

MD-PhD programme

Information for Master students

1. Degree titles

The Faculty of Biomedical Sciences awards both the MD (Dr. med) title and the PhD (PhD in Biomedical Sciences) title.

Conditions, procedures and bodies are set in the corresponding Regulations and Directives (available at: <https://www.biomed.usi.ch/it/informazioni-pratiche/regolamenti-e-formulari>)

- Regulations for the promotion to Medical Doctor MD (Dr.med.);
- Regulations for the Degree of PhD and PhD Study Regulations.

2. MD-PhD programme

Through the MD-PhD programme it is possible to pursue both degrees with an abbreviated pathway starting as early as during the 5th year of the Master's studies.

The MD-PhD programme is aimed at medical students interested in a career in biomedical research by acquiring the scientific skills and abilities needed to contribute to translational, disease- and patient-oriented research.

Therefore, MD-PhD graduates should preferentially not lose contact with the clinic and complete their clinical training, and/or pursue a career in a medical research institute.

3. Admission

In order to be admitted to the MD-PhD programme, applicants must:

- have completed their Bachelor of Medicine;
- have obtained excellent grades in their 1st year exams;
- show a strong interest in the field of biomedical research.

The selection of the candidates of the admission to the MD-PhD programme is the responsibility of the Graduate Studies Committee.

4. Programme

The MD-PhD programme includes basic training and a thesis.

4.1. Basic training

Basic training includes at least 15 ECTS in courses of the PhD programme, in fields relevant to the preparation of the specific research project (e.g. cell biology, biochemistry, molecular biology, immunology, neurobiology, cancer biology, public health, etc.).

Basic training can be conducted either in parallel with medical studies during the 5th and 6th years (in addition to the courses of the Master of Medicine) or during the first year after obtaining the medical degree. The ECTS obtained may be recognised for the PhD (even if not yet started).

Students admitted to the programme are assigned an experienced researcher as their thesis director. The course plan for basic training is determined by the student in agreement with the thesis director and is approved by the Graduate Studies Committee. The Graduate Studies Committee and the thesis director are responsible for coordinating, supporting and supervising the student during their basic training.

4.2. Thesis

For each degree there is a **separate** scientific paper:

- the Master's thesis;
- the dissertation for the Doctor of Medicine degree (Dr.med.);
- the doctoral thesis (PhD).

The rules for conducting the theses and dissertation are governed by the respective regulations (see point 1).

It is recommended

- to choose the subject of the Master's thesis as early as possible and orient it on experimental research in order to gain an understanding of research methods;
- to start the PhD thesis immediately after the Federal Exam.

It is possible and makes sense that

- the research part of the Master's thesis is completed as part of the Dr.med. dissertation;
- the doctoral dissertation is a continuation and deepening (not a repetition) of the Dr.med. dissertation.

5. Varia

It should be noted that

- the Dr.med. title can be obtained only after completing the Master of Medicine and passing the Federal Exam;
- the title of Doctor in Biomedical Sciences (PhD) can be obtained no earlier than 3 years after the completion of the Master of Medicine.

As a rule, a minimum of 3 years with up to 20% clinical activity is required to obtain the MD-PhD. If the clinical activity exceeds 20%, the minimum duration is extended to 4 years.

Higher clinical activity, up to 50%, is allowed as long as it takes place within the framework of the doctoral project. The maximum duration of the MD-PhD programme is 6 years, starting from the effective beginning of the PhD (and not from the pre-admission to the MD-PhD programme). Even if the proportion is 50-50% the student must hand in their 1st Year Review at the end of their first year of PhD.

The institution or laboratory in which the student completes the MD-PhD programme must document high quality research activity and ensure comprehensive supervision and guidance for doctoral students in accordance with the "Regulations for the Degree of PhD".

For candidates enrolled in the MD-PhD programme who are pursuing a clinical activity, specialty training remains essential. In some disciplines, 1 to 2 years of the MD-PhD program can be considered for specialty training. Candidates are advised to inquire about these possibilities within the relevant medical specialty.