



BYLAWS OF THE ZURICH PH.D. PROGRAM IN MOLECULAR LIFE SCIENCES (MLS)

MISSION STATEMENT

The aim of the Ph.D. program in Molecular Life Sciences is to recruit and train outstanding young scientists during their Ph.D. thesis in the Molecular Life Sciences.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Molecular Life Sciences Ph.D. program is a 3-4 year MSc. to Ph.D. program under the umbrella of the Life Science Zurich Graduate School (LSZGS). Participating students can choose from a broad selection of research topics and participate in cutting edge research. Enrollment into the program is decided by an admission committee. To graduate, students need to fulfill the following requirements:

- Acquisition of 12 credit points of advanced courses,
- Deposition and defense of a Ph.D. thesis describing the student's original research work,
- Any other requirements imposed by the host institution (UZH or ETH).

The final degree is conferred by either the UZH or the ETH Zürich, depending on the academic affiliation of the host laboratory.

Specific regulations are detailed under point 7.

PROGRAM GOVERNANCE

1. Steering committee

1.1 Objectives

The function of the Steering Committee is to oversee the graduate program including:

- The roles of faculty in the program
- The admissions committee
- Graduate student progress in the program
- Curriculum development and monitoring
- To oversee fund raising and spending of money awarded to the program
- Any other strategic issue related to the program

1.2 Membership

The Committee consists of seven faculty members, two student representatives, and the program administrator. At least one of the faculty members shall be a junior (non-tenured) group leader. The student representatives are selected from the pool of active program members; one shall be studying in a research group physically located at the Hoenggerberg campus, the other in a research group physically located on the Irchel campus. The program administrator is an ex officio member of the Committee, but without voting rights (see below).

The committee is chaired by a chairperson (“Chair”) and a vice-chairperson (“Vice Chair”). The Chair assumes directorship of the MLS program and has overall responsibility for the well-functioning of the program.

1.3 Elections

Faculty representatives are elected for one-year-terms at the annual faculty assembly. Faculty representatives who step down during the year can nominate a replacement, who shall take this place on the steering committee until the next faculty assembly. Student representatives are elected by the relevant student bodies (MLS students studying on the Hoenggerberg and Irchel campuses, respectively).

Chair and Vice Chair shall be elected by a simple majority vote by the Steering Committee from among the eligible faculty representatives.

1.4 Voting rights

Both faculty and student representatives have full voting rights. Members who are not present at the meeting may vote by sending an email or FAX to the administrator or chair before the meeting. The program administrator has a consultative right, but no voting right.

A quorum will require the presence of either the Chair or Vice Chair and at least four additional voting members, of which at least three shall be faculty members.

1.5 Term of office

The term of office of all steering committee members is three years. Members can be re-elected.

Chair and Vice Chair are also elected for renewable one-year terms.

Force majeure: Chair and Vice Chair can be removed from office before the end of their term (but not from the Committee) by a supermajority vote comprising at least 75% of the eligible votes (6 votes out of 9).

1.6 Meetings

The Steering Committee meets as often as necessary, usually the chair calls a meeting every 1-2 months, but any member can call a meeting. Student members are not present for discussions on the academic progress of students. In addition to these regular meetings, working groups may be set up to tackle

specific program issues. The program Chair may also consult with members between meetings if warranted.

1.7 Papers / Minutes

An agenda with the items to be discussed is sent out in a timely manner. Minutes will be taken and written up by the program administrator. Minutes will be brief: summarizing decisions, recommendations and action points. Minutes will be circulated to non-student members of the Steering Committee. Minutes will be made available to student members for those items where they were present.

2. Faculty Membership

Group leaders who are carrying out research in the field of Molecular Life Sciences and dispose of own (independent), competitive research funds may apply to become member of the MLS Ph.D. program by submitting their CV, list of publications and a letter of intent. The steering committee will decide on the admittance or rejection of the applicants. The chair of the program will communicate the committee's decision to the applicant, giving reasons in case of a rejection.

The MLS Ph.D. program strives to recruit excellent students worldwide to join the groups of the MLS faculty members. To this end, interviews with selected candidates are held twice a year during which MLS faculty members have the opportunity to meet with interested students (see below points 6.2 and 7.1 on admissions). The MLS program organizes and schedules the interviews and provides together with the LSZGS support throughout the entire recruitment process.

Faculty members of the MLS Ph.D. program support the program by serving on admission committees or by teaching course modules or tutorials. Furthermore, they are responsible that their students comply with the program's regulations as described in appendix 1: to hold regular meetings with their thesis committee, to attend the required courses and to participate at least once at the student retreat. Should a faculty member repeatedly fail to do so, she or he may be excluded from the MLS program by the steering committee.

If need be, the steering committee can decide to collect a membership fee as well as a commission fee for the successful recruitment of students. The steering committee sets the level of these fees.

Resignation from the program is possible at any time. Oral or written communication will suffice.

3. Faculty Meeting

At least once a year, the Program director invites all faculty members to a faculty assembly meeting.

Invitations to faculty assembly meetings and agendas are distributed to faculty members in a timely manner.

The faculty assembly is responsible for the following:

- Election of faculty representatives on the steering committee.
- Changes to the MLS program's bylaws.
- Fundamental strategic decisions that significantly impact the program.
- Decisions by the faculty assembly are taken by simple majority of the members present.

Alternatively, elections and decisions on the above mentioned matters may also be carried out by circular or other (electronic) means.

4. Program Director

The chair of the steering committee acts simultaneously as director of the MLS Ph.D. program. The program director:

Represents the program toward UZH and ETH leadership, the student body and the public.

Represents the program on the Program Directors Conference of the Life Science Zurich Graduate School (LSZGS).

Is responsible for the scientific and financial annual reports.

Raises third party funding.

Supervises the program coordinator.

5. Program Coordinator

The program coordinator is responsible for day-to-day program matters. He or she reports to the program chair and is the central coordination and contact point of the program. The program coordinator:

Plans, administrates and controls the funds of the program

Writes up the scientific and financial annual report

Ensures that the students comply with the program's requirements

Is a contact point for students throughout their Ph.D. studies

Organizes the interview sessions with Ph.D. candidates

Is responsible for the internal (students & faculty members) and external communication (applicants, public)

Organizes faculty and steering committee meetings and writes the minutes of these meetings

Maintains the program's web site

Supports the teaching coordinators with the organization of program courses

Maintains a close contact and exchanges information with the Life Science Zurich Graduate School and the other Ph.D. programs

6. Recruitment and Admission

6.1. Admission committee

All faculty members of the MLS Ph.D. program participate in the admission committees.

Each admission committee has a chair who is nominated on the spot by the committee members.

The chairs communicate the results to the coordinator and give reason for rejections or acceptance with reservation.

The duties of the admission committee are:

To read the applications

To meet with the other committee members to discuss the applications and make a specific recommendation on whom to interview (invite, waiting list, reject).

To be present at the interviews.

To rate the applicants based on the interview according to the following criteria:

the quality of the presentation

the knowledge of his/her specific field of previous/current research

the general knowledge beyond the specific field of research

the motivation and future career plans

knowledge of English

6.2. Admission procedure

Twice per year, MLS faculty members can announce to the program coordinator those open positions for which the funding is secured.

The MLS program recruits and invites suited candidates according to the number of announced positions.

MLS Faculty members with open positions must be present during the interviews to meet with interested candidates. MLS faculty members who are not located at the University or ETH in Zürich must meet the candidates at the University or ETH campus in Zurich. The first contact between a candidate and MLS faculty member is organized by the program coordinator.

MLS Faculty members may not fill their free position(s), should none of the candidates satisfy their individual recruiting criteria.

7. APPENDIX 1: Student Regulations

These regulations conform to the Ph.D. regulations of the ETH Zürich and the University of Zurich (UZH), which require the student to be enrolled from the beginning to the end of the Ph.D. studies. For further information please refer to: <http://www.mnf.uzh.ch/en/studium/phd/programme.html>
<https://www.ethz.ch/en/doctorate.html>

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- Completion of a Scientific Writing, an Ethics and a 1st-year-presentations course, as well as 2 tutorials and either an Introductory Module or some voluntary program work (6 credit points altogether)
- Attend the MLS student retreat at least once, preferably in the first year (1 credit)
- Acquisition of another 5 credit points according to the regulations of the student's host university (University of Zurich or ETHZ)
- Deposition and defense of a Ph.D. thesis describing the student's original research work
- Any other requirements imposed by the host institution

The final degree is conferred by either the University of Zurich or the ETH Zürich, depending on the academic affiliation of the host laboratory.

7.1. Admission procedure for students

The applicants are required to have a Master's degree or an equivalent when they start the Ph.D. thesis. Students are not required to have obtained their Master's degree at the time of application or interview.

Track I: Application to the program

The deadlines for application are July 1 and December 1.

Three-day interviews are held in February (week 6) and September (week 36), respectively. Invited candidates are informed by the program administrator no later than four weeks after the deadline.

The admission interviews are held on the first day, lab visits take place during all three days.

During the three days of interview, applicants will meet with group leaders who have an available Ph.D. position.

No later than Tuesday after the interviews the applicants as well as the MLS Faculty members send a preference list to the program coordinator.

The matching is done by the LSZGS jointly with all Ph.D. programs according to their rules.

Track II: Direct application to a Principal Investigator (PI)

An applicant has the possibility to directly apply to a research group and can be accepted by the PI.

In order to be part of the MLS Ph.D. program the student must apply no later than 6 months after the start of the doctorate. For the interview and the acceptance into the program the same criteria are used as for track I applicants.

7.2. Thesis committee

The thesis committee consists of three to four members:

- The direct thesis supervisor (MLS member)
- At least one additional member of the MLS Ph.D. program
- At least one external member (not a member of the MLS Ph.D. program)

The student selects the members of his/her thesis committee members after consultation and in agreement with the PI.

7.3. Thesis committee meetings

The students are responsible for organizing the meetings. At least three members (including the thesis supervisor) have to be present.

Committee meetings will be held after 6 months (in exceptional cases after consulting with the program administrator no later than 12 months). Subsequent meetings are held every 12 months. The thesis defense must not take place later than 18 months after the last thesis committee meeting.

For the first meeting the students write a project proposal describing their Ph.D. project in the format of a short grant application describing the background of their research field, preliminary results, the specific aims and planned experiments.

This proposal has to be submitted to the thesis committee members and the program administrator at least two weeks before the meeting. The program administrator will hand out guidelines for the students.

The proposal has to be presented and defended by the students during the first meeting.

In case of unsatisfactory performance, the students can repeat the proposal defense after three months. If the students should fail a second time, they will be expelled from the program.

The chair of the thesis committee sends a brief report to the coordinator after each meeting stating the date, the members present, the committee's decision (pass/fail) and specific recommendations.

For the subsequent meetings the students have to submit a progress report two weeks before the meeting to the committee members and the program administrator.

Should a student repeatedly fail to do so, she or he may be excluded from the MLS program by the steering committee.

7.4. Course work during Ph.D. program

Students of the MLS PhD program need to gain a total of 7 credit points by attending activities offered by the program.

- Compulsory courses and activities

The attendance of a Scientific Writing course, a 1st-Year Presentations course and an Ethics course is compulsory for MLS students. The Ethics course consists of two parts: an introductory lecture into Scientific Integrity and a block course in Ethics. The program offers these courses once or twice per year. Alternatively, MLS students can attend similar courses organized by another program or by the LSZGS. In addition, the attendance of at least one MLS student retreat is also compulsory, preferably in the first year.

- Core elective activities

MLS Ph.D. students are required to attend two tutorials. The goal is to introduce the students to the various models, methods and techniques that are used by the MLS research groups. Moreover, students should get an overview of the research that is performed at the different institutes and broaden their general knowledge in Biology to complement their specific expertise in their field of Ph.D. work. The students need also to gain a credit point by attending either an Introductory Module or doing some voluntary program work (retreat organization, lecture series, travel grants, newsletter). In general, 1 credit is awarded for 2-3 full course days. It is recommended to attend the compulsory courses in the first 1.5 years of the Ph.D.

- Advanced and transferable skill courses

The advanced courses may contain symposia, EMBO courses or similar courses.

A variety of transferable skill courses is offered by the Life Science Zurich Graduate School.

The advanced and transferable skill courses can be taken throughout the entire duration of the Ph.D.

In order to complete their Ph.D., students must acquire 12 credit points. During the Ph.D. a maximum of two credits may be gained through participation in a MLS committee. This requirement complies with ETH Zürich and University of Zurich regulations.

7.5. Confidentiality

It is an important goal that the participants of the Ph.D. program exchange their scientific results between different institutes and the host institutions. Any such results shall be kept strictly confidential by all participants of the program and shall not be disclosed to persons outside of the program as long as the results are not published by the author/originator of the results. No participant of the Ph.D. program shall use any scientific result to the detriment of one of the host institutions, in particular, no participant shall impair a host institution's right to seek protection for intellectual property contained in such results by way of a premature publication or other premature disclosure of results.

7.6. Thesis defense

The thesis defense complies with the rules of the host institution:

- <https://www.ethz.ch/en/doctorate.html>
- <http://www.mnf.uzh.ch/en/studium/phd/programme.html>

In addition to the ETH Zürich or University diploma, students will receive a certificate from the MLS Ph.D. program stating their successful participation in the program.

The date and title of the defense must be communicated to the program administrator no later than one week in advance.