

May 2023

Information sheet

Agreements in connection with academic projects/papers or internships completed at another university or research institution (outgoing and incoming students)

1. Subject

If ETH students complete an academic research project/paper (e.g. a Master's thesis) or an internship at another – usually non-Swiss – university or research institution (hereinafter “host institution”), the latter often requires the conclusion of an agreement. This agreement must be signed by the student, and sometimes also by an ETH Zurich representative.

Occasionally an agreement is also required in the opposite situation by non-Swiss universities, if students complete a project/paper/thesis or internship at ETH.

This information sheet provides tips on what to take into account in connection with these agreements.

2. General provisions

Usually these are standard agreements which are accepted practice at the host institution and should therefore present no problems in themselves. However, from the perspective of the host institution they are normally non-negotiable, or negotiable only within a very limited framework. They should always relate to the individual student only, and contain no provisions extending to other students or collaborations.

The persons signing the agreement should read through the text carefully and understand those provisions relevant to them. If in doubt, they should ask the contact person from the host institution for clarification. If any individual provisions are unworkable for students or ETH this must be brought to discussion and a change sought. In extreme cases, incompatibility may mean that the project cannot be conducted. The responsibility for clarifying and dealing with outstanding issues lies with students and their supervisors.

3. Projects/papers / internships of ETH students at a host institution

3.1 Signatures

Students sign the agreement in their own names and at their own responsibility, and thereby commit themselves to comply with or take note of the provisions relevant to them.

If a cognisant supervisory person at ETH is named in the agreement, this person signs in the name of ETH. Otherwise the Director of Studies signs. The signature confirms that the signatory will comply with or take note of the provisions relevant to them in the name of ETH.

If there is any fundamental problem with one or more provisions in the agreement, the document should not be signed.

3.2. Content of the agreement

The following information should be noted in connection with points typically set out in these agreements.

IP rights

Students are frequently required to transfer their IP rights to the planned work to the host institution. From the ETH perspective this is not a problem, as long as the work is to be conducted independently from ETH work. If the work is connected with ETH projects, the required transfer of rights to the host institution must be discussed in advance with the person responsible for the project at ETH.

Confidentiality

Provisions relating to confidentiality are primarily aimed at students, but may also affect supervisory persons at both ETH and the host institution. Any duties of confidentiality for supervisors at ETH should be outlined as clearly and closely as possible (example: “content of the final report” and as far as possible not “all information communicated in connection with the academic research work”). Contractual penalties cannot be accepted.

Insurance

All ETH students are fully responsible for all of their own [insurance](#). This includes both their own health and accident insurance and liability insurance for damage caused at the place of study.

Adherence to the provisions of the host institution

Students are normally fully subject to the regulations of the host institution. Any misconduct will be punished by the institution according to its provisions. Possibly the agreement will state that in any such case the home institution will be informed.

It is advisable for students to take note of any regulations mentioned in the agreement.

Interruption, premature termination:

The agreement should state the conditions under which work can be interrupted or prematurely terminated, and the respective consequences.

Supervision / assessment:

If the work or internship is to be recognised towards ETH studies it must be ensured that the corresponding supervision and assessment requirements are fulfilled. In the case of Master's theses, degree programmes normally require that an ETH professor be responsible for grading.

Funding:

The stay may be financed through one or more of the following sources: personal funds, scholarships, employment, grants for expenses (travel, accommodation, food). Frequently the agreement addresses funding or partial funding. This helps to create transparency and preclude unintentional double funding. Funding contributions are also often subject to certain stipulations, which should be noted.

4. Projects/papers / internships of students from other universities at ETH

If the home university insists that its own agreement be signed, the ETH supervisory person who issues the invitation must ensure that this agreement contains no provisions that are unacceptable to ETH. Here the pointers mentioned in (2) and (3) above apply analogously.