



**University of
Zurich**^{UZH}

Institute of Biomedical Ethics and History of
Medicine

PhD Program in Biomedical Ethics and Law

**University of Zurich
Medical Faculty
Institute of Biomedical Ethics and
History of Medicine**

**Doctoral Program in Biomedical
Ethics and Law/Medical Track**

Program Information and Student Guide





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Introduction

The Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Law of the University of Zurich are jointly offering the doctoral program (PhD) in Biomedical Ethics and Law, established in 2009. It aims to respond to the emerging challenges posed by biomedical developments over the past few decades and the increasing need for experts in biomedical ethics and law who can adequately address these issues at the national and international level.

The information in this leaflet is for the medical track of the program which is based on the Medical Faculty's Regulations for Doctoral Programs (*Promotionsverordnung*, 2009) and the Regulation of the BmEL PhD Program of the University of Zurich Medical Faculty (*Doktoratsordnung*, 2009). This information is only relevant to those applying to the medical track of the program or who have been accepted by the medical track, through the Faculty of Medicine. On behalf of the Medical Faculty, the Institute of Biomedical Ethics and History of Medicine (IBME) carries the overall responsibility for this program.

The PhD BmEL/Medical Track is an English language program. It is part of the Life Science Zurich Graduate School.

Goals

The program offers advanced training in the area of biomedical ethics and law through required courses and an original research project leading to a doctoral dissertation. The program is open to medical doctors, scholars and other qualified participants and focuses on interdisciplinary research.

In particular, the BmEL PhD Program's goals are to:

- deepen participants' understanding of global issues in biomedical ethics and law
- provide the intellectual environment and guidance that will allow participants to develop their own research project



- equip participants with the methodological tools used in bioethics and law to approach ethical dilemmas that arise in biomedicine and health care
- offer opportunities for students to interact with an international network of experts in the field of biomedical ethics and law

Governance and Organization

The PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF

The PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF is responsible for the implementation of the PhD regulations (Doktoratsordnung), curriculum in biomedical ethics as well as for the overall establishment and function of the program. It also serves as the admissions committee to the program setting the criteria for admission and performing the evaluation of the applications. The committee also reviews applications for financial support when resources are available.

The PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF consists of the following members:

- The program director
- The coordinator of the PhD program
- Additional members with relevant expertise

A student representative serves as the communication liaison between the Commission and the PhD students.

PhD Program Coordinator

The coordinator works closely with the Director of the program and carries the responsibility of the scientific coordination of the PhD program. The coordinator is responsible for the overall development of the program, in terms of both organization and content. Tasks include the development of proposals for the curriculum, exploring



collaborations with other institutions, and serving as the program's focal point of contact for applicants and enrolled students.

PhD Administration

The Program Administrator is the first person of contact. Applications are received and checked preliminarily for content by the administrator. She/he will be in contact with the PhD applicants for all administrative application matters. Most correspondence is handled by the administrator. For any questions regarding the application and registration processes she/he will guide and help the applicants.

During the program the administrator will aid with course registrations and timetables, student formalities, offers credit point guidance and information outside of the scientific scope of the program.

Towards the end of the program the administrator guides the students through the administrative steps of the defense and dissertation formalities.



Application Process and Admission

Eligibility

The program is open to national and international students who have demonstrated academic excellence and have a strong interest in biomedical ethics. They may or not have medical training, or be in the process of completing their medical studies (see section on MD/PhD).

To be considered eligible candidates must have:

- a Master's degree or an equivalent academic title (subject to acceptance through the University of Zurich's admissions office, see section on "admission"), or
- completed three years of medical school for conditional admission in the MD/PhD option
- demonstrated academic excellence (academic grades, distinctions, awarded fellowships or publications)
- motivation and commitment to their research interests
- fluency in the English language

MD/PhD option

The PhD program in Biomedical Ethics and Law accepts medical students for the option of a combined MD/PhD or MMed/PhD.

First and second year medical students with an interest in biomedical ethics will be given a general orientation and information about the option of the combined degree. They will be expected to choose electives related to biomedical ethics and may register for additional modules, exceeding medical school requirements. Eligible medical students should be on their 3rd year of studies in order to apply to the PhD program. Conditional approval may be granted to 3rd year medical students while full enrollment in the program will take place upon completion of medical studies.



Medical students have the option of completing some of the PhD required coursework parallel to their medical training (while completing their master's requirement for their medical degree). They may also choose the topic of their Master's thesis or medical dissertation (MD/Dr. med.) from the area of bioethics. Having already completed some of the PhD requirements, they will be able to concentrate on their research project and PhD dissertation upon completion of their medical training.

Application Process

Applications should be addressed to the PhD Program Commission BmEL/Medical Track by email: ibme@ibme.uzh.ch

Application should be in pdf, please use our application form and attachments and should be received by the deadline set for the running admission cycle. The following documents are required:

- Curriculum vitae with photo
- Academic degrees (copies) including secondary school degree and MA equivalent;
- Completed application form (available at: <https://www.bmel.uzh.ch/en/med/program/application.html>)
- Statement of purpose (within the application form):
The statement of purpose should include a description of the applicant's interest in the field of biomedical ethics, and the particular research areas that she/he would like to address, the reasons for which she/he decided to pursue a PhD, and future career plans;
- Essay (separate document): Please provide a short essay (max 2 pages in attachment) describing a research idea that you would be interested in working on. Include also a section on the methodological approach that you would consider most suitable for addressing your research question.



- Two letters of recommendation referring to the applicant's qualifications and academic potential. The letters of recommendation should be sent directly to the admissions committee at ibme@ibme.uzh.ch
- Proof of English proficiency:
Accepted tests and scores as defined by the University of Zurich's language requirements. The language tests are not required if the applicant provides proof of completion of a previous degree program in an English language university; or proof of prolonged residence and exercise of a profession in an English-speaking country.

Applicants who have been short-listed may be invited for an interview.

Interview

The interview will be held in English. The aim of the interview is to allow the admissions committee to make a better assessment of the applicant's motivation, commitment to the completion of his/her studies and research project as well as his/her expectations.

If it is not possible for the applicant to travel to Zurich, the interview can be held by teleconference.

Admission

The PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF serves as the admission committee for those applying through the Faculty of Medicine.

The admission committee reviews all complete applications that have been received upon the deadline set for the admission cycle. Applicants who are short-listed will be invited for an interview. The decision about the admission will be based on both the written application and the interview.

All applicants will be informed of the committee's decisions in writing.



Funding opportunities

Applicants to the PhD program are expected to have their funding secured for a minimum of three years. They may have been awarded individual scholarships or be working as part of a research project at the IBME. They may also apply as part-time students and continue with a paid position, e.g. as physicians. To what extent their professional activity can be reconciled with their status as a PhD student will be subject to a case-by-case discussion by the BmEL program commission.

Selection of potential funding sources:

- MD-PhD program of the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS). This program awards a limited number of scholarships each year. The area of biomedical ethics is explicitly covered by this program and BmEL students are in principle eligible to apply. If you fulfill the program's criteria and are interested in applying, please contact the BmEL program director.
<https://www.samw.ch/en/Funding/MD-PhD-Program.html>
- Forschungskredit UZH
<https://www.research.uzh.ch/en/funding/phd/fkcandoc.html>
- SNF Doc.CH Program
<http://www.snf.ch/en/funding/careers/docch/>
- Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships
<https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/education/scholarships-and-grants/swiss-government-excellence-scholarships.html>



Registration with the UZH

After having been accepted by the PhD program admission committee, registration as a doctoral student with the UZH Admissions Office is necessary until latest July 31 for the Fall Semesters or January 31 for the Spring Semester:

<https://www.uzh.ch/cmsssl/en/studies/application/apply.html>

Please read the information carefully and follow the instructions. For online registration use this link:

<https://www.uzh.ch/cmsssl/en/studies/application/apply.html>

Under "Studiengang" you will have to choose: Doktorat Medizinische Wissenschaft. PV09

In addition to your other paperwork you will be asked to submit the "Confirmation of Supervision from the Authorized Examiner", and the confirmation letter from the Institute that you have been accepted into the program.

Once you have received the authorization to study from the university, you can start booking courses:

<https://www.students.uzh.ch/en/booking.html>

Unclick the box "nur Module mit offener Buchungsfrist".



UZH for Students

Please read all information regarding students carefully and contact the relevant offices if you have any questions:

Visa

If you which Switzerland needs a Visa, see following link for information:

<http://www.uzh.ch/en/studies/application/generalinformation/entry.html>

Information and Advice

<https://www.uzh.ch/cmsssl/en/studies/infoadvice.html>



PhD Program

Program overview

The program consists of coursework and an original research project which leads to the dissertation. The PhD candidates should complete core and elective courses for a minimum of 30 ECTS points.

The research project should demonstrate originality and the ability of the candidate to conduct independent research in biomedical ethics.

The duration of the program is usually three years on a full time basis. Exceptions to this rule will be considered on a case by case basis by the PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF. It is also possible to complete the PhD program on a part time basis. If a candidate wishes to pursue the part-time PhD option in combination with work undertaken outside the PhD program, the BmEL PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF should agree on the part-time percentage of work.

Requirements

The successful completion of the PhD program requires:

- a. Completion of the research project and a dissertation in the form of a monograph. The monograph can contain a collection of articles which have been published or accepted for publication in national and international scientific journals.
- b. One publication (as first author) in a national or international scientific journal;
- c. Successful completion of mandatory and elective modules (minimum 30 ECTS points);
- d. Doctoral dissertation defense (public presentation and oral exam by Dissertation Committee)



Curriculum

PhD students have to obtain a minimum of 30 ECTS points. Students should fulfill the mandatory course requirements and complete elective modules with the most relevance to their research interests. The program will offer a variety of modules covering theoretical areas in biomedical ethics as well as research methodologies. The selection of electives should be approved by the student's supervisor.

Mandatory modules

Mandatory modules include four core courses and two additional modules (cf. tables). The core courses are offered by both the IBME and the Faculty of Law. The goal of core courses is to provide PhD students with a solid understanding of the key concepts, main issues and methodological approaches in biomedical ethics and law. It is highly recommended that core courses are completed during the first two semesters of study.

Elective modules

Elective modules are comprised of selected courses, workshops and conferences organized by the IBME or by other institutions, either in Switzerland or abroad. They must be relevant to the PhD student's research interests and have to be pre-approved by the PhD supervisor. Recognition of corresponding credit point(s) by institutions other than the UZH proceeds through completion of the "ECTS Transfer Form": <https://www.bmel.uzh.ch/en/med/program/regulations.html>

We also offer retreats to enable exchange between PhD students and are open to partner programs. We encourage doctoral students to gather teaching experiences.

Various courses offered by the University of Zurich:
<http://www.vorlesungen.uzh.ch>

Life Sciences Zurich Graduate School (LSZGS):
<https://www.ueberfachliche-kompetenzen.uzh.ch/en/phd-courses/CoP.html>



Graduate Campus UZH:

<https://www.ueberfachliche-kompetenzen.uzh.ch/en.html>

Information on ECTS Points and equivalencies:

<https://www.uzh.ch/cmsssl/en/studies/catalogue/bologna.html>

Mandatory modules (18 ECTS)

Core courses

Offered by the IBME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundations of biomedical ethics • Contemporary issues in biomedical ethics 	3 ECTS 3 ECTS
Offered by the Faculty of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches and ways of legal thinking • Introduction to medical and health care law 	3 ECTS 3 ECTS

Additional mandatory modules

Offered by the IBME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication Tutorial • Research Colloquium (6 semesters) 	3 ECTS 3 ECTS
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Foundations of biomedical ethics (3 ECTS)

This course presents the development of the field of biomedical ethics analyzing the historical and social changes that have played the most significant role in shaping the field. It focuses on the methodological approaches that have emerged in addressing ethical dilemmas in biomedicine in particular, such as principlism, rights-based approach, casuistry, virtue ethics etc. The goal of this course is to equip students with the different methodological approaches of argumentation and how they can be applied in the debate of bioethical issues. It takes place in the Fall Semester.



Contemporary issues in biomedical ethics (3 ECTS)

The course aims to present and discuss the current controversies in biomedical ethics. A representative selection of the most debated topics in the field includes issues in clinical ethics, research involving human subjects, international health and justice. The goal of the course is to ensure that participants are acquainted with the key debates in the field, and familiarize themselves with the most relevant literature, which will also facilitate their search for defining their research project. It takes place in the Spring Semester.

Publication Tutorial (3 ECTS)

The publication tutorial to assist students to develop their abilities to conduct literature search, to plan and draft scientific papers, and to enhance their knowledge about existing guidelines on scientific integrity and authorship. Fulfilment of this module requires:

- a) Attendance of the Academic Writing and Publishing Seminar, which is offered by the IBME.
- b) Tutorial with the PhD supervisor, which consists of three meetings between the student and the supervisor to discuss about the planning, writing and/or submission of papers to academic journals.
- c) The publication of a paper in a peer-reviewed journal.

Research Colloquium (3 ECTS)

The Research Colloquium is designed to enable PhD students and IBME staff to present their current research and receive feedback from colleagues. It takes place bi-weekly every semester. PhD students are required to attend the Research Colloquium along 6 semesters.



Progress Report Meetings

First progress report meeting

At the end of their first semester in the PhD Program, every PhD student has to have a first progress report meeting with the PhD Program Commission. Main aims of this meeting are to assist new students to better define their research question and to identify potential members of their Dissertation Committee.

Prior to the meeting, students are required to submit the “First semester PhD Progress Report” form to the PhD Program Commission.

Annual progress report meeting

PhD students are required to have a yearly progress report meeting with their Dissertation Committee. This meeting ensures that the student is making satisfactory research progress toward their PhD and provides a mechanism for identifying areas of strength and weakness in their work. The PhD Coordinator ensures the timely organization of the meetings.

Prior to the meeting, students are required to submit the completed “Annual PhD Progress Report” form to the Dissertation Committee and to the PhD Coordinator.

At the meeting, students are expected to give a short presentation (10’) describing the past year’s accomplishments and pending work. The outcome of these meetings is documented by the PhD Program Coordinator with a copy to the PhD student and his/her supervisor.

In addition to the formal yearly progress report meeting, PhD students are strongly encouraged to have one or more additional progress report meetings with their supervisors during the of the year. Students themselves should take care of scheduling this second meeting.



Dissertation and Dissertation Defense

Supervision

Every student has a supervisor. Depending on the research project a student may have two supervisors. The supervisor/s should be defined as early as possible and no later than the end of the first semester.

The Dissertation Committee includes the supervisor(s), the chair (a member of the faculty) and other scholars, either from the University of Zurich or from other Universities. The Dissertation Committee is responsible for planning, scheduling, supervising and evaluating the work that leads to the PhD degree. The committee convenes at least once a year to ensure that the doctoral candidate is progressing according to expectations. The composition of the Dissertation Committee will be discussed between the PhD student and the PhD Program Commission during the first progress report meeting taking place within the first six months from the admission into the program.

The chair of the Dissertation Committee is a member of the Medical Faculty. The composition of the committee needs to be approved by the PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF.

The relevant form (“Doctoral Agreement”) should be signed by the PhD student and by all Dissertation Committee members. The student should submit the signed form to the program's administrative coordinator. The form is available at: <http://www.bmel.uzh.ch/med/program/regulations.html>

In case of dispute between the PhD candidate and his/her supervisor, the matter should be brought to the PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF which will determine the appropriate appeal mechanism and facilitate the resolution of the issue.



Dissertation defense examination (Promotionsprüfung)

Once the dissertation is completed and in agreement with the Dissertation Committee, the PhD candidate sets a date for the dissertation defense examination. The dissertation defense examination consists of two parts:

1. a discussion between the candidate and the Dissertation Committee
2. public presentation and open discussion of the PhD findings

Examiners are the members of the Dissertation committee. The chair of the Dissertation Committee chairs the exam. All members of the committee shall be present during the exam session.

The exam is graded on a pass or fail basis.

In case of failure, the exam can be repeated one more time.

Title

The awarded title is Dr. sc. med. (German) / PhD (English).

Registration Fees

Registration fees are defined by the admissions office of the University of Zurich and apply to those registered in the PhD program.



Checklist for PhD students

	WHEN	WHERE/WHO	URL
First time registration as doctoral student	University of Zurich deadlines: July 1st and January 1st	Online	https://www.uzh.ch/cssl/en/studies/application/apply.html
Attend orientation session	First semester	IBME	https://www.bmel.uzh.ch/en/med/calendar.html
Course registration (Module booking)	Medical Faculty module booking deadlines every semester	Online	https://www.students.uzh.ch/en/booking.html
Identify supervisor and research topic	By end of first semester	IBME	http://tiny.uzh.ch/Xn
First semester progress report meeting	By end of first semester	IBME (through PhD program coordinator)	http://tiny.uzh.ch/Xo
Submit first semester progress report form	By end of first semester	PhD program administrator	
Submit Dissertation Committee form	By end of first semester	PhD program administrator	http://tiny.uzh.ch/Xn
Annual progress reports	Every year	doctoral student sets a date with Dissertation Committee members	http://tiny.uzh.ch/Xp



Additional progress report meetings	at least once per year	doctoral student sets dates with supervisor(s)	http://tiny.uzh.ch/Xp
Defense	when dissertation is finished, all necessary points have been awarded and all forms are in order	doctoral student sets date with Dissertation Committee, sends out invitations for public defense	http://tiny.uzh.ch/Xq https://www.bmel.uzh.ch/en/med/program/regulations.html
Dissertation	once accepted and defense passed comply package of: dissertation, one original article	doctoral student sends package to administrator - administrator will send package to faculty for the faculty meeting	
Printing	once faculty has accepted dissertation and it is ready for printing	coordinator has to give good for printing, doctoral student prints according to guidelines, distributes according to template and collects signatures	https://www.bmel.uzh.ch/en/med/program/regulations.html See various downloads under 'Dissertation'
Diploma	2 dissertations to administrator who will start the process leading to diploma	doctoral student gives necessary documents to administrator	



Staff

PhD BmEL Medical Track Program Director:

Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. Nikola Biller-Andorno
Email: biller-andorno@ethik.uzh.ch

PhD BmEL Medical Track Program Coordinator:

Dr. Roberto Andorno
Phone: +41 44 634 8380
Email: roberto.andorno@ibme.uzh.ch

Administration:

Michelle Heimgartner
Phone: +41 44 634 4081
Email: heimgartner@ibme.uzh.ch

PhD BmEL Medical Track Student Representative:

Giovanni Spitale
Phone: +41 44 634 3705
Email: giovanni.spitale@ibme.uzh.ch