



University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>

# MD-PhD Program

## Information for Supervisors

Interfaculty MD-PhD Committee IMPK

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# 1 General information

The MD-PhD program enables medical students and graduates to gain a basic natural science education in addition to their degree in medicine, dentistry, or veterinary medicine. This allows them to conduct regular doctoral studies at the Faculty of Science at UZH, without previously attaining an MSc degree in natural science. **The program serves as an entry point for medical students and graduates into the Life Science Zurich Graduate School.**

The MD-PhD program is not an independent PhD program. MD-PhD students are affiliated to one of the LSZGS PhD programs (Cancer Biology, MLS, ...) and have to fulfil their requirements.

The MD-PhD program differs from a regular Life Science Graduate School PhD regarding these points:

- Application deadlines
- Application process
- Curriculum (propaedeutic studies)

## Steering Committee / Coordination and contact:

Interfaculty MD-PhD Committee (IMPK)

Prof. Dr. Anne Müller, President

Thomas Aeppli, Coordinator

[thomas.aeppli@uzh.ch](mailto:thomas.aeppli@uzh.ch)

# 2 Requirements

## 2.1 Qualification

The MD-PhD program is restricted to students who have a degree in:

- Human medicine
- Veterinary medicine
- Dental medicine

Applicants holding an MSc degree in Life Science or related fields in addition to their medical degree may apply directly to the Life Science Graduate School. They do not need to fulfil the additional requirements of the MD-PhD program. However, they may be affiliated to the program and attend the retreats.

## 2.2 Nationality

The MD-PhD program is open to students of all nationalities. Admission of applicants from outside Europe (EU/EFTA) is subject to the recognition of their degree by the Admission Office of UZH. Residence and work permits are granted by the local authorities.

Students wishing to do clinical work during their MD-PhD studies are subject to the regulations on medical professions. Medical degrees obtained within the EU can be recognized in Switzerland through the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH). Students who have completed their medical studies in a non-EU country can only practice clinically during their PhD if this is approved by the Directorate of Health.

For more information, please contact the Federal Offices of Public Health.

## 2.3 Track I vs. Track II

The Track I MD-PhD program is restricted to students who have earned at least a bachelor's degree in medicine at any Swiss university. The propaedeutic studies are started in parallel to the medical Master studies at UZH. The PhD dissertation is conducted after earning the medical master's degree.

The Track II MD-PhD program is open to students who have earned at least a master's degree (or equivalent) in human medicine, veterinary medicine or dentistry. Both propaedeutic studies and doctoral dissertation are conducted after attaining a medical master's or equivalent degree.

We only accept candidates up to five years after completing their medical degree, counting from the date of the next submission deadline after receipt of the application.

## 3 Deadlines

### 3.1 Applicants from EU/EFTA countries

<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Matriculation</i>
15 December	mid January	Spring semester
15 June	late June – mid July	Fall semester

The exact date if the interviews will be communicated upon submission of the application documents.

### 3.2 Applicants from non-EU/EFTA countries

Students resident in non-EU/EFTA countries at the time of application need to organize their entry into Switzerland (visa application). This process usually takes up to 3 months. Therefore, these applicants are subject to the following deadlines:

<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Matriculation</i>
15 December	mid January	Fall semester
15 June	late June – mid July	Spring semester

Interviews are conducted via Zoom. The VISA/work permit formalities may be initiated in collaboration with the host institute as soon as the confirmation of acceptance has been issued.

Non-EU/EFTA applicants may also apply at the deadlines listed in 3.1, however, it might not be possible to finalize matriculation by the following semester.

**If you plan to host a candidate from a non-EU/EFTA country, please contact the program coordinator as early as possible.**

## 4 Application process

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<b>Initial contact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thomas Aeppli, coordinator</li><li>• email: <a href="mailto:thomas.aeppli@uzh.ch">thomas.aeppli@uzh.ch</a></li></ul>
<b>Submission of application documents</b> (Web-Upload, login will be provided)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Motivation letter/career plan (1 page)</li><li>• CV</li><li>• Copies of diplomas and grades</li><li>• Brief outline of PhD project (ca. 5 pages)</li><li>• Confirmation of supervisor (form available on the website, section 'Application')</li></ul>
<b>Review of the application</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conducted by the program leadership in coordination with the program coordinator</li><li>• The applicant must have secured a host laboratory at this point.</li></ul>
<b>Admission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presentation of the proposed MD-PhD project and interview by the IMPK.</li><li>• If successful: Acceptance into the program.</li></ul>

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### 4.1 Admission criteria

Essential criteria for the admission to the interview are:

- the qualification of the applicant (grades in medical school, other qualifications)
- the qualification of the host laboratory
- the quality of the presented project

The MD-PhD program requires a confirmation of the host lab that the salary for the students is secured for a minimum duration of the thesis of 3 years. This is in accordance with the regulations of the Life Science Graduate School:

<https://www.lifescience-graduateschool.uzh.ch/en/PI/recruitment.html>

### 4.2 Repetition

Rejected candidates are not permitted to apply again.

## 5 Funding

### 5.1 General remarks

For the duration of the PhD dissertation (3 years minimum), the host lab must provide a salary which must correspond to the SNSF rates for doctoral students. In addition, students may engage in clinical work up to an employment level of 20% (see 6.3).

Supervisors and host labs are also expected to provide funding to cover other standard expenses, such as course fees or conference expenses.

### 5.2 Scholarships

The Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences SAMS and the Swiss National Science Foundation, with the support of private foundations and in collaboration with the Swiss School of Public Health, award a limited number of competitive individual MD-PhD grants each year.

Further information: <https://www.samw.ch/en/Funding/MD-PhD-Program.html>

These scholarships are awarded through the SAMS. Applicants must be enrolled in an MD-PhD program to submit an application. Starting in 2025, the application and evaluation process is conducted entirely at the national level, and all applications are submitted directly to the SAMS.

<b>Application deadline</b>	See SAMS website
<b>Requirements</b>	Personal and formal requirements are listed in section 7 of the SAMS regulations.
<b>Timing</b>	Candidates must apply at the beginning of their MD-PhD studies. It is not possible to apply for a scholarship 1-2 years into the program.
<b>Repetition</b>	Only one application is possible, meaning that students who are accepted into the MD-PhD program but unsuccessfully apply for a scholarship cannot apply a second time.

### 5.3 Other funding opportunities

Funding for PhD students	<a href="https://www.research.uzh.ch/en/funding/phd.html">https://www.research.uzh.ch/en/funding/phd.html</a>
Medical Faculty: Foundations, awards and grants (German)	<a href="#">UZH - Medizinische Fakultät - Stiftungen und Preise</a>

## 6 Organization

### 6.1 Propaedeutic studies

In the framework of the propaedeutic studies, students must gain a minimum of 30 or 35 ECTS<sup>1</sup> credit points, equivalent to 6 months of fulltime studies. For further information as well as a selection of mandatory and recommended courses and lectures, see the document “Propaedeutic Studies” on the program website (section ‘Curriculum). Since not all courses are offered every semester, the propaedeutic studies typically span two to four semesters. Up to 16 credit points can be awarded for lab rotations.

It is possible to have external academic achievements recognized towards the propaedeutic studies. The number of credit points awarded is decided by the Faculty’s Office of Student Affairs upon request by the IMPK.

### 6.2 Dissertation

All students who are admitted to the MD-PhD program must join one of the Life Science Graduate School’s doctoral programs in coordination with their supervisor. MD-PhD students do not need to pass a separate admissions process for this.

The regulations of the Faculty of Science apply to the process and completion of the doctoral program.

### 6.3 Clinical Work

MD-PhD students may engage in clinical work (up to an employment level of 20%) alongside their PhD dissertation. Remuneration for clinical work has to be agreed with the relevant hospital management.

## 7 Supervision and thesis committee

MD-PhD students are PhD students at the Faculty of Science (MNF) and subject to their regulations (see 6.2).

Specifically, this means that the PhD thesis project must be approved by a professor of the Faculty of Science, or a professor who holds the right to confer a PhD-degree at the Faculty of Science (*Promotionsrecht*). The approving person must declare their willingness to act as a member of the thesis committee.

For more information, please refer to the website of the Faculty of Science:

<https://www.mnf.uzh.ch/en/studium/reglemente.html>

A list of faculty members and other researchers with the right to award doctorates can be found on the MNF website.

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<sup>1</sup> Students entering the program 2021 or earlier: 35 ECTS; students entering 2022 or later: 30 ECTS.