



Regulations for the Doctoral Program Epidemiology and Biostatistics (EBPhD)

Version June 1, 2023

I. General Information

1. The doctoral program “Epidemiology and Biostatistics” (EBPhD) at the University of Zurich (UZH) and ETH Zurich (ETHZ) fosters the research expertise of its doctoral students in Epidemiology and Biostatistics and promotes their acquired skills for careers within and outside academia. The overall goal is to train PhD students in designing, conducting, and analyzing research studies in biomedicine. Depending on the specific research area students are expected to acquire core competencies in epidemiology or biostatistics.
2. The program is run by the Life Science Zurich Graduate School (LSZGS), a joint organization belonging to UZH and ETHZ.
3. The doctoral studies are regulated according to the Ordinance for Obtaining a Doctoral Degree and the Doctoral Program Regulations at UZH Faculty of Science or the Ordinance on the Doctorate at ETHZ as well as the detailed stipulations regarding the doctorate of the departments, depending on where students matriculated for their doctorate.
4. Obtaining a doctoral degree from the EB program depends on the fulfillment of the following requirements:
 - Composition and successful defense of a dissertation containing original research.
 - Earning of 12 ECTS Credits that fulfill the curricular requirements.
 - Completion of all the relevant conditions and additional requirements set by the institute or department where the student matriculated.
5. The doctoral degree is awarded by the UZH or ETHZ, respectively.

II. Admission

1. Candidates with a Master of Science in Epidemiology, (Bio)statistics, Biology, Mathematics, Physics, or an equivalent subject will be admitted to the program without additional requirements. Candidates with a master’s in Human Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Psychology or Sociology (or with equivalent degrees) will be admitted without additional requirements, if they fulfill the following requirements:
 - Over the course of their education, they actively participated in research for at least 6 months/30 ECTS Credits/900 hours, such as during a master’s thesis or an MPH program, in which epidemiological or biostatistical methods played a major role.
 - Candidates have 30 ECTS Credits of foundational education in the natural sciences (Biology, Chemistry, etc.) or in methodological subjects (Epidemiology, Biostatistics, etc.). They must have earned at least 10 ECTS Credits in each of these two subject areas.

All other candidates will be set additional requirements in order to fill any gaps in their knowledge at the beginning of their doctorate. Candidates belonging to this second category will be admitted specifically to the EBPhD program and may not switch to a different program within the LSZGS.

Candidates need not have completed their master’s degree at the time of their application and admissions interviews, though it must be complete once they begin their dissertation. Candidates are admitted to the program via one of the two tracks described below.

2. Track I: Online Application on the LSZGS Website

There are two application deadlines per year in accordance with the application deadlines of Life Science Zurich Graduate School. A committee (consisting of multiple members of the EBPhD program and the EBPhD program coordinator) selects candidates and informs them at the latest 4 weeks after the application deadline whether they have been invited to an admissions interview. Over the course of the interview week, candidates have the opportunity to meet with research group leaders who have open PhD positions. An admissions committee (consisting of at least two members of the EBPhD program and the EBPhD program coordinator) hold the interviews. If candidates pass the interview, they are admitted to the Life Science Zurich Graduate School. By Tuesday following the interviews, candidates as well as research group leaders submit a list of preferences. The matching of candidates to research group leaders is conducted simultaneously for all PhD programs according to the rules set by the Life Science Zurich Graduate School. If candidates cannot find a position within half a year, they will lose their membership at the Graduate School.

3. Track II: Direct Application to a Research Group Leader

Candidates may also apply directly to a research group leader, who can accept them as a doctoral student. To be admitted to the EBPhD program, PhD students must apply to the program within six months of beginning their dissertation. The same rules apply for the interview and admission to the EBPhD program as in track I. There are four predetermined application deadlines per year which comply with those of Life Science Zurich Graduate School.

4. The program’s official language is English. The admissions committee uses the interview to determine whether a candidate’s English abilities suffice for communication in science.

5. All candidates must be matriculated at the university where the research group in which they are working is located. Conferral of a doctoral degree is determined by the respective university.

III. Structure of the Doctoral Program

1. Curricular Portion

All students who started their PhD after April 1, 2016 are required to attend the 2-hour LSZGS introductory course on Scientific Integrity.

Module/Course	ECTS Credits
EPI 301 Introduction to Epidemiology or STA 404DP Clinical Biostatistics	3
Free choice in accordance with supervisor	4
EBPhD Methods Seminar	2
Transferrable skills	min. 3
Total	min. 12

2. Teaching Assistance

A teaching assistance of at least 100 hours and no more than 420 hours is a component of all doctoral programs at MNF (UZH). The exact composition of the lessons depends on

the faculty affiliation of the responsible faculty member.

- a) For responsible faculty members with affiliation in Division VI "Computer-Aided Sciences and Neuroinformatics", the following can be counted as participation in teaching: instruction of Bachelor and Master students, supervision and correction of examinations, supervision of Master students.
- b) For responsible faculty members with affiliation in Division IV "Biology/Biomedicine" it is referred to www.biologie.uzh.ch/de/Studium/Doktorat.html verwiesen.
- c) For all other Divisions, the responsible faculty member determines the number and composition of the lessons.

PhD students matriculated at ETHZ are referred to the regulations at their departments and institutes.

3. Doctoral Committee and Doctoral Committee Meetings

The doctoral committee is determined by the direct PhD advisor with the understanding of the PhD student at the latest six months after the beginning of the dissertation. The doctoral committee consists of at least three members:

1. The direct thesis supervisor who is a member of the EBPhD program and has the right to confer a PhD.
2. If the direct supervisor does not have the right to confer a PhD, an EBPhD member with the right to confer a PhD has to be determined as official supervisor and is also member of the thesis committee.
3. A further member of the EBPhD program program.
4. An external (to the EB PhD program) member holding a PhD degree, preferably an established scientist from the field of research of the thesis.
5. Either the second member or the external member needs to have the right to confer a PhD.

The first meeting takes place within 6 to 12 months. A follow-up meeting must be scheduled every 12 months. The PhD defense may not take place more than 18 months after the doctoral committee's last meeting. The defense is considered the last meeting. At least two members of the doctoral committee must be present at every meeting. The external member must attend at least one meeting and should, if possible, be present at the defense.

For their first meeting, PhD students prepare a research proposal, in which they describe their project and its scientific background, document their first results, and describe specific goals, such as a plan for how to compose the required manuscripts. PhD students send out this research proposal to the committee and the EBPhD program coordinator ahead of the meeting. During the first meeting, PhD students present and defend their research proposal. In addition, the components of the PhD's curricular portion should be defined during this meeting.

In the case of an unsatisfactory performance, doctoral students can repeat the doctoral committee meeting and defense of their research proposal after three months. If they fail a second time, they will be expelled from the EBPhD program.

A brief report has to be submitted after every meeting. The report should record the date, the members present, the committee's decision (requirements fulfilled/ not fulfilled), any specific recommendations and the list of curricular coursework.

PhD students send the members of the doctoral committee and the EBPhD program coordinator a progress report ahead of all subsequent meetings. During these meetings, they present their research findings and compose a transcript, which records the proceedings and will be presented to all committee members.

PhD students are responsible for organizing the doctoral committee meetings. If a PhD student repeatedly fails to fulfill the requirements of these meetings, the Steering

Committee can expel the student from the EBPhD program.

4. Pre-PhD Defense

The presentation and defense of research findings during the doctoral committee's last meeting before the submission of the thesis is considered the pre-PhD defense. Students must successfully complete the pre-PhD defense to be allowed to submit their dissertation. The goal of the pre-PhD defense is to ascertain whether candidates have the necessary knowledge and abilities to complete the research for their dissertation. In the case of an unsatisfactory performance, doctoral students can repeat the pre-PhD defense within three months. If they fail a second time, they will be expelled from the EBPhD program.

IV. Doctoral Degree

Both the Ordinance for Obtaining a Doctoral Degree and the Doctoral Program Regulations at the UZH Faculty of Science as well as the Ordinance on the Doctorate at ETHZ provide detailed information on the regulation of doctoral degrees.

Specifically, the circulation round is defined to consist of at least five members with the right to confer a PhD-degree (EBPhD program members or people with the right to confer a PhD-degree at Faculty of Science) who are not part of the doctoral committee. The circulation round can be enlarged to include further faculty members at the discretion of the supervisor.

Confidentiality

An important aspect of the doctoral program is the exchange of scientific data and results between the various institutes at both universities. Such results should be treated as strictly confidential by all those involved and may not be passed along to individuals outside of the program if they have not yet been published by the author or their initial investigator. No member of the doctoral program may use scientific results to the disadvantage of the involved university. In particular, no member may infringe upon the university's right for the protection of its intellectual property by publishing data prematurely.