



Learning Agreement - Instructions to Students

Christian Lehner, MSc coordinator (last update November 2017)

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" has to be scheduled around 8 weeks after completion of the Master thesis (except for special well founded cases). The date entered into the Learning Agreement is provisional; the definitive date is fixed after completion of the Master thesis.

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.biologie.uzh.ch/de/Studium/Masterstudium/MasterStudies/MolecularCellularBiology.html> (see Infobox, upper right corner)

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 “Rahmenverordnung requests (§ 15: “... Masterarbeit muss an der Fakultät absolviert werden.“) that the Master thesis research has to be completed within the MNF (Mathematisch-naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät) of the University of Zurich. Moreover, the “Studienordnung” of the MNF states (§12: „Verantwortlich für die Leitung und Beurteilung der Masterarbeit ist ein Fakultätsmitglied, ein Titularprofessor / eine Titularprofessorin oder ein Privatdozent / eine Privatdozentin“) that only Professors and Privatdozenten/innen of the MNF (Mathematisch-naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät) can act as supervisors. These regulations are 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 these regulations might perhaps be granted only in very rare and restricted cases that are well justified. 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, MSc co-ordinator will only grant exceptions 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 “Rahmenverordnung” posits that at least 50% of the credits have to come from UZH).