



Learning Agreement - Instructions to Students

Christian Lehner, MSc coordinator (last update May 2013)

The Learning Agreement has to be worked out at the start of the MSc study program

Step 1:

In general, the student should find a research group where she/he can do the research for the Master thesis and a supervisor who guides this research as well as the completion of the Master thesis already before beginning his study program. Only Professors or PDs (or in exceptional cases proven research group leaders) with significant research and teaching experience in Molecular and Cellular Biology can act as supervisors. They can only act as supervisors when approved by the coordinator. See Appendix for additional information on potential supervisors.

Step 2:

The student develops a study program and generates a draft of the Learning Agreement (download Form for personal notes (preparation purposes only) (DOC, 143 KB) from the web:
<http://www.biologie.uzh.ch/Studium/Masterstudium/MasterStudies/MolecularCellularBiology.html>

The relevant sections of the current version of the Wegleitung concerning the MSc Biology, Specialization Molecular- and Cellular Biology have to be considered. Alternatively, consult:
<http://www.biologie.uzh.ch/Studium/Masterstudium/MasterStudies/MolecularCellularBiology.html>

The exam for BIO 520 "Integrated Knowledge in Biology / Themenübergreifende Fachkompetenz" will generally be scheduled around 8 weeks after completion of the Master thesis (except for special well founded cases). She/he discusses the draft of the Learning Agreement with the Master thesis supervisor to arrive at a study program which is mutually agreed on.

Step 3:

The student writes an e mail with the unsigned draft of the Learning Agreement as an attachment to the coordinator (christian.lehner@imls.uzh.ch) and suggests a number of dates for a meeting. The coordinator will select a convenient date and invite the student to the meeting. To this meeting, the student should also bring the BSc certificate/academic record (or a copy). The coordinator will either accept the suggested study program and Master thesis supervisor or suggest alterations. After an agreement between student, Master thesis supervisor and coordinator has been reached, the final form can be filled out using the web form:

http://www.visualedu.ch/index.php?id=learning_agreement

Step 4:

The printed final version needs to be signed by the student, the advisor, and then by the MSc coordinator, and finally by the Studienkoordination. A copy of the signed Learning Agreement has to be delivered to the MSc coordinator.

In case of questions, contact the coordinator (christian.lehner@imls.uzh.ch).



Appendix: Supervisors of a Master thesis in the programme MSc Biology, Molecular and Cellular Biology

The legally binding Rahmenordnung requests in § 45. Durchführung und Benotung: Eine Person aus dem Kreis der ordentlichen und ausserordentlichen Professorinnen und Professoren, der Assistenzprofessorinnen und -professoren, der Titularprofessorinnen und - professoren und der Privatdozentinnen und Privatdozenten überwacht die Durchführung der Bachelorarbeit bzw. der Masterarbeit und ist zuständig für die Erteilung der Note.

This means that only Professors and Privatdozenten/innen in the Division of Biology of the MNF (Mathematisch-naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät) of the University of Zurich can act as Supervisors. § 45 is meant to assure that supervisors are not just experienced researchers but also experienced academic teachers, reflecting the fact that the Master thesis is clearly the dominating element of the MSc programme (usually 60 of a total of 90 credit points).

Exceptions from § 45 are only granted in restricted cases. External supervisors must have proven a comparable experience in research and academic teaching in the field of specialization, i.e. Molecular and Cellular Biology. External supervisors need to have an evident interest in teaching. In general, the co-ordinators will only grant exceptions from § 45 when an external supervisor is known to contribute substantially and successfully to teaching in the MSc Biology programmes (usually in block courses). This rule should also help that the capacity in block courses in biology remains sufficiently high to maintain the intended high quality training in scientific research, and it prevents research group leaders from viewing MSc students simply as unpaid workforce.

The following information should assist in finding a supervisor for a Master thesis in the programme MSc Biology, Specialization in Molecular and Cellular Biology:

- For a list of research group within the Division of Biology, MNF, UZH see:
<http://www.biologie.uzh.ch/Studium/Masterstudium/MasterStudies/MolecularCellularBiology.html>

- In case of other research groups: the final decision whether a given external supervisor is acceptable rests with the MSc coordinator. Research groups of the Medical faculty and University Hospital can be considered only if they provide a substantial contribution to teaching in the BSc/MSc programs of Biology at the MNF. Note that Promotionsrecht at the MNF is not sufficient to qualify as external supervisor of a Master thesis. Research group at other Universities (including ETHZ) are not an option. The Rahmenordnung posits that at least 50% of the credits have to come from UZH.