



## Regulations of the PhD Program in Ecology

### General information

#### *Mission Statement*

The aim of the PhD Program in Ecology is to enhance the research competence of PhD students in the interdisciplinary field of ecology, and to support the education of transferable skills for a future career within or outside an academic institution.

#### *Organization*

The program is governed by the program director and the associated research groups, and is organized by the program coordinator. The associated research groups are experts in the field from the University of Zurich (UZH), the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ) and the affiliated organizations Eawag, Agroscope and WSL.

#### *Certificate*

PhD students of UZH and ETHZ participate during 4 years in the program. In addition to the UZH or ETHZ diploma the student will receive a certificate stating the successful participation in the PhD Program in Ecology. At UZH the certificate is needed to register for the thesis defense.

#### *Further information*

All documents, including the semester course program are available on the homepage:

<http://www.phd-ecology.uzh.ch/>

### Admission

#### *Application*

Candidates apply directly through the homepage of the Life Science Zurich Graduate School (LSZGS: <http://www.lszgs.ch/>) for admission to the PhD Program in Ecology (track 1). The official LSZGS interviews are organized in February and September, calendar week 6 and 36. Application outside the official interviews are possible and have to be arranged with the coordinator of the PhD Program in Ecology (track 2).

#### *Admission interview*

Admission to the program is granted based on an interview. The interview includes a presentation by the candidate, followed by questions on the candidates subject competences. At least three official representatives of the PhD Program in Ecology are present. A protocol of the interview will be signed by all interviewers. The following requirements will be tested:

- training in Ecology / Environmental Sciences (equivalent to 10 ECTS) and in Mathematics (incl. Statistics) / Physics (together equal to 6 ECTS);
- evidence of excellent communication skills in English during the interview

Admission interview form: <http://www.ieu.uzh.ch/en/teaching/phd/graduate/links.html>

#### *Fast track*

Fast track candidates of the Specialized MSc Environmental Sciences can enter the PhD Program in Ecology directly through a combined admission interview.

#### *Registration*

Candidates are required to have a Master's degree or equivalent when they start their PhD. All candidates have to apply for matriculation at the University of Zurich or ETH Zurich. All requirements of the respective host institution have to be fulfilled. A detailed description of the application and admission procedures can be found on the following web pages:

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

ETHZ: <https://www.ethz.ch/en/doctorate/registration-admission.html>

PhD students that successfully passed the admission interview have to submit the registration form to the program coordinator. Registration form: <http://www.ieu.uzh.ch/en/teaching/phd/graduate/links.html>

## Thesis committee

### *Formation of thesis committee*

The thesis committee ensures that PhD students receive the best possible supervision. It supports the PhD student with expertise and advice throughout the thesis work. In case of emerging problems that cannot be sorted out directly by a meeting between the student and the supervisor, the thesis committee members and/or the program coordinator should act as go-betweens. The members of the thesis committee are selected jointly by the thesis supervisor and the student at the start of the PhD, but not later than 6 months after the official date of employment. The thesis committee consists of 3-4 persons:

The direct thesis supervisor (must be a member of the PhD Program in Ecology)

The official thesis supervisor (must be a member of the Science Faculty (MNF) of the UZH or of D-BIOL / D-USYS of the ETHZ, or have Promotionsrecht). This function is not required if the direct supervisor satisfies these criteria

At least one additional member of the MNF UZH / D-BIOL ETHZ / D-USYS ETHZ (or a person with Promotionsrecht)

At least one external member who has the right to supervise PhD students at his/her home institution.

The committee selects a chairman for the thesis committee meeting, who must not be the PhD student's supervisor. The chairman checks that all committee members received the student reports and that both—the PhD student and the supervisor—have the opportunity to talk to the committee in absence of the other party.

### *Thesis committee meeting*

At least once a year the PhD student organizes a meeting with the thesis committee. The PhD student distributes the relevant documents before the meeting to all members. The results of the meeting will be protocolled and signed by the committee members. After the thesis committee meeting, the PhD student submits the thesis meeting report form to the coordinator of the PhD Program in Ecology via DissGo. Thesis meeting report form:

<http://www.ieu.uzh.ch/en/teaching/phd/graduate/links.html>

The following time-plan should be followed:

- The first meeting takes place 3–6 months after the official start to discuss the research plan and to sign the doctoral agreement.

### *Research plan*

Prior to the first meeting, the PhD student has to submit to all committee members and to the program coordinator a research proposal of ~2000 words (excluding references) describing his/her proposed PhD project. The research proposal should be written in the form of a grant application and include: title or working title of the dissertation; a description of the research project, including the background of the research field, preliminary results, planned experiments, potential pitfalls and solutions; a timeline of the thesis, including mile-stones and a roadmap.

In case of unsatisfactory performance, the PhD student can repeat the proposal defense within three months. Should the PhD student fail a second time, he/she will be expelled from the program. The accepted proposal should be signed by the thesis committee at the end of the first meeting and the original submitted together with the Doctoral Agreement to the coordinator of the PhD Program in Ecology via DissGo.

### *Doctoral agreement*

The doctoral agreement outlines the expectations from the student and the thesis committee at the start of the PhD. The form should be filled out and signed at the first thesis committee meeting and should be submitted together with the research plan to the coordinator of the PhD Program in Ecology via DissGo. The information should be updated in the subsequent meetings and any changes have to be communicated to the coordinator of the PhD Program in Ecology.

The following points should be addressed in the doctoral agreement:

members of the thesis committee

curriculum, including planned internal and external lectures, seminars and courses

contribution to teaching (see below)

Doctoral agreement form: <http://www.ieu.uzh.ch/en/teaching/phd/graduate/links.html>

Second meeting after 18 months and third meeting after 30 months to present results and evidence of progress. For all subsequent meetings, the PhD student has to submit to the committee members and to the program coordinator a progress report (up to 1000 words) two weeks before the meeting. The progress report can be substituted by a manuscript, providing that the PhD student's contribution is significant and clearly identifiable.

Final meeting 6 months before registration for the exam.

## Curriculum

### Structure

PhD students attend program courses for a minimum of 12 ECTS credit points during their PhD; these are subdivided into four categories (see table below). The internal courses are communicated to all members of the program before semester start and they are listed in the UZH online semester plan "Vorlesungsverzeichnis":

<http://www.vorlesungen.uzh.ch>

| Categories  | ECTS      |
|---|-----------|
| Subject-specific matters (incl. special lectures)   | 3         |
| Methods   | 3         |
| Transferable skills                                 | 3         |
| Research seminars (incl. oral/poster contributions) | 2         |
| Free choice   | 1         |
| Total   | (min. 12) |

PhD students at ETHZ and other Swiss universities have to first register as "Gaststudent" at UZH to book courses directly, or alternatively contact the program coordinator until the registration is approved. Registration as "Gaststudent" at UZH:

<http://www.uzh.ch/en/studies/application/mobilitaet.html>

Registration as "Gaststudent" at UZH:

<https://www.ethz.ch/en/the-eth-zurich/organisation/departments/academic-services/student-exchange-office.html>

Registered PhD students from all Swiss universities can book courses through the "Modulbuchung" at UZH and the earned ECTS will be automatically accredited to the "Leistungsausweis" at their home university. Registration for courses through "Modulbuchung" at UZH: [http://www.students.uzh.ch/booking\\_en.html](http://www.students.uzh.ch/booking_en.html)

Internal courses, seminars and lectures of the four categories can be complemented with courses from the LSZGS graduate school, partner PhD programs and the UZH or 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: see above) 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 will decide about the accountability and allocation of ECTS credits. One ECTS corresponds to a total work load of 30 hours (incl. preparation and homework). Oral/poster contributions can be each accredited with one ECTS and need to be certified by the supervisor of the student.

Additional courses that the program accepts:

- Graduate School courses The LSZGS offers a variety of interdisciplinary and soft-skill courses. Students can attend these courses for free. For more information and for registration visit the website: <http://www.lifescience-graduateschool.uzh.ch/en/courses.html>. Courses of the Zurich Graduate School in Mathematics can be attended for free (excluding courses where additional payments to all participants apply). For more information visit: <http://www.zurich-graduate-school-math.ch>
- Courses of all LSZGS PhD programs, such as the partner programs Plant Science Center and Evolutionary Biology. Students are free to take courses of other programs, however the number of participants might be limited and availability based on priority given to own members.
- Courses offered by UZH/ETHZ Students can take courses offered by their respective host institution where they are matriculated, for example the Graduate Campus UZH offers transferable skills for PhD candidates: <http://www.ueberfachliche-kompetenzen.uzh.ch/en.html> or the courses offered by ETHZ on teaching skills: <https://www.usys.ethz.ch/en/doctorate.html>
- Courses from external institutions In agreement with the thesis committee and the program coordinator.

### Scientific Integrity Course:

The Scientific Integrity course is compulsory for all Life Science Zurich Graduate PhD students. The course must be completed in the first year of their PhD. This regulation is in effect from 1 February 2016.

### Teaching hours

The PhD student and the supervisor list the planned teaching hours in the doctoral agreement. PhD students at MNF UZH have to report planned and absolved teaching hours to the "Fachbereich Biologie / Geowissenschaften". Teaching hours include the support of lectures on the Bachelor/Master level, exam supervision and correction, supervision of master students, and others. Teaching at the Science Education Center (within the disciplines of life science, mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography and biology) can be accredited as teaching hours. A minimum of 40% of the total hours has to be in direct contact with the students.

Teaching hours form: <http://www.biologie.uzh.ch/Studium/Doktorat.html>

### *Certificate*

In addition to the UZH/ETHZ Diploma, the PhD student will receive a certificate from the PhD Program in Ecology stating the successful participation in the program. The certificate will be signed by the program director, coordinator and the supervisor and is needed to register for the thesis defense.

Certificate template: <http://www.ieu.uzh.ch/en/teaching/phd/graduate/links.html>

### **Thesis defense**

#### *Registration*

The PhD student has to submit and defend a thesis describing his/her original research carried out during the course of the PhD studies. The thesis defense complies 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>

The thesis committee decides whether the PhD student has passed or not. In exceptional cases, the committee can recommend the students for distinction to the UZH/ETHZ. This recommendation has to be accompanied by two letters of reference from external reviewers. Distinction is intended for top ~5% of PhD students. The final degree is conferred by either the UZH or the ETHZ, depending on the academic affiliation of the research group.

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

#### *Data backup*

Together with the registration for the doctoral examination the PhD student has to hand over the thesis and the complete data used to produce the thesis, including meta information and where necessary analysis scripts, on a data storage medium to the coordinator of the PhD Program in Ecology.

### **Publications and Presentations**

#### *Logo*

For any oral/poster presentation it is recommended to use the logo of the PhD Program in Ecology: contact [phdecology@ieu.uzh.ch](mailto:phdecology@ieu.uzh.ch), Debra Zuppinger-Dingley

#### *Confidentiality*

The exchange of scientific data and unpublished results is fundamental for the PhD Program in Ecology. 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.

I have read and understood the Regulations of the PhD Program in Ecology.

Date                      Name                      Signature

