



Mission Statement

The aim of the PhD program in Microbiology and Immunology (MIM) is to recruit and train future leaders in different fields of Microbiology and Immunology. This PhD program offers a unique and integrative environment for internationally competitive research. It aims to attract the most motivated students from any field of the natural sciences. Projects will cover basic, environmental and medical microbiology, molecular microbiology, biochemistry, bacterial and viral pathogenesis, infection biology, experimental and clinical immunology, experimental mycology, evolution, parasitology, virology and veterinary bacteriology.

Program Overview

The Microbiology and Immunology PhD program leads from a MSc to a PhD degree within three to four years. An admission committee selects students according to their abilities and knowledge in state of the art natural sciences. The successful applicant can join the research group of a principal investigator who is a member of the MIM program. To graduate, students will have to fulfill the following requirements:

- Acquisition of 12 credit points
- Deposition and defense of a PhD thesis describing an original piece of experimental or theoretical research
- Any other requirements imposed by the host institution (UZH or ETHZ).

The final degree is conferred by either UZH or ETHZ, depending on the academic affiliation of the responsible faculty member (see specific regulations as are detailed below).



REGULATIONS FOR THE MIM PHD PROGRAM

1. ADMISSION TO THE MIM PHD PROGRAM

1.1 ADMISSION PROCEDURE

The applicants must have a Master's degree or an equivalent degree at the start of the PhD program.

Track I: Application to the Program

- The deadlines for the applications are May 1st and November 1st.
- The admission committee decides on the list of applicants to be invited for the interviews.
- Three-day online interviews will be held in June and December, respectively.
- The applicants should choose up to eight research groups they are interested in and would like to meet during the online interview round.
- During the online interview round, the candidates have to pass an admission interview. By the end of the interviews, the admission committee will communicate a list of candidates admitted and a list of candidates not permitted into the program.
- Furthermore, the candidates will discuss with group leaders who have advertised a PhD position.
- After the online interviews, applicants will list the names of group leaders they would like to meet in-person. In-person visits are planned for week 28 / week 3.
- After the second round of interviews, applicants will list up to six names of group leaders in the order of their preference.
- This will be the basis for the matching process. The matching process will take into account the candidate's and the PI's preferences and should be completed within two weeks after the end of the interviews.

Track II: Application to a Principal Investigator (PI)

- An applicant has the possibility to directly apply to a research group and can be accepted by the PI.
- Track II students should submit their application via the online application system of the Graduate School, including two recommendation letters if possible from two independent reviewers. The application has to contain a recommendation letter of the PI explaining why the student qualifies for the Program. In case the PI does not have the right to promote at the Faculty of Science (UZH) or at ETH, a confirmation letter of the official supervisor has to be submitted additionally.
- Applications can be submitted at any time. The Steering Committee will decide on the acceptance of the student or on a further examination by the Admission Committee.
- Applications from Track II students are accepted no later than 6 months after starting the PhD (start of work in the lab).
- Applicants who failed a Track I or a Track II interview (of any Zurich graduate Program) are excluded to enter the MIM program through Track II.



- Application as Track II is possible for candidates which had applied by Track I but were not invited for an interview.
- Exceptionally, a MIM Track II admission interview can be repeated once during the following 6 months.

Should a PhD student fail to comply the requirements of the MIM PhD Program, this may result in exclusion from the Program.

Recruitment Costs

In order to cover the recruitment costs the following fees have to be borne by the PI:

- Track I : 1000.- CHF
- Track II: 1000.- CHF

In case a PI retracts a position after the invitation of the candidates, a 250.- contribution to the administrative costs has to be paid.

1.2 ADMISSION COMMITTEE

The admission committee consists of up to 10 members of MIM. Not more than two members of the program steering committee should be in the admission committee.

The admission committee members are proposed and appointed by the steering committee. The members of the admission committee should carry out their task for at least three to four years.

Three members of the admission committee can be exchanged every year. In addition, ad hoc members will support the appointed admission committee members. Ad hoc members are all MIM PI's with open positions in the respective recruitment round. Ad hoc members have the same rights and duties as appointed members for one recruitment round. The duties of the admission committee members are:

- to evaluate the applications
- to be present at the interviews
- to decide on the admission to the MIM program.

2. THESIS COMMITTEE

The thesis committee consists of three to four persons and its composition is in agreement with the doctoral regulations of UZH or ETHZ:

- The responsible faculty member of UZH or ETHZ
- The thesis supervisor (if not identical with the responsible faculty member)
- A second faculty member (according to the ETH und UZH regulations)
- 1-2 additional advisors from a related research area, one of which ideally is a member of the MIM PhD program



At least one member of the PhD committee is an independent person (not belonging to the same group or being a close collaborator of the official supervisor).

At least one member should be a basic researcher.

The responsible faculty member, thesis supervisor and the student have to select the thesis committee. The responsible faculty member or the thesis supervisor has to be member of MIM. In case the direct supervisor is not the same person as the responsible faculty member, the direct supervisor has to become a MIM member, too, if she/he fulfils the Program's requirements. The composition of the committee has to comply with the respective regulations at UZH or ETHZ.

3. THESIS COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- The student is responsible to organize the meetings. At least two members (including the thesis supervisor) have to be present.
- The chair of the committee meeting has to be defined at the beginning of the meeting; usually this is not the student's supervisor.
- Every meeting from which the public is excluded consists of a project presentation by the student, followed by a discussion with the committee members.

At the end of every meeting, a protocol (committee meeting report), signed by the attended thesis committee members, must be compiled and uploaded onto the Student Admin (UZH PhD student). ETH PhD students use the template provided by their department and also fill in the supplementary sheet provided by MIM (PhD committee meeting report – supplement). Should no template be provided by the Department, the MIM PhD committee meeting report will be used. The protocol(s) must be uploaded onto the DissGo database. Protocol templates can be downloaded from the MIM webpage.

- The first Committee meeting is held within 12 months, followed by annually occurring meetings. At ETH, the aptitude colloquium can be recognized as first Thesis Committee meeting. The progress of the experimental or theoretical work will be judged based upon an oral presentation of the PhD candidate.
- The thesis defense does not take place later than 18 months after the last thesis committee meeting.
- For the first meeting the student will write a project proposal (approximately 2000 words, excluding references) describing the PhD project. For this purpose, the proposal that is required for the ETHZ admission can be used.
The proposal has to be submitted to the thesis committee members and uploaded onto the Student Admin database (UZH PhD student) or DissGo (ETH PhD student) at least one week before the committee meeting and has to be written in the format of a grant application, including a background section, the aims of the project, planned experiments and a short compilation of the envisaged methods, including a section of preliminary results. The proposal is presented and defended by the students during the first meeting.
- In case of an unsatisfactory performance, the student can repeat the proposal defense after three months (Exception: if the ETH aptitude committee unanimously assessed



the first attempt of the aptitude colloquium as “failed”, no repetition is possible). If the student fails a second time, he/she will be expelled from the program.

For the subsequent meetings the students will submit a progress report (up to 1000 words) one week before the meeting to the committee members and upload it to the respective database. ETH PhD students may use the academic progress report they write for the annual status conversation. The annual status conversation can be recognized as a Thesis Committee Meeting if at least the second advisor of the PhD committee is attending.

- The chair gives the student the opportunity to speak to the committee members without his or her supervisor and closely related PIs being present.
- The last PhD committee meeting must include a discussion and agreement of the PhD committee with the PhD student about:
 - the publication concept (no program-specific details defined)
 - the form of the dissertation (monograph or a cumulative dissertation)
 - the review of the coursework and, for MNF/UZH students, the teaching assignments
 - the timeline and approx. date of the defense (disclosure of how long the PhD is paid maximally)

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

It is an important goal that the participants of the PhD program exchange their scientific results between different institutes and the host institutions. Any such results shall be kept strictly confidential by all participants of the program and shall not be disclosed to persons outside of the program as long as the results are not published by the author/originator of the results.

No participant of the PhD program shall use any scientific result to the detriment of one of the institution; in particular, no participant shall impair a host institution’s right to seek protection for intellectual property contained in such results by way of a premature publication or other premature disclosure of results.

5. COURSE WORK DURING PHD PROGRAM

To complete the PhD program a student must acquire 12 credit points in total. The awarding of credit points complies with UZH/ETHZ regulations, and courses should be selected in a meaningful way. The MIM Introductory Course and active participation at one conference and at one MIM Retreat are compulsory and the student will acquire one credit point each.

Graduate and other courses should be approved by the PhD Committee and regular documentation of the completed course work should be included in the PhD committee meeting reports.



Introductory block course

An introductory block course of three days will be held once a year. The goal is to introduce the students to the various model organisms, methods, and fields of expertise of the research groups of the program, and to foster contacts between the peers. For this compulsory task the student will acquire one credit point.

Retreat

The attendance of at least one students' retreat is mandatory and credited with one credit point.

Conference visit

Every student visits once a meeting relevant to his/her field. Submission of an abstract is compulsory and leads to an acquisition of one credit point.

Details for the acquisition of credit points

- Not more than 3 credit points can be acquired by attending undergraduate courses (1st or 2nd year of the BSc curriculum). A maximum of 4 credits can be obtained by participating at symposia, workshops, summer schools and by serving as a member of an ETHZ / UZH commission or committee or as representative of the doctoral students.
- An active participation in an external workshop / summer school is worth 1 credit for 2 days (2 credits for a one-week education) in case the organizers do not award official credits.
- A maximum of 2 credits can be awarded by participating actively (poster and/or oral presentation) at maximally 2 external conferences. Participation at seminars organized by the host institute (journal club, colloquium, etc.) does in general not give credit points unless they are listed as course with credit points as defined in the course catalogue of UZH or ETHZ.
- A maximum of 2 ECTS can be listed for online courses (outside of the regular UZH / ETH curriculum). Courses must cover the ECTS-equivalent workload and involve an activity confirmation / proof of achievement. Prior consultation of and approval by the direct supervisor is mandatory.

6. THESIS DEFENSE

The PhD defense will follow the respective regulations of the MNF or ETHZ and will consist of two parts: A public presentation of the thesis work and an oral examination.

- The public presentation of 45 minutes can be embedded in a seminar series of the host institution.
- The oral examination is not public. It can immediately follow the public presentation or has to take place within six months after the public presentation.

The Thesis Committee decides on passed or not passed. For ETHZ students the Committee makes a suggestion to the ETHZ if the student should be awarded a medal. For University students, the Committee can make a suggestion for a distinction of the thesis.

A successful participation in the MIM program will be confirmed with a certificate.



7. ORGANIZATION OF THE PROGRAM

The MIM program is headed by two directors, one from ETHZ and one from UZH, who co-chair the program.

The steering committee consists of the two directors and two members of the MIM program. It leads the daily business of the program. Term of office for members of the steering committee is four years (renewable once). The term may be extended for a third term (12 years maximum) if the incumbent agrees to continue to serve and is re-elected by the General Assembly.

UZH and ETHZ faculty members and principal investigators with own research grants can apply to become a member of the MIM program. The steering committee will evaluate the requests to join the program. It reports the results of the evaluation to the General Assembly of the MIM program members. The General Assembly will decide about the acceptance of the new member. A simple majority suffices for the acceptance of the new member.

The program members meet at least once a year. This General Assembly elects new members of the program, elects the steering committee of the program and decides about changes in the regulations of the program.

MIM PIs are obliged to contribute to the MIM teaching program, including the MIM Introductory Course. These activities should complement the PhD education in a meaningful way (see annex 1). MIM PIs bear responsibility for fulfillment of the program requirements of their PhD students (regular meetings with the PhD committee, course work, teaching) and to provide high quality supervision and fair payment. Failure to meet these requirements may result in exclusion from the Program (see annex 2).

In addition, we strongly encourage the PIs to implement an annual appraisal meeting with their PhD students. A guideline for preparing an appraisal meeting between PI and PhD students is provided by the MIM Program.

Two MIM PhD students (one of each university) represent the students' interest towards the MIM PhD Program by participating in the Steering Committee and the General Assembly.

February 6, 2025



Annex 1

class	requirement	affiliation
full professor	at least one course as chief organizer on master level or equivalent	full & associate professor
assistant professor	representative contribution in a course on master level or equivalent	SNSF professor assistant professor ETH / UZH adjunct professor professor ad personam
clinicians	representative contribution in a course on master level or equivalent in sciences at ETH or UZH	
senior scientist	teaching contribution on master / PhD level	Ambizione Fellows research associate
PIs, not from Zurich	locally held training modules for PhD students should be part of the course catalogue (ETH or UZH)	

Time limit

MIM members: half a year time for implementation, newly elected MIM members: 1 ½ years

The Steering Committee reserves the right to disqualify MIM members who do not confirm to these requirements.

Annex 2

In case of recurrent severe problematic situations arising in the laboratory of a MIM PI, the SC will get into contact with the specific PI either via the MIM Ombudsperson or via a member of the SC and discuss the situations and the reasons for the recurrent problems with the PI. In case no improvement is resulting from this discussion, the SC has the right to exclude the respective PI from the MIM PhD program. This immediately restricts the ability of the PI to recruit new students via the MIM PhD program. Effectively, the respective PI will remain member of the MIM PhD program until completion of the last thesis of the current MIM PhD students.