Mme Jocelyne Vassali,
Secrétaire de l’Assemblée d’Ecole

EPFL, 6 octobre 2017

Concerne: Convention d’objectifs 2017-2020 de l’EPFL

Madame la Présidente,
Dans sa séance du 27 septembre 2017, la CCE a discuté le texte soumis en consultation. Je vous fais ci-dessous un compte rendu (en anglais) des points qui sont ressortis de cette discussion.

The fact that teaching is put forward as the objective number 1 of the school is highly appreciated by the CCE.

This statement of the CCE will only address aspects that are relevant to teaching. Opinions of the CCE or its individual members on other aspects of those objectives will be expressed via other groups or individual statements.

Some objectives are very vague: like in objective 1.2.2, the notion of “computational thinking”, or in objective 1.3.2, “adapting to the digital revolution”. With vague objectives, it will be difficult to see how they are reached.

Objective 1.3.5: We agree that the quality of teaching is an important criterion for the evaluation of hiring and promotion. However the paragraph sounds as if it would currently not at all be taken into account, which at least in some sections is not the case. We therefore suggest to replace “prendre en compte la qualité...” by “renforcer la prise en compte de la qualité ... “

Objective 1.3.6: suggestion to replace “make ... attractive”, by “make ... more attractive”, as studying at EPFL is already quite attractive...

About the scheduled strategic initiatives to objectives 1 (second part of the table):

why only mention the new courses which have already been done and not any of those still under development? E.g., the masters in digital humanities and data science have already started this fall, but why not mention the master in robotics? The list should be more open to new initiatives.
About the monitoring of the objectives (in the appendix): the criterion regarding the satisfaction of the students should be changed, for various reasons:

a) it is dangerous to ask for a constant or augmenting level of satisfaction.  
b) without any further definition or framework, “satisfaction” can be measured at various levels (the availability of student’s housing, the frequency of the M1, and the variety of sports that can be practiced all contribute to some extent to “the student’s satisfaction” ... without being necessarily relevant as objective for an educational institution) 

c) The easiest way to get a numerical value around “student’s satisfaction” is the overall result of the course evaluation after 8 weeks of lecture. While this is certainly an indicator of fundamental importance to help detect and analyse potential problems, this is certainly *not* a valid overall indicator of student’s “satisfaction” and moreover it would be extremely dangerous to state as an objective that this average value should be constant or increasing. 

d) satisfaction of industry and alumni (as an answer to the question “how well are our students prepared for their professional life?”) should also be part of this criterion.

Therefore, we propose to replace “student satisfaction” by: 
*Student satisfaction and success during, and after completion of, the degree program*

and then rather than "constant or increasing" state as a target "maintenance of useful evaluation procedures and increased monitoring of alumni".

Cécile Hébert  
Présidente CCE