



# Humanities and Social Sciences of Medicine and Health

## milestones of your thesis

**Contact:**

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Interfaculty doctorate FBM and SSP

*Unil*  
UNIL | Université de Lausanne  
Faculté de biologie  
et de médecine

*Unil*  
UNIL | Université de Lausanne  
Faculté des sciences  
sociales et politiques



## **1. Introduction**

Welcome !

**This booklet is intended for all PhD students enrolled in the Humanities and Social Sciences of Medicine and Health (HSSMH) PhD program.**

The HSSMH doctoral program emerges from a collaborative effort between the Faculty of Biology and Medicine and the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, with a doctoral degree that incorporates both university logos and an interfaculty committee overseeing the training. The Doctoral School FBM is responsible for administration, and doctoral students are enrolled under the FBM umbrella.

The present document outlines the essential steps for achieving a PhD in the Humanities and Social Sciences of Medicine and Health at the University of Lausanne, **in accordance with the Rules 2023**. We advise you to access this document through our website to use the clickable links: <https://www.unil.ch/ecoledoctoralefbm/phdihm>

### **Concerning the free study program:**

In addition to the conventional thesis requirements, you must complete doctoral-level courses totalling 12 ECTS credits. This learning activity is “structured” in the form of a [free study programme](#). Once you finish your training courses, make sure to get them approved by the Doctoral School to get your credits. This is needed for all internal and external training, except tutorials (refer also to sections 4 and 6).

Detailed information can be found on the following web page: <https://www.unil.ch/ecoledoctoralefbm/phdhssm>

Meeting deadlines is crucial, particularly if you are working on your thesis full-time (assistant contract). If you are juggling part-time jobs during your studies, you can request an extension for the timelines related to your thesis. However, obtaining the support of your thesis advisor is necessary to request this extension.

## **2. Following registration**

Throughout the thesis period, a thesis committee will oversee and track your progress. The committee’s composition must be communicated to the Doctoral School **at the latest one semester following registration** and selected by common consent between the thesis director and yourself.

### **The committee includes:**

1. The thesis director (and co-directors, if any).
2. Two experts, with at least one employed outside of UNIL/CHUV/Unisanté. The experts should not collaborate significantly to the thesis project to a level which could potentially influence their evaluation or decision. Experts should hold a doctorate degree.
3. The president (nominated by the Doctoral School).

### **3. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester**

A short report summarizing the thesis subject, the thesis milestones/plan & the research progress must be prepared **by the end of the second semester for a first evaluation by the thesis committee**. In order to be validated by the Doctoral School, the report should then be sent by e-mail to ALL the members of the thesis committee, including the President, with in copy (Cc) the thesis director and the Doctoral School ([phdthesis@unil.ch](mailto:phdthesis@unil.ch)).

### **4. Upon concluding the first year: free study program, 4 ECTS credits**

To satisfactorily complete the first year of the free study program, it is necessary to have fulfilled 4 ECTS credits in accordance with our guidelines ([click here](#)). This encompasses the successful completion of two tutorials.

Once you finish your training courses, make sure to get them approved by the Doctoral School to get your credits. This is needed for all internal and external training, except tutorials.

To validate these credits:

- Fill out the designated official forms (<https://www.unil.ch/ecoledoctoralefbm/validationects>) and enclose the relevant course certificates and descriptions.
- Submit all documents via postal mail or email ([program.ls@unil.ch](mailto:program.ls@unil.ch)), in PDF format, ensuring that all pertinent materials/documents are organized in the appropriate sequence.

### **5. Mid-thesis exam**

The mid-thesis evaluation must take place no later than two years following the start of the PhD Assistant contract or within three semesters from the official enrolment date. During this exam, you will present and discuss the progress of your research project in front of the thesis committee.

You, together with the thesis director(s) and committee members (including the president), choose an examination date.

At least one month prior to the mid-thesis exam, you should forward the following information to the Doctoral School:

- The mid-term report presenting the results and research progress as well as a bibliography ("bibliographie de travail") and a timetable for further work on the thesis, (recommended length: 30 pages). This document should be validated by the thesis director and then sent by email to ALL the members of the thesis committee with a copy (Cc) to the thesis director and the thesis office ([phdthesis@unil.ch](mailto:phdthesis@unil.ch)).
- An e-mail to [phdthesis@unil.ch](mailto:phdthesis@unil.ch) mentioning the date, hour and place of the exam.

For more details (exam duration, format of the report...), check our [Directives 2023 for the PhD in the Humanities and Social Sciences of Medicine and Health](#), section "[Evaluation intermédiaire](#)".

## **6. Completion of the free study program (12 ECTS credits)**

You are tasked with attaining a minimum of 12 ECTS credits in accordance with our guidelines ([click here](#)).

Once you finish your training courses, make sure to get them approved by the Doctoral School to get your credits. This is needed for all internal and external training, except tutorials.

To validate these credits:

- Fill out the designated official forms (<https://www.unil.ch/ecoledoctoralefbm/validationects>) and enclose the relevant course certificates and descriptions.
- Submit all documents via postal mail or email ([program.ls@unil.ch](mailto:program.ls@unil.ch)), in PDF format, ensuring that all pertinent materials/ documents are organized in the appropriate sequence.

Kindly submit [the requisite documents](#) for course validation at any juncture during your thesis work. Ensure their receipt no later than four weeks prior to submitting the final thesis manuscript for the oral private defence to the thesis office.

For a comprehensive overview of details and information, kindly consult our guidelines: accessible [here](#).

## **7. Are you ready to defend your thesis?**

In brief, you will have to write your thesis and then defend it at the “private defence” session in front of your selected jury (see below). If you pass, you will then be allowed to present your research in a format accessible to 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 thèse, private exam, or oral private exam)
- 4) The public defence/exam (aka: soutenance publique, public exam, or oral public exam)

The thesis defence usually takes place in the **3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> year** of enrolment in the program, providing that the minimum 12 ECTS of coursework 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 if a sufficient amount of work, of publication quality, has been completed in order to start the end of thesis process.

### **A. Thesis format and writing practice**

Consult the “Good Writing practices” and “How to format your thesis” sections (below) to duly organize and format the thesis document.

### **B. Select your jury**

A thesis jury needs to have minimum of four members and maximum of six and should include:

- The thesis director and co-director(s), if applicable

- Two experts minimum, with at least one coming from outside UNIL/CHUV/Unisanté. Note that experts should not have collaborated significantly to the thesis project to a level which could likely influence their assessment/decision. Experts should hold a doctorate degree.
- The jury president (nominated by the Doctoral School at the beginning of the thesis to chair the thesis committee).

Send an email to all jury members to arrange a suitable date for the private thesis defence. Once the date is confirmed, book a room on the UNIL campus, at CHUV or at Unisanté for the defence. The composition of the jury, as well as the date and location of the exam should be announced to the thesis office ([phdthesis@unil.ch](mailto:phdthesis@unil.ch)) at least **5 weeks before the private thesis defence** (for more details, refer to the next section).

### **C. Before the private defence (Art. 19 of the 2023 Rules “PhD ès sciences humaines et sociales de la médecine et de la santé”)**

You will need to send by email the following documents to [phdthesis@unil.ch](mailto:phdthesis@unil.ch) **at least 5 weeks before the private defence**:

- 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](mailto:phdthesis@unil.ch)). If she/he requires a paper **copy of the thesis** provide it to the Doctoral school (by mail or by depositing it at the reception) and the Doctoral school will send it to the president.
- A **letter signed by the thesis director** indicating the name, address and e-mail of each jury member, and also the location, date and time chosen for the private defence.
- An **updated version of your CV**, 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.
- A **one-page summary of the thesis written for the general public, in French** including the title of the thesis, the name of the PhD student and the name of the host department of the thesis project.
- 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 to [program.ls@unil.ch](mailto:program.ls@unil.ch).
- Along with the items in 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, including you (Cc) requesting their report to be sent to the Doctoral School at least one week prior the private defence. These reports will assess the format and content of the thesis and indicate whether they consider the thesis eligible for attributing a PhD degree. After receiving these reports and before the private defence, the Doctoral School will send them to the president of the jury.

After receiving the thesis, the Doctoral School will send you an email requesting payment for the **examination fee** (500 CHF).

## 8. Private Defence

During the private thesis defence your knowledge in the field of your thesis will be assessed.

The defence (lasting 1-2 hours) will follow this sequence:

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

The language of the thesis defence should be either English or French, and the decision of the language should be reached through collective agreement between the jury members, the thesis director and yourself.

During the deliberation, the jury assigns three grades (ranging from 1 to 6; with a passing grade at 4; half-points are accepted) to assess 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 asked by the jury members

You will need to obtain **a minimum grade of 4 on each of these above-mentioned aspects** in order 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 in consultation with the jury members (at least the jury president and thesis director must be present). The public defence should take place **a minimum three weeks following 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](mailto:phdthesis@unil.ch)).

If the jury requires corrections to your thesis, the document completed during the private defence (the “procès verbal”) should specify it. Without other indication, the thesis director is the person who is responsible for checking your corrections.

Your thesis director has to receive the corrections and announce to the thesis office (with the president in cc) that the new version of the thesis is acceptable in its revised form, **a few days before the public defence**.

The **electronic final version of the thesis** should be sent to the president of the jury, **prior to the public defence**. During the private defence, the “procès verbal” document will be filled out specifying whether the public defence will be held in French or English (or in another language, upon agreement of the jury members).

## **9. Public Defence**

As indicated beforehand, the public thesis defence takes place at least **three weeks following 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”). If the judgement is positive, you will receive the “imprimatur” page (official approval that the thesis can be printed) from the jury president who must have signed it. A copy of this page needs to be included in all final copies of your thesis.

## **10. After the public defence**

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

After the public defence, you have a **maximum of six months** to prepare official bound copies (see “How to format your thesis” below) of the thesis document and distribute them as follows:

- 1 copy for the Doctoral School to be sent to the thesis office.
- 3 copies for the BCUL (Bibliothèque Cantonale et Universitaire Lausanne), one of them with a summary of the thesis in English. These 3 copies for the BCUL should be accompanied by a form available on our website [here](#).

If required (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):

- 1 copy for the department where the research was done
- 1 copy for the thesis director
- 1 copy for each member of the jury

Please note that **you must 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](#).



## Good writing practices

Preparing students for having good writing practices is a responsibility UNIL takes very seriously. As a Doctoral School, we believe that scientific integrity & the prevention of plagiarism should be at the heart of the PhD training. We therefore encourage all the PhD students:

- To discuss about the good writing practices with the thesis director,
- To use the tools available at UNIL to ensure that all the written productions are free of any form of plagiarism. We strongly recommend that you do the self-training module: Avoiding plagiarism (to access use the activation key that can be asked to [phdthesis@unil.ch](mailto:phdthesis@unil.ch))

Additional information on this topic is available on our website in the section [Copyright, Open Access & good writing practices](#)

## How to format your thesis

### A. General formatting requirements for the final thesis version

Some general advice from the “Annexes III and IV, Règlement 2023 pour l’obtention du grade de doctorat ès sciences humaines et sociales de la médecine et de la santé (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](#) **section “4. When you prepare the final version of your thesis”**
- 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 posted, submitted, accepted or published. **Include the most recent version of the articles as they are posted or published.** In a thesis written with articles, they replace the chapters of the results section. NB: before each article, you must include a brief summary of the results, indicating precisely and in detail your contribution to each article (2-3 pages), as well as the stage of publication of the article (e.g. posted, submitted, under review, published, etc.).

**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 II des Directives 2023 pour le Doctorat ès sciences humaines et sociales de la médecine et de la santé (PhD) »:

- Front cover of the thesis in cardstock (130 - 180 gr/m<sup>2</sup>); the official title cover is available [here](#) **section “4. When you prepare the final version of your thesis”**
- 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 public defence)
- Acknowledgements (max 1 page)
- → **Abstract** (in English & French, max 1 page for each language)
- → **Introduction** (30-50 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), and in the posted or published format
- → **Discussion** (5-30 pages)
- References

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

“Annexes III and IV, Règlement 2023 pour l’obtention du grade de doctorat ès sciences humaines et sociales de la médecine et de la santé (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](#) **section “4. When you prepare the final version of your thesis”**
- 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 (30-50 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 you have 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
  - Future perspectives

If you have questions regarding the format of your thesis, or the procedure, do not hesitate to contact the [thesis office](#) :

**Doctoral School**

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

021 692 40 09 (backup if absent 021 692 40 01)

<http://www.unil.ch/ecoledoctoralefbm>

**Mailing Address:**

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Interfaculty doctorate FBM and SSP



Version October 2023. Only regulatory texts are authentic. All titles and functions may apply to both women and men.