

On the confidentiality of the master theses realized as part of the BNEN program

22/03/2023

Most theses completed within BNEN are done in collaboration with SCK CEN or a company (*partner institution*), and confidentiality issues are likely to be raised by the partner institution. The current note summarizes the position of the BNEN Steering Committee on the matter.

Given the completion of a master thesis is a requirement of the BNEN program, the theses are subject to a final evaluation by an academic jury. Therefore, the jury should have access to all necessary pieces of information to make a sound assessment of the student's work, both in the written report and during the final presentation. The latter is legally, as any exam, a public test, but still it should correctly reflect the contents of the official report.

Therefore, if confidentiality issues are at stake, the students are invited to present in their official report results based on anonymized data, which are plausible so that they allow validating the methods proposed in the work, without being totally representative of the situation encountered by the partner institution.

The student might, in addition to the official thesis report, be asked to produce an internal report for the partner institution, which is not accessible to the BNEN jury and containing the results based on the actual data. The differences between the official and the internal reports should not penalize the students in their academic assessment by the BNEN jury.

In the end there must be a public presentation, and a report that is accessible for everyone (in case needed fictive figures or slightly changed simulations are possible).