

# PhD Procedure through Validation of Acquired Experience at the Institut Polytechnique de Paris

## 1. GENERAL PRESENTATION

### 1.1. Validation of Acquired Experience (VAE)

According to Law No. 2002-73, known as the Social Modernization Act of January 17, 2002, any person, regardless of age, nationality, status, or level of education, who can prove at least one year of experience directly related to the certification sought may apply for Validation of Acquired Experience (VAE). This certification, which may be a diploma, a title, or a professional qualification certificate, must be registered in the National Directory of Professional Certifications (RNCP).

A general presentation of the VAE can be found on the government's VAE portal:

<http://www.vae.gouv.fr/>

(document in French)

VAE is a right open to everyone: employees (either on the employee's own initiative or proposed by the employer as part of a training plan), self-employed workers, job seekers, and volunteers. Applicants must be able to demonstrate at least one year of activity directly related to the certification sought, whether through professional or volunteer activities. The funding schemes provided under continuing vocational training legislation are available to candidates seeking to obtain a doctorate through VAE. This procedure is carried out in accordance with the letter and spirit of the law to guarantee this individual right of access to certification.

People who have acquired professional research experience and carried out original scientific work may request validation of prior experience for the award of a doctoral degree. This work may have been conducted outside the academic framework, for example in a company's R&D center. Thus, within the framework of a VAE, the candidate showcases their research work and the scientific skills they have developed and demonstrates the competencies required for obtaining a doctorate. The candidate will also be required to prepare a portfolio to present and defend during an interview with the VAE jury.

VAE is in no way intended to compensate for difficulties that prevent the completion of a traditional doctorate, such as insufficient or nonexistent funding.

### 1.2. Validation of Acquired Experience for a Doctorate

The doctorate is part of the European LMD framework (Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate). It is a national degree, internationally recognized, defined within the general framework in Article L612-7, and its conditions of implementation in initial training are set by ministerial decree. Through the VAE route, the doctoral candidate must therefore have built up **professional research experience** and carried out **original scientific work**, which are presented in a **thesis or dissertation** written by the candidate and defended orally.

**Article L612-7:** “Doctoral training is training for research and through research, which includes the individual or collective completion of original scientific work. [...] Doctoral training constitutes professional research experience, validated, after the defense of a thesis, by the awarding of the doctoral degree. [...]

The doctoral degree is conferred after the defense of a thesis or the presentation of a body of original scientific work. This thesis or work may be individual or, if justified by the discipline, collective, already published or unpublished. In cases where the thesis or work results from a collective contribution, the candidate must write and defend a dissertation that makes it possible to assess their personal contribution.”

### 1.3. Steps of the procedure

The procedure for awarding the doctorate under the VAE framework at the Institut Polytechnique de Paris is based on the “Doctorate and VAE” vademecum developed by the Conference of Directors of University Continuing Education Services and disseminated by the Ministry responsible for Higher Education.

This procedure comprises the following five stages:

- Step 1: Reception and information
- Step 2: Administrative and academic eligibility
- Step 3: Preparation of the VAE portfolio
- Step 4: VAE Jury
- Step 5: Second jury following partial validation (if applicable)

These steps are detailed in Section 2.

### 1.4. The main requirements

The main requirements for obtaining a doctorate through V.A.E. are as follows:

- The administrative and scientific eligibility of the application and the feasibility of the project.
- Participation in the VAE jury does not require any prior training.
- The composition of the VAE jury is specific and complies with the relevant regulations.
- The assessment of requirements is entrusted to the VAE jury, which alone is authorized to apply the VAE rules, including compensation between the first and second jury sessions.
- Ensuring fairness of evaluation between candidates obtaining their doctorate through initial training and those obtaining it via VAE is a central concern of the VAE jury members.
- The degree or diploma awarded is strictly identical to that conferred to doctoral candidates who completed their doctorate through initial doctoral training and successfully defended it.

## 2. Procedure detailed by steps

### 2.1 Reception and information

The Institut Polytechnique de Paris offers dedicated support to candidates applying for a VAE to obtain a doctoral degree. The candidate contacts the Graduate School, which will organize an initial meeting to inform and guide them, provide a preliminary assessment of their application, and, if necessary, assist in preparing their eligibility portfolio.

This support is optional but aims to enhance the candidate’s chances of success in their application process.

## 2.2. Administrative and academic eligibility

### 2.2.1. Eligibility portfolio

The eligibility portfolio must include the following documents:

- A document explaining the context of the application and specifying the professional and personal project.
- A detailed CV listing all professional experiences.
- Documents proving the nature and duration of the activities carried out by the candidate directly related to the VAE application (employment certificates, etc.).
- A summary of research activities and scientific and technical outputs, of a maximum of about ten pages, specifying the context of the projects in which the work took place, the developments achieved and results, and any supervisory experience of research work (interns, postdocs, etc.) by the candidate.
- A list, organized and prioritized appropriately, of all publications, patents, and communications.

The candidate must submit their eligibility portfolio in both digital and paper versions to the Graduate School of IP Paris at the following addresses:

- **Digital version:** [gs-vae@ip-paris.fr](mailto:gs-vae@ip-paris.fr)
- **Paper version:**  
Graduate School IP Paris  
Campus Telecom Paris  
19 place Marguerite Perey  
91120 Palaiseau

The candidate is also required to pay the fees associated with the review of their doctoral VAE application. The VAE service then verifies the eligibility of the submitted documents and the completeness of the eligibility portfolio before forwarding it to the director of the relevant doctoral school.

The doctoral school issues an opinion (favorable/unfavorable) regarding eligibility, the alignment between the disciplinary fields covered by the candidate's work and those of the doctoral school, and any discrepancies between the activities declared by the candidate and the doctoral activity framework. The director of the Doctoral School may communicate with the candidate if further clarification is needed.

If the opinion is favorable, a VAE supervisor holding an HDR (Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches) and affiliated with the candidate's doctoral school is appointed to support the candidate. This opinion is sent to the VAE service, which communicates it to the candidate.

If the candidate does not meet the eligibility conditions, the procedure is terminated.

## 2.3. Preparation of the VAE portfolio

### 2.3.1. VAE Portfolio

After receiving a favorable eligibility opinion, the candidate prepares a VAE validation portfolio under the supervision of their VAE supervisor holding an HDR. The candidate has a period of one year to complete the procedure from the date of this opinion.

Prior to this, the candidate must pay the fees for supervision, jury evaluation, and doctoral registration.

The VAE validation portfolio includes the candidate's professional background, main research areas, and a synthesis of their work in relation to the state of the art. The portfolio must allow for the assessment of the six competency blocks detailed in the Ministerial Decree of February 22, 2019, defining the competencies of doctoral graduates.

The VAE validation portfolio consists of two parts:

- **Professional research experience:** The researcher's professional and personal trajectory, including career progression, activity analysis, identification of research skills and competencies, positioning of the main research axes, and explanation of the coherence, complexity, originality, etc., of the research subject.
- **Original scientific work:** A thesis manuscript presenting a synthesis of the research work in the context of the state of the art; the thesis must demonstrate mastery of the research topic as well as the ability to design, implement, and exploit a scientific research strategy.

The thesis manuscript follows a format similar to that of traditionally defended theses. It presents in a coherent and orderly manner all original scientific work conducted by the candidate. This thesis manuscript must be provided to two external reviewers for evaluation and to the members of the thesis defense jury.

Mastery of the research topic, as well as the ability to design a scientific approach, implement it, and exploit its results, must be demonstrated.

In coordination with their VAE supervisor holding an HDR, the candidate submits their VAE portfolio to the relevant doctoral school at least two months before the thesis defense.

## 2.4. VAE Jury

### 2.4.1. Appointment and Composition of the Doctoral VAE Jury

The VAE jury is appointed by the President of the Institut Polytechnique de Paris after consultation with the director of the doctoral school and the VAE supervisor. The doctoral VAE jury comprises 4 to 8 members. Its composition must satisfy the requirements of both the VAE jury and the doctoral jury:

- At least 50% of the members must be university professors or equivalent.
- The president must be a university professor or equivalent.
- At least 50% of the members must be external to the doctoral school and the Institut Polytechnique de Paris.
- The jury must include at least one member whose primary activity is not teaching and who is qualified to assess the nature of the achievements, including professional ones, for which validation is requested (member of a public or private research organization, active researcher, director of an institute or company likely to recruit researchers).

The two reviewers must be external HDR holders or professors or equivalents (external to the affiliated doctoral school and to co-accredited institutions, with no publications with the candidate).

In accordance with the decree of June 15, 1992, tenured staff belonging to the following categories are considered equivalent to university professors and, if they do not hold an HDR, have an equivalent qualification:

- Research directors [...] of public scientific and technological institutions (i.e., CNRS, INRAE, IFSTTAR, INED, INRIA, INSERM, and IRD);
- Professors and deputy laboratory directors of the Collège de France;
- Professors of the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle;
- Professors and deputy laboratory directors of CNAM;
- Directors of studies of the École des hautes études en sciences sociales;
- Directors of studies of the École pratique des hautes études, the École nationale des chartes, and the École française d'Extrême-Orient;
- Professors of the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales;
- Deputy directors of the Écoles normales supérieures;
- Astronomers and physicists governed by decree No. 86-434 of March 12, 1986, concerning the status of astronomers and physicists and their adjuncts;
- Tenured astronomers and adjunct astronomers governed by the decree of July 31, 1936, concerning the status of astronomical observatories;
- Tenured physicists and adjunct physicists governed by the decree of September 25, 1936, concerning the status of institutes and observatories of geophysics.

Individuals holding titles recognized by the equivalence grid used to compare degrees, work, and functions in a higher education institution outside France, as provided on **Galaxie**, are considered equivalent to university professors and, by extension, benefit from HDR equivalence.

Researchers who cannot be considered equivalent to university professors according to the equivalence grid on Galaxie and who work in a country without an HDR-equivalent degree may be considered, for the composition of a thesis jury, as holding the equivalent of an HDR, provided they have supervised at least three doctoral students to successful defense.

Juries will also strive to ensure balanced representation between women and men.

Jury members must not have, or have had, any professional or personal relationship with the candidate. To avoid conflicts of interest, jury members and reviewers evaluating the thesis are asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest. This declaration is made on honor.

The VAE supervisor participates in the jury as an invited member but does not take part in the jury's deliberations after the defense.

Gender parity must be considered when forming the jury, reflecting the balance in the relevant scientific community. Furthermore, the president, designated by consultation within the jury, must necessarily be a professor or equivalent. The jury proposal must include at least one option for the role of president. The jury members select a president among themselves and, if necessary, a defense reviewer, in accordance with the applicable designation rules (the president must be a university professor or equivalent).

#### 2.4.2. Jury

The two reviewers examine the VAE portfolio and each prepares a written report on it. These reports are sent to the doctoral school, which forwards them to the VAE service, all jury members, the VAE supervisor, and the candidate.

The jury communicates its decision to the candidate following deliberations. The jury produces a report summarizing the final decision and the extent of the validation granted. In the case of partial validation, the report specifies the knowledge and skills the candidate must acquire or, if applicable, those subject to further evaluation.

#### Article R613-37 of the Education Code:

*"The validation jury examines the candidate's portfolio and meets with the candidate regarding this portfolio. For the validation of acquired experience, and where provided by the institution, a real or simulated professional situation of the candidate is organized. By deliberation, the jury determines the knowledge and skills considered acquired in relation to the requirements needed to obtain the requested diploma, taking into account, where applicable, specific legislative or regulatory conditions. The jury may make recommendations or provide advice to the student to facilitate further training. The president of the jury submits a report to the head of the institution specifying the extent of the validation granted and, in the case of partial validation, the knowledge and skills the candidate must acquire or, if applicable, those subject to further evaluation. The head of the institution notifies the candidate of this decision."*

In case of admission, the report presenting the candidate's research work, or a substantial part of it, must be submitted for legal deposit to ensure that the candidate's work becomes part of France's scientific and cultural heritage, and to guarantee that all conditions are met for the diploma to be recognized as identical in every respect to a doctorate obtained through initial training. Furthermore, the candidate must provide evidence of training in scientific ethics and integrity; if not, they must complete dedicated training offered by the doctoral school.

The report presenting the candidate's research is public and intended to be disseminated on the national portal **theses.fr**, like other works submitted for a doctorate, except in exceptional cases granted by the head



of the institution for privacy protection or if the candidate's research is confidential (Article 19 of the Decree of May 25, 2016).

Provided that the candidate has completed the legal deposit, a certificate of doctoral attainment is issued by the Institut Polytechnique de Paris.

In the case of partial validation, the jury determines that the candidate's achievements partially meet the expectations of the doctorate. The jury then identifies the skills, competencies, and knowledge that require further evaluation for the award of the doctorate. For example, the jury may request modifications or additions to the VAE validation portfolio and/or additional training, particularly research-based training. If the jury requests corrections to the portfolio, it sets a deadline, agreed with the candidate, for submission of the revised portfolio. This deadline cannot exceed one year.

For partial validation, the VAE jury provides written recommendations to the candidate specifying the elements that remain to be acquired for potential admission.

In the case of partial validation, the jury may decide to require a new defense before the same jury (with the organizational costs of the second jury to be paid by the candidate) or, for minor corrections, appoint the VAE supervisor to oversee the required updates. The supervisor will then determine whether the prescription has been met and decide whether to grant full certification or not.

### Appendix 1. Funding for Validation and Support

The fee for a doctoral VAE is set annually in consultation by the Administrative Board of the Institut Polytechnique de Paris.

These fees include:

- Fees for reviewing the administrative and academic eligibility of the application
- Fees for support in preparing the VAE portfolio (support represents 24 HETD, which may either be integrated into teaching duties or paid)
- University registration fees
- VAE jury fees (reimbursement of jury members)
- Costs for organizing a second jury session in the case of partial validation

### Appendix 2. Fees

The fees for a doctoral VAE are structured as follows for the 2025–2026 academic year and subsequent years, in the absence of an updated fee schedule approved by the IP Paris Administrative Board.

	Internal candidate at IP Paris (e.g., Research Engineer)	External Candidate at IP Paris
Review of eligibility portfolio	500€	1500€
Annual doctoral fees	397€ (subject to modification based on Ministry of Education decisions)	397€
Support and jury (support fees may be covered under the CPF)	2500€	9000€
Organization of a second jury in case of a partial validation	1400€	2500€