



# Cancer Biology PhD Program – Rules and Regulations

**Name of PhD Student:**

**Name of Supervisor:**

**Name of responsible Faculty member:**

**Start of PhD:**

## Mission Statement

The aim of the international PhD program in Cancer Biology (CB) is recruiting excellent young scientists and training them at an advanced level for their future careers in science and society. Since PhD students enrolled in the program work in both basic and clinical research groups, the emphasis of the program is to actively promote and foster interaction between the students and research groups to facilitate the exchange of research ideas and to encourage interdisciplinary research.

## Program Overview

The program offers a choice of courses covering molecular and cell biology of cancer and clinical cancer research, as well as courses in scientific writing and ethics. In addition, students are asked to attend advanced specialized courses and transferable skill courses, as well as conferences and student retreats. One key aspect of the program is its mentoring system: The students must formulate and defend their project in front of a PhD thesis committee within the first 6 months after starting the PhD. The PhD thesis committee will review the student's progress and give advice on an annual basis.

## Admission

Application to the PhD program must be made via the online tool of the LSZGS (<https://www.lifescience-graduateschool.uzh.ch/en.html>). Acceptance is based on outstanding performance during master studies, strong letters of recommendation and an interview with the admission committee. Candidates who fulfil these criteria are invited to visit research groups of PIs who participate in the LSZGS and have a vacancy. Candidates who fulfilled the admission criteria of the CB PhD program may join the group of any PI in any PhD program of the LSZGS. Candidates who are offered a position may then enrol at the UZH or the ETHZ, depending on the academic affiliation of the principal investigator. These candidates are referred to as Track I.

PIs can also hire students independently of the two annual LSZGS intake rounds; these so-called Track II candidates must apply for the PhD program in Cancer Biology and pass an admission interview before starting their PhD at UZH and within six months of starting their PhD at ETHZ. Participation in a structured PhD program is obligatory at the UZH and voluntarily at the ETHZ. It is compulsory that Track II candidates are interviewed by an ad hoc CB PhD program panel before their acceptance to the program. For organisation of interviewing Track II candidates please contact the coordinating office.



## Registration

The applicants must hold a master's degree or equivalent at the start of their PhD. In order to matriculate at the UZH or ETHZ, they must fulfil the requirements of the respective host institution. A detailed description of the application and admission procedures can be found on the following web pages:

UZH: <https://www.uzh.ch/cmsssl/en/studies/application/apply.html>

ETHZ: <https://www.ethz.ch/en/doctorate.html>; <https://www.biol.ethz.ch/en/doctoral-studies.html>;

Once matriculated, the student will receive login data for the **MNFStudentAdmin** database. This online tool is designed to help the student, the program coordinator and the faculty to keep track of the course requirements. The student is obliged to complete the entries and upload the project proposal, reports and courses within the stipulated deadlines.

## PhD thesis committee

The PhD student and the PI must together set up a PhD thesis committee within the first six months of the employment of the PhD Student. **The names of the committee members must be registered in the online database** (StudentAdmin).

The PhD thesis committee ensures that student receives the best possible supervision. It supports the student with expertise and advice throughout the thesis work. At least one committee member besides the PhD supervisor should be competent in the direct research field of the student.

To promote integration of basic and clinical science, it is strongly recommended having a basic as well as a clinical scientist as member of the PhD committee and involving basic and clinical scientists in supervision of the student.

In case problems occur that cannot be solved by the student and the supervisor themselves, the thesis committee members and/or the program coordinator can act as mediators.

The PhD thesis committee consists of at least three persons:

- The direct thesis supervisor who must be a member of CB PhD program. Regulations for membership are published on the CB website.
- The official thesis supervisor who must be a member of the Faculty of Science (MNF) or have the right to confer a PhD at the MNF of the UZH in case the student is matriculated at the UZH or of D-BIOL/D-CHAB of the ETHZ for students matriculated at the ETHZ. The direct and official PhD thesis supervisor can be one person provided all criteria are fulfilled.
- A second member who is a member of or has the right to confer a PhD at the MNF of the UZH for UZH students or of D-BIOL/D-CHAB of the ETHZ for students of the ETHZ.
- At least one external member (i.e. affiliated with another institute of UZH/ETHZ or with another university) who has the right to supervise PhD students at his/her home institution.
- Additional members can be added anytime if appropriate.

Six months after their start, students must submit a doctoral agreement containing a short description of their project, a timeline and the planned course work into StudentAdmin database.



## PhD thesis committee meetings

The first PhD thesis committee meeting should take place six months after starting the PhD project. If appropriately justified and with approval of the program coordinator, the first PhD thesis committee meeting can be postponed for maximally six months, i.e. 12 months after start. During this meeting, the research plan for the PhD project and the initial results are presented to the committee members. Follow-up PhD committee meetings must be held at least once per year.

### **Two weeks prior to the first meeting, the student has to submit a research proposal to all PhD thesis committee members.**

The research proposal typically consists of ~2000 words (excluding references) and should be written in the form of a grant application. It thus should include the background of the research field, scientific question/aims, preliminary results, planned experiments, potential pitfalls and solutions, and a timeline of the PhD thesis. In case the PhD committee finds the PhD student's performance unsatisfactory, the student can repeat this first PhD committee meeting within three months. Should the student fail a second time, he/she will be expelled from the program.

For all subsequent meetings, the student has to submit a progress report two weeks before the meeting to the committee members.

All PhD thesis meeting reports, signed by the committee members, have to be submitted online to StudentAdmin for approval by the coordinator.

## Courses

Each PhD student must attend the obligatory Scientific Integrity course, organized by the Life Science Zurich Graduate School within the first year of their PhD.

(<https://lsz-tsc-training.lifescience-graduateschool.uzh.ch/en/page/transferable-and-methodological-skills-courses>)

Each PhD student must attend three mandatory core courses that can be chosen from five Module courses (A-E). In addition, each PhD student must attend a Scientific Writing as well as an Ethics course. PhD students are free to select additional course work, subject to approval of the PhD supervisor and the PhD thesis committee and according to the regulations of their respective home institution.

**Module A:** Cancer biology (1 CP)

**Module B:** Tumors and the immune system (1 CP)

**Module C:** Mechanisms of cancer induction and progression (1CP)

**Module D:** Cancer treatments (1 CP)

**Module E:** Translational cancer biology (1 CP)

Scientific Writing (1 CP)

Science Ethics (1 CP)

## Teaching

Each PhD student must perform teaching activities during his/her PhD.

Students at the UZH have to submit their teaching plans within 6 months of starting their PhD to the Academic Support Office of Biology (ASO). Teaching regulations and the required form can be found here.

<https://www.biologie.uzh.ch/de/Studium/Doktorat.html>.

Students at the ETHZ must follow the rules of his/her Department (D-CHAB or D-BIOL).



### Retreats

Cancer Biology retreat: To promote networking and acquisition of interdisciplinary knowledge, PhD students have the opportunity to present their results to their peers during an annual Cancer Biology retreat. Retreats are organized by the coordination office in cooperation with the students. The organizing committee will invite 6-8 principal investigators of the PhD program as keynote speakers and judges for poster prizes.

The attendance and active contribution of at least one Cancer Biology retreat during the course of the PhD is mandatory. The attendance is credited with 1 CP if the student presents his/her work orally or as a poster.

### Credit Points

Students must obtain a minimum of 12 credit points during the course of the PhD. At least 4 credit points should be obtained from topics outside of their direct research field, e.g. from transferable skill courses.

### Thesis Defense

At the end of the PhD study and not later than 18 months after the last meeting with the PhD thesis committee, the PhD student has to submit and defend a PhD thesis describing his/her original research carried out during the course of the PhD studies.

The thesis defense must comply with the rules of the host institution:

UZH: <http://www.mnf.uzh.ch/en/studium/phd/checkliste-fuer-doktorierende.html>

ETHZ: <https://www.ethz.ch/students/en/doctorate/doctoral-thesis-examination.html>

### PhD Diploma

The PhD diploma is conferred either by the University of Zurich or the ETH Zurich, depending on where the student is matriculated.

In addition to the ETHZ or UZH PhD Diploma, the students will receive a certificate from the CB PhD program confirming their successful participation in the PhD program.

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

I have read, understood and will adhere to the Regulations of the Cancer Biology PhD Program.

Date

Signature

