

## Vade mecum<sup>1</sup> of the student's Individual Monitoring Committee

The regulatory framework defining the missions, composition and operation of the doctoral student's Individual Monitoring Committee (IMC) is detailed in article 13 of the [ministerial order of August 26, 2022](#) amending the order of May 25, 2016 which establishes the national framework for doctoral training and the procedures leading to the award of the national doctoral degree. This is detailed in the appendix 1 to this document.

Organisation of the IMC is a mission entrusted<sup>2</sup> to the doctoral schools (DS) by the aforementioned ministerial order, in accordance with their procedures.

### 1. The missions of the IMC<sup>3</sup>

As specified in the above-mentioned article 13, the IMC's role is to **support, assess and monitor**.

#### Support and assessment missions

*The individual doctoral student's monitoring committee provides **support** for doctoral students throughout the duration of their studies.*

*During the interview with the doctoral student, the committee **assesses the conditions of his/her training and the progress of his/her research**.* The IMC does not evaluate either the doctoral student or the thesis director.

- The IMC monitors and makes recommendations to the director of the DS, the doctoral student and the thesis director. It provides an outside perspective on the work and progress of the doctoral project, which each stakeholder will be able to use constructively.
- The IMC monitors the doctoral student's progress in his/her ability to present his/her research work, to demonstrate its quality and innovative character, and to situate it in its national and/or international scientific context. In particular, the IMC encourages doctoral candidates to clearly explain and defend their scientific approach and directions taken in their thesis project;
- The IMC also helps doctoral students to master the timeframe of their project and to plan its completion within the scheduled time.
- The IMC helps doctoral students to take note of the progress of their own work and to develop their scientific culture, international outlook, expertise and skills.

#### Monitoring mission

*The doctoral student's individual monitoring committee **ensures** that the program runs smoothly, based on the doctoral charter and the training agreement.*

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<sup>1</sup> This Vade mecum is based on the Monitoring Committee Guide produced and published in October 2022 by the Réseau National des Collèges Doctoraux (RNCD), of which the AMU doctoral college is a founding member.

<sup>2</sup> Article 3, paragraph 6 of the aforementioned ministerial order of August 26, 2022: Doctoral schools ensure a quality approach to training, in particular by setting up individual doctoral student monitoring committees, [...].

<sup>3</sup> The texts in italics in this document are taken from the Order of August 26, 2022 amending the Order of May 25, cited above.

During the interview with the doctoral student, the IMC is attentive to any difficulties encountered by the doctoral student. **Its role is not to resolve these difficulties but to alert the DS.** *It is particularly vigilant in identifying any form of conflict, discrimination, moral or sexual harassment or sexist behaviour.*

- *In the event of a problem, the doctoral student's individual monitoring committee will alert the doctoral school, which will take any necessary measures concerning the doctoral student's situation and the progress of the doctorate.*
- *In the event of acts of violence, discrimination, moral or sexual harassment or sexist behaviour, the doctoral school will report the matter to the university's anti-discrimination and anti-sexist violence counselling centre.*

## 2. Composition of the IMC and appointment of its members

The IMC of every doctoral student is set up when they first register for their doctorate. Its composition must be entered in the ADUM information system at the time of registration or, at the latest, before the first IMC meeting is held.

*The doctoral school ensures that, as far as possible, the composition of the IMC remains constant throughout the doctoral student's thesis.*

The DS validates the composition of the IMC according to the procedures it defines. *It ensures that **doctoral students are consulted** on the constitution of their IMC.*

*The members of the IMC **do not participate in the supervision of the doctoral student's work.***

The IMC comprises **at least two PhD members**. It may include non-statutory members of similar age, thus facilitating the doctoral student's expression of his/her views. Note that emeritus professors and researchers may be members of the IMC.

*As far as possible, the doctoral student's individual monitoring committee includes a **member from outside** of the institution.*

*It includes **at least one member who is a specialist** in the discipline or is related to the field of the thesis. It is recommended that this member should be **qualified to direct research** or have experience of supervising doctoral students. This member must have sufficient expertise in the doctoral student's field of research to ensure, in particular, that they are able to situate their work in the national and/or international scientific context, present their research approach, the originality of their work, etc. The specialist member may act as examiner or chairman of the jury during the thesis defence. It is strongly recommended that he/she **should not be appointed as thesis reporter**<sup>4</sup>.*

*The IMC also includes a **non-specialist member from outside of the thesis's research field**. This member is specifically responsible for monitoring any difficulties encountered by the doctoral student.*

It is recommended that the members of the IMC collectively should be:

- **Open and benevolent**, encouraging doctoral students to express themselves freely about any difficulties or questions they may have about the progress of their doctorate.

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<sup>4</sup> As specified in article 17 of the aforementioned ministerial order of August 26, 2022, the reporters are not involved in the doctoral student's work. They must therefore remain independent in order to avoid any bias in the evaluation of the doctoral student's work and to provide an outside perspective.

- **Independent** and without any particular preconceptions with regard to the thesis director and the doctoral student. The members of the IMC are committed to providing an external and impartial point of view.
- **Experienced** in doctoral supervision and training.

### 3. Commitments of IMC members and recommendations

By agreeing to take part in the committee, the members of the IMC make a commitment to the following points:

- **Confidentiality** and **discretion**. Where the work is of a proven confidential nature, the confidentiality undertaking must be formalised (a model is provided in the appendix);
- Be impartial and not engage in discrimination, moral or sexual harassment or sexist behaviour, or breach research ethics or scientific integrity;
- Be vigilant in identifying any form of conflict, discrimination, moral or sexual harassment or sexist behaviour, any breach of research ethics or scientific integrity, or any conflict of interest;
- Alert the doctoral school if such a situation is identified.

It is recommended that:

- The members of the IMC assure the doctoral student that they will listen to him/her whenever necessary;
- The IMC member with expertise in the doctoral student's field of research remains **independent** and **external** to the doctoral supervision and the doctoral student's work throughout the doctorate;
- The member of the Monitoring Committee who is not a specialist in the doctoral student's field of research specifies that he/she can be contacted if necessary, outside the annual meeting of the IMC.

### 4. IMC meetings

The IMC must meet before students enrol in their second year and then **before each new enrolment** until the end of their doctorate.

Renewal of registration is **subject to the opinion<sup>5</sup> of the IMC**.

Interviews are organised in **three distinct stages**:

- *Presentation of work progress and discussions;*
- *Interview with the doctoral student without the thesis supervisor;*
- *Interview with the thesis supervisor without the doctoral student.*

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<sup>5</sup> Article 11 of the aforementioned ministerial order of 26 August 2022 stipulates that: *registration is renewed at the beginning of each academic year by the head of the institution, on the recommendation of the doctoral school director, after receiving the opinion of the thesis director and **the doctoral student's individual monitoring committee***. Article 14 of the same order also stipulates that: *Annual extensions may be granted on an exceptional basis by the head of the institution, on a proposal from the thesis director and **after receiving the opinion of the monitoring committee** and the doctoral school director, upon reasoned request of the doctoral student.*

These three stages may take place on different dates or at different times.

Unless otherwise instructed by the doctoral school, the presentation to the IMC of the doctoral student's scientific work and the scientific questions on this work may take place in a public setting (scientific days of the doctoral school, laboratory seminar, etc.).

However, the committee's meetings with the doctoral student without the thesis supervisor and with the thesis supervisor without the doctoral student are held **behind closed doors** so that everyone can express themselves freely during the meetings. Everyone is required to be discreet and benevolent about what will be discussed during the meeting.

### Before the annual meeting

- The doctoral student writes an annual progress report on his/her work and sends it to the members of the IMC. The format of this report is defined by the DS.
- The doctoral student provides the IMC members with his/her updated skills portfolio and educational training plan.
- The procedures for sending the documents to IMC members are communicated by the DS.
- The members of the IMC take note of the current document, in particular of the list of questions that will be addressed below.

### During the meeting

- The members of the IMC should set aside a short time at the beginning of the meeting to explain the framework, objectives and procedures.
- The members of the IMC check that all points they deem necessary or useful to ensure that the doctoral student's thesis is progressing smoothly are addressed.

### At the end of the meeting

At the end of its meeting, the IMC **makes recommendations** and sends an **interview report** to the *director of the DS*, who may, if necessary, ask for revisions or additions.

Once the report has been validated by the DS, it is conserved by the doctoral school and sent to the thesis director and the doctoral student.

In its report, the IMC:

- Assesses the conditions of the doctoral student's educational training and the progress of his/her research; it may highlight strengths and areas for improvement.
- Makes recommendations and gives advice.
- Gives an opinion on a new annual enrolment and, where appropriate, on extending the duration of the thesis.
- Ensures that, in the case of doctoral students preparing their thesis in parallel with another professional activity, the initial adjustments made to the program and the conditions for preparing the thesis are appropriate.
- In the event of difficulties, alerts the DS, which takes all necessary measures concerning the doctoral student's situation and the progress of the doctoral program. Depending on the nature of the difficulty, the IMC may mention it either in the interview report or bring it to the attention only of the doctoral school director in a confidential document.

- In the event of acts of violence, discrimination, moral or sexual harassment or gender-based harassment, the DS will report the matter to the Respect and Equality Department as soon as it becomes aware of the situation.

## **5. Questions that may be addressed**

After taking note of the doctoral student's annual activity report and hearing a presentation of his/her work, the IMC may address the questions below, for example:

### **Progress of the doctoral project**

- Is the research work progressing satisfactorily? Can the doctoral project be completed within the initially defined timeframe? If not, by how many months should the preparation of the thesis be extended to allow the thesis to be defended?
- Has the research question been properly identified? Is the doctoral student able to situate his/her work in the national and/or international scientific context, to identify what it will contribute to the field of knowledge, and what will constitute the originality and innovative character of the thesis?
- Does the doctoral student have a clear vision of the research process and the research work to be carried out before the defence?

### **Conditions for doctoral student's training**

- Is the dialogue between the doctoral student and the supervisors satisfactory? Is the doctoral student well integrated into the research team or unit, into a scientific community? Does she/he feel isolated?
- Have the scientific, material and financial conditions necessary for the doctoral project to run smoothly been met?
- If the doctoral student is working on his/her thesis at the same time as undertaking another professional activity, is the division of time between his/her various activities appropriate? Should the conditions under which the doctorate is being carried out be reviewed?
- If the doctoral student is preparing his/her thesis within a partnership framework (interdisciplinary, international or with a partner from the socio-economic world), are the conditions of this partnership satisfactory? Is the collaboration between the various players effective?
- How are the responsibilities for supervising the thesis carried out by the thesis director and, where appropriate, the co-director and co-supervisors? Are the supervision arrangements appropriate or in need of review? If the scientific direction of the doctoral project is shared, is the supervision team operating satisfactorily? Is everyone's role clearly understood by the doctoral student?
- Are his/her motivation and determination to make progress sufficient?
- Is he/she exposed to psychosocial risks? Is he/she subject to harassment, discrimination, violence, and in particular sexist and sexual violence or sexist behaviour?

## Development of doctoral student's skills and preparation for his/her future career

- Are the doctoral student's written outputs sufficient (progress report, bibliographical review, articles, chapters of the thesis, etc.)? If so, how did the doctoral student and supervisor work together to draft and proofread the written work? Is the doctoral student aware of the principles of scientific integrity relative to publication, signature and copyright on scientific work?
- Are the doctoral student's presentation skills satisfactory?
- Do doctoral students have opportunities to develop their scientific culture and national and/or international outlook (seminar cycles, thematic schools, etc.)? Is the development of their general knowledge and disciplinary expertise satisfactory?
- How far has he/she got in preparing for his/her future career? Has he/she considered his/her skills, educational training plan and additional activities (see skills portfolio)? Does the doctoral student have professional experience outside of research (teaching assignments, for example)?
- Has the doctoral student been made aware of research ethics and scientific integrity, the challenges of open science, the dissemination of research work in society, and sustainable development?

## 6. Practical questions and recommendations

### How long should be an IMC?

The time devoted to the presentation of the doctoral student's research to the members of the IMC must be long enough for the committee to be able to assess the progress of the work and the doctoral student's presentation skills.

The time devoted to private interviews with the doctoral student and the thesis director should also be sufficient to cover all the other aspects.

### Is videoconferencing possible?

The IMC can be organised as a videoconference. This facilitates the participation of external members and reduces travel time. However, the conditions used must not hinder free expression and the human exchanges that facilitate it. For example, it is generally necessary to open the camera during private interviews and it can be reassuring to specify that the interviews are not recorded.

### Who organises an IMC meeting?

The DS determines who is responsible for organising the annual IMC meeting. It may be the doctoral school, the management of the doctoral student's host research unit or the doctoral student him/herself, who may be invited to organise his/her IMC meeting within the framework set by the DS (e.g. start and end dates of the period during which IMCs are held). It is recommended that IMC meetings should be organised before summer holidays and/or at the beginning of the academic year. They should be held before the re-registration deadline for thesis, which is generally November 30<sup>th</sup>.

## Appendix 1

### Regulatory framework for IMCs

#### Article 13 of the [ministerial order of August 26, 2022](#):

An individual doctoral student's monitoring committee ensures that the program runs smoothly, based on the doctoral charter and the educational training agreement.

The doctoral student's individual monitoring committee provides support for the doctoral student throughout the duration of the doctorate. It must meet before the student enrolls in the second year and then before each new enrolment until the end of the doctorate.

The interviews are organised in three distinct stages:

- Presentation of work progress and discussion,
- Interview with the doctoral student without the thesis director,
- Interview with the thesis director without the doctoral student.

During the interview with the doctoral student, the committee assesses the conditions of his/her training and the progress of his/her research. During the same interview, it is particularly vigilant in identifying any form of conflict, discrimination, moral or sexual harassment or sexist behaviour. The committee makes recommendations and sends a report on the interview to the doctoral school director, the doctoral student and the thesis director.

In the event of difficulties, the doctoral student's individual monitoring committee will alert the doctoral school, which will take all necessary measures regarding the doctoral student's situation and the progress of his/her doctorate.

As soon as the doctoral school becomes aware of acts of violence, discrimination, moral or sexual harassment or sexist behaviour, it will report them to the institution's anti-discrimination and anti-sexist violence counselling centre.

The composition, organisation and operation of this committee are proposed by the doctoral school board. The doctoral school ensures that, as far as possible, the composition of the doctoral student's individual monitoring committee remains constant throughout the doctorate.

The doctoral student's individual monitoring committee includes at least one member specialised in the discipline or related to the field of the thesis. As far as possible, the doctoral student's individual monitoring committee includes a member from outside the institution. It also includes a non-specialist member from outside the thesis research field.

The members of this committee do not participate in directing the doctoral student's work.

The doctoral school ensures that the doctoral student is consulted on the composition of his/her individual monitoring committee before its meeting.

## Appendix 2

### Confidentiality statement - IMC

*To be completed by each member of the IMC when the doctoral student's work is confidential and to be returned, dated and signed, to the thesis director with a copy to the doctoral school director.*

Hereby,

I, the undersigned [Civil status First name Last name] Title/position:

Contact details: [Professional address]

Acknowledge, in my capacity as a member of the individual monitoring committee of [First name and last name of the doctoral student],

Placed under the scientific responsibility of [Title and address of the thesis director].

From the laboratory: [Name and address of the laboratory]

To have received written and/or oral confidential information relating to the work on the following subject: [Title of thesis]

And make commitment:

- Not to use this information, even for scientific research purposes;
- Not to pass it on to third parties, even for research purposes, in any way whatsoever;
- Not to divulge this information by any means whatsoever and, in particular, not to make any publications or oral communications relating to this information;
- Not to register any industrial property rights in the aforementioned information.

The commitments set out above will remain in force until the end of the confidentiality period.

It is understood that these undertakings do not apply to information for which I can establish:

- That it has fallen into the public domain or has been revealed to me by a third party, without there having been a breach of this agreement;

or

- - That it was in my possession prior to its disclosure.

Done at [place], on [DD/MM/YYYY]

"Read and approved"

Signature