



Vademecum of the PhD

for PhD students and supervisors
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une version française est également disponible sur la page ci-dessus

This document is a practical guide for PhD students and supervisors from the allocation of a grant to after the defence. It is specific to Doctoral School MIIS, but applies to all its students (with funding by the institution, by the region, PhD with the industry — CIFRE —, funding on a project, cosupervision with an institution abroad — cotutelle —, etc.), whatever the institution where they registered. However, specific conditions (funding, cosupervision, etc.) can convey additional obligations which of course must be honoured.

Law as well as the doctoral contract, the doctoral charter, the internal rules of the doctoral school, the convention of “cotutelle”, etc. constitute the legal reference, and must be known by all. However, this document will be updated as they evolve; thanks in advance for informing us of erroneous, missing, or unclear points.

In the whole document, “ED” (“École Doctorale”) stands for Doctoral School MIIS.

Contacts

Director: Bruno Zanuttini.
Vice-director-for Caen: Gilbert Levitt.
Vice-director for Rouen (for the university and INSA): Cecilia Zanni-Merk.
Vice-director for Le Havre: Alexandre Berred.
Secretaries for Caen: Marie Legay-Meleux.
Secretary for Rouen (for the university and INSA): Coleen Boust and Florence Fradet.
Secretary for Le Havre: Christine Le Bodo.
Elected PhD student for Caen: Tanguy Gernot (GREYC).
Elected PhD students for Rouen: Timothée Schmoderer (LMI), Yiyi Xu (LINEACT).
Elected PhD student for Le Havre: Irmand Leblond Mikiela Ndzoumbou (LMAH).

Physically, students can go to the “maisons du doctorat” in Caen (campus 2, Sciences 3 building, office S3-103) and in Rouen (Madrillet, office 019 at “UFR des Sciences et Techniques”), and at the “UFR des Sciences et Techniques” (Présidence building) at Le Havre. Messages must be sent to the list edmiis@normandie-univ.fr, who comprises the above persons, and not to individual members of the board. This speeds up handling of messages and enables us to better follow your case.

A number of steps of the PhD are digitalised via the SyGAL application (<https://sygal.normandie-univ.fr>).



Students must watch their institutional email on a very regular basis. They are also encouraged to register to mailing lists specialised in their discipline (take advice from PhD supervisors) so as to be informed of events, positions, etc. in their scientific community.

Organisations of PhD students ADDED (Rouen and Le Havre, <http://association-added.fr/>, association.added@gmail.com) and OPTIC (Caen, association.optic@gmail.com) organise events for PhD students, who can enjoy them, but also invest time in these organisations.

Web Sites of Institutions

Procedures and forms (registration, doctoral charter, defence, change of supervisor, registration for 4th year, etc.) evolve rather often, and some of them depend on the institution where the student has registered. Hence one must always refer to the latest versions of the documents, as provided by the secretary or downloaded from the website of the institution:

- University of Caen : <http://recherche.unicaen.fr/etudes-doctorales/>,
- University of Rouen : <http://recherche.univ-rouen.fr/pole-etudes-doctorales-335981.kjsp>,
- INSA Rouen : <https://www.insa-rouen.fr/recherche/doctorats>,
- University of Le Havre : <https://www.univ-lehavre.fr/spip.php?rubrique88>.

All Along the PhD

Questions, Problems, Specific Cases? Inform of any problem and ask any question to edmiis@normandie-univ.fr, to the director, to one of the vice-directors or to the secretaries. Never hesitate to do so. Elected students at the council of the ED may also provide help to PhD students.

Training Program. Each PhD student must follow at least 60 h of training during the PhD, among which at least one general unit ("module généraliste") proposed by Normandie Université (list and registration process on the websites of the institutions) and at least one specific unit ("module spécifique", viz. Related to the scientific disciplines of the ED; information about these is provided by the ED). Attending summer schools, training for teaching, investing time in students organisations, being an elected member at the ED, etc. can be counted as training; in case of doubt, feel free to ask the opinion of the ED. Following master 2 courses, in Normandy or elsewhere, is also accounted for as a specific unit.

The PhD student is responsible for choosing the training units in which he wants to enrol, and for following the training program all along the PhD. The ED does *not* propose a program tailored to each PhD student, it only proposes units each of which the students are free to choose or not. By registering to one of them, the PhD student commits to indeed attending it, for its whole duration, except with an adequate justification and provided he informs the organisers and the ED before the training takes place.

The PhD students can choose other training units than those proposed by the ED or by Normandie Université. The ED can provide financial support for such training and they can be accounted for in the 60 hours, on a case by case basis.



Popularisation Actions ("CSTI"). PhD students are encouraged to get involved in popularisation of science, by, e.g., participating to the "Fête de la Science", giving conferences aimed at nonexperts, participating to round tables with the industry, going to high schools ("lycées"), etc. For PhD fundings by Region Normandie at least one such action is explicitly expected each year. Scientific centers (Le Dôme in Caen and Science Action in Rouen and Le Havre) organise such actions on a regular basis, and PhD students are encouraged to get involved in them.

Popularisation actions can be counted in the 60 h training program.

Other Activities. During up to 32 days per year, PhD students can get involved in a mission in a company, administration, association, etc., either for the dissemination of science or the valorisation of research results, or for a position as an expert. Such activities are ruled by a specific contract.

Mobility. The ED proposes financial support for mobility and travelling. The support for travelling concerns travelling for the PhD or for the professional future, other than travelling for presenting a selected article at a conference (in which case the lab should pay). The support for mobility concerns long stays (three weeks or more) in a research lab abroad.

The ED sends calls several times per year; if you are unsure that your project is concerned by such support, then ask. Such support enables PhD students to meet other researchers, to discover new environments, other research themes, etc. Such experience is then an important point on one's curriculum.

When you are back, the ED asks you to send a short email explaining what you got from your mission, your difficulties, if any, etc.

Being a Representative. There are 4 representatives of PhD students at the council of the ED; these representatives are elected by and among the PhD students. Their functions end with their PhD. The representatives are also invited at the "collège des écoles doctorales", a council which groups together the 8 doctoral schools of Normandie Université.

Teaching. PhD students can apply to teaching at their institution. The procedures are different at each institution (information should be asked the teaching departments in June of each year, for the following school year).

For PhD students who want to prepare for a career in the Academia, teaching enables them to get a concrete idea of the functions of a professor, and are essential for obtaining the "qualification" (to the functions of an assistant professor).

As Soon as a Funding is Obtained

Doctoral Contract. For the preparation of doctoral contracts (fundings by institutions, by the region – "RIN 100 %" or "RIN 50 %", by a research project), the required information must be given to the ED before the end of June. The doctoral contract can formally start only once the diploma of master is obtained (for example, on October 1st if the diploma is obtained during September) and after the student has registered for the PhD. These contracts are handled by the services of human resources ("services des ressources humaines" or "RH").



Doctoral Charter and Convention of Formation (“Charte des thèses” and “Convention de Formation”). For the registration form, they must be filled in with the PhD supervisor. These documents must be downloaded from the website of the institution where the student registers. They must be sent to the ED once they are correctly filled in (including the foreseen schedule, the professional project, etc.) and signed by the PhD student, the supervisor(s) and the research lab, as required by the form. The secretaries then communicate them to the director of the ED, the institution and Normandie Université.

Registration. Registration is performed in one of the institutions who can prepare students for a PhD (U. Caen, U. Rouen, U. Le Havre, INSA Rouen). The registration form is specific to each institution and must be downloaded from the corresponding website. In general, at least the following documents must be provided: master diploma, identity card or passport, birth act for foreigners, etc.

Registration fees must be paid to the institution. The PhD student gets a student card. PhD students must have paid the CVEC before (“Contribution Vie Étudiante et de Campus”, 91 € in 2019-2020); the identifier obtained with the CVEC receipt must be provided for the registration.

The registration can take place from mid-July on, and must be performed as early as possible; it is a necessary condition for the doctoral contract to be prepared. If registration takes place at another moment during the year (for a PhD with the industry or with funding by a research project, for example), it still counts as a registration for the current school year (for example, it is a registration for 2020-2021 if the student registers at the end of April 2021). PhD students must register each year.

During fall, soon after most PhD students have registered, a welcome meeting is organised by Normandie Université, common to all doctoral schools, and a specific meeting is organised by the ED in each place (Caen, Rouen, and Le Havre). Attending this meeting is crucial.

During the Six First Months of the PhD

The follow-up committee (“comité de suivi individuel” or “CSI”) must have been constituted and accepted by the ED. It must comprise 2 members, among who at least one must hold an habilitation to supervise PhDs (“habilitation à diriger des recherches” or “HDR”), at least one must be external to Normandie Université, and at least one must be in the Academia (assistant-professor, professor, or researcher). The 2 members must be external to the supervisor’s or supervisors’ direct scientific environment (not in the same research group nor regular coauthors). The aim is to provide an external and impartial point of view on the thesis.

The typical CSI comprises one member with a habilitation who holds a position in a lab outside of Normandy, and one member from the same lab as the PhD student but from another group, or from another lab in the same scientific discipline, physically close to the PhD student’s lab.

The supervisor must help the PhD student to form the CSI, in particular as concerns the external member, by suggesting names if needed. However, the members are *in fine* chosen by the PhD student. For this he can take advice from other students, teachers, and researchers. A template is provided in the appendix for an email asking someone to participate in one’s CSI.

The proposed members for the CSI must be communicated to the ED for it to validate it. Then the ED sends a confirmation to the PhD student, to the supervisor(s) and to the committee members.



Before Summer at the End of the First Year

For example, before summer 2021 for a PhD who has registered first during school year 2020-2021. For students who registered in January or later during the current school year, the first meeting of the committee can take place in September (warning: this is an exception only for the first year).

Committee Meeting. The first meeting of the CSI must take place in June or earlier. One part of the meeting must be organised with the PhD supervisor(s) (in addition to the PhD student and the two members of the CSI), and one part without the supervisor(s). The external member can attend the meeting through videoconference (the ED cannot give financial support for their travel to Normandy). If the PhD requires it, the ED can provide a template for a confidentiality commitment to be signed by the committee members.

It is up to the persons involved to agree on a precise format for the meeting, but typically:

- before the meeting, the PhD student sends a report (for example, his yearly report — see next paragraph) as well as published or submitted papers, if any,
- during one part of the meeting, the PhD student presents his work, his working environment, etc., and the supervisor attends this presentation,
- a possibly long discussion is devoted to questions and to discussion, with the supervisor(s) attending,
- another part of the meeting is held without the supervisor(s), for freely discussing about the working environment, the relationships with the supervisor(s), the PhD student's professional project, etc.

After the meeting, the two committee members commonly write a report (using the form provided by the ED or as free text, and it may be a single paragraph if there is not much worth noting) giving their opinion on the progression of the PhD, the working environment, and all points which they think are important to mention. They send this report to the ED (edmiis@normandie-univ.fr), which forwards it to the PhD student and to the supervisor(s). If useful, the committee can also send another message to the ED, which will not be forwarded.

It is important that the CSI members send the report (for example, that the local member does, with the external member Cc'ed).

Yearly Report. The yearly report must be filled in and sent back to the ED, also before summer (even for PhD students who have registered late). The ED provides a template. The report must be about the following: report on the scientific work, publications, popularisation actions performed, training program followed, participation to conferences, symposia, etc. For PhDs funded by the region, it is particularly important that those actions are listed.

The opinion of the supervisor and director of the research lab must be provided on the report before it is sent to the ED. Then the ED summarises (if needed) the report by the CSI (hence this part is *not* to be filled in by the CSI).

These yearly reports can be enough to constitute the PhD student's "portfolio", which reports on all activities performed and on the whole training program followed at the end of the PhD.



During Summer at the End of the First Year

Registration. PhD students must register at their institution for the next school year (even if they registered late for their first year). In exceptional cases (clear lack of work, of motivation...), this may be disallowed, following an opinion expressed by the follow-up committee or the supervisor(s). This would only occur after in-depth discussions by the board of the ED with all persons involved.

No Later than in June of the Second Year

Warning: this concerns the second school year of the PhD, even for late registrations. For example, all PhD students with a first registration in 2020-2021 must follow these steps in June 2022.

Follow-Up Committee. The follow-up committee must meet like at the end of the first year (but in June for PhD students who registered late for their first year). The process is the same as at the end of the first year, but the follow-up committee must explicitly give an opinion about whether the PhD student should be allowed to register for a third school year.

Yearly Report. It must be sent to the ED like at the end of the first year. Quantitative information (production, popularisation actions, training program) of the first year must be recalled, with the new information (those of the second year) emphasised.

During Summer at the End of the Second Year

Registration. Like for the second year, PhD students must register again at their institution for their third year. Again, in exceptional cases, this registration may be disallowed, but only for important reasons and after in-depth discussions.

No Later than in June of the Third Year

Warning: this concerns the third school year of the PhD, even for late registrations. For example, all PhD students with a first registration in 2020-2021 must follow these steps in June 2023.

Follow-Up Committee and Yearly Report. The follow-up committee must meet, and the yearly report must be sent to the ED, with the same procedure as at the end of the first and second years.

Registration for a Fourth Year. A derogation for registering for a fourth year must be requested if the PhD is not defended during the third year (before October 31 ---exact date subject to small changes each year). The derogation is not automatically granted (see next section).



If the supervisor and the PhD student foresee that the PhD defence cannot be held on time, they must clearly inform the follow-up committee about this, and the committee must give an opinion about a fourth registration in their report (this is mandatory).

During Fall after the Third Year

For example, this concerns September 2023 for a PhD student who first registered (even late) during school year 2020-2021.

Registration for the Fourth Year. If a registration for a 4th year must preferably be planned, viz. If the PhD cannot be defended on time (see previous section), or simply if it may be the case that it is not defended on time, a request for a derogation must be sent to the ED at the beginning of September, together with a cover letter by the supervisor and, if it has not been sent before, the opinion of the follow-up committee about this 4th registration.

In case of uncertainty about the ability to defend the PhD on time, it is better to anticipate and request a derogation for a 4th registration, may it be useless in the end. However, the derogation is not granted automatically; the council of the ED will grant it only if the PhD student has started to write the dissertation (attach the manuscript in its current state to the request), if the PhD student has a salary guaranteed until the defence (like a position of “ATER” or a contract of “ingénieur d’étude”, for example – attach the contract), if the proposed schedule until the defence makes sense, etc.

Generally speaking, the ED must be told about the situation as early as possible, so that everyone can anticipate all steps at best.

Request for “Qualification”. For PhD students who plan to apply to a position of “maître de conférences” in France, the « qualification aux fonctions de maître de conférences » is mandatory. Requesting it requires first to pre-register during fall on the dedicated national website, then to send the application itself after the PhD defence but before a deadline imposed each year (usually during the first mid of December; hence the PhD must be defended before this).

Note that if the PhD is not defended before the deadline, this prevents the “qualification” to be requested and hence, prevents the PhD student to have a position of “maître de conférences” in the following school year; however, the “qualification” can be requested during the following year (in all cases, it is granted for 4 years).

As soon as the Defence is Foreseen

Proposal of Reviewers and Committee. A proposal of reviewers and defence committee must be sent to the ED no later than 3 months before the date aimed at for the defence. For example, for a defence foreseen on November 20, the proposal must be sent no later than August 20 (add one month if the summer break is included; for example, for a defence on November 1st, the proposal must be sent no later than July 1st). It is up to the supervisor to form the committee and send the proposal to the ED, after agreeing about the committee with the PhD student.



It is not mandatory to contact the proposed members before this step. It is better to send a proposal earlier to the ED, and to contact the members once the reviewers and committee have been validated.

About the proposal, the ED checks the following:

- that the proposal is in accordance with the regulations (2 reviewers with habilitation and, for the defence committee: between 4 and 8 members, at least half with “rang A” or equivalent, at least half external), and, if applicable, with the “convention de cotutelle”,
- that there are no conflicts of interest; reviewers must not have published with the PhD student nor with the supervisor (or sufficiently long before the PhD started); they cannot be members of Normandie Université, nor members of the follow-up committee of the PhD,
- that there is at least one member of each gender in the defence committee; for the scientific disciplines corresponding to ED MIIS, where there are much fewer women than men, this is a minimum step towards gender balance as requested by the law,
- that at least one member will be in position to be designated as the committee president for the defence (member with “rang A”, possibly an emeritus professor, other than the supervisor(s)).

Note that an “external” member is one whose position is neither within Normandie Université, nor in the company (for “CIFRE” PhD’s). When the PhD is cosupervised or when there is a “cotutelle”, the cosupervisor and the people with a position in the same institution are not counted as external either. In general, for obvious reasons of objectivity, only external members should be in the committee, except for supervisors (and possibly cosupervisors or “coencadrants”). Also note that a “maître de conférences” or a “chargé de recherche”, even with habilitation, does not count as one with “rang A”. Finally, at least one reviewer must be in the defence committee (usually, both are).

In exceptional cases, the committee may comprise invited members, who are not formally in the committee but can attend the defence. These members are left apart when the above criteria are checked.

Portfolio. The “portfolio” summarises the PhD student’s curriculum during the PhD. It must summarise the research activity; publications and communications; the training program followed, missions and stays; teaching performed, popularisation actions, etc. As such, it can simply be composed of the yearly reports written during the PhD. This portfolio must be sent to the ED at the same time as the reviewers and committee proposal, and is mandatory for the defence to be allowed.

No Later than Two Months before the Defence

Two months constitute a minimum timespan. It is strongly advised to start these steps earlier, and in no case can they be started later.

Defence Form. The defence form (“dossier de soutenance”), available from the website of the institution, must be filled in, signed by the PhD student, the supervisor(s) and the director of the research lab, then sent to the ED. It must propose the reviewers and defence committee previously validated by the ED. All documents required in the form must obviously be attached (for confidential theses, for the European label, etc.).

Sending the Manuscript. The manuscript must be sent to the reviewers, together with an impartiality form to be filled in (available from the website of the ED), and the signed reports and impartiality forms



must be requested for no later than three weeks before the defence. It is up to the supervisor and the PhD student to send the manuscript and the form, and to give the return deadline. An example message for doing so is given in the appendix.

One Month before the Defence

Reception of Reviews. The reviews on the manuscript must explicitly allow the defence. They must be sent by the reviewers to the ED, together with the impartiality forms, everything dated and signed, using the address edmiis@normandie-univ.fr. Then the ED forwards them to the PhD student and to the supervisor(s).

Submission of the Manuscript. The PhD manuscript must be submitted officially via the SyGAL application (<https://sygal.normandie-univ.fr/>). Submission is mandatory for the defence to be considered valid. In parallel, the title and abstract of the thesis, together with the date, hour, and place of the defence must be given to the ED so that the defence can be announced.

Convening of the Defence Committee. As soon as the defence has been formally allowed to take place by the institution, the ED convenes the members of the defence committee and sends them the reviews. It is up to the supervisor and the PhD student to send them the manuscript.

As concerns the defence, the ED can help for logistics, in particular for reserving a room, rehearsal slots, etc.

PhD Defence

Before the defence, the supervisor gets the documents which the committee will have to fill in.

On the day of the defence, logistics (welcoming members, opening the room, etc.) must be coped with by the supervisor(s) and the PhD student (possibly with help by the ED). Before the defence starts, the committee designates one of its members to be the president; the president must be a member with “rang A”, other than the supervisor(s) (a reviewer may be the president); moreover, the president must be physically present (no videoconferencing). Note that for a “cotutelle”, additional rules may apply.

During deliberation, the committee must fill in the documents provided by the ED. The supervisor is part of the committee, but he must not sign the “PV” (“procès verbal”); however, he signs the defence report. The defence reports, if it mentions the deliberation, must state that the decision was made by the committee members without the supervisor(s). These rules also apply to cosupervisors and/or “coencadrants”, if any.

Invited members do not sign any document, and they do not take part in the deliberation.



After the Defence

Corrections of the Manuscript. If the committee has awarded the PhD “with optional modifications in form” (“avec modifications de forme facultatives”), the PhD student may submit another version of the manuscript via the SyGAL application within one month.

If the committee has awarded the PhD “with mandatory corrections” (“sous conditions de corrections obligatoires”), this step is mandatory: within three months, the PhD student must submit a new version of the manuscript, corrected exactly as required by the committee. When this new submission is validated, but not before this, the certificate of success can be delivered to the PhD student.

“Qualification”. If the PhD student requests the “qualification aux fonctions de maître de conférences”, and provided he has pre-registered during fall (see above), he can send his/her application as early as (s)he obtains his/her certificate of success, while complying to the deadlines of the “CNU” (National Council of Universities).

Give News. By law, it is required that PhD students answer all requests about their professional insertion after the PhD. For this reason, the defence form asks students to provide permanent contact information. Independently from such surveys, the ED strongly encourages former PhD students to give news on a regular basis to their (former) supervisor and to the ED.

Appendix: Typical Message for Contacting a Possible Member of the Follow-Up Committee

I am a PhD student in research lab XXX, in CAEN/ROUEN/LE HAVRE... under the supervision of XXX, within Doctoral School « Mathématiques, Information, Ingénierie des Systèmes » of Normandie Université. My PhD is about XXX. In accordance with my supervisor, we would like to propose you to be part of my follow-up committee together with XXXX/A MEMBER OF MY LAB.

The purpose of the follow-up committee is to assess, at the end of each school year, the conditions of work, the progression of the PhD, the relationships with the supervisor, etc. This is done through a meeting (possibly with videoconferencing), which typically lasts one to two hours, at some moment which we plan together. The doctoral school then asks the follow-up committee to send a report (possibly a very short one), as well as to allow or disallow registration for a 3rd, 4th, or 5th year, whenever applicable.

I hope that you will accept and thank you in advance for your answer.

Appendix: Typical Message for Asking the Reviews

Thank you again for accepting to act as a reviewer for XXX’s PhD. The dissertation is attached to this message, as well as an impartiality form.

The doctoral school requires that the reviews be sent no later than three weeks before the defence, that is, before XXX. Thank you for sending yours before this date, signed, and explicitly allowing the defence



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if so is your opinion. Thank you for sending the impartiality form as well, filled in, dated, and signed. The review and form should be sent directly to the doctoral school, using the address edmiis@normandie-univ.fr, or by postal mail using the address « École doctorale MIIS, Campus 2 Côte de Nacre, bâtiment Sciences 3, bureau S3-103, boulevard du Maréchal Juin, CS 14 032 Caen Cedex, France ».

You may also ask any question about the process to the doctoral school, using the email address given above.