

THE RESEARCH TRAINING SEMESTER AND THE MASTER THESIS

1. Purpose of the Masters thesis and Research training semester in the curriculum

The second year of the program in cognitive science in Neuchâtel is entirely dedicated to the Masters thesis and research training semester. The fall semester is dedicated to research training and the spring semester to the achievement and defense of the Master thesis.

The purpose of the research training semester is to gain hands-on experience with research as a member of a research group within UNINE or any other agreed lab in Switzerland or abroad.

During their research training, students will actively participate to research tasks under local supervision. The research training is typically a preparation time for the development of the personal research aims which will concretize in the Master thesis ("mémoire de master" in the French language administrative wordings of UNINE regulations).

The Master thesis is a personal research work achieved by the student under the guidance of a professor of the Cognitive science centre. Occasionally, an option is offered to have co-supervision with a professor of another institution, typically where the student did their research training.

The thesis and the research training are validated with 30 ECTS each, in other words, 750-900 hours of work each. They are marked with separate grades.

2. Two ways of organizing the research training and the Master thesis

There are two ways to structure the interaction between the research training and the Master thesis, 'Model 1' and 'Model 2'. Students need to pay attention to these options early enough and approach professors to discuss the best plan for them.

In all cases, the projected research training semester must be first approved by one of the professors of the Cognitive science centre. At the beginning of the spring semester, students will receive a notification by email that they have to submit a description of their plans for their research training semester and asked for the name of their UNINE supervisor, who has accepted the project. Also, students will be able to apply for (limited) financial support if their research training outside UNINE.

➤ *Model 1: Integrated thesis and Research training*

The thesis and research training are part of one integrated project undertaken in the same lab. The research training is the first part of the thesis work, typically including literature review and developing methods of inquiry. The student writes the first part of the thesis (up to and including the methods section), which is then graded by the supervisor. This counts as the grade for the research training. The student then completes the project (data collection and analysis) and writes up the rest of the thesis (Results, Discussion, Conclusions). This final part is then graded for the thesis.



Model 1 is typically applied for projects specializing in biology and comparative cognition that involve extended periods of fieldwork and/or experimental research.

➤ **Model 2: Independent thesis and Research training**

With Model 2, the Master thesis and the research training are separate matters, even though in principle the research training is a coherent preparation for the Master thesis. In principle, both are anyways under the official supervision by one professor at UNINE but there may be exceptions depending on the particularities of each student's projects.

The Research training grade is based on a report by the student. Its format and content may depend upon the particularities of the training and is discussed in due time with the UNINE supervisor. If the research training takes place outside UNINE, a confirmation letter of attendance by the local external supervisor must be provided. During the research training, one or two meetings with the UNINE supervisor must take place.

The Masters thesis is always officially supervised by a professor of the Cognitive science centre, but a qualified person outside UNINE, for example where the training research has been conducted, can be co-supervisor, and may act informally as the main supervisor.

The details of the Masters thesis achievement and defense are arranged by the UNINE supervisor.

3. In case of trouble

We are aware that these various questions may be complicated to handle, and that choosing a lab for the research training, a supervisor, and identifying a suitable research project can be complicated and difficult. We advice the students to get in touch without hesitation with the professors in individual meetings to discuss their ideas and / or doubts. The programme director is always available to provide guidance. The programme administrator is available for all administrative questions.

Programme director

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- From February 1st: Prof. Adrian Bangerter

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Programme administrative person:

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