

# Evaluation of EPFL's Schools and Colleges

## A worthy quest?

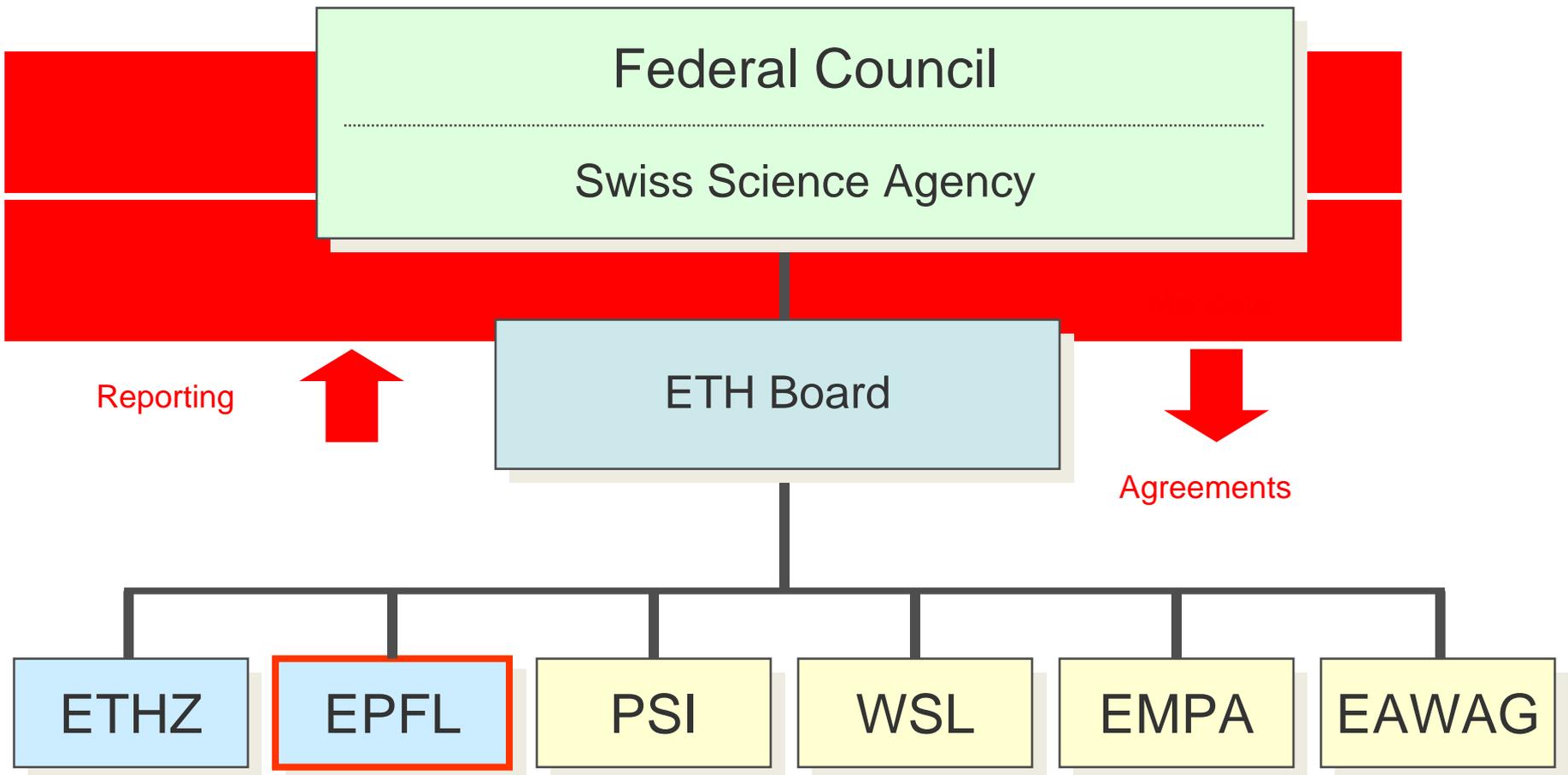
**Seval** annual meeting, Bern, 11th September 2009

Dr Michel Jaccard

*EPFL International Affairs Management and Accreditation*

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# The ETH system



**1803** Napoleon Bonaparte "*Acte de médiation*"

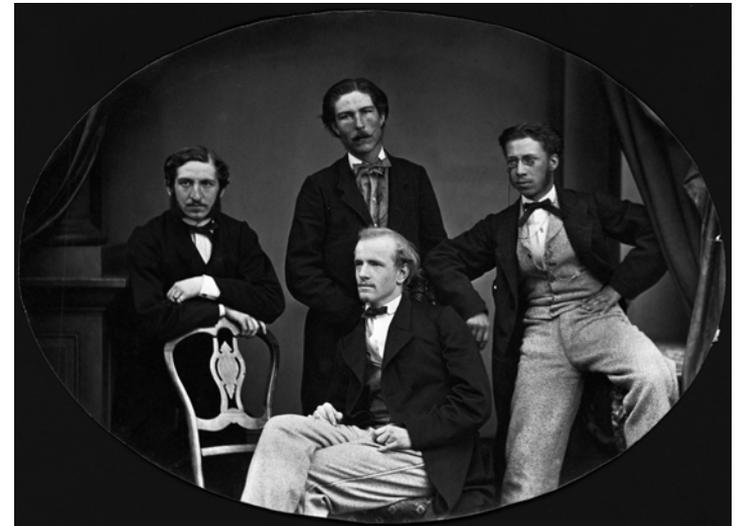
Canton de Vaud



**1853** Ecole Spéciale de la Suisse Française, based on the *Ecole Centrale Paris* model

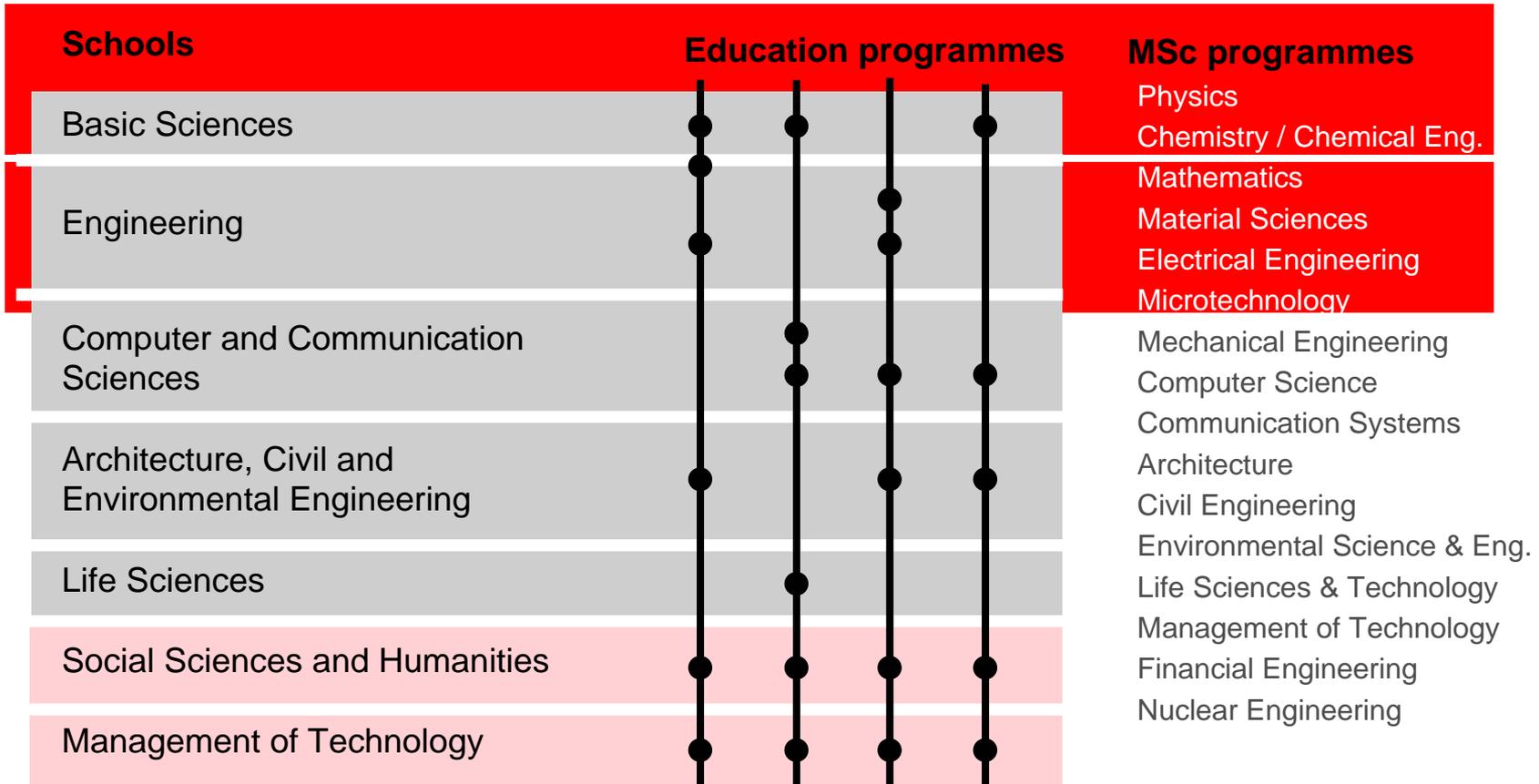
Founding members:

- Prof. Jean GAY  
*Academy of Lausanne, first President*
- Prof. Henry BISCHOF  
*Academy of Lausanne*
- Prof. Luis RIVIER  
*Ecole Centrale Paris*
- Prof. Jules MARGUET  
*Ecole Centrale Paris*
- Prof. Pierre-Joseph MARGUET  
*Ecole Polytechnique Paris*



**1969** The Ecole Polytechnique **Universitaire** de Lausanne becomes the  
Ecole Polytechnique **Fédérale** de Lausanne

# Anchor education in cutting-edge research



# A double system

- ***Double Accreditation in 2006***

- of the Bachelor and Master programmes by OAQ (based on the ENQA standard).
- of the Master programmes (engineering only) by CTI with the European EUR-ACE label (more or less a Total Quality standard).

 *International visibility and enhanced attractivity of the programmes, continuous improvement in teaching*

- ***Evaluation of Schools and Colleges on a regular basis***, reporting to the ETH Board according to the rules of the performance agreement.

 *EPFL's performance has generally improved*

## 4 main aims

- To convince the stakeholders (especially the ETH Board) of the accountability of EPFL.
- To give fair indications of the performance levels of the Schools and Colleges.
- To provide hints for the continual improvement of the services provided (teaching, research, technology transfer).
- To facilitate the formulation and implementation of the Schools' and Colleges' strategies (recommendations).

# Several Themes

- Evaluation of Schools and Colleges: frequency
- Aims of the evaluation: questions
- Selection of both the audit committee and the President
- Contents of the self-assessment documents
- Evaluation schedule and duration
- Role of debriefing
- Contents of the experts' report.
- Implementation of the recommendations and their control

# Frequency

- Every 4, 5 or 6 years?
- *Criteria:* Faculty will respond in a more relaxed manner, slower implementation of the recommendations, power and motivation of the Deans...

## Aims and questions to be addressed

- *Define the aims:* what do we want to learn? Structure's efficiency, research performance, accurate vision and future strategy, efficiency of technology transfer (what does it mean?), best use of resources?
- Generic or specific questions? *Trust the committee?*
- Many questions or just a few?

# Quality and “diversity” of the members

- Total number: between 8 and 13? How to ensure coverage of the different research topics?
- Which level to be chosen: “Young Researchers”, Seniors Scientists, Deans, Heads of department?
- How to arrive at a good diversity? Gender, age, nationality, academic culture, members of the private sector, etc.
- Should we invite outstanding scientists or rather scientists at the same level within the Faculty (CRUS’ proposal)?
- Who will provide the list of possible experts? The School, the Vice-Presidency for Academic Affairs, others?
- What are the qualities of a good audit committee president ? What happens if he does not attend the meetings?

# A Classic: Documents “A” and “B”

- “A” contains:
  - The role of the School within EPFL
  - The School’s legal, structural aspects and managerial rules
  - The School’s vision, strategy, overall positioning and policies
  - Education programmes: Bachelor, Master, Doctorate as well as continuing education
  - Overall results in research and technology transfer
  - The central services that could be provided
  
- “B” contains:
  - The structure and mission of the Institutes and Centres
  - The scope of activity and size of each unity (laboratories)
  - The units’ main output (for instance list of publications, participation in congresses, books published, companies created, licenses accepted, etc.)

***The general trend is to deliver shorter reports***

# Duration of the evaluation

- 3 days or 1 week? How to choose? Does this impact on the experts' level of excellence?

# Evaluation schedule

- Respective weight of the various activities:
  - *Teaching*
  - *Strategies, policies and management*
  - *Faculty recruitment, appointments and promotion (especially PATT)*
  - *Synergies with other Schools and units of other universities*
  - *International collaboration, etc.*
- Common or parallel sessions (breaking the committee into sub-units)?
- Role and importance of informal contacts with Faculty and Senior Management Teams (Schools and EPFL)

*Existence of criteria facilitating an optimum balance of these possibilities?*

# Debriefing

- Mainly in two separate sessions: (i) for the Schools and all auditees (ii) for EPFL's Senior Management Team
- **Very Important** step to convince the internal stakeholders of the validity of both the analysis and the audit committee's conclusions

# Report

- About 20 to 30 pages
- Key recommendations only
- Delivered one month after the evaluation (a somewhat idealistic view)
- Accept minority comments and add-ons (no consensus of experts regarding certain conclusions)

# Implementation

- Does the School agree with the report's conclusions?
- What happens if there is strong disagreement?
- Does the School accept the committee's recommendations?
- If not, does the School propose other actions?
- **Should the School provide a planning with regard to implementation?**

# Control

- A topic in an annual report?
- Intermediary reporting to EPFL's Senior Management Team within two years?
- Part of the content of the annual meeting of the School's Senior Management with EPFL's President
- An analysis of what was implemented to be included in the next evaluation's self-assessment report?

*What will occur if a new Dean is appointed by the Presidency and comes with a new Vision and Strategy?*

# Conclusion

- Evaluation of Schools and Colleges is a delicate and complex tool.
- The results gained by EPFL to date are rewarding and deliver a good ratio of return on investment.
- Most Faculty members and colleagues were satisfied with the process and the content of the report.
- Improvements would be welcome...

Why not exchange our  
good practices?