



## Regulations of the PhD Program in Epidemiology and Biostatistics (EB)

### 1 Mission Statement

The EB PhD Program aims to attract ambitious and talented students who are interested in the methodological foundations of clinical and population-based biomedical research. The overall goal is to train PhD students in designing, conducting and analyzing research studies in biomedicine. Depending on the specific research area students are expected to acquire core competencies in epidemiology or biostatistics.

### 2 Organization

Members of the EB PhD Program are University of Zürich/Faculty of Science (UZH/MNF) or Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zürich (ETHZ) faculty members or persons with Promotionsrecht as well as principal investigators (with own research grants, holding a doctoral degree and experienced in their field of research). All members are called PI in the following.

The General Assembly of all EB PhD Program members meets approximately once a year, elects new members of the program, elects the Program Director and the Deputy Director and decides about changes in the regulations.

The Steering Committee of the EB PhD Program comprises the following members: the director and the deputy director, the program coordinator(s) and a student representative. The Steering Committee and in particular the program coordinator(s) are responsible for the organization and the advertisement of the program, the organization of interviews and admission of the applicants to the program and the approval of thesis committees (in cases of doubt).

### 3 Application, Admission and Matriculation

The applicants must have a Master's degree or an equivalent degree at the start of the PhD program.

#### Track I: Application to the Program

- The deadlines for the applications are July 1st and December 1st.
- The program directors together with the program coordinator(s) or a specific committee decide on the list of applicants to be invited for the interviews.
- Three-day interviews will be held in September and February, respectively. An admission committee comprising at least two PIs and a coordinator interviews all invited applicants. The interview includes a presentation by the applicant, followed by questions on the applicant's subject competences and general questions. A protocol of the interview will be signed by all interviewers.
- During the three day visit applicants will discuss with up to eight research groups who have advertised a PhD position.
- After the three day visit, applicants will list up to six names of PIs in the order of their preference.
- By the end of the interview day, the admission committee will communicate a list of applicants admitted and a list of applicants not permitted into the program. This will be the basis for the matching process. The matching process will take into account the applicant's and the PI's preferences and should be completed within two weeks after the end of the interviews.

#### Track II: Application to a PI

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

- Track II students should submit their application via the online application system of the Graduate School, including two recommendation letters if possible from two independent reviewers. The application has to contain a recommendation letter of the PI explaining why the student qualifies for the program. Applications can be submitted at any time. Otherwise the same procedure as for track I applications has to be followed.
- Track II students should apply to the program within 6 months after the start of their thesis.

### **Recruitment Costs:**

In order to cover the recruitment costs the following fees must be paid by the PI

- Track I: 500.- CHF for each successfully hired student
- Track II: no fee but PI has to cover all travel costs and accounting administration

Doctoral students who have started their thesis work at the UZH or ETHZ before the installment of the EB PhD program may be admitted to the program if they have started after January 2012.

All applicants have to apply for matriculation at the UZH or ETHZ and definitive admission is subject to official approval. All requirements of the respective host institution have to be fulfilled. A detailed description of the application and admission procedures can be found on each institution's web pages.

## **4 Structure**

### **a) Thesis Committee**

Within 3 months of the start of the doctorate, the thesis supervisor appoints a thesis committee together with the student. The thesis committee comprises at least three members:

1. the direct thesis supervisor who is a member of the EB PhD program
2. if the direct supervisor does not have Promotionsrecht, an EBPhD member with Promotionsrecht has to be determined as an official supervisor and is also member of the thesis committee
3. a further member of the EB PhD program program
4. an external (to the EB PhD Program) member holding a PhD degree, preferably an established scientist from the field of research of the thesis.

- Either the second member or the external member needs to have Promotionsrecht

The thesis committee is responsible for the thematic and methodical monitoring of the thesis, for the formulation and supervision of the complementary course work and for the decision to continue or discontinue the thesis. The thesis committee ensures that students receive the best possible supervision. In case of emerging problems that cannot be sorted out directly between student and supervisor, the thesis committee members and/or the program coordinator should act as intermediary.

### **b) Thesis Committee Meetings**

The chair of the committee meeting has to be defined at the beginning of the meeting, usually it is not the student's supervisor.

The first meeting of the thesis committee should take place approximately 6 months after starting, subsequent meetings should be organized in an interval of approximately 12 months. The last meeting is the defense of the thesis. For each meeting at least two members of the committee have to be present. The external member has to be present at least once, and it is expected that he or she is present at the defense. In cases of absence, he/she shall express his/her opinion on the interim report by written correspondence.

*First meeting:* student submits, presents and defends a research plan; the thesis committee writes a protocol of the meeting, which is then signed by all involved parties and is used as doctoral agreement.

*Subsequent meeting:* student submits a progress report beforehand, presents new results and summarizes discussion and comments in a protocol.

The progress of the research and these meetings form the basis for the decision of the thesis committee concerning the continuation of the thesis project. All documents have to be sent to the program coordinator. Responsible for the organization of the meetings is the student. If the requirements concerning these meetings are repeatedly not satisfied the student may be excluded from the program.

#### **c) Pre-doctoral Exam**

The second meeting of the thesis committee is the pre-doctoral exam including again a presentation of the results and their defense along with more widespread questioning around the subject of the thesis. The purpose of this exam is to verify that the student has the skills and the ability to carry out the planned research. A successful pre-doctoral exam is awarded two credit points. In case of failure the exam can be repeated once within 3 months, repeated failure leads to exclusion of the program.

#### **d) Defense**

At the end of the PhD study, the 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 coincides with the last meeting of the thesis committee and has to comply with the rules of the host institution, concerning not only the defense itself but also the preparation of written reports by thesis committee members and experts beforehand. Specifically for UZH students, the Zirkulationskreis is defined to consist of at least five EB PhD Program members with Promotionsrecht who are not on the thesis committee, it can be enlarged to include external faculty at the discretion of the supervisor.

The thesis committee decides whether the student has passed or not. In exceptional cases, the committee can recommend the students for Distinction to ETHZ or UZH (see respective regulations). The date and title of the defense must be communicated to the program coordinator as much as possible in advance.

#### **e) Curriculum**

All students who started their PhD after April 1st 2016 are required to attend the 2 hour LSZGS introductory course on Scientific Integrity. Before registering for the thesis defense it is necessary to acquire a total of 12 ECTS. The thesis committee and the supervisor decide together with the student on how to obtain these. The PhD program regulations stipulate the following minimal requirements:

- 3CP: EPI301 Introduction to Epidemiology **or** STA404DP Clinical Biostatistics
- 2CP: EB methods seminar
- 2CP: pre-doctoral exam
- 2CP: free choice in accordance with supervisor
- 3CP: transferable skills

Courses, seminars and lectures from the course catalog of UZH and ETHZ at an appropriate level can be complemented with courses from the Life Science Zurich Graduate School, the UZH Graduate Campus or similar offers from UZH and ETHZ. In agreement with the program coordinator and the thesis committee PhD students can also attend external courses. PhD students must collect a certificate for courses that are not booked through the institutional systems of UZH (Modulbuchung) or ETHZ (myStudies) and get them accredited to their student account by the respective faculty (UZH) or department (ETHZ). In case of doubt the thesis committee decides about the accountability and allocation of ECTS credits. One ECTS corresponds to a total work load of 30 hours (incl. preparation and homework) and it is necessary that an active and verifiable contribution has been delivered by the student (checked ideally through a report to the supervisor). Participation at conferences, preparation of scientific publications, the presentation of the PhD student's own work at internal seminars are not awarded credit points as these are intrinsic parts of the PhD thesis.

The EB methods seminar provides the students of the EB PhD program with a common background on important topics of general interest and with specialized views on some research subjects. The modus of teaching is a mix of student and research seminar. It is organized each semester, active participation during one semester is awarded one credit point, i.e. students have to actively participate twice.

## **5 Teaching**

PhD students of the Faculty of Science (UZH) have to prove that they acquired 100-420 teaching hours. Teaching hours include the support of lectures on the Bachelor/Master level, exam supervision and correction, supervision of master students, and others. The PhD student and the supervisor list the acquired and planned teaching hours each year within the framework of the thesis committee meeting. Teaching hours have to be reported to the coordinating office of the "Fachbereich Biologie", detailed instructions are available there.

## **6 Graduation**

The decision to confer the Doctor title will depend on:

- Approval of the thesis by the thesis committee
- Only UZH: Approval of the thesis by the Zirkulationskreis
- Passing the thesis defense
- Approval by the UZH or ETHZ of the proposal of the thesis committee to confer the PhD title

In addition to the ETHZ or UZH Diploma, the students will receive a certificate from the EB PhD Program stating his or her successful participation.

## **7 Publications**

Any publication or presentation (talks, posters) with a PhD student as co-author should mention the PhD program in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. For presentations, it is recommended to use the logo of the Life Science Zurich Graduate School.

## **8 Confidentiality**

The exchange of scientific data and unpublished results is fundamental for the EB PhD Program. Such information is strictly confidential and should not be shared prior to publication by any of its members. The protection of intellectual property as outlined by the associated institutions needs to be assured.