

Mediation procedure (EDSP2)

1. Purpose and principles

This procedure describes the mediation framework implemented by the Doctoral School Directorate when a dispute arises between a doctoral student and their thesis supervisor (or any other person in their scientific environment) in order to:

- to prevent the escalation of conflicts,
- to restore working communication,
- to secure the conditions for the completion of the thesis,
- to propose solutions that are proportionate and accepted by all parties.

Mediation is based on the following principles:

- Neutrality: the ED Directorate conducts the process impartially.
- Confidentiality: exchanges are confidential, except where explicitly agreed by the parties or required by law/security.
- Proportionality: a graduated response, adapted to the situation.

It is important to note that this procedure is in addition to other interlocutors and support, listening and regulation mechanisms that can be mobilized depending on the situation, such as thesis supervisors, the directors of research units, teams or research axes, the tutor, the Individual Monitoring Committee, as well as dedicated university services, such as the Listening, Monitoring and Reporting Unit, the scientific integrity mechanism, the mediator or any other competent service.

2. Situations concerned

The procedure can be activated in particular in the event of:

- communication difficulties, relationship tensions, persistent misunderstandings,
- disagreements on work organization, scientific priorities, access to resources,
- conflicts over supervision (availability, feedback, co-supervision, task allocation),
- problems with working conditions impacting the thesis (workload, deadlines, unrealistic objectives),
- situations posing a risk to health/safety or suspected serious breaches, etc.

Outside the direct scope of mediation:

In cases that may involve disciplinary action, harassment, violence or discrimination, or scientific integrity, the Doctoral School Directorate will refer the matter to the appropriate resources (Listening, Monitoring and Reporting Unit, Scientific Integrity, Ombudsman, etc.), while ensuring follow-up on the situation and the procedures implemented.

3. Actors and roles

- PhD student / PhD supervisor: expresses difficulties, participates constructively in discussions, proposes factual elements, etc.;
- ED Management: leads the mediation, guarantees the framework, listens, clarifies, commits to realistic adjustments, proposes solutions, specifications, an action plan;
- Depending on the circumstances, a neutral person may be asked to participate (member of the thesis monitoring committee not involved, unit director, representative of doctoral students, etc.);
- Individual Monitoring Committee (IMC): can be mobilized for an opinion, a recommendation, or enhanced monitoring (ensuring the absence of conflicts of interest);
- Host structure / Laboratory: can be associated if the solutions relate to the organization, resources, work collective, etc.

4. Procedures for submitting a request

Mediation can be requested by:

- the doctoral student,
- thesis supervision,
- the ED management (self-referral) if it identifies a risk of thesis disruption.

Minimum information to provide (without going into excessive detail):

- Identity of parties, laboratory/team, year of thesis, funding (if applicable),
- factual description of the problem, impacts on the thesis,
- potential emergencies (health, safety, deadlines),
- attempt(s) already undertaken to resolve the problem(s).

5. Mediation process (graduated process)

Step 0 – Quick orientation (if necessary)

If the situation falls under a specialized mechanism (Monitoring and Reporting Unit, scientific integrity, Ombudsman, etc.), the ED management:

- informs the person of the appropriate route,
- offers career guidance support,
- secures the continuity of the thesis (temporary measures if needed).

Step 1 – Separate collection of viewpoints

Mediation only begins after the applicant agrees to lift confidentiality.

The procedure is tailored to specific situations and is discussed and defined in agreement with the person making the request.

As a general rule, the Doctoral School Directorate conducts two separate interviews (one with the doctoral candidate and one with the thesis supervisor) in order to:

- clarify the facts, the context, the expectations,
- identify the non-negotiable points, the room for maneuver,
- identify the risks (conflict of interest, pressure, health, etc.).

Observable elements are prioritized (e.g., response times, meeting frequency, objectives, deliverables, data access).

Step 2 – Proposal for joint mediation

If mediation is deemed appropriate (and if the requesting party agrees), a joint meeting is organized:

- agenda communicated in advance,
- The framework for discussion was reiterated (respect, listening, speaking time).
- objective: to reach an operational agreement.

Step 3 – Action plan and commitments

Management formalizes an action plan (1 page) including:

- the shared observations (brief),
- the proposed measures (e.g., frequency of meetings, return schedule, clarification of priorities),
- responsibilities (who does what),
- simple milestones and indicators (e.g., “feedback within 15 days”, “monthly meeting”, “validation of an experimental plan”, etc.),
- the implementation timeframe,
- the review date,
- etc.

The action plan is sent to the parties.

Step 4 – Follow-up

A follow-up meeting is being organized (within a timeframe to be defined) for:

- verification of implementation,
- adjustments,
- decision to close or finding of deterioration.

Step 5 – Escalation (if unsuccessful)

If no lasting solution emerges, or if the situation is too degraded, the ED Management may propose a reconfiguration of the supervision (addition of a co-director or co-supervisor, change of thesis director, etc.), with the agreement of the parties concerned.

6. Possible measures

Mediation may result in one or more adjustments, for example:

- A schedule of fixed meetings (monthly/bi-monthly) with a short summary to be written after each meeting.
- commitments regarding review/comment deadlines,
- clarification of quarterly objectives (realistic deliverables),
- arbitration on the distribution of tasks between co-supervisors,
- framework for disseminating results, access to data,
- methodological support or training (thesis project management, methodology, statistics, etc.),
- etc.

7. Prevention and information

The ED management ensures active prevention through:

- A reminder of the rules of supervision (meetings, feedback, respect);
- Training/awareness-raising for future supervisors (ADT, authorization to register for HDR);
- Workshops on supervisory practices;
- The provision of the Guide to good management practices;
- Information on the University's listening services and Sciences Po Bordeaux
- During back-to-school meetings and general assemblies;
- As part of the dissemination of the annual monitoring procedure for doctoral students.

8. Contact

The management of EDSP2

Bernard N'KAOUA, Director

bernard.nkaoua@u-bordeaux.fr

Hélène JACQMIN-GADDA, Deputy Director

helene.jacqmin-gadda@u-bordeaux.fr

Cécile VIGOUR, Deputy Director

c.vigour@sciencespobordeaux.fr

The listening cells

University of Bordeaux: celluledeveille.personnel@u-bordeaux.fr

celluledeveille.etudiant@u-bordeaux.fr

Sciences Po Bordeaux: ecoute@sciencespobordeaux.fr