

"INTERUNIVERSITY DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN ORGANISMAL BIOLOGY"

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1. AIMS

The doctoral program aims to foster scientific quality and creativity and offers doctoral students a variety of courses and activities that will promote their general ability to deal with challenges in contemporary academic, administrative, and commercial environments.

2. REGISTRATION AND ELIGIBILITY

All Ph.D. students of the Institute of biology are expected to register in the program and will thereby commit to the requirements outlined in these guidelines.

The doctoral program is also officially offered as part of the academic collaboration between the Universities of Neuchâtel, Lausanne, and Genève (AZUR), Bern and Fribourg (BENEFRI) and as such is recognised by the CUSO. The Ph.D. students from those universities can also register to participate in the program.

Post-docs and students that are not registered are welcome to take part in the doctoral program activities if space is available. Priority will be given to registered students.

3. CONCEPT

A broadly based schooling and intensive interactions among research groups are the fundamental elements of the doctoral program. The main objective is that students will acquire high standard academic competence as well as skills that are easily transferable to non-academic environments. Therefore the academic program that is offered goes beyond the specific aspects of the individual research projects. This will be accomplished by:

COURSES, WORKSHOPS, AND MEETINGS

Each academic year a minimum of 6 courses will be given on subjects that broaden the knowledge and skills of the participants in various fields.

- Special workshops will be organised during which experts in a particular area of research will be invited to give lectures and discuss with students.
- Attendance at national and international scientific meetings will be strongly encouraged. Students can apply for competitive grants offered by the program to attend such meetings.

MOBILITY

Mobility will be promoted to expose students to different research environments and to prevent "inbreeding". This will be accomplished by:

- Encouraging and sponsoring students to visit and acquire research experience at other research groups.
- Offering doctoral students the opportunity to present their work at workshops and international congresses.

4. REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REQUIREMENTS

- At least 12 ECTS points must be accumulated during the Ph.D. period (see point 6).
- Within the first 6 months the student provides a literature review and research plan in English to his/her thesis supervisor. The student and supervisor meet to discuss, adapt and approve the research plan. A copy of the research plan and confirmation of approval is sent to the education office.
- Yearly reports written by the student in English are submitted to the supervisor (see Art.9 of the *Règlement concernant le statut des assistants et des assistants étudiants de l'Université de Neuchâtel*). Not later than the end of the 2nd year, one such report is submitted to (an) external expert(s) who will participate in a meeting to discuss the report and advice on the progress of the project. The expert(s) will be selected by the doctoral student in consultation with the supervisor. Copies of the reports as well as a brief report of the mid-thesis meeting including the comments of the expert(s) are sent to the education office.
- Candidates must regularly participate in the courses, workshops, and graduate students meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Write the thesis in English.
- Two publications in refereed scientific journals.
- Contribution to local teaching, but not more than 20%.
- Organisation of and participation in weekly local seminars.
- Conduct part of the research at a collaborating laboratory.
- At least two presentations at international scientific meetings.

5. CONTENT

COURSES, WORKSHOPS, AND MEETINGS

- Courses and workshops

Each semester, the doctoral program office will organise selected courses and workshops on specific topics that will broaden the qualifications of the participants. **Courses** will familiarise the participants with specific **research tools** or have the objective of improving **communication skills**. For the **scientific workshops**, experts in a particular field of research will be invited to teach the fundamentals of their research areas.

- Doctoral program meetings

Every year the participants within the program will organise a daylong meeting during which they will have the opportunity to present their work to each other. For this meeting they will be provided funds to invite one or two top scientists to give lectures. The meetings will provide opportunities to discuss ongoing work and to obtain feedback from colleagues.

MOBILITY

Students are encouraged to spend at least 1 month at a collaborating or partner laboratory. These visits will serve to broaden expertise, learn new techniques and conduct experiments relevant to the thesis that cannot be done in the home laboratory. To facilitate such visits the students can apply for mobility grants offered by the program.

SEMINARS

- Weekly seminars

Students are expected to organise and attend seminars. These can be informal and the format of the seminars is left to the creativity of the organisers. It is also highly recommended that literature discussion groups be formed.

- Guest seminars

Upon requests by doctoral program members, guest seminars can be organised.

6. ECTS POINT SYSTEM AND REGULATION

- To ensure the active participation of doctoral students in the doctoral program an ECTS point system has been developed that is compatible with other such programs in Switzerland.
- Ph.D. students that officially register are required to obtain a total of 12 ECTS over the period of their thesis (3-4 years).
- ECTS can be obtained by actively participating in courses and workshops that are listed on the "*Interuniversity doctoral program in organismal biology*" website (minimum of 8 ECTS) and equivalent courses offered in other places. Additional ECTS can be obtained with presentations at international scientific conferences and with activities dedicated to the public understanding of science.

COURSES

Three types of courses will be offered:

- communication skills (effective public speaking, interview techniques, etc.)
- research tools (data mining, statistics, molecular techniques, etc.)
- scientific workshops

To ensure a broadly based graduate education a minimum of 2 ECTS will have to be acquired in each type of course.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Additional ECTS can be obtained with:

- Oral (1 ECTS) or poster (0.5 ECTS) presentations at international meetings.
- Courses offered by others. Approval will have to be requested through the coordinator of the program.

The following scheme summarises how the ECTS requirements are sub-divided:

minimum 12 ECTS during Ph.D.*			
min. 8 ECTS within the doctoral programme**		+ ECTS external	
2 communic.	2 tools	2 scientific	6 free choice

* If the Ph.D. thesis is finished in less than three years, proportionally fewer ECTS points must be collected.

** For students that also participate in another officially recognised doctoral program, the minimum requirement is reduced to 6 ECTS.

VALIDATION OF ECTS POINT

The ECTS assigned to the courses are based on the equivalent of 1 hour per week over 1 full semester per ECTS. The ECTS will also be given for preparation time and will be adjusted according to the level of the course. Ph.D. student's participation in a course may be validated in the form of an exam, exercises, and/or presentations. Problem solving approach will be encouraged in the validation procedure. For courses and other events without such validations a one page written report needs to be submitted.

Exceptions and changes to the requirements can be requested (with good argumentation) from the head of the doctoral program committee.

7. DOCTORAL PROGRAM COMMITTEE AND MEDIATOR

COMMITTEE

For the structuring and implementation of the doctoral program policies a **doctoral program committee** is appointed. This committee consists of the following members:

- The director of the programme (University of Neuchâtel)
- The programme coordinator (University of Neuchâtel)
- One member of the "*corps professoral*" (University of Neuchâtel)
- Two faculty members of the universities Fribourg/Bern/Lausanne/Genève
- A representative of the "*corps intermédiaire*" except Ph.D. students (University of Neuchâtel)
- One representative of Ph.D. students (University of Neuchâtel)
- One Ph.D. students of the universities Fribourg/Bern/Lausanne/Genève

The "*conseil de l'institut*" selects the coordinator, who dedicates 40% of a full time job to the doctoral programme. The director of the programme and the other committee members are nominated by their peers and elected by the "*conseil de l'institut*". The representatives serve two-year terms and can be re-elected.

The committee sets guidelines for the structuring and functioning of the doctoral program.

The committee meets as often as necessary upon invitation by the head of the program (at least once a year). Meetings can also take place upon request of two other members of the committee. Decisions are taken by simple majority voting. In case of parity of votes the vote of the director is decisive. Important decisions and key changes in the program will be presented to the "*conseil de l'institut de biologie*" for approval before implementation.

MEDIATOR

The chair of the committee will also serve as the ombudsman or mediator for the students. Students can make appointments by email to discuss issues and concerns that cannot be addressed by their direct supervisor. In case of absence of the chair of the committee and for his/her own students, the director of the Institute of biology will serve as the mediator.

Web page address: http://www.unine.ch/dp-biol
