



**University of  
Zurich** <sup>UZH</sup>

**University of Zurich**

**Faculty of Medicine**

PhD Program in Biomedical Ethics and Law

**Regulation (*Doktoratsordnung*)**

*German language version approved by the Faculty of Medicine on 28.01.2009.*

*This is not an official English translation*



## **1. Introduction**

The Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Law of the University of Zurich are jointly offering a doctoral program (PhD) in Biomedical Ethics and Law. The program is based on the Medical Faculty's Regulations for Doctoral Programs (*Promotionsverordnung*). The information included in this document apply to PhD candidates and students who apply to and are admitted through the Faculty of Medicine. On behalf of the Medical Faculty, the Institute of Biomedical Ethics (IBME) carries the overall responsibility for this program.

## **2. Goals**

The program offers advanced training in the area of biomedical ethics through required courses and an original research project leading to a doctoral dissertation. Doctors, scholars and other qualified participants will deepen their knowledge in global issues in biomedical ethics and will acquire the methodological tools to pursue their own research in this area. The program focuses on interdisciplinary research.

## **3. Application process and admission**

### **3.1 Eligibility**

**3.1.1.** 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).

The program aims to enroll around five qualified candidates per admission cycle.

**3.1.2.** To be considered eligible candidates must have:

1. a Master's degree or an equivalent academic title, or
2. completed three years of medical school for conditional admission in the MD/PhD option (see 3.2)
3. demonstrated academic excellence (academic grades, distinctions, awarded fellowships or publications)
4. motivation and commitment to their research interests
5. fluency in the English language (see 3.3.1)

### **3.2 MD/PhD option**

**3.2.1** The PhD program in Biomedical Ethics and Law accepts medical students for the option of a combined MD/PHD or MMed/PhD (depending on the title of the medical degree).

**3.2.2** First and second year medical students with 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 3d year of studies in order to apply to the PhD program. Conditional approval may be granted to 3d year medical students while full enrollment in the program will take place upon completion of medical studies.



**3.2.3.** Medical students who have been accepted in the MD/PhD 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 medical dissertation (for the MMed) 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 after completion of their medical training.

### **3.3 Application Process**

**3.3.1** Applications should be addressed to the PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF. Application should be in writing and should be received by the deadline set for the running admission cycle. The following documents are required:

1. Curriculum vitae with photo
2. Academic degrees (copies);
3. Statement of purpose:
  - 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;
4. 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.
5. 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.

**3.3.2** Applicants who have been short-listed will be invited for an interview. (see 3.4)

### **3.4 Interview**

**3.4.1** The invited applicants will be interviewed by the admissions committee. 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.

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

**3.4.3** A record of the committee's assessment based on the interview will be prepared following the interview.



### **3.5 Admission**

**3.5.1** The PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF serves as the *admission committee* for those applying through the Faculty of Medicine. (see 4.2)

**3.5.2** 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.

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

**3.5.4** The admissions committee will communicate its decisions to the BmEL PhD Program Steering Committee

## **4. Governance structure**

### **4.1 The BmEL PhD Steering Committee**

According to the Medical Faculty's Regulations for Doctoral Programs, programs that are jointly offered by two or more faculties may have a joint Steering Committee. In this case the BmEL PhD Steering Committee would consist of members of the PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF and members of the PhD Program Commission BmEM/RWF. The Chairs of these two committees would alternate as Chair of the Steering committee every two semesters.

**4.1.2** The role of such a steering committee includes the developing and harmonizing the common curricular requirements and ensuring an efficient cooperation of the two Faculties.

### **4.2 The PhD program Commission BmEL/ MeF**

**4.2.1** The PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF is responsible for the development of the PhD regulations (Doktoratsordnung), program of studies, 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.

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

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

Additional members may be added to the committee depending of their expertise. Every member should have designated a replacement in case of his/her unavailability. Each member can serve for the duration of two years, however extension of membership for a longer time period is possible. The committee chair's replacement should only be another member of the medical faculty.

**4.2.3** The Chair of the Commission is elected by the members. Every other year the Commission Chair is chairing the steering committee.

**4.2.4** The composition of the PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF is confirmed by the Medical Faculty.

### **4.3 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 for applicants and enrolled students.

## **5 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.

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.

### **5.1 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 core and elective modules (minimum 30 ECTS points);
- d. Doctoral dissertation defense (public presentation and oral exam by Dissertation committee)

### **5.2 Curriculum**

**5.2.1** PhD students should complete coursework for a minimum of 30 ECTS points. Students should fulfill the core/mandatory requirements and complete elective modules with the most relevance to their research interests. (The ratio for core/electives is expected to be 3:2.) 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.

**5.2.2** Students may also be able to attend relevant modules in other PhD programs.

### **5.3 Credit points**

**5.3.1** PhD credit points that have been obtained outside the program (i.e. in other Universities) can be transferred. However, the maximum number of credit points that will be recognized is one third of the total number required for the PhD degree. Decisions about transfer of ECTS points and recognition of points for activities other than coursework shall be made by the PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF.

**5.3.2.** Credit points can be obtained with the completion of core and elective courses. The core/mandatory requirements include courses that offer 12 credit points and a tutorial for the required publication which carries 3 credit points. For the elective program credits can be collected through courses, participation in colloquia and seminars, active participation in conferences such as with oral presentation and posters. The number of points for each of those activities is determined by the BmEL PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF.

## **6. Dissertation and Dissertation Defense**

### **6.1 Supervision**

**6.1.1** 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.

**6.1.2** The supervisor in consultation with the student will define the other members of the dissertation committee.

**6.1.3** The composition of the dissertation committee needs to be approved by the PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF.

### **6.2 Dissertation Committee (Promotionskomitee)**

**6.2.1** The dissertation committee is responsible for planning, scheduling, supervising and evaluating the work that leads to the PhD degree. At the initiative of the PhD student the dissertation committee should be formed by the end of the first semester.

**6.2.2** It consists of the following members:

1. the supervisor (if the student has two supervisors, both should be members of the committee)
2. a member of the PhD Program Commission BmEL/MeF;
3. an additional scholar (depending on relevance to the research project). A committee member may be from a faculty other than Medicine or Law if the research project requires additional guidance.

If none of these members belongs to the Faculty of Medicine, a Faculty of Medicine member should be added to the committee.

**6.2.3** The chair of the committee is a member of the Medical Faculty.

**6.2.4** The objective of the Dissertation committee is to supervise, guide and mentor the PhD candidate during his studies. To ensure these functions are fulfilled, the committee should receive regular progress reports and hold regular meetings with the PhD candidate.

**6.2.5** 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.

**6.2.6** The Dissertation committee should be formed by the end of the student's first semester in the program.



**6.2.7** The Dissertation should be reviewed by one or more Faculty members or outside experts. Based on the reviews the Dissertation committee decides whether the Dissertation is ready to be defended. This decision is communicated, in writing, to the Faculty of Medicine by the chair of the committee.

### **6.3 Dissertation defense examination (*Promotionsprüfung*)**

**6.3.1** Once the dissertation is completed and after the agreement of the Dissertation committee has been obtained, the PhD candidate sets a date for the dissertation defense examination. The dissertation defense examination consists of two parts: public presentation and open discussion of the PhD findings and a separate discussion between the candidate and the Dissertation committee.

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

**6.3.4** The exam is graded on a pass or fail basis.

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

### **6.4 Title**

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

### **7. Registration Fees**

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

### **8. Validity**

These rules come to force on 29.01.2009