



# MAS ETH in Housing

Master of Advanced Studies in Housing  
ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE

# The MAS ETH in Housing

The Master of Advanced Studies in Housing (MAS ETH in Housing) trains architects to understand housing challenges and strategies within their broader socioeconomic, cultural, political and urban contexts.

## Our goal

The programme is committed to breaking new ground beyond established geographic boundaries in order to systematically investigate housing issues in Switzerland, Europe, and the global South. Employing an interdisciplinary approach, with an emphasis on participatory research and planning methods, the MAS ETH in Housing prepares architects and professionals in related fields to work in complex and multi-cultural environments that center around people, their needs, preferences, and wellbeing. The programme equips professionals of the built environment with the theories, concepts and methods required to assess the viability, effectiveness, and sustainability of different housing and neighbourhood development strategies. The MAS ETH in Housing

trains professionals to work with a wide range of actors, from individuals, communities, and cooperatives to local governments, non-governmental, and governmental agencies across different countries and rapidly transforming contexts.

There are immense challenges to ensure affordable housing in an increasingly complex and urbanised world: globally, one billion new residents will need adequate housing by 2025; around one quarter of the world's urban population continues to live in slums, and an increasing number of people live in conditions that are environmentally and socially precarious. Access to adequate and affordable housing is a challenge not only for people in low-income countries, but also increasingly

## Our target group

The programme is targeted at professionals of the built environment including architects, planners, civil engineers, and others from related disciplines. It is aimed at candidates who want to develop a professional career, in their own country or internationally, and acquire skills in participatory planning and research methods. In Switzerland and Europe such skills are increasingly demanded

by neighbourhood and city planning agencies, housing cooperatives, civil society organisations, and by organisations working with socially disadvantaged groups, such as low-income households, elderly people, migrants, and refugees. At the global level, the MAS ETH in Housing prepares participants to work in the domains of informal settlements, urban upgrading, housing for displaced people, and post-disaster reconstruction.



“I was promised different perspectives on the topic of housing and hands-on research tools by combining theory with practice. The MAS in Housing team, and my fellow students did not let me down. It was an amazing year that gave me the perspectives and inspiration to refocus. I would recommend it to anyone seeking the same!”

**Stefania Koller**

MSc ETH Architecture, MAS ETH in Housing  
 Salewski Nater Kretz AG Project Manager & Extended  
 Management | Glarus Nord Design Commission, Neustart  
 Schweiz & SODA Baden Board Member

in middle- and high-income countries that face the dual challenges of rapid migration and an ageing population. Finding solutions to these challenges requires highly motivated and skilled professionals acquainted with the process of developing housing solutions and neighbourhoods that are liveable, affordable, sustainable, and contextually appropriate.

**About the ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE**

The ETH Centre for Research on Architecture, Society and the Built Environment (ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE) was founded within the Department of Architecture at ETH Zurich in 1990 as an interdisciplinary research centre for the analysis of housing processes and their links to people’s socio-economic conditions, as well as to spatial and urban development. ETH CASE is involved in education, research, and advisory services in the fields of housing and neighbourhood development, cooperative housing, and adequate and affordable housing for low-income families, refugees, and the elderly.

The multidisciplinary team believes in an integrated and holistic approach to the generation of knowledge on housing. We are committed to participatory, people-centered, age-, gender- and minority-sensitive housing approaches. We maintain that cultural diversity is a source of socioeconomic enrichment that can make an important contribution to sustainable urban development.

**The MAS ETH in Housing**

The programme was launched in 1999 and so far, it has enrolled students from over 30 countries, forming a vibrant international network of alumni among whom exchanges and collaborations extend well beyond the completion of studies at ETH Zurich. In fact, the programme also aims to generate durable, long-term collaborations between professionals and researchers in Switzerland and abroad.





Participatory settlement planning in Gujarat  
© Jennifer Duyne Barenstein, ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE





MAS Students conducting interviews for Research Methods course  
© Alejandro Jaramillo

## The programme

The MAS ETH in Housing focuses on housing challenges and solutions for the 21st century in Switzerland, Europe, or the global South. While such different contexts may appear to have little in common, they share similar challenges in an increasingly globalised and urbanised world: how do socioeconomic, cultural, and demographic changes influence housing needs and demands? How can housing be both affordable and adequate for low- and middle-income groups? How can the growing number of people migrating to cities be housed in neighbourhoods that are socially cohesive, sustainable, and liveable? How should houses be rebuilt after natural or manmade disasters and conflicts? What are the links between adequate housing, sustainable neighbourhoods, human development, and quality of life? Building upon the research and professional experience of the ETH CASE and its partners, the programme places major emphasis on enhancing participants' theoretical, methodological, and writing skills. The MAS ETH in Housing focuses on a number of inter-linked thematic areas that will be analysed in the framework of four specific modules.

## Academic title

Successful graduates of the MAS programme acquire the academic degree "Master of Advanced Studies ETH in Housing" (MAS ETH HS).

## Duration

The MAS is a full-time, 12-month programme beginning in September every year. Upon request, the MAS course may be completed over a period of up to 24 months.

## Credit points

A total of 60 ECTS points must be acquired in order to obtain the degree MAS ETH in Housing. 28 credits are offered in the Autumn Semester as part of the following four modules: **module 1:** Social Innovation in Housing (4 ECTS), **module 2:** Global housing issues, challenges and strategies (4 ECTS), **module 3:** Housing Research Methods (10 ECTS), **module 4:** Writing and communication skills (10 ECTS). 30 ECTS points are offered in the spring semester. They include development of research project and the supervised Master thesis (MAS thesis). A seminar week/trip of 2 ECTS is offered either in the Spring or Autumn Semester.

"The MAS ETH in Housing gave me the skills and confidence to pursue specialist interests at an advanced level. The experience gave me the courage to set up my own practice on return to New Zealand, which is now a partnership with 26 staff. I suggest the MAS ETH in Housing course to anyone looking to pursue self driven studies in this area in an international context."

**Harriet Pilkington**  
Architect MAS ETH  
Director, Young + Richards Ltd.





**Tuition language**

Lectures, seminars, workshops, reading material, and individual coaching by academic advisors are all conducted in English. The MAS thesis is generally written and defended in English. However, it is possible to take courses held in German at ETH Zurich and to write the thesis in any of the Swiss national languages (German, French, or Italian).

**Elective courses**

MAS ETH Housing students are not required to complete any additional courses in order to obtain their degree. However, students have the option to take a wide range of elective courses offered by ETH to acquire additional academic and professional competences without being charged any additional registration fee.

**Programme fee**

Information regarding the programme fee and payment deadlines can be found on the website of the School for Continuing Education: [www.sce.ethz.ch](http://www.sce.ethz.ch)

**Infrastructure**

MAS participants are enrolled as students at ETH Zurich and are entitled to the use of all academic facilities, including lectures, student computer rooms, libraries with electronic access to a wide range of journals, discounted meals in student cafeterias, and discounted access to sport and leisure facilities.

MAS Students during seminar week in Barcelona in October 2022)  
© ETH Wohnforum - ETH CASE



# E PHARMA





# Thematic focus

Building upon the academic, research, and professional experience of ETH CASE and its partners, the MAS ETH in Housing focuses on a number of interlinked thematic areas that will be analysed in the framework of four specific modules.

## Module 1: Social Innovation in Housing

This module focuses on the interlinkages between housing, neighborhoods, wellbeing, and quality of life with specific reference to a selected number of housing projects. We visit highly innovative housing projects, such as those developed by renowned Swiss housing cooperatives, and interact with leaders of housing initiatives, architects, and residents with the aim of developing a critical understanding of the historical, sociocultural, and political context that enables such creative solutions to emerge. This module is carried out in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, such as the housing cooperatives ABZ, Kalkbreite, mehr als wohnen, Kraftwerk 1, and WBG-Winterthur, among others.

## Module 2: Global housing issues, challenges and strategies

Globally, over one billion people lack adequate housing – a challenge that calls for innovative, affordable, sustainable, and inclusive solutions. Departing from the understanding that housing needs to be analysed with reference to its broader socio-economic, cultural, political, and environmental context, the module focuses on the causes and the consequences of the lack of adequate and affordable housing and on the strategies that individuals and communities pursue to meet their need for shelter when formal housing is not accessible to them (e.g. self-help and incremental housing in informal settlements).



“The course of studies in the MAS Housing programme at the ETH is not simply an important step on your career ladder, but is learning for life. The strengths of the course lie in expert teaching at one of the best universities in Europe coupled with highly qualified supervision.”

### Professor Dominic Haag

Architect MAS ETH SIA  
 Interior Designer FH VSI  
 Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts

The module further focuses on the role of housing policies and built environment professionals in making adequate housing affordable through both conventional social housing projects and innovative approaches that explore alternative ways of housing finance, tenure, procurement and new forms of collective living. Key topics include: housing culture, affordable housing, housing and social innovation, housing cooperatives, social housing, collaborative housing, links between housing and socio-demographic and political context, informal housing, and housing post-disaster and post-conflict.

### **Module 3: Housing research methods**

This module introduces the course participants to the research methods and tools that are currently used in housing studies, with particular emphasis on qualitative and participatory methods. This enables participants to directly engage with stakeholders, such as residents and neighbourhood organizations, in the process of generating knowledge and information. These insights complement the technical know-how of experts in the process of

planning and designing urban interventions. Local authorities and government departments, in Switzerland and worldwide, recognise the importance of such bottom-up and participatory approaches to housing developments. By combining lectures focusing on methods and best practices with practical exercises, this course will equip students with the required knowledge and skills to develop their own MAS thesis and the opportunity to apply them in the framework of group exercises, individual projects, and in their future professional life.

### **Module 4: Writing and Communication Skills**

A core element of the MAS ETH in Housing is the elaboration of a research-based individual thesis. In the framework of Module 4, students will learn the fundamentals of conducting their own research project, from defining a clear research question, to formulating valid hypotheses, and developing a feasible research design. The course is intended to support the students in developing their individual proposals and applying the skills necessary to work independently with scientific rigour on a project that will lead to their final MAS thesis.

“The MAS ETH in Housing course was a wonderful opportunity to grow both professionally and personally. It gave me the tools to learn how to do research and to produce knowledge. I recommend attending the course if you’re ready to challenge yourself and if you are interested in having an ambitious cultural exchange where you will enrich your professional future.”

**Maria Florencina Medina**  
Architect, MAS ETH  
Executive Editor of PLOT magazin







Top: MAS students visiting housing cooperative ABZ © Daniela Sanjinés, ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE.  
Bottom: Residential building Caracas © Daniel Schwarz, ETH D-ARCH U-TT.













# Programme structure & content

The MAS ETH in Housing consists of an intensive 12-month programme divided into three blocks.

The **first block** takes place during the Autumn Semester (September-December): Through lectures, seminars, and group work, participants acquire the theoretical knowledge and methodological instruments that are required to analyse and compare housing strategies in different socio-cultural contexts and with reference to different population groups (e.g. aging people, migrants, refugees, slum dwellers, people displaced by disasters). The inputs for the first block will be provided by the ETH CASE core team and by invited lecturers with additional relevant academic and professional experience. The first block includes:

## **Four core courses**

These are specifically designed and exclusively oriented towards the MAS participants. They focus on research methods, key concepts, theories, and policies related to housing strategies in Switzerland, Europe, and the global South.

## **Elective courses**

The MAS ETH Housing students are not required to take any additional credits in order to obtain their degree. However, students can undertake elective courses offered by the ETH to acquire additional academic and professional competences.

## **Individual and group guidance**

During the first block the participants will be coached towards the development of their own research project. The topic of their thesis has to focus on a particular aspect related to any of the thematic areas covered by the programme and be translated into a project proposal by the end of the first semester.

## **Excursions**

Organised excursions in Switzerland offer an opportunity for MAS students to learn through observation and direct interaction with relevant Swiss stakeholders in the development of strategies for adequate and affordable housing, with particular focus on the country's renowned housing cooperatives.

## **Seminar week**

In keeping with the tradition of the ETH Department of Architecture, the seminar week constitutes an integral component of the MAS ETH in Housing. The seminar week focuses on key topics of the MAS and provides an opportunity to put the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the MAS into practice within a specific context. Participants will learn about existing housing strategies, visit projects, meet with related communities and stakeholders, and reflect upon contextually appropriate housing solutions.



Zwicky Süd, Kraftwerk 1  
© Verein Open House Zürich



Brunnenhof: cooperative housing for large families in Zurich. © Stiftung Wohnungen für Kinderreiche Familien

The **second block** (January-February) takes place during the semester break. This period will be dedicated to the participants' individual research projects. We encourage participants to conduct empirical research on relevant issues of their choice in their own country or on a subject and context related to their personal interest or professional experience. Whenever possible, we will also facilitate opportunities to conduct research in the framework of housing projects executed by our partners.

The **third block** (March-June) is dedicated to writing the thesis under the supervision of the ETH CASE scientific staff and its partners. During this period, the participants will be stimulated to reflect upon their research findings and guided in writing their theses in the framework of regular group meetings and individual consultations.

### Studying at ETH and living in Zurich

The MAS ETH in Housing is intensive and demanding, but participants are able to enjoy an active student life. Zurich is an attractive, dynamic, and multi-cultural city, offering a high quality of life and a wide range of cultural and recreational activities. Zurich is renowned worldwide for its housing governance and the municipal government's role in providing affordable housing. A high number of innovative housing cooperatives reflect a strong tradition of bottom-up, community-driven initiatives, enabling housing policies and collaborative housing organisations. Leading architects have contributed to the translation of these cooperatives' housing aspirations into high-value, affordable, and sustainable housing complexes that we will have the opportunity to visit in the MAS programme.

"The ETH MAS in Housing has meant a great opportunity to enhance my research skills at one of the best universities in Europe. The programme focuses on relevant topics around international housing strategies by analysing numerous specific cases and projects. I would recommend it to anyone looking to push forward their academic and research career in an international learning context."

#### Josep Maria Solé Gras

UPC Architect MAS ETH

Associated Professor in Urbanism and Architecture,  
Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona







Cooperative settlement Sihlfeld in Zurich  
© ABZ/Reto Schlatter

**Selected lecturers from the  
ETH Zurich**

Professor Elli Mosayebi  
Chair of Architecture and Design,  
D-ARCH

Professor Maria Conen  
Chair of Architecture and Housing,  
D-ARCH

Dr Jennifer Duyne Barenstein  
ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE

Daniela Sanjinés  
ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE

Dr Tino Schlinzig  
ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE

Dr Sibylle Wälty  
ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE

Each year, the MAS ETH in Housing features several invited lecturers with relevant expertise from other universities and from public and private organisations.

**Programme management**

Professor Elli Mosayebi  
Chair of Architecture and Design, D-ARCH

Professor Maria Conen  
Chair of Architecture and Housing, D-ARCH

Dr Jennifer Duyne Barenstein  
Executive Director MAS ETH in Housing  
ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE, D-ARCH

Daniela Sanjinés  
Coordination MAS ETH in Housing

**Location**

ETH Zurich, Campus Höggerberg  
ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE  
Centre for Research on Architecture, Society  
and the Built Environment  
Department of Architecture

**Duration**

1 year full-time, 600 contact hours  
2 years possible on request

**Detailed information**

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**Registration**

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**Documents required for registration**

Please submit your Curriculum Vitae, two references (from employer or professors at your university), and a motivation letter including preliminary ideas for a MAS research topic along with the registration documents to the ETH School for Continuing Education.







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