

MD-PhD Program - General Information

- **What is the MD-PhD program?**

The MD-PhD Program is a natural science PhD program for MDs, dentists and veterinarians. It is offered by all main universities in Switzerland.

The essence of the program is to enable medical students and graduates (in addition to their regular degree in medicine, dentistry, or veterinary medicine) to gain a basic natural science education which allows them to conduct a regular natural science PhD.

- **What does the Zurich MD-PhD program offer?**

The MD-PhD program serves as an entry point for medical students and graduates into the Life Science Zurich Graduate School. The role of the MD-PhD program is to select eligible candidates and to coordinate their integrated science education. All MD-PhD students should join one of the existing Life Science Zurich Graduate School PhD programs for their continuing education during their PhD studies.

- **How are MD-PhD students accepted into the program?**

Candidates can choose between two tracks within the MD-PhD program in Zurich:

- ⇒ In Track 1, the basic science education is conducted in parallel to the medical studies. The PhD is started after completion of the medical education.
- ⇒ In Track 2, the basic science education is conducted after completion of the medical degree, in parallel to the PhD.

- **Application process:**

Step 1:

Advisory discussion with Prof. Aguzzi (chairman of the MD-PhD steering committee).

Contact: MD-PhD Coordinator, Jacqueline Wiedler (jacqueline.wiedler@usz.ch).

Candidates have to find a suitable thesis project, host laboratory and a supervisor who agrees to supervise their PhD thesis and provide funding. The host laboratory must be affiliated to *Life Science Zurich*: <http://www.lifesciencezurich.ch/>. Track 1 candidates choose their thesis project towards the end of their basic science education. Track 2 candidates choose thesis project and host lab right at the beginning and start both simultaneously.

Candidates lacking wet lab experience are strongly advised to do lab rotations prior to enrolling in the MD-PhD programme. Lab rotations are a good opportunity to get to know possible host labs.

Step 2:

- Preparation of a study plan (basic studies, 35 ECTS points). See pdf-file „Studienplan/Basic Studies“.
- Motivation letter: Brief outline of career plans.
- Brief description of MD-PhD thesis project and selection of host lab. Letter of support from host lab. (Track 2 students supply this information at enrolment, Track 1 students latest upon completion medical studies and basic science education before starting with their MD-PhD thesis.
- Send documents (study plan, motivation letter, description of MD-PhD thesis project, letter of support from host lab, CV, diplomas/grades) to MD-PhD Coordinator
⇒ Examination of documents by MD-PhD steering committee. If approved:

Provisional acceptance into the program:

Track 1 and Track 2 students are now allowed to enrol for courses and start their basic sciences education (collection of 35 ECTS). Track 2 students start their MD-PhD thesis project at the same time. Track 1 students

Step 3:

- Presentation of the proposed MD-PhD project and interview by the entire MD-PhD steering committee. If passed:

Full acceptance into the program:

Candidates are now fully recognized PhD students of the Life Science Zurich Graduate School. They join one of the existing schools for their PhD and conduct their continuing education during their thesis according to the requirements of the respective schools.

- **What salaries do MD-PhD students earn?**

- ⇒ 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.
- ⇒ MD-PhD students can apply for a specific SAMW fellowship. This is a prestigious, competitive fellowship awarded to the candidate directly, which provides a salary for up to 3 years. Only students with Swiss citizenship or permanent residents (C permit) are eligible. (<http://www.samw.ch/en/Research/MD-PhD-Program.html>)
- ⇒ The MD-PhD program recommends that the salary provided matches the SAMW fellowship. Under no circumstances should the salary be lower than the SNF PhD student specification. (http://www.snf.ch/D/NewsPool/Seiten/news_071107_SNFInfo2_Lohn_Doktorierende.aspx)

- **What is the duration of a MD-PhD thesis?**

MD-PhD theses are no different from regular life science PhD theses. They are usually conducted within 3-4 years.

Please note: Track 2 MD-PhD candidates need to obtain most of their basic natural science education (35 ECTS) during their first year of the PhD thesis.