



PhD in Life Sciences

# Milestones of your thesis

For PhDs who enrolled at the UNIL-FBM  
before Spring 2017

**Doctoral School FBM - Thesis Office**

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## 1. Welcome

With this document we want to provide you with the necessary steps to complete a PhD in Life Sciences at the University of Lausanne. We recommend you to download this document from our website, so that you are able to use the clickable links: <http://www.unil.ch/ecoledoctoralefbm/rulesandforms>

### Overview of the dynamic of the thesis

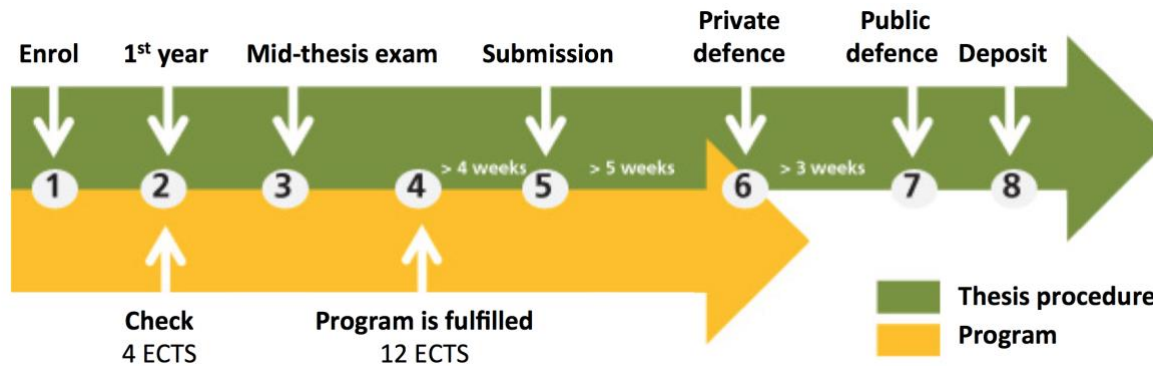


Figure 1 - Milestones of the thesis procedure

**For the programs:** Life Sciences FREE study option & Life Sciences with a study option in Cardiovascular and Metabolism (CVM), Ecology and Evolution (EE), Integrated Experimental & Computational Biology (IECB) and Microbial Sciences (MS).

*For the Program in Life Sciences with a study option in Cancer and Immunology (CI), their procedure is different, check their [own website](#).*

## 2. 1<sup>st</sup> year

At the end of the first year, you must forward the following documents to the Doctoral School:

- The thesis committee composition;

The thesis committee will follow your progress in the thesis process (including the mid-thesis exam). It is composed of:

1. The thesis director (and co-directors, if applicable)
2. Two experts, at least one from outside the Department of your thesis director. None of the experts can have collaborated in the thesis project or published with you. Regarding the Jury for the thesis defence, see point 5.B, page 5.
3. The president (nominated by the Doctoral School during the first year).

- The first year report (a short report, one page A4) signed by the PhD student and the thesis director;
- The documents related to the doctoral program with a minimum of 4 ECTS (including 2 tutorials) or according to the specific requirements of the program with a study option;
- If you are enrolled in the Life Sciences program FREE study option: Use checklist 1 and forward all the documents to the Secretary's Office.

If you are enrolled in a program with a study option (CVM, EE, MS, IECB), forward

- To the Secretary's Office (phdthesis@unil.ch): The thesis committee composition and the first year report only.
- To the Program Coordinator: All the documents related to the PhD program (ECTS).

### **3. 2.5 years**

The mid-thesis exam must be presented **at the latest** 2.5 years after the official enrolment. During this exam, the student presents the advancement of her/his research in front of the thesis committee.

The PhD students, together with the thesis director(s) and committee members (including the President) choose an examination date.

At least 15 days before the mid-thesis exam, you should forward the following to the Doctoral School:

- The mid-term report presenting the results and the work progress (max. 20 pages, double-spaced, 30 references). This document should be signed by you and the thesis director and also be sent to the thesis committee members.
- The "Confirmation of the thesis committee composition" provided at the end of the first year by the Doctoral school. This document should mention the date, hour and place of the exam.

For more details (exam duration, format of the report...), check our Guidelines for the PhD in Life Sciences, page 2, section "Evaluation intermédiaire".

### **4. End of the program**

You need to fulfil the following program requirements: minimum 12 ECTS, according to the specific requirements of the program with or without a study option. Please forward the documents for validation of courses at any time during your thesis, but **at the latest** 4 weeks before the deposit of the thesis manuscript to the Secretary's Office (=manuscript for the oral private exam).

Please, forward these documents to your coordinator and use Checklist n°2.

Should you have any queries on the requirements of the program in which you are enrolled, contact your program coordinator.

## **5. Are you ready to defend?**

In brief, you will have to write your thesis, defend it at the “private defence” session in front of a selected jury. If you pass, you will then be allowed to present your research in a format more accessible for non-scientists in front of a public audience. At this point, the jury will give a formal final evaluation considering these four points:

- 1) The research work (skills and autonomy of the PhD candidate; originality of the PhD project)
- 2) The format and writing style of the thesis
- 3) The private defence/exam (aka: soutenance privée, colloque de these, private exam, or oral private exam)
- 4) The public defence/exam (aka: soutenance publique, public exam, or oral public exam)

The thesis defence usually occurs in the **3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> year** of enrolment in the program, provided that the 12 ECTS of the coursework (and the possibly additional requirements of the specialised PhD programs) have been obtained and the mid-thesis exam has been successfully passed. It is the responsibility of the PhD student together with the thesis director to determine when the student has completed enough work of publication quality to complete the end-of-thesis process.

### **A. Thesis format**

Consult the Thesis Formatting Section (below) to properly organize and format the thesis document.

### **B. Pick your jury**

A thesis jury needs to have minimum 4 members and maximum 6 and has to include:

- The thesis director (and co-directors, if applicable)
- Two experts, at least one from outside the University of Lausanne. *None of the experts can have collaborated in the thesis project or published with you.*
- The jury president (already nominated by the Doctoral School during the first year).

Email all jury members to coordinate a date for the private thesis defence. Once the date is fixed, reserve a room on the campus to hold the private defence. The composition of the jury, as well as the date and location of the exam have to be announced to the Secretary of the thesis procedures (phdthesis@unil.ch) at least **5 weeks prior to the private thesis defence**.

### **C. Before the private defence (Art 12 of the Rules “PhD en sciences de la vie”)**

You will need to send the following documents the thesis office (FBM Doctoral School, Amphipôle 324, Unil-Sorge, 1015 Lausanne) **at least 5 weeks before the private defence:**

- A paper copy of the thesis for the Doctoral school to send to the president OR the confirmation that the president of the thesis jury only requires the electronic version. In any case, please send a PDF version of your thesis to the Doctoral school (phdthesis@unil.ch)
- A letter or an email signed by the thesis director indicating the name, address, e-mail of each jury member, and also the location, date and time chosen for the private defence.
- An updated CV of the PhD student, including the list of publications, communications and conferences related to the thesis project
- Two one-page summaries of the thesis, one in English and one in French. Each summary must be written on a separate page and include the title of the thesis, the name of the PhD student and the name of the host department of the thesis project.
- A one-page summary of the thesis written for the general public, in French (please do not forget to translate the title of the thesis into French).
- The Certificate with the credits obtained during the PhD (has to be requested at the latest 4 weeks before the deposit of the thesis manuscript for the private defence).
- Along with this checklist, [click here](#).

At the same time, send a copy of the thesis to all jury members. Each jury member should receive the electronic version of the thesis, unless they specifically request a hard copy (the printed document).

The Doctoral School will send an e-mail to the jury, with copy to the PhD candidate, asking them to send their report to the Doctoral School at least one week before the private defence. On this report, they will evaluate the format and contents of the thesis and indicate whether they consider the thesis eligible for attributing a PhD degree. After receiving these reports, the Doctoral School will send them to the president of the jury.

After receiving the thesis, the Doctoral School will send the **exam's registration bill** (500 CHF) to the student's private address.

## **6. Private Defence**

Here, your knowledge in the field of the thesis will be evaluated.

The defence (1-2 hours) will be conducted in the following order:

- 20-40 minutes of oral presentation by the PhD student
- 2 rounds of questions from the experts
- Deliberation by the jury

During the deliberation, the jury assigns 3 grades (1 to 6, pass grade is 4, half points accepted) evaluating three aspects of the thesis:

- The research work (skills and autonomy of the PhD candidate; originality of the PhD project)
- The format and writing style of the thesis
- The private examination, including presentation skills and responses to questions posed by the jury members

You will need to obtain **a minimum grade of 4 on each of these aspects** to pass the exam and to continue to the public defence. Given that you have successfully passed the private defence, you need to fix a date for the public thesis defence, together with the jury member (at least the jury president and the thesis director have to be present). The public defence should take place **minimum 3 weeks after the private exam**. Once the date is agreed upon, you need to reserve an auditorium to hold the public defence and announce the location, date and time to the thesis office (phdthesis@unil.ch).

If the jury requires corrections to your thesis, the document filled out during the private defence (the “procès verbal”) should specify it. The thesis director will be the person who will be responsible for checking your corrections. Your thesis director has to receive the corrections, and announce to the Doctoral School that the new version of the thesis is acceptable in its revised form, **at least one week before the public defence**.

The **electronic final version of the thesis** has to be sent to the president of the jury **before the public defence**. During the private defence, the “procès verbal” document will be filled out specifying whether the public defence will be held in English or in French.

## **7. Public Defence**

As indicated beforehand, the public defence takes place at least **3 weeks after the private defence**. At the end of the public defence, the members of the jury decide whether the thesis is judged as acceptable (“réussi”) or not (“pas réussi”). Given the result is satisfactory, you will receive the “imprimatur” page (official approval that the thesis can be printed) from the jury president, a copy of this page needs to be included in all final copies of the thesis.

## **8. After the public defence**

### **A. Bound copies of the thesis document**

After the public defence, you have a **maximum six months** to prepare official bound copies (see Thesis Formatting Section below) of the thesis document and distribute them as follows:

- 1 copy for the Doctoral School to be sent to the thesis office.
- 1 copy for the department where the research was done.
- 2 copies for the thesis director.

- 1 copy for each member of the jury. To avoid wasting paper, time and money, we recommend that the jury members be contacted to make sure they really want a final hard copy of the thesis. You do not need to send a copy to the president, unless she/he requests it.
- 3 copies for the BCUL (Bibliothèque Cantonal et Universitaire Lausanne), one of them with a summary of the thesis in English, if the thesis was written in French. These 3 copies for the BCUL need to be accompanied by a form available [here](#).

Please note that ***PhD students have to remain enrolled at the University of Lausanne*** until the thesis has been deposited to the BCUL and to the Doctoral School.

### **B. On-line publication of the thesis**

The thesis can be published on-line at the University of Lausanne, through the [SERVAL website](#).

### **C. Order your diploma**

Fill in the on-line form “Application de commande électronique de grade” available [here](#). An intermediate official certificate, indicating that a PhD has been awarded, will be sent out by the Doctoral School.

## **How to format your thesis**

### **A. General formatting regulations for the final thesis version**

Some general advice from the “[Annexe V, Règlement pour l’obtention du grade de docteur ès sciences de la vie \(PhD\)](#)”:

- A4 format, 29.7 x 21 cm
- Double-sided printing
- Paper 80 gr/m<sup>2</sup>
- 40 lines/page maximum
- 15 mm external margin minimum
- Clean presentation of text, pictures and tables, without corrections
- Front cover of the thesis in cardstock (130 - 180 gr/m<sup>2</sup>); the official title cover is available [here](#)
- The official title page, identical to the front cover of the thesis, but printed on paper (80 gr/m<sup>2</sup>), with the possibility to include supplementary logos
- An exact reproduction of the “imprimatur” is printed at the back of the second title page (attributed by the thesis jury)
- Please note that the binding of the document cannot be done with rings or plastic

## **B. How to organize a thesis with published articles**

To write your thesis with articles you need to have one or several articles published or accepted for publication or at least under review, in peer-reviewed journals. Only if your contribution is significant, the article will be considered as part of your thesis. The advantage of a thesis written with articles is that articles can replace the chapters of the results section.

**Important note on self-plagiarism:** The sections indicated hereafter with “→” must reflect the individual PhD student's original work, and not be a replication of text available in other articles/manuscripts even if authored or co-authored by the PhD student. Indeed, articles are very often a multi-author work, therefore using blocks of text of other articles in these sections of your thesis, which is a single author work, is considered as (self-)plagiarism. Briefly referring to other articles, with proper citation, is evidently permitted if it contributes to the overall understanding (also refer to the UNIL Directives 0.3 and 0.3bis)

A thesis with articles should be structured as follows (Annexe III des Directives pour le Doctorat ès sciences de la vie):

- Front cover of the thesis in cardstock (130 - 180 gr/m<sup>2</sup>); the official title cover is available [here](#)
- The official title page, identical to the front cover of the thesis, but printed on paper (80 gr/m<sup>2</sup>), with the possibility to include supplementary logos
- An exact reproduction of the Imprimatur page is printed at the back of the second title page (attributed by the thesis jury after the final exam)
- Acknowledgements (max 1 page)
- → Abstract (in English & French, max 1 page for each language)
- → Introduction (10-60 pages)
- Brief summary of the results, indicating precisely your contribution to each article (2-3 pages)
- Article(s) should be presented as individual chapter(s)
- → Discussion (5-30 pages)
- References

## **C. How to organize a thesis without published articles**

**(“Article 9 du Annexe V Règlement pour l’obtention du grade de docteur ès sciences de la vie (PhD)”):**

This type of thesis should be structured as follows:

- Front cover of the thesis in cardstock (130 - 180 gr/m<sup>2</sup>); the official title cover is available [here](#)
- The official title page, identical to the front cover of the thesis, but printed on paper (80 gr/m<sup>2</sup>), with the possibility to include supplementary logos



- An exact reproduction of the Imprimatur page is printed at the back of the second title page (attributed by the thesis jury)
- Acknowledgements (max 1 page)
- Abstract (in English & French, max 1 page)
- List of Abbreviations
- Table of Contents
- List of Figures
- List of Tables
- Introduction (10-60 pages)
- Materials and Methods
- Results
- Discussion (5-30 pages)
- References

Please **keep in mind the following points** when writing a thesis with or without articles:

- Make sure to acquaint yourself with the applicable regulations on **Copyright, Open Access & good writing practices**
- Please download the **thesis official title page** from our website.
- The Imprimatur page has to immediately follow the title page in the final thesis version. This can be done by scanning the original Imprimatur page and inserting it into the thesis document (please do not use a jpg-photo, the quality is not sufficient).
- A good introduction should show that you have acquired a broad knowledge of the previous and on-going research in your field, do not forget appropriate referencing.
- A good discussion should express critical thinking concerning what the student has learned:
  - Discussing your results in light of other's results, making an overall analysis of the publications reviewed.
  - Analysing the quality and limitations of the results.
  - Formulating conclusions.
  - Making the point about future perspectives.

If you have questions regarding the format of your thesis or the procedure do not hesitate to contact the Secretary's Office:

**Doctoral School FBM- Secretary's Office**

[phdthesis@unil.ch](mailto:phdthesis@unil.ch)

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Faculté de biologie et de médecine

Version May 2021. Only regulatory texts are authentic. All titles and functions may apply to both men and women.