

Doctorate in Life Sciences from the Faculties of Medicine and Science

Specializations: Molecular Biosciences, Ecology and Evolution, Genomics and Digital Health, Physics of Biology, Biomedical Sciences, Pharmaceutical Sciences

REGULATIONS

Article G 35.1 – Introduction

1. The Faculties of Medicine and Science jointly award the Doctorate in Life Sciences from the Faculties of Medicine and Science. The French name of the degree is: Doctorat ès sciences en Sciences de la vie des Facultés de médecine et des sciences. This is a program of advanced study. This doctorate is accompanied by a specialization. The specializations correspond to the different Doctoral Programs (as listed below) of the PhD School in Life Sciences (PSLS).
2. The specializations are in Molecular Biosciences, Ecology and Evolution, Genomics and Digital Health, Physics of Biology, Biomedical Sciences, and Pharmaceutical Sciences. The French names of the specializations are: Biosciences moléculaires, Ecologie et évolution, Génomique et santé numérique, Physique du vivant, Sciences biomédicales, and Sciences pharmaceutiques. The specializations are indicated on the diploma.
3. The Doctoral Programs associated with the specializations are: Molecular Biosciences, Ecology and Evolution, Genomics and Digital Health, Physics of Biology, Biomedical Sciences, Pharmaceutical Sciences. The functioning of the PhD School and its programs is defined by its statutes.
4. The present study regulations are subject to recommendations from the College of the Professors of the two Faculties and to approval by the Faculty Councils of the two Faculties, then to final adoption by the Rectorate. Any modification or deletion of these study regulations must follow the same procedure. The study regulations are published by the Faculty of Science and by the Faculty of Medicine on their websites.
5. This training program operates in complete compliance with the principles of the University's Charter of Ethics and Deontology and of the PhD Code. Thesis directors and directors of each Doctoral Program are responsible for maintaining a climate of respect, trust, and scientific integrity during the years in which the students develop their doctoral projects. They must keep themselves informed regarding measures developed by the University for prevention of abuses, in particular of a sexist nature or towards minorities.

Article G 35.2 – Organization

1. The doctoral training program is managed by the Council of the PhD School in Life Sciences.
2. The Council of the PhD School comprises a Vice Dean representing each of the Faculties, designated by the respective Dean's Offices, the directors of each of the Doctoral Programs, the coordinators of the PhD School, and two doctoral students representing each of the Faculties (students currently pursuing a doctorate, designated by the respective Dean's Offices, on proposal of current doctoral students). The term of the mandate of the members of the Council is based on the term of the mandates of the Doctoral Program directors, specifically 4 years, renewable once, except for the students, whose mandate is 2 years, renewable once. The coordinators are permanent members of the Council of the PhD School.
3. The directors of the Doctoral Programs manage their Doctoral Programs, provide recommendations on requests for equivalencies, validate the composition of Thesis Advisory

Committees (TACs), and provide recommendations on thesis defense proposals based on the thesis submitted by the doctoral student and the thesis report (Article G 35.11.4).

4. The Council of the PhD School ensures the coherency among the different Doctoral Programs, votes on the creation, merging, separation, or dissolution of said programs, and ratifies the nomination of program directors.

Article G 35.3 – Structure of the doctoral training program

1. The doctorate is pursued in the framework of the PhD School in Life Sciences, following the curricula of the Doctoral Programs associated with the specializations. These curricula specify the courses and activities for which ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits must be earned.
2. The doctoral training program includes a research project in the specialization concerned that includes a preliminary report and a session during the first year, under the auspices of the Thesis Advisory Committee (Article G 35.7), the drafting of a thesis, and a public oral defense.
3. This research project is accompanied by complementary theoretical and/or practical training, called the “doctoral training program”, organized by the Doctoral Programs associated with the different specializations. This training program corresponds to a total of 20 mandatory ECTS credits, regardless of the specialization. The credits from the doctoral training program must be earned no later than the end of the 3rd year of studies, and in all cases prior to the thesis defense, under penalty of elimination.
4. Additionally, the thesis director may require the doctoral student to complete other courses, seminars, and/or advanced training programs as co-requisites. These co-requisites may also be set by the director of the Doctoral Program concerned, in agreement with the thesis director. These complementary elements shall not exceed a total of 20 ECTS credits. They must be completed no later than the end of the 2nd year of studies, under penalty of elimination.
5. The Dean’s Office of the Faculty in which the student is enrolled specifies, in the admission letter, the complementary training tied to the doctoral training program that the student must complete, any other courses, seminars, and/or advanced training programs required by the thesis director (co-requisites), the total number of ECTS credits to be obtained, and the deadlines for obtaining them, under penalty of elimination.

Article G 35.4 – Enrollment

1. Applicants must meet the general enrollment requirements of the University of Geneva.
2. Admitted candidates are enrolled at the University of Geneva throughout the entire period of their doctoral training program. They are registered at their thesis director's host Faculty.

Article G 35.5 – Admission and registration

1. Applicants eligible for admission to the Doctorate in Life Sciences:
 - a) are holders of a Master’s degree or a degree judged equivalent from an institution of higher education in Switzerland or abroad that is recognized in the field of the specialization applied for, and whose training included an internship in experimental research that 1) was validated by a written report graded by the academic institution concerned, and that 2) had a duration of one full-time semester,
 - b) have successfully passed the selection procedure mentioned in Article G 35.5.2,
 - c) have been accepted by a thesis director.
2. Admission is based on an application dossier. The application dossier comprises a CV, at least two letters of recommendation, a cover letter, and copies of secondary-school and university diplomas and transcripts. Applicants must also produce an attestation proving that they have the equivalent of a B1 competency level in the English language according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Only the best applications are retained, and students whose applications have been retained are invited to give a scientific presentation followed by a question-and-answer session. Based on these criteria, admission decisions are pronounced by an advisory committee composed of professors and laboratory directors that evaluates the different candidates. The thesis director may then propose a thesis project to the admissible candidates of the director’s choice.

3. Students holding a different degree than those indicated in Article G 35.5.1 above may apply for this doctorate. To that end, they must submit an equivalency request for their degree. This request will be examined as stipulated in the conditions set down in Article G 35.5.4 below.
4. The Dean's Office of the Faculty for which the applicant is applying rules on the equivalency request regarding degrees based on the recommendation of the director of the Doctoral Program concerned. The directors of the Doctoral Programs assess the equivalency requests for degrees partly on the basis of the connection between the scientific field of the prior training of the student and their thesis project, and partly on the basis of the student's aptitudes for research developed during the final project for a Master's degree (or an equivalent degree) with an experimental research internship at least one full-time semester in length, validated by a written report and graded by an academic institution.
5. Candidates for a Doctorate in Life Sciences will be required to complete their research project under the authority of a thesis director in a research group at the Faculty of Medicine or the Faculty of Science, or in a group affiliated with one of these two faculties.
6. Furthermore, for registration as a doctoral candidate, a thesis direction attestation duly signed by the thesis director and the director of the Doctoral Program concerned is required. It must comprise:
 - a) the academic title and affiliation of the thesis director and, if applicable, the thesis co-director,
 - b) the specialization of the candidate's intended doctorate,
 - c) any examinations in addition to those required for the Doctoral Program (co-requisites),
 - d) equivalencies awarded in the framework of the Doctoral Program,
 - e) for information purposes, the sources and origins of the candidate's financing.

This attestation presupposes a positive recommendation from the director of the Doctoral Program concerned regarding the request for acceptance and equivalencies. If applicable, it can stipulate required co-requisites.
7. The Dean's Office of the Faculty for which the applicant is applying evaluates the conformity of the elements in the attestation and rules on the application for admission.

Article G 35.6 – Thesis direction

1. Thesis work is carried out under the direction of a director who is a Professor or a Research and Teaching Associate at the Faculty of Medicine or the Faculty of Science. In the case of a Research and Teaching Associate, the approval of the College of the Professors of the Department or Section concerned is required, and furthermore a Professor from the Department or Section with which the Research and Teaching Associate is affiliated must be part of the thesis jury.
2. The thesis director must hold a doctorate in medicine or in the sciences.
3. Professors and Research and Teaching Associates have the right to refuse to direct the thesis of an admissible candidate without providing reasons for this refusal.
4. Co-direction, which must be announced during the first year of the thesis, takes place under the following conditions:
 - a) If the thesis is being conducted at the Faculty of Medicine or the Faculty of Science and the director requests co-direction: the request must be co-signed by the director of the Doctoral Program concerned, by the director of the Department or the head of the Section concerned, approved by the Dean's Office of the Faculty in which the student is enrolled, or its delegate, and meet the following criteria:
 - i. the co-director must hold a doctorate and have pertinent postdoctoral experience,
 - ii. the co-director, whether or not a member of one of the two Faculties, must be deeply involved in the direction of the thesis, monitoring progress at least once per semester.
 - b) If the thesis director does not hold a doctorate (PhD) in the sciences or an MD-PhD: a co-director, holder of a PhD or MD-PhD, must be designated. The co-director must be

a Professor or a Research and Teaching Associate. If a Research and Teaching Associate, the nomination process follows the same rules as for nomination to the role of thesis director. In certain exceptional situations where a researcher who does not hold a PhD or MD-PhD has demonstrated exceptional scientific qualities, engages in research as a primary activity (> 40%), has already co-supervised or supervised a minimum of three science theses (PhD), and regularly obtains competitive funding, typically from the Swiss National Science Foundation, to support their research, they may request a waiver of this rule. Such a waiver must be supported by the Council of the PhD School and validated by the Dean's Offices of each of the Faculties.

- c) If, exceptionally, the Director of the Doctoral Program concerned authorizes, upon duly justified request of the thesis director, that the thesis be conducted outside the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Science: in this case, the thesis director must belong to the Faculty of Science or the Faculty of Medicine, and the external supervisor shall be the thesis co-director. Direction in this case must meet the following criteria:
 - i. the director must be a Professor or a Research and Teaching Associate with a doctorate in the sciences. In the case of a Research and Teaching Associate, the approval of the College of the Professors of the Department or Section concerned is required, and furthermore a Professor from the Department or Section with which the Research and Teaching Associate is affiliated must be part of the thesis jury.
 - ii. the co-director must hold a doctorate, have pertinent scientific experience, and proof of advising experience,
 - iii. the thesis project is the subject of an agreement between the concerned parties from the beginning of the project, as indicated in the thesis attestation,
 - iv. the thesis project's progress must be monitored by the co-director,
 - v. for the Faculties of Medicine and Science, the director is the academic and scientific sponsor of the thesis,
 - vi. the sources and origins of funding for the doctoral candidate must be indicated.
5. If the thesis director decides to no longer direct the thesis, and the candidate has not received two negative recommendations from the TAC as set forth in Article G 35.7.8, the candidate shall no longer be registered for the Doctorate in Life Sciences because they no longer fulfill the conditions of Article G 35.5. In this case, they are not considered to have been eliminated from the Doctorate in Life Sciences. The thesis director must inform the director of the Doctoral Program concerned and the Thesis Advisory Committee (see Article G 35.7) of their decision.
6. The thesis topic is chosen in agreement with the thesis director. In the event of the departure from the University of Geneva (retirement, voluntary departure, etc.) of the thesis director or co-director, if applicable, the director of the Doctoral Program concerned and the Dean's Office of the Faculty in which the student is enrolled, after consultation with the Council of the PhD School, will make every effort to allow the doctoral student to finish their thesis at the University of Geneva within the prescribed deadlines.

Article G 35.7 – Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC)

1. In addition to earning the course credits required by the Doctoral Program concerned, and, if applicable, credits from other courses, seminars, and advanced training programs described in Article G 35.3 (co-requisites), the thesis project and its oral defense, the doctoral student must be evaluated by the Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC).
2. The TAC session must take place at the end of the first year. If the doctoral student has not attended the TAC session after 15 months, they are eliminated from the doctorate.
3. The TAC evaluation covers general knowledge of the discipline, the progress made on the doctoral student's research projects, and the implementation of the thesis project.
4. The TAC comprises a minimum of 2 members, chosen in agreement between the thesis director and the doctoral candidate, and, if applicable, the thesis co-director. In principle, the members of the TAC are Professors or Research and Teaching Associates, and must hold a doctorate. At least one of the members must hold a doctorate in the sciences. At least one of the members must be from a department other than that of the doctoral student. The thesis director, and, if

applicable, the thesis co-director, participate in the TAC in an advisory capacity. The composition of the TAC is approved by the director of the Doctoral Program concerned.

5. The TAC may also add an additional member who holds a doctorate and possesses pertinent scientific experience. The participation of this additional member must be justified and pre-approved by the director of the Doctoral Program concerned.
6. In preparation for the TAC session, the doctoral student submits to the TAC members a written report on the progress made on research projects and the thesis project. The session begins with an oral presentation by the doctoral student, followed by a series of questions.
7. The TAC must allow the doctoral student to express their viewpoint openly in the absence of the thesis director and, if applicable, the thesis co-director. The TAC must also allow the thesis director to express their viewpoint openly in the absence of the doctoral student. After having heard independently from the student and the thesis director, and, if applicable, the thesis co-director, the TAC, in their absence, produces a report that:
 - a) evaluates the scientific knowledge acquired by the student, in general and more specifically in connection with their project,
 - b) evaluates the quality of the thesis project,
 - c) evaluates the quantity and quality of the work produced by the student to achieve prescribed objectives,
 - d) succinctly describes the strengths and weaknesses of the student in relation to their thesis project,
 - e) ensures that the everything is in place so that the doctoral training program can be pursued in the best possible conditions,
 - f) comments on the quality of the interactions between the student and their thesis director, and thesis co-director, if applicable,
 - g) delivers a positive or negative recommendation in the form of a report signed by the members of the TAC, the doctoral student, the thesis director, and, if applicable, the thesis co-director.
8. A positive recommendation permits the doctoral student to pursue their thesis. If the general evaluation is not satisfactory, the TAC produces a negative recommendation and must justify this position. The recommendations are transmitted to the director of the Doctoral Program for validation. In event of conflictual relationships identified by the TAC, the director of the program shall inform the Faculty in which the student is enrolled about this.
9. In event of a negative recommendation, the doctoral student may request a second and final general evaluation before the end of the first 18 months of their thesis work. If the TAC confirms its negative recommendation, the doctoral student is eliminated from the Doctorate in Life Sciences from the Faculties of Medicine and Science.

Article G 35.8 – Evaluations by the Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) during the program

Further meetings between the doctoral student and the TAC for feedback on the progress made are encouraged. The TAC may be convened at the request of the doctoral student, the thesis director and/or co-director, or the director of the Doctoral Program, for questions related to the scientific project or the conditions in which the project is progressing. On the decision of the director of the Doctoral Program concerned, the TAC may be required to meet with the doctoral student and the thesis director and, if applicable, the thesis co-director, for any request for an extension of the length of studies (see Article G 35.9).

Article G 35.9 – Length of studies

The length of studies may not exceed 10 semesters unless an extension is granted by the Dean's Office of the Faculty in which the student is enrolled on recommendation of the thesis director and, if applicable, a recommendation from the TAC. The directors of the Doctoral Programs shall agree on criteria for the assessment of requests for extensions.

Article G 35.10 – Composition of the thesis jury

For the defense, the thesis director and the thesis co-director constitute the thesis jury, composed of at least three members, or four in the case of co-direction, meeting the following criteria:

- a) all members of the jury must hold a doctorate,
- b) the thesis director, and co-director, if applicable, are members of the jury,
- c) one member of the jury belongs to the Doctoral Program concerned,
- d) one member of the jury is external to the University of Geneva and not directly involved in the thesis project,
- e) preferably, one member of the jury belongs to the other Faculty than the one in which the doctoral student is enrolled,
- f) at least one member of the jury, not directly involved in the thesis project, must hold a doctorate in the sciences.

Article G 35.11 – Writing and defending the thesis

1. Preferably, the thesis shall be written in English. A different language may be authorized by the jury. An abstract in French, one to two pages in length, shall be appended to the text, regardless of the language in which the thesis is written.
2. A collection of original publications, if sufficiently interesting and recognized as such by the thesis jury, can constitute the basis of a doctoral project. These publications may in no case represent, on their own, the thesis itself. They will always be accompanied by a substantive text designed to present them in a coherent fashion and to justify the relevance of their inclusion. Developments not included in the publications themselves are expected. The thesis must contain a broad introduction to the thesis topic, connections between each publication, and a deep, global discussion of the results obtained.
3. To be defended, the thesis must first be submitted to the thesis director, and, if applicable, the thesis co-director, and also to the members of the jury for approval and to permit the drafting of the thesis report by the thesis director. The thesis (in electronic format), the thesis report approved by all the jury members and that concludes that the thesis can be defended, as well as those chosen for the jury, are submitted for the approval of the director of the Doctoral Program concerned.
4. At least fifteen business days before the scheduled date of the thesis defense, the coordinator of the Doctoral Program concerned must provide to the Dean's Office of the Faculty in which the student is enrolled a copy of the thesis (in electronic format) accompanied by the thesis report, the composition of the jury, and its approval.
5. At the public defense, the thesis is assessed by the jury. The jury assesses the doctoral student's scientific research and the quality of the written thesis and the oral defense. The possible assessments are "accepted" and "refused". If the oral defense does not permit acceptance of the thesis, the defense may take place a second time. In this case, and still respecting the deadline for maximum length of studies set forth in Article G 35.9 above, the doctoral student will first be required to complete the written thesis in accordance with the thesis jury's observations, then again submit their thesis as described in Article G 35.11.3-4.
6. On the basis of the definitive manuscript, the thesis director proposes to the Deans of the Faculties of Science and Medicine to grant publication approval.

Article G 35.12 – Granting of the degree

1. Successful completion of the doctoral training program as defined in the above Articles results in the granting of the "*Doctorate in Life Sciences from the Faculties of Medicine and Science of the University of Geneva*" along with the specialization set forth in Article G 35.1.
2. The diploma is signed by the Rector, the Secretary General of the University, and by the Deans of the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Science.
3. The issuing of the diploma and the use of the title of doctor is only possible after the definitive version of the thesis has been submitted in electronic format as stipulated in the Directive regarding submission and dissemination of scientific documents in the University of Geneva's open archive.

Article G 35.13 – Fraud and plagiarism

1. Any fraud, any plagiarism, or any attempted fraud or plagiarism duly documented by the Program director and by the College of the Professors of the Section or the Department concerned of the Faculty in which the student is enrolled results in the failure of the assessment concerned.
2. The College of the Professors of the Section or Department concerned may also determine that the failure of the assessment in question shall be definitive.
3. The Dean's Office of the Faculty in which the student is enrolled shall report to the University's Disciplinary Council:
 - a) if it is determined that a disciplinary hearing is warranted;
 - b) in all cases, when the failure of the assessment concerned is definitive and will lead to the student being eliminated from the Doctorate in Life Sciences.
4. Beforehand, the president of the College of the Professors of the Section or Department concerned, for that College, the director of the Doctoral Program concerned, and the Dean's Office of the Faculty concerned, must have interviewed the doctoral student, and the doctoral student has the right to examine their file.

Article G 35.14 – Elimination

1. Candidates are definitively eliminated from the doctorate in life sciences:
 - a) if they are not evaluated by their TAC within the 15-month time limit set forth in Article G 35.7.2,
 - b) if they have twice received negative recommendations from their TAC (Article G 35.7),
 - c) if they have not successfully completed the co-requisites required at the moment of their admission (definitive failure or failure to report to assessments) within the prescribed deadline,
 - d) if they have not successfully completed the examinations of the chosen Doctoral Program within the prescribed deadline (Article G 35.3),
 - e) if they have definitively failed their thesis project (written thesis and oral defense),
 - f) if they have not successfully completed their doctorate within the maximum length of studies set forth in Article G 35.9 and have not received an extension.
2. Cases of fraud, plagiarism, or attempted fraud or plagiarism shall be addressed by the relevant rules and regulations.
3. The dean of the Faculty in which the student is enrolled pronounces the elimination, taking into account exceptional situations.

Article G 35.15 – Appeals procedures

1. Any decision made in application of these study regulations may be appealed to the deciding body within 30 days of the day following the announcement of the decision.
2. The rules pertaining to appeals at the University of Geneva (RIO-UNIGE) of 16 March 2009 shall apply.
3. Decisions rendered on an appeal may be appealed to the administrative chamber of the Court of Justice within 30 days of the day following the announcement of the decision.

Article G 35.16 – Resumption of studies

1. Candidates for the Doctorate in Life Sciences who, during their studies, requested exmatriculation from the University may be once again admitted as doctoral candidates, on decision of the dean of the Faculty of the thesis director, provided that the candidates meet the conditions set forth in Article G 35.16.2.
2. To be eligible for re-enrollment as doctoral students, the justification that led to their exmatriculation must be recognized as valid by the dean of the Faculty of the thesis director.
3. During the decision-making process, the dean of the Faculty of the thesis director must also take into account practical factors affecting the pursuit of the thesis project.

4. The candidate must provide a new thesis direction attestation that sets out the modalities for the resumption of studies.
5. On the other hand, a candidate exmatriculated following elimination from the course of studies is not eligible to register again as a candidate for a doctorate delivered wholly or conjointly by the Faculty of Science or the Faculty of Medicine.

Article G 35.17 – Entry into force and transitory provisions


1. The present study regulations for the Doctorate in Life Sciences from the Faculties of Medicine and Science shall enter into force effective 16 September 2024.
2. It cancels and replaces that of 1 February 2018 and applies to all new students, subject to Article G 35.17.3 below.
3. Students already enrolled at the moment these rules and regulations enter into force remain subject to the rules and regulations in force at the moment of their enrollment.

Translation notice: This document is a translation of the “Règlement” for the “Doctorat ès sciences en Sciences de la vie des Facultés de médecine et des sciences”. English is not an official language of the Canton of Geneva. This translation is provided for information purposes only and has no legal force. This translation was produced by the Rectorate of the University of Geneva and is an accurate equivalent of the original French text. The French text remains authoritative.



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