Universität Zürich[UZH]

ETH zürich

LIFE SCIENCE ZURICH

LIFE SCIENCE ZURICH GRADUATE SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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Frontpage photos: ETH and LSZ

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1 Executive summary

The Life Science Zurich Graduate School (LSZ GS) continued to serve in 2025 as a central platform for doctoral education across the life sciences at the University of Zurich (UZH) and ETH Zurich. The Graduate School brought together 17 competitive PhD programs, coordinated centralized recruitment, and provided cross-program training and services for a large and diverse doctoral community.

As of 31 December 2025, the LSZ Graduate School comprised 1'672 enrolled PhD students, confirming a broadly stable student population. Of these, 1'069 were affiliated with UZH and 548 with ETH Zurich. The Graduate School remained highly international, with 1'116 international students compared to 457 Swiss students. Gender distribution was balanced, with 982 female and 693 male doctoral candidates. In 2025, 323 PhD candidates completed their doctorates, and program drop-outs remained low (56 students), indicating stable retention across programs. The alumni network grew to 3,691 former graduates.

Application numbers in 2025 remained high, stabilizing after a peak in late 2024. Across the most recent recruitment rounds (November 2024, May 2025, November 2025), the Graduate School received around 2'000–2'300 complete applications per deadline, with a slight downward trend but no substantial decline in international interest. European applicants as a whole showed relatively stable numbers across recruitment rounds, while growth was primarily driven by applicants from Asia.

Despite high application volumes, the pool of shortlisted candidates did not grow proportionally. Typically, 5.5–7% of applicants were invited to interviews, and 33–43% of interviewed candidates were offered a position, in line with past years. Fill rates varied strongly between rounds: May 2025 achieved a particularly high success rate, while the November 2025 intake remained provisional with fewer positions filled by year end, reflecting competitive international recruitment dynamics.

The Graduate School's Transferable Skills Course (TSC) program remained a key pillar of doctoral training. In 2025, 32 courses were offered across five thematic areas, and over 500 PhD students participated. Courses covered scientific integrity and ethics, communication, methodological skills, writing and publishing, and self-management. Around one-third of courses were delivered online or in hybrid format, increasing accessibility across institutions. Demand for these centralized offerings remained high despite a modest reduction in the total number of courses compared to the previous year.

Financially, the LSZ Graduate School continues to operate under largely unchanged institutional contributions from UZH and ETH Zurich since 2010, despite growth in student numbers and rising operational costs. In 2025, the Graduate School closed the year with a small deficit, underscoring the increasing pressure on the sustainability of centralized recruitment and training services.

Sustained high application numbers confirm Zurich's international attractiveness for doctoral training but place increasing demands on programs, admission committees, and supervisors, particularly in high-volume disciplines, such as Microbiology and Immunology, Cancer Biology, Molecular Life Sciences, and Neuroscience. Looking ahead, the Graduate School continues to face the challenge of balancing these high application volumes with targeted recruitment, ensuring that applicant profiles align with available projects and supervisory capacities. Refining international outreach, optimizing matchmaking processes, and maintaining the quality of centralized training remain key priorities to sustain cohort size and academic excellence.

2 Introduction

The idea of establishing a graduate school to consolidate all the different PhD programs in the Life Sciences offered at the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich emerged in September 2005. Officially inaugurated on 8 December 2005, the Life Science Zurich Graduate School became an autonomous branch of the Life Science Zurich Initiative. The LSZ Graduate School currently consists of 17 highly competitive PhD programs. Thanks to a strong teaching curriculum and a clear mentoring system, these programs consistently attract top students from around the world.

2.1 Mission

The aim of the Life Science Zurich Graduate School is to promote first-class graduate education in the life sciences at the University of Zurich (UZH) and ETH Zurich (ETH). The LSZ GS offers centralized services (e.g., recruitment administration, assistance in identifying new funding opportunities) and products (e.g., transferable skills courses) that support established PhD programs and facilitate the development of new programs in the life sciences. The centralized administration of these services enables the individual PhD programs to focus on the education of their graduate students within the respective research fields. The individual PhD programs are thereby relieved of administrative tasks and ensuing costs in areas not directly related to their specific research fields.

Specifically, the Life Science Zurich Graduate School aims:

- to increase the visibility and attractiveness of the LSZ PhD programs worldwide to reach excellent undergraduates who consider doing a PhD in the life sciences
- to initiate the recruitment process to attract the best students internationally
- to improve the coordination of recruitment, thereby avoiding redundant reviews of applicants
- to support the development of new PhD programs
- to improve the coordination of teaching for PhD programs with common areas of interest and/or curricula
- to support PhD programs by providing a centralized course program in relevant transferable skills for all graduate students
- to provide career development support for graduate students; alumni of the LSZ GS should be equipped with the key attributes needed to successfully enter the competitive job market in the life sciences
- to identify and pursue new funding opportunities for the Graduate School and its member PhD programs (e.g., European funding, foundations, SNF)
- to ensure the *quality* and *sustainability* of the services and products of the LSZ GS

The LSZ Graduate School:
a family of PhD programs spanning the Life Sciences

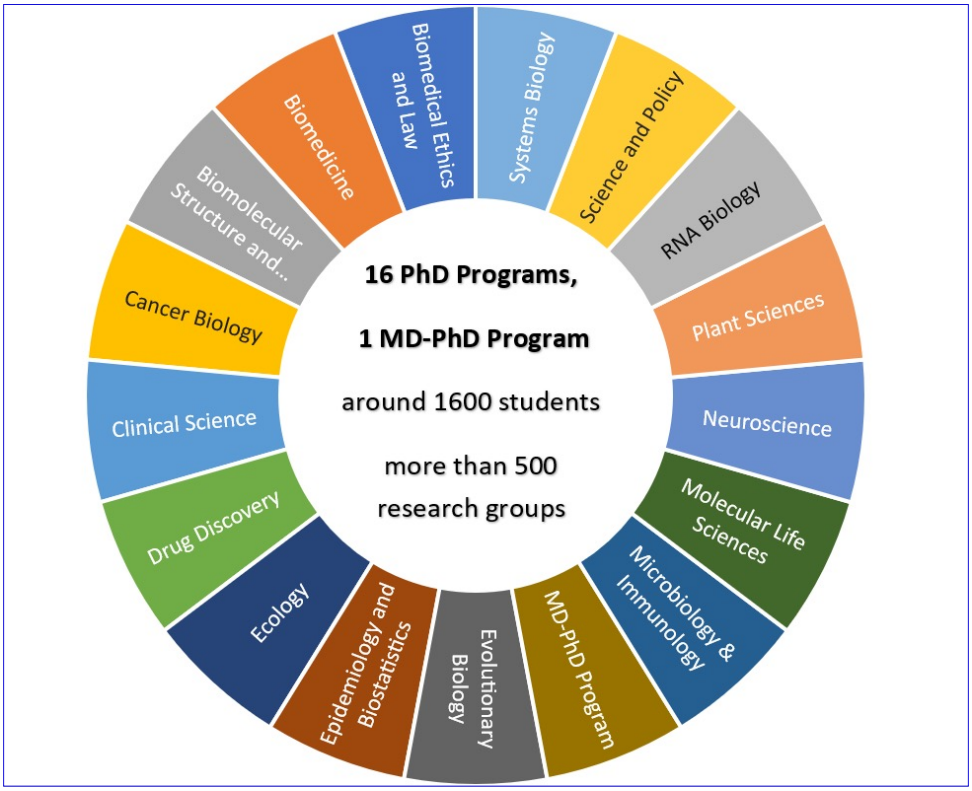


Figure 1. The LSZ Graduate School PhD programs

2.2. Strategy and products of the LSZ GS

The major units of the LSZ GS are:

a) LSZ GS Directors' Conference (program directors from each PhD program form the steering committee)
b) PhD programs
c) Graduate School office: administration

Table 1: Roles and responsibilities of the LSZ GS

Unit	Roles and Responsibilities
LSZ GS steering committee	• Strategic development of LSZ GS • Advice and support for the PhD programs and GS administration • Development of common criteria for quality assurance of the PhD programs • Promotion of relevant contacts within the scientific community of life sciences • Identification of common course needs • Development of a transferable skills curriculum • Identification and development of joint funding initiatives
PhD programs	• Evaluation and acceptance of students into the program • Development, implementation, and funding of a discipline-specific graduate curriculum • Quality assurance • Fundraising for a specific PhD program • Tracking development of the students within each program • Funding travel expenses and accommodation for interview candidates from abroad
Graduate School office	• Increasing visibility of the PhD programs worldwide • Advertising the graduate school and its recruitment procedure (advertisements on web platforms, posters etc.) • Coordination of the recruitment process (application forms, internal and external communication, i.e., information to PI and to candidates) • Organization of interviews • Funding for PR, the common application platform, and the transferable skill courses • Development and maintenance of the LSZ GS website for dissemination of information • Financial planning and financial controlling of the LSZ GS activities (esp. recruitment and courses) • Advice and support for the development of new programs (practical procedures, know-how transfer) • Fundraising for LSZ GS in areas *independent* of a specific research field (e.g., for common activities or for fellowships for students from a specific country) • Development and organization of a centralized Transferable Skills Course Program for all graduate students, including acquisition, commitment, and support of internal and external facilitators, advertising the courses (GS website) and coordinating sign-up • Support for the career development of graduate students (courses, activities, web information) • Assurance of quality and sustainability of the services and products of the LSZ GS office • Exchange and collaboration with other units of Life Science Zurich • Exchange and collaboration with other graduate schools, both in- and outside of Zurich

2.2 a) LSZ GS Steering committee

The Life Science Zurich Graduate School is governed by the Program Directors' Conference (PDC), which consists of all program directors, the LSZ GS chair, and the vice chair. Students and program coordinators are each represented with four votes each in the PDC. In 2025, this steering committee met once to decide on the strategic orientation and development of the Graduate School. Since July 2017, Prof. Eilika Weber-Ban, Institute of Molecular Biology and Biophysics (ETH Zurich) has chaired the LSZ GS.

Prof. Alex Hajnal, Institute of Molecular Life Sciences (UZH), is the current vice-chair.
At the request of the evaluation committee, the LSZ GS has established a working group in 2022 with representatives of all stakeholders (program directors, coordinators and doctoral students) to consider optimal internal structures for sustaining the current excellence of the doctoral training and to develop a strategy for the trans-institutional school over the next five to ten years. Analogously to the Program Directors' Conference, the working group met once in 2025.

2.2.b) PhD programs

The PhD programs are governed by an elected professor and managed by program administrators (Table 2). Detailed reports for each program can be found in the appendix to this report.

Table 2: Program directors and administrators

PhD Program	Director	Program Administrator
Biomedical Ethics and Law (medical track)	Prof. Nikola Biller-Andorno, UZH	Dr. Roberto Andorno, UZH Michelle Heimgartner, UZH
Biomedicine	PD Dr Sean Froese, Kispi Prof. Katrien de Bock, ETH	Andrea Schmitz-Derron, UZH
Biomolecular Structure and Mechanism	Prof. Martin Jinek, UZH	Iryna Bottcher, UZH Iris Rothäusler, UZH
Cancer Biology	Prof. César Nombela Arrieta	Bettina Rausch-Malina, UZH
Clinical Science	Prof. Dr. med. Bea Latal, Kispi	Ismael Dellova de Campos , UZH
Drug Discovery	Prof. Michael Arand, UZH	Olga von Niederhäusern, UZH Gerlinde Wieczorek, UZH
Ecology	Prof. Jordi Bascompte, UZH	Dr. Debra Zuppinger-Dingley, UZH
Epidemiology & Biostatistics	Prof. Milo Puhan, UZH Prof. Mark Robinson, UZH	Dr. Marco Kaufmann, UZH
Evolutionary Biology	Prof. Kentaro K. Shimizu, UZH	Dr. Tony Weingrill, UZH
MD-PhD Program	Prof. Adriano Aguzzi, UZH Prof. Nicole Joller, UZH	Thomas Aeppli, UZH
Microbiology & Immunology	Prof. Rolf Kümmerli, UZH Prof. Jörn Piel, ETH	Judith Zingg, ETH
Molecular Life Sciences	Prof. Francesca Peri, UZH	Dr. Susanna Bachmann, ETH
Neurosciences	Dr. Wolfgang Knecht	Heidi Gauss, UZH
Plant Science	Prof. Samuel Zeeman, ETH	Dr. Melanie Paschke, ETH Dr. Bojan Gujan, ETH
RNA Biology	Prof. Frederic Allain, ETH Prof. Norbert Polacek, UniBe	Rahel Büchi, ETH
Science & Policy	Prof. Ueli Grossniklaus, UZH	Dr. Melanie Paschke, ETH Dr. Luisa Last, ETH
Systems Biology	Prof. Uwe Sauer, ETH Prof. Jörg Stelling, ETH	Simone Zuber, ETH Dr. Andrea Huber-Brösamle, ETH

Graduate School student body 2025

Details of each program are published in Appendix 2.

Table 3: Total numbers as of 31 December 2025

Total students	**1672**
Affiliated with UZH	1069
Affiliated with ETH	548
Other affiliation	77
Track I students	510
Track II students	1164
Female students	982
Male students	693
International students	1116
Swiss students	457
Program drop-outs	56
Completed PhD*	323
Program alumni	3691

2.2 c) Graduate School office

Since 1 April 2006, the Graduate School has had its own administrative office headed by Dr.Susanna Bachmann, who is employed part-time at 40% and manages the day-to-day business of the LSZ GS. The longtime assistant for Life Science Zurich, Helen Stauffer, retired early at the end of 2025. Her successor and former intern, Olena Illiasevych, dedicates about 25% of her employment to the LSZ GS.

In addition to daily operations the school administrator participated in the following courses, conferences and committees:

- PRIDE (Professionals in Doctoral Education) annual conference on “Back to the Future: The Next Two Decades of Doctoral Education” in London on 9 and 10 April at UCL.
- Network for conflict resolution at UZH, meeting on 12 May.
- Network of program coordinators at UZH, meeting on 3 June.
- Representation of the LSZ GS at the virtual Doctoral Insight Symposium in the afternoon of 23 September. Event organized by the Vienna Biocenter.
- Annual encounter of the GRADE (Goethe Research Academy for Early Career Researchers) advisory board on 16 October in Frankfurt.
- Annual meeting of the Life Science coordinator network (SEEDS) on 20 and 21 October at the Technical University of Dresden and the MPI-CBG Dresden.
- PRIDE webinar series on onboarding on 28 October and 18 November (to be continued in 2026).
- Meeting of the Swiss Transferable Skills Network (STSN) in Zurich on 4 December (together with Olena Illiasevych).
- Several Keystone webinars on different aspects of recruitment.

3 Activities

3.1 Recruitments

As in previous years, for both recruitment rounds the applicants of the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, and to a lesser extent Bangladesh) formed the largest group (approximately 1/3 of all applicants of the May and November deadline). They were followed by students from China, Germany, Italy, Iran, Switzerland, Nigeria and Turkey in varying order for the two deadlines (see appendix 3).

Table 4: Complete applications per PhD program in 2025

PhD Program	1 Nov. 2024	1 May 2025	1 Nov. 2025
Biomedical Ethics and Law (med. Track)	no data	no data	no data
Biomedicine	168	135	158
Biomolecular Structure and Mechanism	66	67	66
Cancer Biology	326	324	367
Clinical Science	88	36	33
Drug Discovery	no data	no data	no data
Ecology	72	68	57
Epidemiology and Biostatistics	218	159	161
Evolutionary Biology	32	26	27
Microbiology and Immunology	603	439	288
Molecular Life Sciences	269	255	323
Neuroscience	200	191	238
Plant Science	82	161	96
RNA Biology	40	40	44
Science and Policy	28	37	26
Systems Biology	132	97	113
TOTAL	**2324**	**2035**	**1997**

Since the peak in November 2024, the number of complete applications has declined slightly, yet it has remained at a comparatively high level of around 2,000. As in the previous year, this increase was driven primarily by consistently strong interest from students in India, Pakistan, and China. When looking specifically at applicants who obtained their master's degree in Europe, the numbers fluctuate only modestly from round to round, as shown in the list of applications (see Appendix 3).

However, the pool of well-qualified candidates who ultimately make it onto the shortlist does not appear to be growing in proportion to the rising number of applications. The LSZ GS continues to face challenges in developing effective strategies to attract early-career researchers with the right academic background. Although advertising efforts and social media campaigns are designed in close collaboration with various recruitment platforms, the resulting data must be carefully analyzed and appropriate measures defined anew for each intake cycle.

For some programs, application numbers have reached a point where conducting a thorough and diligent review within the given timeframe has become increasingly difficult. As a result, it is more important than ever for the LSZ GS to ensure that its outreach is precisely targeted - neither too broad nor too narrow - to reach the most suitable potential applicants.

Figure 2: Total number of applications since 1 July 2013

Figure 3: Total number of applications by gender

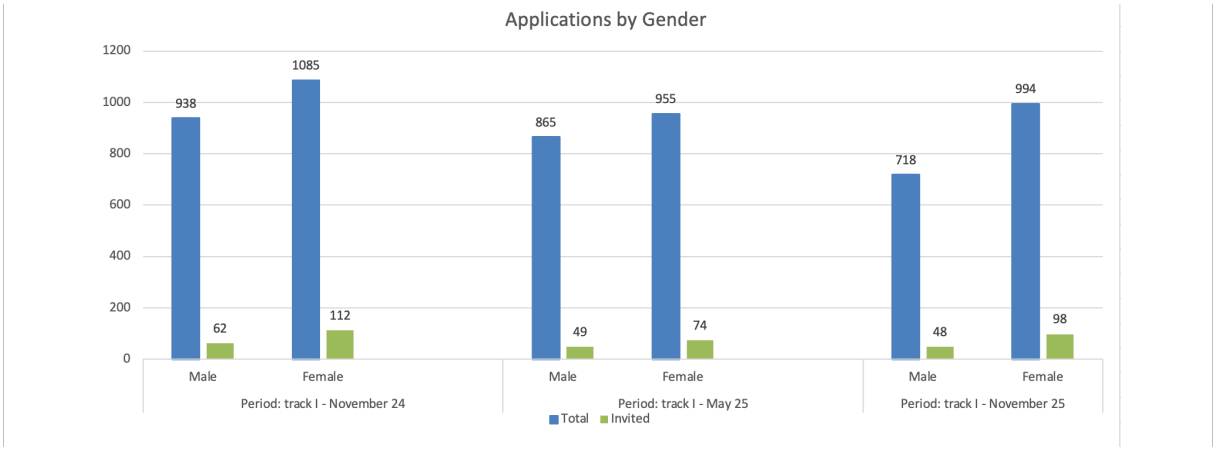
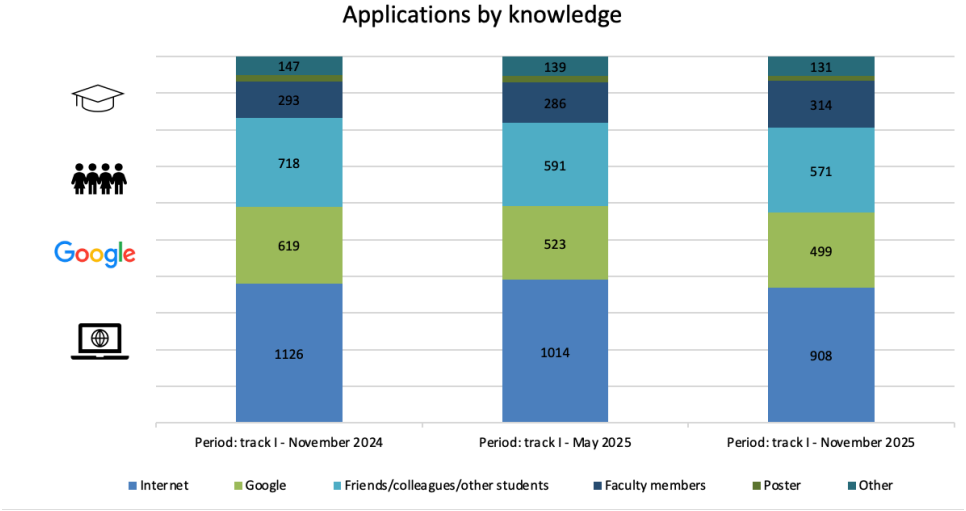


Figure 4: Total number of applications by knowledge



After the admission committees of the different programs had reviewed the applications, the top 5.5-7% of the applicants were invited to virtual admission interviews. This proportion is again lower than in previous years, but it is a logical result of continuously increasing application numbers and fewer available slots. Between 33% (November round) and 43% (May round) of the interviewed candidates were offered a position in Zurich, which is in line with the average of previous years. The same is true for the proportion of accepted candidates who rejected a position offered by our group leaders (ca. 3%) or dropped out of the recruitment process after the virtual interview or the in-person visit (7-10%). Drop-out rates before the interviews were with 12-15% higher than last year but still within the average of previous recruitment rounds (15-20%)

Table 5: LSZ GS recruiting statistics in 2025

	Nov. 1, 2024*	**Nov. 1, 2024****	**May 1, 2025**	**Nov. 1, 2025**
Complete applications	2147	2414	2046	2016
Invited candidates	180	179	123	146
Drop-outs before interview	27	26	16	18
Candidates at interview	153	153	107	128
Free slots	98	85	62	78
Matches	50	52	44	30
Candidates without matches	76	71	51	84
Drop-out after interview or site visit	14	15	8	7
Decision against LSZ GS	5	5	3	3
Rejected candidates	10	10	1	4

*as in 2024 report
**corrected data

The aim is, of course, to fill as many positions as possible, though in practice the average success rate is around 50%. While we slightly exceeded this target in November 2024 with 51%, we saw a clear peak in May 2025 with a 71% fill rate. For the November 2025 intake, numbers are still provisional and currently stand only at 30%. We hope that additional positions will be filled in the coming months, once recruitment rounds at other European institutions conclude and candidates finalize their decisions.

Because not all open positions can be filled during a given recruitment round—and because some strong applicants prefer not to wait six months when they narrowly miss an application deadline—all programs also accept "Track II" candidates. Track II students apply directly to, and are accepted by, a group leader who is affiliated with a specific PhD program. This more traditional recruitment pathway is used to varying degrees across programs. Still, more than two out of three students are hired via Track II. Applications from Track II candidates are administered directly by the individual programs.

3.2 Data systems and webpages

In August, the Life Science Zurich Graduate School informed ETH students that the administration of the doctoral process would move from DissGo to the *studentadmin* database. This system, hosted by the Faculty of Science and in use for several years, now enables LSZ GS to manage all student data on a single platform without switching between databases.

The transition proceeded smoothly overall, though some initial issues required attention. Because the automated transfer of documents from DissGo to *studentadmin* was not ready by late summer, all documents had to be moved manually for each student. Another challenge concerned missing program affiliations: ETH's export only included students who had specified participation in an LSZ GS PhD program. The ETH Doctoral Office kindly offered to add missing affiliations manually based on lists provided by the Graduate School. This collaboration worked well, and the transfer was completed by year-end.

The websites required only routine updates and maintenance, and both the application platform J*oin* and the University-licensed course database *TrainingPlus* operated reliably.

To comply with a global UZH security mandate, multi-factor authentication was successfully introduced for the Join database by the end of the summer. In addition, the programmers developed new overview pages for the coordinators, enabling them to see matches and in-person visits for each individual applicant. Transparency for recruiting PIs was also improved: they can now view which labs the invited candidates are scheduled to meet. It remains to be seen, however, whether this added information will ultimately enhance the matching process and its success rate.

Although *TrainingPlus* offers all necessary features for managing the nearly 40 annual LSZ GS courses, it remains incompatible with the university systems used for official course listings and credit allocation. Since ETH requires all completed courses, conferences, and lectures to be recorded in *myStudies*, students must manually transfer information from *studentadmin* or *TrainingPlus* into the ETH system.

Because the situation is similar for students enrolled at the Faculty of Science, the Graduate School decided to list *TrainingPlus* courses additionally in the official UZH syllabus. As this creates duplicate work, the task is progressing slowly. Despite the added workload, the LSZ GS recognizes the importance of ensuring full course visibility within the university systems.

3.3. Transferable skills courses

In addition to centralizing the application process, one of the key reasons for establishing the Graduate School was to provide common courses that are not specific to any particular scientific program. The Transferable Skills Course (TSC) program at the Life Science Zurich Graduate School aims to equip early-stage researchers with essential skills for their dissertation projects and future careers, whether in academia, industry, or the public sector. The courses are categorized into five groups: Best Scientific Practice and Ethics, Communication and Presentation Skills, Methodical Skills, Scientific Writing and Communication, and Social and Self-Management Skills.

In 2025, more than 500 PhD students participated in one or more of the 32 courses offered by the LSZ GS—nine fewer than in the previous year. This reduction is due in part to discontinued collaborations with certain university units, or to courses being fully taken over and offered independently by those units. For example, the *Animal Welfare and 3R* course is now hosted by Transdisciplinary Studies, though it remains open to LSZ GS PhD students. In addition, rising costs for several courses meant that, with an unchanged budget, the LSZ GS had to reduce the total number of courses offered. Three course formats were delivered by in-house staff, allowing them to be provided at no additional cost.

For organizational efficiency, the LSZ GS also includes a few methodological courses within the TSC, such as *DNA Next Generation Sequencing* and *Transcriptomics RNA Sequencing*. These courses are typically taught by university facility centers, including the Functional Genomics Center as well as the Flow Cytometry and Microscopy and Imaging Centers.

Approximately one-third of all courses are delivered online or in a hybrid format. Many professional trainers now offer advanced webinars that combine self-study elements with group discussions and Q&A sessions. Courses that rely heavily on social interaction among participants are preferably held on-site. This mix of in-person, embedded, online, and hybrid formats makes the TSC broadly accessible, enabling participants to choose the option that best fits their schedule. Additionally, online formats help reduce the LSZ GS's carbon footprint by minimizing the need to fly in trainers from abroad.

Table 6: Transferable Skills Courses offered to the Graduate School Students in 2025

Course category	Number of course offers	Attended by total students	UZH students	ETH students	Other affiliation
Best scientific practice & ethics	8	206	157	38	4
Communication Skills	9	99	73	25	1
Methodological Skills	3	24	22	2	
Social and Self-Management Skills	9	143	108	35	
Writing & Publishing	3	55	32	23	
Total	**32**	**520**	**392**	**123**	**5**

Figure 5: Numbers of course offers by category

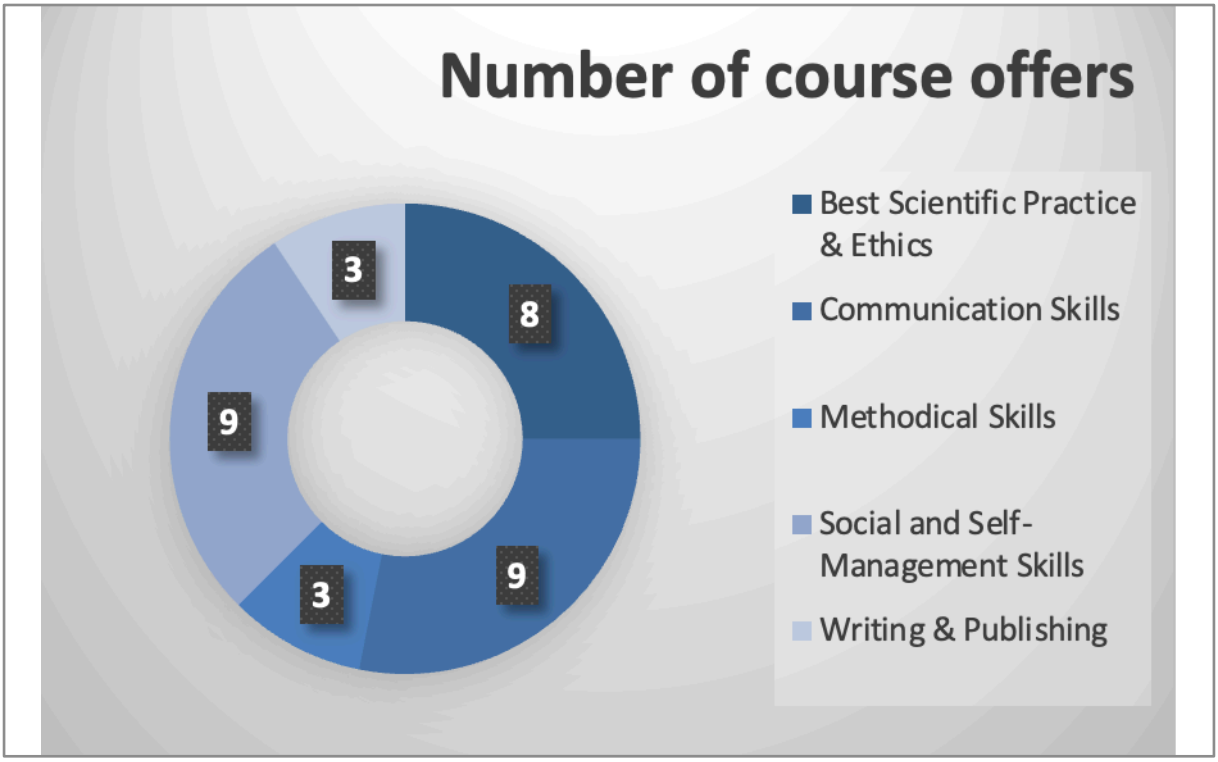


Table 7: Course program in detail

Transferable skills courses for PhD students	Number of participants	UZH affiliation (incl. USZ & Kispi)	ETH affiliation	Other
Best Scientific Practice & Ethics				
BIO 662: Ethical Issues in Human Genetics and Genomics	15	11	4	
Introductory Lecture to Good Scientific Practice and Scientific Integrity	51	39	10	2
Introductory Lecture to Good Scientific Practice and Scientific Integrity	35	27	8	
BIO 663 The impact of ethics on doing science	16	11	5	
Introductory Lecture to Good Scientific Practice and Scientific Integrity	82	69	11	2
Total	**199**	**157**	**38**	**4**
Communication Skills				
Argumentation in Scientific Writing	16	14	2	
Social Media for Scientists	14	11	3	
Effective Visual Communication of Science	18	12	6	
Presenting Science	9	5	4	
Speaking with Confidence and Impact	8	7	1	
Storytelling & Storyboarding Science at Locarno Film Festival	4	2	1	1
Effective Visual Communication of Science	17	11	6	
Logic and Reasoning for Scientists	13	11	2	
Total	**99**	**73**	**25**	**1**
Methodical Skills				
BIO 675 RNA Next Generation Sequencing	8	8		
BIO 680 DNA Next Generation Sequencing	8	7	1	
BIO 675 RNA Next Generation Sequencing	8	7	1	
Total	**24**	**22**	**2**	**0**
Social and Self-Management Skills				
Intelligent Productive Teams. How to create team partnership, communication and trust	11	7	4	
Unlocking Industry Doors: A Roadmap for PhDs and Postdocs in Life Sciences	28	21	7	
Self-organization during a PhD	20	17	3	
PhD, and next? Career options, skills and orientation for scientists	16	14	2	
Enhancing Analytical Thinking for PhD Projects and Beyond	15	6	9	
Teaching Science at University	11	10	1	
Mastering Stress and Time Management in Science	15	10	5	
Design Your Future: Navigating Career Transitions for Fulfillment	16	13	3	
Project Management I: Plan your PhD	11	10	1	
Total	**143**	**108**	**35**	**0**
Writing & Publishing				
BIO 661 Scientific Writing & Effective Communication	19	9	10	
Scientific Writing & Publication in Life Sciences	16	10	6	
BIO 661 Scientific Writing & Effective Communication	20	13	7	
Total	**55**	**32**	**23**	**0**
Total of all courses	**520**	**392**	**123**	**5**

4 On-going projects

As noted above, courses in the transferable skills training program will be added to the university's official syllabus. We regard it as important that doctoral researchers have all workshops they attended throughout their PhD in the official transcript issued together with their degree certificate. Although the project is progressing only slowly, we are confident that all entries will be completed by the end of the coming year.

The "studentadmin" database will also require further work. Although ETH students are now integrated into the platform and the main teething problems have been resolved, several issues remain. Program alumni are only partly included in the tool. Students who completed their degree at the Faculty of Science before the database came into use in 2019 have never been added to the platform and PhD students who graduated from ETH still need to be made visible as program alumni. Similarly, the LSZ GS needs at least a basic record of its PIs. We need to know in which programs the principal investigators participate as official members. Compared with the integration of the ETH doctoral candidates into "studentadmin" these are, however, minor tasks that will hopefully be completed by the beginning of summer.

At their November conference, the program directors agreed that the working group should explore whether the LSZ GS Scientific Integrity lecture ought to be updated to include ethical considerations related to the use of AI in research. While there is broad recognition that AI presents new challenges, the consensus is that its use should be guided rather than restricted. Since some programs and other university units already address best practices for AI use in their courses, the graduate school should ensure that any updates neither duplicate nor compete with existing offerings

5 Finances

Since UZH and ETH signed their agreement in 2010, the Life Science Zurich Graduate School has received CHF 700'000 annually from its host institutions. Each year since then, the Directors' Conference has developed a distribution key to allocate these funds (see Appendix 1 for the 2025 key). To ensure fair funding, each program receives a fixed allowance with a maximum share of CHF 14'000, plus a per capita contribution for a maximum of four years per student.

The LSZ GS has not been able to fund all of its PhD programs for some time. Most of the programs (partially) affiliated with the Medical Faculty do not receive any financial support via the Graduate School. Conversely, the Clinical Science and MD-PhD programs pay a membership fee. The RNA Biology program receives funding from the NCCR RNA Biology, and the Graduate School pays only the per capita fee for its PhD students. Although the student body has stabilized, the number of funded PhD students (year 1 to 4) increased from 1'071 2011 to 1'211 in 2025. Despite this continuous growth, support from UZH (CHF 400'000) and ETH (CHF 300'000), has remained unchanged since the agreement was signed in 2010. Consequently, financial resources for most programs have decreased over the years due to the addition of new programs and a general increase in costs and salaries. In 2025, the Life Science Zurich budget at the Faculty of Science (MNF) was reduced by 0.67% and then by an additional 1.3%, resulting in total cuts of CHF 16'354. Fortunately for the Graduate School, LSZ absorbed the reduction of the allocated funds. At the end of 2025, the faculty announced the cuts for 2026 amounting to CHF 32'900 for Life Science Zurich. In the coming year, all LSZ units will have to assume a proportional share of these reductions, making it already clear that the Graduate School will have to operate with a reduced budget.

Given the faculty's strained financial situation, it is doubtful that an expansion of the LSZ GS

administration to 1 FTE or increasing the budget by CHF 45'000 will be possible. The request is still pending with the dean and has so far neither been approved nor rejected. The Graduate School therefore remains uncertain as to whether it can expect an increase in personnel resources in the near future.

Since the faculty introduced the Sustainability Cost (SuCo), the LSZ GS has been covering these additional expenses. The MNF levies a fee of CHF 200 per ton of CO_2 for all billed flights. A portion of this fee is returned to the institutes in the form of an "incentive tax." The remainder is used by the faculty to create a fund from which costs for international train travel can be reimbursed. Currently, the Graduate School bears SuCo costs arising from applicants' travel. As we now have data from the past three years, we would like to work with the programs to determine how these costs can be distributed fairly and with minimal administrative effort.

Figure 6: Student numbers at LSZGS and growth rate between 2011 and 2025 (exact numbers in Appendix 2). Please note that this table shows the total number of students. The numbers thus differ from the numbers mentioned above and in Appendix 1, where only the students from year 1 – year 4 are listed.

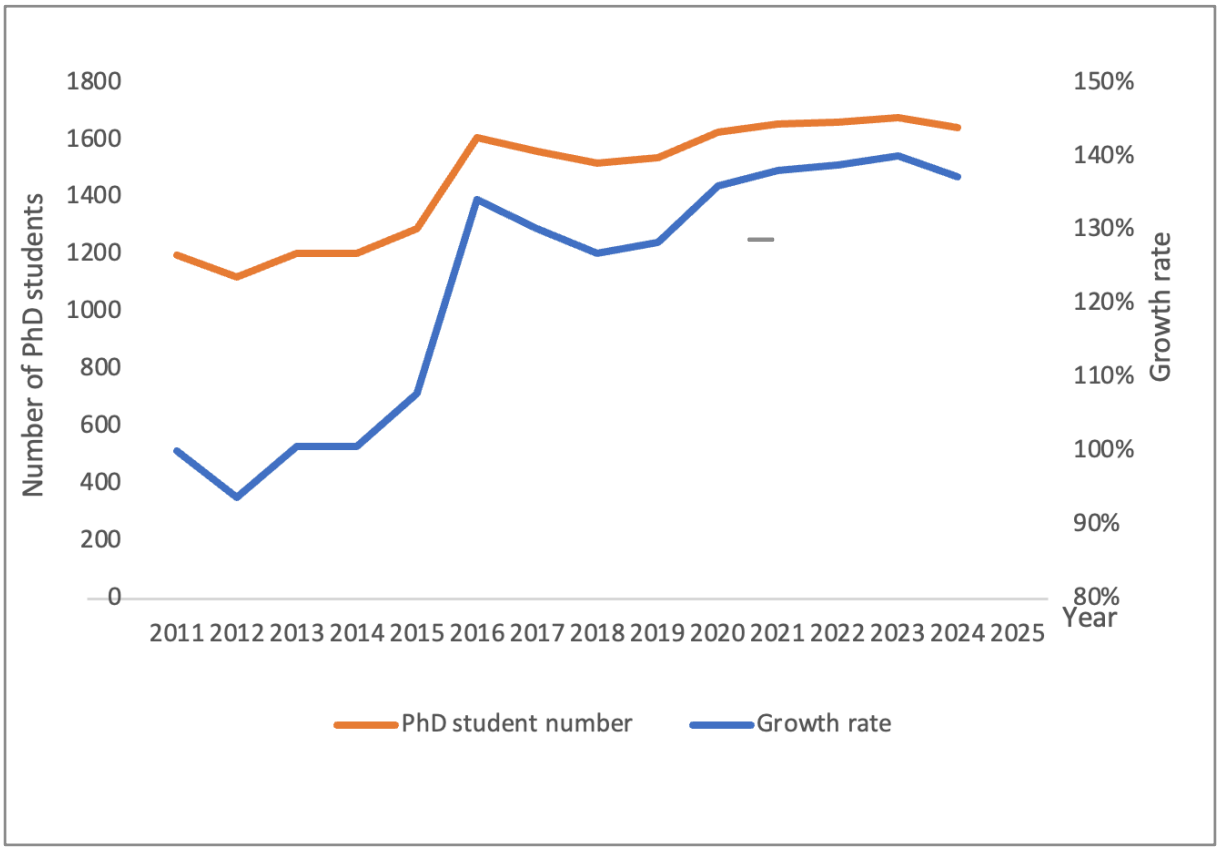


Table 8: Annual Account LSZ Graduate School 2025

Earnings 2025	**CHF**
Contribution UZH	113'195
Contribution ETH	26'035
Reimbursement recruitment costs PhD programs (May 2024 & Nov 2024)	52'795
Annual support MD-PhD program	5’000
Annual support Clinical Science Program	8'421
SuCo (sustainability costs) justice fonds	3'584
Course surcharges	1'460
Return VBZ day cards	2'178
Total earnings	**207’668**

Costs 2025	**CHF**
Recruitment rounds (Jan & Jul 2025)	45'250
Transferable skills course program	82'174
Data bases (Join, PhD Tool), computer services (servers etc.) & hardware	11'865
Marketing (online ads & listings)	7'660
Salary administrator	51'266
SuCo (sustainability costs) incentive tax 2025	12'348
Overhead	1'480
Total costs	**210’563**
Balance as of 31 December 2025	**-2’895**

The social benefit costs for Susanna Bachmann (CHF 11'937) were covered by the Faculty of Science of the UZH.

Table 9: Life Science Zurich Graduate School: Recruitment costs 2025 in CHF

Travel & accommodation costs for external students	**January (56 Stud.)**	**July (47 Stud.)**
Accommodation	10'174	7'725
Travel costs (incl. public transports and meals	13'621	13’729
Total costs CHF	**23'795**	**21’454**
Costs per student	425	456

SuCo costs CHF	**1st part year 2025**	**2nd part year 2025**
SuCo flight tax	-5’346	-7'002
SuCo justice fund	1'079	2'505
Sustainability fund (train fares)	2'516	3'012
Total costs CHF	**-1'751**	**-1'485**

*Taxes are based on the flights of the previous year (2024) and can therefore not be related to the flight distance covered in 2025.

6 Outlook

In late 2025, the dean and the dean of studies of the Faculty of Science met with the ETH Vice-Rector for Doctoral Studies to discuss the future of the Life Science Zurich (LSZ) initiative and, consequently, the Graduate School. Although the discussions between the two universities are still underway and are expected to continue well into 2026, it currently appears that both institutions wish to maintain their support for the Graduate School. However, they will likely need to renegotiate the agreement that has been in place since 2010/11. The coming year will show what implications this will have for the LSZ Graduate School, its budget, and the services it provides to doctoral students and affiliated PIs.

Meanwhile, the financial situation will require careful monitoring in 2026. While 2024 concluded with a positive balance of CHF 11'038, 2025 closed slightly negative at –CHF 2'895. Rising costs-particularly for transferable skills courses, SuCo (sustainability) charges, and marketing—have outpaced earnings. Notably, recruitment costs per student have increased over the last two years, despite smaller cohorts in some rounds. The same trend applies to the transferable skills program where course costs per participant increased in 2025 compared to the previous year.

Applications show a slight downward trend across the last four recruitment rounds (from 2'414 to 2'016 complete applications) with moderate variability in matches (30–52 per round) and fluctuating candidate willingness to relocate. Although interview attendance remains stable, the proportion of candidates without matches has increased in some rounds, suggesting tighter competition for supervisors and potential mismatches between applicant profiles and project needs. The LSZ GS may have to adjust recruitment messaging, strengthen international outreach, or refine matchmaking processes to maintain stable cohort sizes and meet the supervisors' expectations from the Track I recruitment.

Appendix 1: Financial distribution key

Financial support of ETH and UZH in 2025							
Annual contribution ETH: 300'000 CHF Annual contribution UZH: 400'000 CHF Total contribution: 700'000 CHF			Allowances: up to 10 students: CHF 5'000 11-20 students: CHF 10'000 more than 20 students: CHF 14'000				
Programs	**Allowance**	**ETH students**	**UZH students**	**Other uni/ faculty**	**Students total**	**310 CHF per student**	**Total amount**
Biomedicine	14,000	17	108		125	38'750	52'750
Biomolecular Structure and Mechanism	14,000	36	39		75	23'250	37'250
Cancer Biology	14,000	20	110		130	40'300	54'300
Ecology	14,000	20	33		53	16'430	30'430
Epidemiology & Biostatistics	14,000	2	38		40	12'400	26'400
Evolutionary Biology	14,000	3	57		60	18'600	32'600
Microbiology & Immunology	14,000	80	140		220	68'200	82'200
Molecular Life Sciences	14,000	58	65		123	38'130	52'130
Plant Science	14,000	55	35	17	90	27'900	41'900
RNA Biology		12	4	16	16	4'960	4'960
Sciences and Policy	14,000	49	6	5	55	17'050	31'050
Systems Biology	14,000	46	15		61	18'910	32'190
ZNZ/Neuroscience	14,000	68	151	18	219	67'890	81'890
TOTAL CHF	**168,000**	**466**	**801**	**56**	**1267**	**392'770**	**560'770**

Life Science Zurich Graduate School

154'230 (= approx. 1'267 x 109.89 CHF plus CHF 15'000 membership fees : CHF 5'000 from MD-PhD program and 10'000 from Clinical Science)

This support covers 1st - 4th year of PhD.

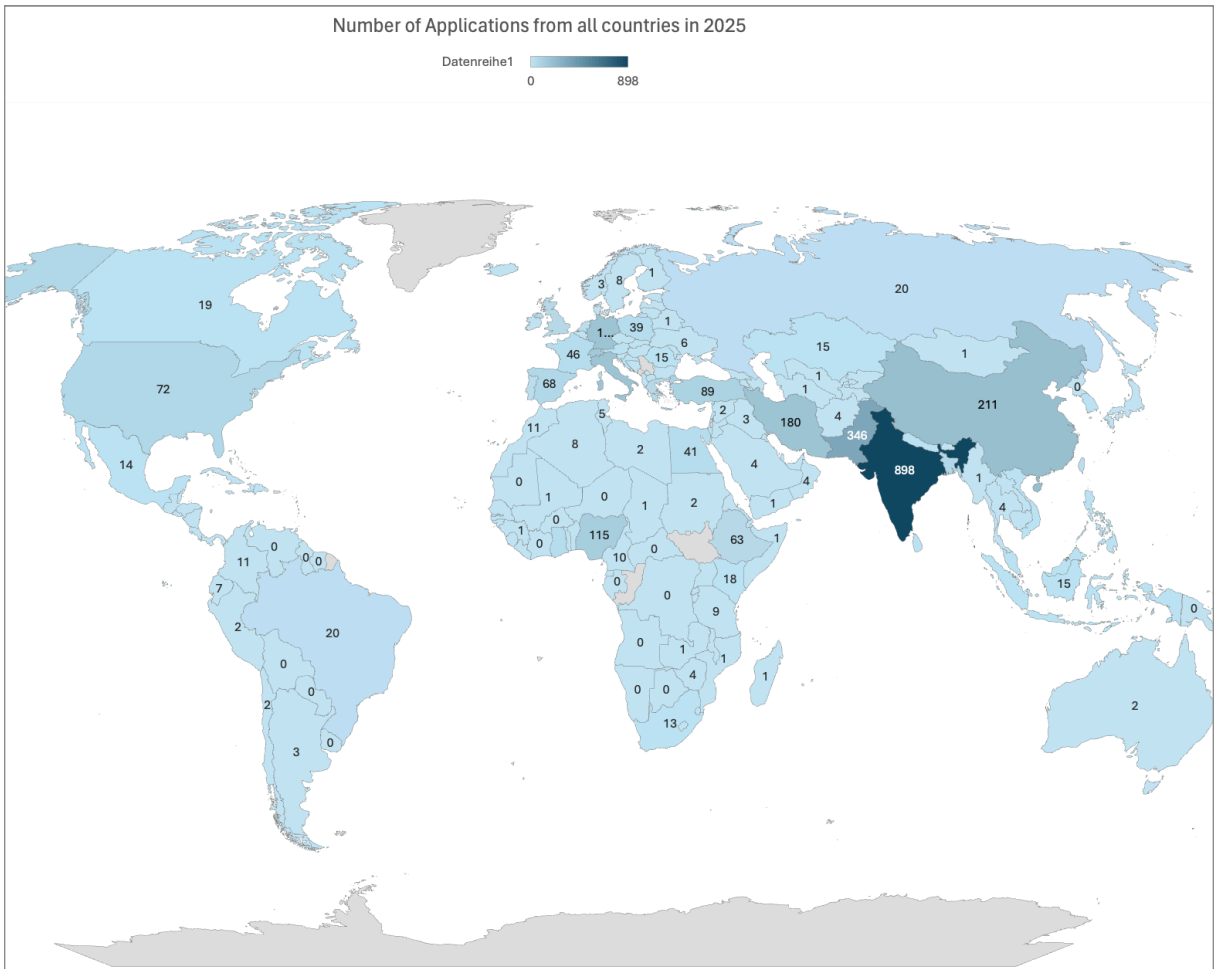
Appendix 2: Graduate School student body 2025

As of 31 December 2025	Total number of students	Affiliated with UZH	Affiliated with ETH	Other affiliation	Track I students	Track II students	Female students	Male students	International students	Swiss students	Program drop-outs	Completed PhD	Program Alumni
Graduate School total	1672	1069	548	77	510	1164	982	693	1116	457	56	323	3691
Biomedicine	134	112	22	0	52	82	94	40	86	47	8	27	66
Biomolecular Structure & Mechanism	81	41	40	0	32	49	43	38	62	19	3	17	194
Cancer Biology	131	109	22	0	72	59	81	50	88	43	2	36	433
Clinical Science	81	81	0	0	9	72	53	28	49	32	0	5	45
Drug Discovery	22	17	4	1	10	12	12	10				2	
Ecology	79	54	25	22	1	78	43	36			4	21	262
Epidemiology & Biostatistics	54	53	1	0	30	24	32	22	35	19	0	9	113
Evolutionary Biology	72	69	3	0	5	67	42	30	53	19	3	18	217
Microbiology & Immunology	249	163	86	0	79	170	148	101	151	98	5	61	605
Molecular Life Sciences	154	82	72	0	98	56	91	63	127	27	5	36	689
Neuroscience	312	219	91	2	43	269	177	135	235	77	11	43	34
Plant Science	120	38	62	20	5	117	67	55	92	30	3	17	727
RNA Biology	38	6	13	19	25	13	28	10	31	7	1	5	55
Science & Policy	64	7	44	13	12	52	38	27	48	17	11	15	100
Systems Biology	81	18	63	0	37	44	33	48	59	22	0	11	151

Appendix 3: Statistics LSZ Graduate School intake rounds

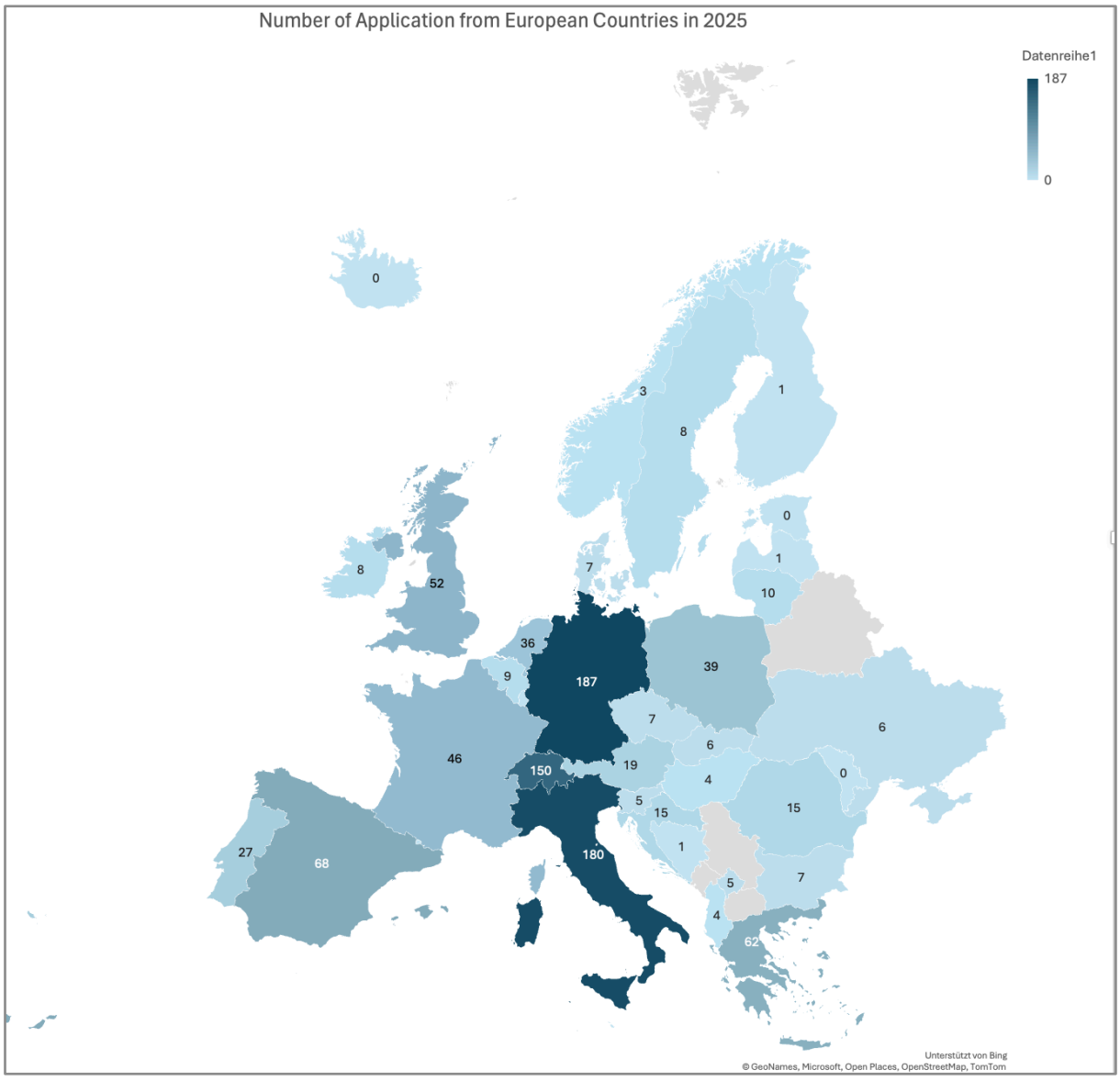
Figures include more data groups than shown in table 5.

Applications worldwide 2025 by country



Country	Applications	Country	Applications	Country	Applications
India	898	Bangladesh	68	Taiwan	36
Pakistan	346	Spain	68	Portugal	27
China	211	Ethiopia	63	Brazil	20
Germany	187	Greece	62	Russian Federation	20
Iran	180	UK	52	Austria	19
Italy	180	France	46	Canada	19
Switzerland	150	Ghana	45	Kenya	18
Nigeria	115	Egypt	41	Lebanon	16
Turkey	89	Poland	39	Malaysia	16
USA	72	Netherlands	36	Croatia	15

Applications from Europe 2025



Country	Applications	Country	Applications	Country	Applications
Germany	187	Austria	19	Slovakia	6
Italy	180	Croatia	15	Ukraine	6
Switzerland	150	Romania	15	Kosovo	5
Spain	68	Lithuania	10	Serbia	5
Greece	62	Belgium	9	Slovenia	5
UK	52	Ireland	8	Albania	4
France	46	Sweden	8	Hungary	4
Poland	39	Bulgaria	7	Norway	3
Netherlands	36	Czech Republic	7	Liechtenstein	2
Portugal	27	Denmark	7	Luxembourg	2

Applications worldwide November 2024 - November 2025

Rank	Country	Nov 24	Country	May 25	Country	Nov 25
1	India	451	India	462	India	436
2	Pakistan	188	Pakistan	227	China	126
3	China	186	Italy	96	Pakistan	119
4	Nigeria	122	Germany	92	Iran	101
5	Iran	114	China	85	Germany	95
6	Germany	99	Iran	79	Italy	84
7	Italy	95	Switzerland	71	Switzerland	79
8	Switzerland	68	Nigeria	60	Nigeria	55
9	Ethiopia	62	Turkey	41	Turkey	48
10	Turkey	55	Ethiopia	40	Spain	45
11	Greece	33	Bangladesh	37	USA	38
12	Spain	31	USA	34	Bangladesh	31
13	Bangladesh	28	Greece	33	Greece	29
14	UK	28	Ghana	29	UK	27
15	Egypt	26	Poland	29	Ethiopia	23
16	France	26	Egypt	26	France	20
17	Ghana	22	France	26	Taiwan	18
18	Kenya	22	UK	25	Ghana	16
19	Russian Federation	21	Netherlands	23	Egypt	15
20	USA	20	Spain	23	Netherlands	13
21	Portugal	18	Taiwan	18	Portugal	13
22	Austria	15	Portugal	14	Brazil	12
23	Taiwan	15	Kenya	10	Russian Federation	12
24	Indonesia	14	Lebanon	9	Austria	11
25	Netherlands	12	Austria	8	Canada	11
26	Philippines	12	Brazil	8	Malaysia	10
27	Poland	12	Canada	8	Poland	10
28	Brazil	11	Croatia	8	Kazakhstan	9
29	Uganda	11	Mexico	8	Romania	9
30	South Africa	10	Russian Federation	8	Indonesia	8
31	Zimbabwe	10	South Africa	8	Kenya	8
32	Cameroon	9	Uganda	8	Lithuania	8
33	Colombia	9	Indonesia	7	Croatia	7
34	Mexico	9	Japan	7	Lebanon	7
35	Sri Lanka	9	Nepal	7	Morocco	7
36	Croatia	8	Philippines	7	Nepal	7
37	Viet Nam	8	Sri Lanka	7	Republic of Korea	7
38	Afghanistan	7	Viet Nam	7	Mexico	6
39	Albania	7	Colombia	6	Philippines	6
40	Kazakhstan	7	Jordan	6	Sri Lanka	6
41	Malaysia	7	Kazakhstan	6	Viet Nam	6
42	Republic of Korea	7	Malaysia	6	Belgium	5
43	Slovakia	7	Republic of Korea	6	Cameroon	5
44	Sudan	7	Romania	6	Colombia	5

Rank	Country	Nov 24	Country	May 25	Country	Nov 25
45	United Republic of Tanzania	7	United Republic of Tanzania	6	Denmark	5
46	Australia	6	Algeria	5	Israel	5
47	Jordan	6	Cameroon	5	Jordan	5
48	Lebanon	6	Afghanistan	4	South Africa	5
49	Lithuania	6	Belgium	4	Bulgaria	4
50	Sweden	6	Cyprus	4	Cyprus	4
51	Tunisia	6	Ireland	4	Czech Republic	4
52	Ukraine	6	Morocco	4	Ecuador	4
53	Belgium	5	Rwanda	4	Ireland	4
54	Malawi	5	Sweden	4	Slovakia	4
55	Nepal	5	Thailand	4	Slovenia	4
56	Romania	5	Tunisia	4	Sweden	4
57	Rwanda	5	Ukraine	4	Algeria	3
58	Singapore	5	Bulgaria	3	Malawi	3
59	Syrian Arab Republic	5	Czech Republic	3	Oman	3
60	Algeria	4	Ecuador	3	Serbia	3
61	Canada	4	Kosovo	3	Uganda	3
62	Cyprus	4	Liberia	3	United Republic of Tanzania	3
63	Ireland	4	Saudi Arabia	3	Albania	2
64	Japan	4	Zimbabwe	3	Armenia	2
65	Kosovo	4	Albania	2	Azerbaijan	2
66	Morocco	4	Argentina	2	Barbados	2
67	Saudi Arabia	4	Armenia	2	Chile	2
68	Belarus	3	Benin	2	Hungary	2
69	Hungary	3	Bhutan	2	Iraq	2
70	Mauritius	3	Denmark	2	Japan	2
71	Slovenia	3	Gambia	2	Kosovo	2
72	Somalia	3	Hungary	2	Luxembourg	2
73	Argentina	2	Liechtenstein	2	Rwanda	2
74	Azerbaijan	2	Lithuania	2	Ukraine	2
75	Botswana	2	Mauritius	2	Antigua and Barbuda	1
76	Chile	2	Norway	2	Argentina	1
77	Ecuador	2	Serbia	2	Australia	1
78	Estonia	2	Slovakia	2	Bahrain	1
79	Iraq	2	Australia	1	Bhutan	1
80	Israel	2	Azerbaijan	1	Brunei Darussalam	1
81	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	2	Belarus	1	Cambodia	1
82	Mozambique	2	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	Chad	1
83	Myanmar	2	Cuba	1	Cuba	1
84	Serbia	2	DR Congo	1	Eritrea	1
85	Thailand	2	Eritrea	1	Finland	1

Rank	Country	Nov 24	Country	May 25	Country	Nov 25
89	Central African Republic	1	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1	Honduras	1
90	Chad	1	Madagascar	1	Liberia	1
91	Democratic Republic of the Congo	1	Malawi	1	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1
92	Denmark	1	Mali	1	Mongolia	1
93	Djibouti	1	Malta	1	Myanmar	1
94	Finland	1	Mozambique	1	Norway	1
95	Gambia	1	New Zealand	1	Peru	1
96	Guatemala	1	Oman	1	Saudi Arabia	1
97	Haiti	1	Peru	1	Sudan	1
98	Lao People's Democratic Republic	1	Senegal	1	Syrian Arab Republic	1
99	Latvia	1	Sierra Leone	1	Togo	1
100	Liechtenstein	1	Singapore	1	Trinidad and Tobago	1
101	Mali	1	Slovenia	1	Tunisia	1
102	Malta	1	Somalia	1	Uzbekistan	1
103	Nicaragua	1	Sudan	1	Zimbabwe	1
104	Norway	1	Syrian Arab Republic	1		
105	Oman	1	North Macedonia	1		
106	Peru	1	Turkmenistan	1		
107	Republic of Moldova	1	Yemen	1		
108	Saint Lucia	1	Zambia	1		
109	Sierra Leone	1				
110	Yemen	1				
	Total	**2121**	**Total**	**1866**	**Total**	**1736**

Applications from Europe November 2024 - November 2025

Rank	Country	Nov 24	Country	May 25	Country	Nov 25
1	Germany	99	Italy	96	Germany	95
2	Italy	95	Germany	92	Italy	84
3	Switzerland	68	Switzerland	71	Switzerland	79
4	Turkey	55	Greece	33	Spain	45
5	Greece	33	Poland	29	Greece	29
6	Spain	31	France	26	UK	27
7	UK	28	UK	25	France	20
8	France	26	Netherlands	23	Netherlands	13
9	Russian Federation	21	Spain	23	Portugal	13
10	Portugal	18	Portugal	14	Austria	11
11	Austria	15	Austria	8	Poland	10
12	Netherlands	12	Croatia	8	Romania	9
13	Poland	12	Romania	6	Lithuania	8
14	Croatia	8	Belgium	4	Croatia	7
15	Albania	7	Ireland	4	Belgium	5
16	Slovakia	7	Sweden	4	Denmark	5
17	Lithuania	6	Ukraine	4	Bulgaria	4
18	Sweden	6	Bulgaria	3	Czech Republic	4
19	Ukraine	6	Czech Republic	3	Ireland	4
20	Belgium	5	Kosovo	3	Slovakia	4
21	Romania	5	Albania	2	Slovenia	4
22	Cyprus	4	Denmark	2	Sweden	4
23	Ireland	4	Hungary	2	Serbia and Montenegro	3
24	Kosovo	4	Liechtenstein	2	Albania	2
25	Belarus	3	Lithuania	2	Hungary	2
26	Hungary	3	Norway	2	Kosovo	2
27	Slovenia	3	Serbia and Montenegro	2	Luxembourg	2
28	Estonia	2	Slovakia	2	Ukraine	2
29	Serbia and Montenegro	2	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	Finland	1
30	Denmark	1	Latvia	1	Norway	1
31	Finland	1	Malta	1		
32	Latvia	1	Slovenia	1		
33	Liechtenstein	1				
34	Malta	1				
35	Norway	1				
36	Republic of Moldova	1				
	Total	**595**	**Total**	**499**	**Total**	**499**

Appendix 4: PhD Programs Annual Reports

Biomedicine

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	134
UZH	112
ETH	22
Other affiliation*	0
Track I students	52
Track II students	82
Female students	94
Male students	40
International students	86
Swiss students	47
Program drop-outs	8
Completed PhD	27
Program alumni	66
Faculty members	100

*One PhD student is enrolled at UZH, doing her PhD at CUTISS AG.

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	159	129
Invited candidates	22	17
Drop-outs before interview	5	2
Free slots (BioMed priority program)	11	7
Matches	5	4
Candidates without matches	6	7
Decision against program	1	1
Rejected candidates	2	0
Change to other LSZGS programs	4	4
Gained from LSZGS programs	1	1

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1		
Income		
ETHZ		
UZH	52’750	
Fees	34’000	
Other	6’350	
Expenses		
Salaries program*		59’863
Social benefits		907
Recruitment November 24		1’914
Recruitment May 25		2’822
Program activities (retreat, courses, event, travel grants)		26’821
Overhead		
Total	**93’100**	**92’327**
Balance as of December 31		**+773**

*Without social security contributions

Program Activities 2025

Graduate Courses organized by BioMed

- October 30+31, 2025: Mouse physiology and pathophysiology *(Petra Seebeck, Lubor Borsig)*
- June 16 + 17, 2025: Scientific Writing and Oral Communication *(ext. speaker Pedro Ruiz-Castro)*
- September 1 + 2, 2025: Molecular Biology Methods *(ext. speaker Pedro Ruiz-Castro)*
- October and November 2025: (5 days) Bioinformatics and Next Generation Sequencing, with course fee for PhD students *(Ferdinand von Meyenn and Babraham Institute UK)*
- December 4+5, 2025: Aspects in human tissue engineering *(Agnes Klar, Thomas Biedermann)*

- *Cancelled*[1]*:* Introduction to human physiology: Regulation of cardiovascular function *(Stefano Ministrini, Peter Kahr*)time overlap
- *Cancelled*[2]*:* Introduction to human physiology: Endocytosis in kidney homeostasis and Disease (former Membrane transport, signal transduction *(Alessandro Luciani)* *****
- *Cancelled*[2]*:* Introduction to human physiology: Sensory systems: how we hear and see *(Flurin Pfiffner and Christian Grimm)* *****
- *Cancelled*[2]*:* Introduction to human physiology: Respiration and *Blood (Roland Wenger)* *****

[1] Absence lecturer
[2] Lack of participants (< 5)

*****The BioMed commission has decided that these courses will no longer be offered. New course offering is in planning.

New database Studentadmin

All ETH student files are transferred to the new database StudentAdmin. Some adjustments are still ongoing. The former database DissGo is no longer used by the ETH students.

5th BioMed Retreat

June 6, 2025 (1 day): 5th BioMed Mini-Retreat in the Landenberghaus Greifensee. 46 participants (8 PIs and 38 Ph students) took part.

Program:
- Session 1-3: in total 14 presentations from BioMed PhD students
- Poster sessions with 28 posters
- Talk of an invited external speaker: Talk: Dr. Daniel Lafkas, Principal Scientist at Roche
- Prizes for best presentations and posters

BioMed event 2025

November 3, 2025: Fall event together with the MIM PhD Program, Bellavista ETH Hönggerberg, 17 - 21 o'clock, presentation of (special) scientific methods / techniques (1 slide/person) followed by an aperitif with around 60 participants.

BioMed Travel Grants

In 2025 the BioMed Travel Grant supported nine PhD students to participate in a conference in and outside Europe with a sum of 500 per student.

New BioMed commission member

With PD Dr. Cristelle Le Foll, Institute of Veterinary Physiology a new BioMed commission member could be found (replacement Bernd Wollscheid).

New BioMed PIs

In 2025 we welcomed following new PIs in the Biomed PhD Program.

Joel Zindel ETH
Marco Baccigaluppi UZH

Gustav Nyström EMPA/ETH
Nicole Lindenblatt USZ
Theresa V. Rohm USZ

Total: 100 BioMed PIs

Financial Situation of the Program

The financial situation of the program was still good, not at least because we have a constant number of new doctoral students (PhD fee). Nevertheless, we decided to offer the Bioinformatics course (organized together with the Babraham Institute, UK) mostly financed by the participants.

Outlook 2026

Graduate Courses organized by BioMed in 2026

- June 11 + 12, 2026: Mouse physiology and pathophysiology *(Petra Seebeck, Lubor Borsig)*
- June 15 + 16, 2026: Scientific Writing and Oral Communication *(ext. speaker Pedro Ruiz-Castro)*
- September 7 + 8, 2026: Molecular Biology Methods *(ext. speaker Pedro Ruiz-Castro)*
- October and November 2026: (5 days) Bioinformatics and Next Generation Sequencing, with course fee for PhD students *(Ferdinand von Meyenn and Babraham Institute UK)*
- December 3 + 4, 2026: Aspects in human tissue engineering *(Agnes Klar, Thomas Biedermann)*

Courses in planning for fall semester 2026:

- Regulation of cardiovascular function *(Stefano Ministrini, Peter Kahr*)
- "Ear" course (2-day, course title tbd *(Flurin Pfiffner)*

Open: Biomedical Research & Development offered by Daniel Stekhoven ETH

Update BioMed regulations

The BioMed regulations need to be revised, as the current version still refers to the old DissGo database. Minor adjustments will also be made.

Two-day Retreat 2026 in Murten

June 25 + 26, 2026: 6th BioMed two-day Retreat in Centre Loewenberg, Murten.

BioMed event fall/winter 2026

We will decide in September if the program can afford another event in fall/winter 2026 (scientific part followed by a social part and aperitif) possibly together with the MIM PhD Program.

BioMed Travel Grants 2026

We have included 10 travel grants (CHF 500 for each student) in the financial budget.

Financial situation Program

The retreat 2026 will be financed from remaining money we have received from the ETH in 2023/24. If we experience a drop in the number of new doctoral students, we will have to cancel the grants in the second half of the year and will not be able to organize any further event in fall / winter 2026.

AS 13.2.202

Biomolecular Structure and Mechanism

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	81
UZH	
ETH	
Other affiliation	0
Track I students	32
Track II students	49
Female students	43
Male students	38
International students	62
Swiss students	19
Program drop-outs	3
Completed PhD	17
Program alumni	194
Faculty members	29

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	42	44
Invited candidates	6	8
Drop-outs before interview	3	1
Free slots (priority program)	8	4
Matches	2	2
Candidates without matches	1	4
Decision against program	-	1
Rejected candidates	-	-
Change to other LSZGS programs	-	1
Gained from LSZGS programs	-	-

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1		
Income		
ETHZ	-	
UZH	37’250.-	
Fees	15’000.-	
Other	-	
Expenses		
Salaries program		29’118.55.-
Social benefits		6’120.00.-
Recruitment November 24		3’552.40.-
Recruitment May 25		3’044.40.-
Program activities (retreat, symposia, etc.)		10’736.52.-
Overhead	-	-
Total	52’250.00.-	52’571.87
Balance as of December 31		-321.87

Program Activities

- Structural Biology Course: 03.02.2025 & 04.02.2025
- Annual Meeting of the BSM Program members on 22.05.2025
- Current Topics in structural Biology Course: 19.06.2025
- Retreat in Morschach, Mattli Hotel, 29.09.-01.10.2025

Cancer Biology

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	131
UZH	109
ETH	22
Other affiliation	-
Track I students	72
Track II students	59
Female students	81
Male students	50
International students	88
Swiss students	43
Program drop-outs	2
Completed PhD	36
Program alumni	433
Faculty members	75

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	326	324
Invited candidates	21	16
Drop-outs before interview	3	2
Free slots (CB priority program)	10	7
Matches	9	7
Candidates without matches	4	6
Decision against program	3	1
Rejected candidates	2	0
Change to other LSZGS programs	2	2
Gained from LSZGS programs	4	1

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1	37’594.47	
Income		
ETHZ	14’000.00	
UZH	40’300.00	
Fees		
CCCZ	91’657.80	
Other		
Expenses		
Salaries program		75’441.80
Social benefits		16’216.10
Recruitment November 24		5’898.40
Recruitment May 25		2’914.40
Program activities (retreat, symposia, etc.)		89’490.00
Overhead		
Total	183’552.37	189’960.70
Balance as of December 31		6’408.33

Program Overview

Director:
Prof. César Nombela Arrieta, Department of Medical Oncology, USZ from June 4, 2025,
Prof. Maries van den Broek until June 4, 2025

Steering Committee:
Prof. Ana Guerreiro Stücklin, Oncology Department, Kispi
Prof. Anne Müller, Institute of Molecular Cancer Research, UZH
Prof. Manuel Stucki, Department of Gynaecology, USZ elected on April 7, 2025
Prof. Roger Schibli, PSI and Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, ETHZ

Student representatives:
Aditya Awasthi, Institute of Molecular Cancer Research, UZH
Guillaume Ems, Neurosurgery, KSSG – from October 2025
Charbel Machaalani, Oncology, KISPI – from October 2025
Avni Mehta, Paul Scherrer Institute, ETHZ – resigned Dec 2025
Marine Ray – Oncology, KISPI – from October 2025
Maria Walker - Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, UZH – from October 2025

Program coordinator:
Bettina Rausch-Malina, c/o Institute of Molecular Cancer Research, UZH

Program Activities

The following committees were established to conduct Track 1 admission interviews:

Review/Admission Committees:
Nov 24/Jan 25:
Prof. Lubor Borsig, Institute of Physiology, UZH
Prof. Christoph Driessen, Department of Medical Oncology and Hematology, KSSG
PD Dr. Ralph Fritsch, Department of Medical Oncology and Hematology, USZ
Prof. Jana Ellegast, Department of Medical Oncology and Hematology, USZ
Prof. Roger Schibli, Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, ETHZ
Prof. Enni Markkanen, Institute of Veterinary Pharmacology and Toxicology, UZH
Prof. Anne Müller, Institute of Molecular Cancer Research, UZH
Prof. Marian Neidert, Department of Neurosurgery, KSSG
Prof. Alessandro Sartori, Institute of Molecular Cancer Research, UZH
Dr. Tobias Weiss, Department of Neurology, USZ
Prof. Thorsten Zenz, Department of Medical Oncology and Hematology, USZ

May25/Jun 25
Prof. Martin Baumgartner, Oncology, University Children's Hospital Zurich
Prof. Lubor Borsig, Institute of Physiology, UZH
PD Dr. Ralph Fritsch, Department of Medical Oncology and Hematology, USZ
Prof. Jana Ellegast, Department of Medical Oncology and Hematology, USZ
Dr. David Penton Ribas, Electrophysiology Facility, UZH
Prof. Roger Schibli, Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, ETHZ
Dr. Tobias Weiss, Department of Neurology, USZ
Prof. Thorsten Zenz, Department of Medical Oncology and Hematology, USZ

In addition, admission interviews for applicants to Program 2 were conducted throughout the year by the following professors and research group leaders:

Prof. Nicola Aceto, Molecular Health Sciences, ETHZ
Prof. Matthias Altmeyer, Department of Molecular Mechanisms of Disease, UZH
Prof. Isabelle Arnold, Institute of Experimental Immunology, UZH
Prof. Bernd Bodenmiller, Department of Quantitative Biomedicine, UZH
Prof. Beat Bornhauser, Oncology, KISPI
Prof. Ralph Fritsch, Department of Medical Oncology and Hematology, USZ
Prof. Ana Guerreiro Stücklin, Oncology, KISPI
Prof. Mitch Levesque, Department of Dermatology, USZ

Prof. Anne Müller, Institute of Molecular Cancer Research, UZH
Prof. Christian Münz, Institute of Experimental Immunology, UZH
Prof. Lorenza Penengo, Institute of Molecular Cancer Research, UZH
Prof. Martin Pruschy, Radiobiology Lab, USZ
Prof. Michael Scharl, Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, USZ
Dr. Karina Silina, Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, ETHZ
Prof. Lukas Sommer, Institute of Anatomy, UZH
Prof. Manuel Stucki, Department of Gynecology, USZ
Prof. Didier Surdez, Sarcoma Research, Balgrist
Prof. Lynn Wong, Department of Molecular Life Sciences, UZH

*The program's **mandatory module courses**, with focus on the molecular and cellular biology of cancer as well as clinical cancer research, along with the courses in scientific writing and ethics, were held as follows:*

Module E – **Translational cancer biology**
Encoded library technology and generation/testing of prototypes / Dario Neri / 03.02.2025
Cancer immunotherapy / Christian Klein et al. / 04.02.2025
Small molecule anticancer therapeutics / Karsten Meissner / 05.02.2025
Gene and Cell-Based Therapies / Christian Pellegrino, Tobias Weiss / 06.02.2025
Regulatory aspects and entrepreneurial activities / Dario Neri / 07.02.2025

Module B – **Tumors and the immune system**
Introduction to the immune system / Maries van den Broek, Christian Stockmann / 28.03.2025
Hematologic malignancies / Nastassja Scheidegger, Nicole Bodmer, Susanne Kubetzko, Stefan Balabanov, Beat Bornhauser, Thorsten Zenz, / 29.03.2025
Tumor immunology (basics and therapy) / Miro Räber, Egle Ramelyte, Omar Hasan Ali Patrick Roth / 30.03.2025
High dimensional profiling of tumour microenvironment / Karina Silina, Chiara Magnani / 31.03.2025
Infection-induced cancers/ Anne Müller, Roberto Speck, Achim Weber / 01.04.2025

Module C – **Mechanisms of cancer induction and progression**
Metastasis / Lubor Borsig, Maries van den Broek / 16.06.2025
Oncogenes and tumor suppressor genes / Beat Bornhauser, Martin Baumgartner, Didier Surdez, Javad Nazarian, Marco Wachtel, Ana Guerreiro Stücklin / 17.06.2025
Cell signalling molecules as therapeutic targets / Philipp Berger, Martin Grossmann, Martin Béhé / 18.06.2025
Genome instability / Andreas Panagopoulos, Jana Krietsch, Manuel Stucki / 19.06.2025
Circulating tumor cells and metastasis / Nicola Aceto / 20.06.2025

Module D – **Cancer treatments**
Personalized chemotherapy / Ralph Fritsch / 22.09.2025
Cancer surgery / Mayura Meerang et al. / 23.09.2025
Cancer radiotherapy / Irma Telarovic et al. / 24.09.2025
Tumor pathology / Dorothea Rutishauser, et al. / 25.09.2025
Precision Oncology: targeted and immuno-therapy in cancer patients/ Andreas Wicki et al. / 26.09.2025

Module A – **Cancer biology**
Modes of cell death / Christian Münz, Martin Pruschy, Lynn Wong / 27.10.2025
Colon cancer: inflammation and epigenetics / Michael Scharl, Gerhard Rogler, Stephan Vavricka / 28.10.2025
Functional genomics / FGCZ Ralph Schlapbach / 29.10.2025
Cell biology / Jana Krietsch, Jan Krützfeld, Roland Wenger / 30.10.2025
Model systems for cancer research / Martin Baumgartner, Mitch Levesque, Anne Müller / 31.10.2025

Scientific Writing Courses
Proposal and Grant Writing, Pavel Janscak, 25.03. + 23.10.2025
Paper Writing, Isabelle Arnold, 07.04. + 18.11.2025

Science Ethics Courses
Research Ethics for Cancer Biologists, Dr. Jacky Leach Scully, Professor of Bioethics and Director, Disability Innovation Institute, UNSW, Australia, 20.-22.05.2025

Ethics in Life Sciences - Focus Cancer Biology, Dr. Verena Lütschg + Dr. Jean-Daniel Strub
About Tomorrow Consulting, 03.-04.12.2025

12th Retreat of the Cancer Biology PhD Program
The 12th Cancer Biology Retreat and 20th PhD program anniversary took place from June 02-04, 2025, at the Höhenhotel Seeblick in Emmetten. 64 PhD students took part, 49 of whom presented a poster, 14 students also presented their project with a talk. 18 research group leaders attended the retreat and were involved in the evaluation of the posters.

Anniversary Special Guests and discussion panel:
Prof. Michael Hengartner, ETH Board, ETH Zürich
Prof. em. Josef Jiricny, Institute of Molecular Cancer Research, University of Zurich
Prof. Dario Neri, ETH Zürich and Philochem
Prof. em. Beat Schäfer, Division of Oncology, University Children's Hospital Zürich

Anniversary Lecture
Prof. Jonathan Home, Institute for Quantum Electronics, ETH Zürich

Keynote speakers:
Prof. Dario Neri, Philogen AG and ETH Zürich
Prof. Maries van den Broek, Institute of Experimental Immunology, University of Zurich

Poster prizes were awarded to the following doctoral students:
Silvan Brunn, Department of Medical Oncology and Hematology, USZ
Tosca Dalessi, Department of Molecular Life Sciences, UZH
Victoria Hermes, Department of Dermatology, USZ
Anna La Torraca, Institute of Physiology, UZH
Giovanni Papa, Institute of Molecular Cancer Research, UZH
Joris Veger, Department of Immunology, USZ

Travel Grants: travel expenses for congresses, meetings, symposia, workshops, and courses.
Deadlines for applications: 15.1. and 1.5. and 1.9.2025

The following students applied for and received a travel grant to attend the conference mentioned below:

Bimbati Matteo, Oncology, KISPI
2025 Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Research Conference
Bouzereau Manon, Laboratory of Molecular Neurooncology, USZ
Society for Neuro-Oncology (SNO) 30th Annual Meeting & Education Day
Brzobohata Adela, Laboratory of Molecular Neurooncology, USZ
Society for Neuro-Oncology (SNO) 30th Annual Meeting & Education Day
Ciani Ludovica, Oncology, KISPI
2025 Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Research Conference
Dalessi Tosca, Department of Molecular Life Sciences, UZH
ISREC-SCCL Symposium: Horizons of Cancer Biology & Clinical Oncology
Hermes Victoria, Department of Dermatology, USZ
Society for Melanoma Research 22nd International Congress
Leuenberger Laura, Department of Medical Oncology and Hematology, USZ
Annual Meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR)
Patterson Angelica, HOCH Health Ostschweiz, KSSG
European Association of Neurosurgical Societies (EANS) Congress
Sanchez Bergman Astrid, Oncology, KISPI
13th AACR-JCA Joint Conference: From Cancer Discovery Science to Therapeutic Innovation
Stanclik Szymon, Laboratory of Molecular Neurooncology, USZ
Society for Neuro-Oncology (SNO) 30th Annual Meeting & Education Day

Social Activities

Get-together with PhD students and candidates of interview rounds over Pizza & Drinks at VITO's Europaallee, 16.01.2025 / 10.07.2025
BBQ at Medizinerhof, Irchel Campus on 12.08.2025
X-Mas Event on 09.12.2025: ice skating and winter market at the Dolder sports

Outlook 2026

Courses:
Module E – **Translational Cancer Biology** – 02.02.-06.02.2026
Module B – **Tumors and the immune system** – 23.03.-27.03.2026
Module C – **Mechanisms of cancer induction and progression** – 15.06.-19.06.2026
Module D – **Cancer treatments** – 21.09.-25.09.2026
Module A – **Cancer biology** – 26.10.-30.10.2026

Scientific Writing Course – May and November 2026
Science Ethics Course – June and December 2026

Joint Retreat Cancer Biology PhD Program and Comprehensive Cancer Center Zürich (CCCZ)
Emmetten, Höhenhotel Seeblick, 26-28.08.2026

Travel Reimbursement Grants: travel expenses for congresses, meetings, workshops, and courses. Deadlines: 15.1. and 1.5. and 1.9.2026

Social Activities:
Get together in January and July
Summer BBQ in August
X-Mas event in December
Monthly Beer Hour at Irchel Bar

Clinical Science

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	81
UZH	81
ETH	0
Other affiliation	0
Track I students	9
Track II students	72
Female students	53
Male students	28
International students	49
Swiss students	32
Program drop-outs	0
Completed PhD	5
Program alumni	45
Faculty members	42

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	101	41
Invited candidates	16	17
Drop-outs before interview	3	0
Free slots (priority program)	18	18
Matches	0	5
Candidates without matches	85	24
Decision against program	1	0
Rejected candidates	0	4
Change to other LSZGS programs	0	0
Gained from LSZGS programs	0	0

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1		
Income		
ETHZ	0	
UZH	0	
Fees	0	
Other	0	
Expenses		
Salaries program		72’581.70
Social benefits		12’006.25
Recruitment November 24		0
Recruitment May 25		375.10
Program activities (retreat, symposia, etc.)		21’451.48
Overhead		0
Total		106’414.53
Balance as of December 31		106’414.53

Program Activities

Annual Retreat, 12 September 2025
Annual Members Meeting, 22 October 2025

Outlook

Annual Retreat, 18 September 2026
Annual Members Meeting, 21 October 2026

Drug Discovery

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	22
UZH	17
ETH	4
Other affiliation	1
Track I students	10
Track II students	12
Female students	12
Male students	10
International students	
Swiss students	
Program drop-outs	
Completed PhD	2
Program alumni	
Faculty members	

Ecology

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	79
UZH	54
ETH	25
Other affiliation	22
Track I students	1
Track II students	78
Female students	43
Male students	36
International students	-
Swiss students	-
Program drop-outs	4
Completed PhD	21
Program alumni	262
Faculty members	24

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	58	58
Invited candidates	1	0
Drop-outs before interview	1	-
Free slots (priority program)	-	-
Matches	-	-
Candidates without matches	-	-
Decision against program	-	-
Rejected candidates	-	-
Change to other LSZGS programs	-	-
Gained from LSZGS programs	-	-

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1		
Income		
ETHZ		
UZH	30430	
Fees	16397	
Other		
Expenses		
Salaries program		46481
Social benefits		10975
Recruitment November 24		0
Recruitment May 25		0
Program activities (retreat, symposia, etc.)		506
Overhead		
Total		46987
Balance as of December 31		-1947

Program Activities

In 2025 we continued with newsletter to students and principal investigators and featuring a PhD project from the program each semester in the newsletter. This project is then added to the first page of our website each semester and kept on the website under featured PhD projects for future reference. We organized PhD program meet-ups in spring and fall for our PhD's.
The PhD Program in Ecology welcomed 14 new PhD's in 2025.

Teaching
In 2025 the PhD Program in Ecology organized the following courses:
Subject-specific matters –
ECO 398 Foundations in Ecology 1,
ECO 341 Ecological concepts and research 1,
ECO 397 Cutting Edge Research Club,
Methods –
ECO 331 General linear and linear mixed models in R,
ECO 353 Introduction to Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).
Transferable Skills –
ECO 303 Teaching Science at University,
ECO 311 Writing a scientific manuscript.

Students were reserved places on the following courses: BIO 402 Philosophy of Science with a Focus on Biology, BIO 663 The impact of ethics on doing science, EEE 334 Biodiversity from Species to Landscape Scale – Concepts and Methods in Spatial Ecology and Remote Sensing, EEE 352 Contemporary Analysis for Ecology, Statistical Modelling (PSC), Introduction to Machine Learning for Plant Scientists Block 2 (PSC), Introduction to Machine Learning for Plant Scientists Block 2 (PSC), Compositional Data Analysis (PSC).

Outlook

The biannual PhD student meet-up will continue in 2026
The PhD Program in Ecology will offer the following courses in 2026:
Foundations in Ecology 2,
Ecological concepts and research 2,
Landscape Genetics,
Introduction to Structural Equation Modeling,
General Linear and Linear Mixed Models in R,
Teaching Science at University.

Prepared and distributed by: Dr Debra Zuppinger-Dingley

Epidemiology and Biostatistics

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	54
UZH	53
ETH	1
Other affiliation	0
Track I students	30
Track II students	24
Female students	32
Male students	22
International students	35
Swiss students	19
Program drop-outs	0
Completed PhD	9
Program alumni	113
Faculty members (MNF)	9

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	195	143
Invited candidates	20	16
Drop-outs before interview	2	3
Free slots (priority program)	8	8
Matches	6	7
Candidates without matches	10	5
Decision against program	1	0
Rejected candidates	1	0
Change to other LSZGS programs	0	1
Gained from LSZGS programs	0	0

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1	19'907	
Income		
LSZGS (UZH)	26'400	
Fees	14'100	
Other	161	
Expenses		
Salaries program		15'000*
Recruitment November 24		161
Recruitment May 25		0
Program activities (retreat, symposia, etc.)		20'795
Total	60'568	35'956
Balance as of December 31	24'612**	

*The remaining salary of the coordinator has been covered with other means.
**Program budget is planned on a biannual basis.

Program Activities

The program organized the academic career development and social events in close collaboration with students, represented by the student representatives. Furthermore, the program supported events initiated by students.
The following major events took place:

- EBPhD social events.
- Career talks by EBPhD alumni.
- Mobility applicant's meeting.
- Peer mentoring picnic.
- Methods seminar (STA 880DP) in spring and fall semester 2025.
- Introduction to Epidemiology (EPI 301) block course in fall semester 2025.
- EBPhD kick-off afternoon with talks & workshops.
- EBPhD retreat.

In addition, we regularly informed our PhDs about lectures and events, the Graduate Campus and LSZGS offerings.

Outlook

The following events have been planned for 2026:

- EBPhD social events.
- Career talks by EBPhD alumni.
- FUND-O-POLY: Player tips!
- Mobility applicant's meeting.
- Peer mentoring picnic.
- Methods seminar (STA 880DP) in spring and fall semester 2026.
- Introduction to Epidemiology (EPI 301) block course in fall semester 2026.
- EBPhD kick-off afternoon with talks & workshops.

Evolutionary Biology

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	72
UZH	69
ETH	3
Other affiliation	0
Track I students	5
Track II students	67
Female students	42
Male students	30
International students	53
Swiss students	19
Program drop-outs	3
Completed PhD	18
Program alumni	217
Faculty members	27

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	27	25
Invited candidates	5	3
Drop-outs before interview	0	3
Free slots (priority program)	2	1
Matches	2	0
Candidates without matches	3	0
Decision against program	0	0
Rejected candidates	2	0
Change to other LSZGS programs	1	0
Gained from LSZGS programs	1	0

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1		
Income		
ETHZ and UZH	42’600.00	
Member Fees	14’000.00	
Other		
Expenses		
Salaries program (including social benefits)		36’000.00
Program Activities: Annual Retreat		13’156.70
Events		3’481.35
Teaching		1’979.00
Overhead (IT purchases)		2’095.80
Total	56’600.00	56’711.35
Balance as of December 31	-112.85	

Program Activities 2025

- Annual Retreat in Gais AR, June 23-26
- EvoBio Visit to the Institute of Evolutionary Medicine
- Three Informal Get-Togethers with PhD Students and PIs
- BIO303 Teaching Science at University (together with Ecology PhD Program)
- ECO345 Online Landscape Genetics (together with Ecology PhD Program)
- BIO395 Concepts in Evolutionary Biology
- BIO554 Survey Course: Topics in Evolutionary Biology
- BIO547 Bayesian Regression Models in R
- BIO555 Scientific Writing for Evolutionary Biologists
- BIO610 Next-Generation Sequencing for Model and Non-Model Species
- BIO692 Introduction to Genome-Wide Association Studies

Outlook 2026

- Annual Retreat, June
- EvoBio Visit to the Department of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies
- Several Informal Get-Togethers with PhD Students and PIs
- BIO303 Teaching Science at University (together with Ecology PhD Program)
- ECO345 Online Landscape Genetics (together with Ecology PhD Program)
- BIO395 Concepts in Evolutionary Biology
- BIO554 Survey Course: Topics in Evolutionary Biology
- BIO547 Bayesian Regression Models in R
- BIO555 Scientific Writing for Evolutionary Biologists
- BIO610 Next-Generation Sequencing for Model and Non-Model Species

Microbiology and Immunology

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	249
UZH	163
ETH	86
Other affiliation	0
Track I students	79
Track II students	170
Female students	148
Male students	101
International students	151
Swiss students	98
Program drop-outs	5
Completed PhD	61
Program alumni	605
Faculty members	110

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	556	410
Invited candidates	25	23
Drop-outs before interview	3	0
Free slots (priority program)	13	14
Matches	8	8
Candidates without matches	8	9
Decision against program	2	2
Rejected candidates	1	1
Change to other LSZGS programs	3	3
Gained from LSZGS programs	2	2

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1		
Income		
ETHZ / UZH	82200	
Fees	49413	
Other	16795	
Expenses		
Salaries program (including social benefits)		112467
Recruitment November 24 & May 25		7907
Program activities (retreat, symposia, etc.)		35718
Total	148408	156092
Balance as of December 31	-7684	

Organization of the Program

The MIM Program is headed by two directors, Prof. Jörn Piel from ETHZ and Prof. Rolf Kümmerli from UZH, who co-chair the Program. The steering committee consists of the two directors and two additional members of the MIM Program, Prof. Silke Stertz (UZH) and Dr. Roman Spörri (ETH). The General Assembly, including all PIs of the Program, meets on an annual basis and decides on the admission of new members and changes of the regulations.

The duties of the admission committee members are to evaluate the applications, to lead the interviews and to decide on the admission to the MIM Program. Admission committee members are

- Prof. Silvio Brugger (UZH)
- Prof. Cornel Fraefel (UZH)
- Prof. Urs Greber (UZH)
- Prof. Ben Hale (UZH)
- Prof. Nicole Joller (UZH) -> Prof. Isabelle Arnold (UZH)
- Dr. Mark Mellet (UZH)
- Prof. Christian Münz (UZH)
- Dr. Gabriella Pessi (UZH)
- Prof. Natalia Pikor (ETH)
- Prof. Emma Slack (ETH) -> Prof. Michael Berney (UZH)

Two MIM PhD students Sarah van Ruitenbeek (UZH) and Juan Zilic (UZH) represent the students' interest in the MIM PhD Program by participating in the Steering Committee, the General Assembly and the LSZGS Directors Conference.

The coordinator of the MIM Program is Judith Zingg.

Program Activities

Program-specific courses for doctoral students

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19th Microbiology and Immunology Introductory Course (BME 645)
January 20-22, 2025 / ETH Hönggerberg

In this yearly-offered three-day workshop, MIM PIs introduce their fields of expertise, their basic research questions, and the methodologies applied to answer them. Students of the MIM PhD program present their own research projects. Participants become acquainted with the research performed at the different microbiological and immunological laboratories of the MIM consortium, facilitating contact with those labs whose expertise could contribute to their own research work.
The scientific program of the 19th MIM Introductory Course included 10 oral presentations of PIs and 30 of PhD students, covering the fields of general and medicinal Microbiology, Virology and Immunology, additionally Dr. Claudia Dumrese (Cytometry Facility), Dr. Ralph Schlapbach (FGCZ), Dr. Daniel Stekhoven (Nexus), Dr. Zacharias Kontarakis (GEML), Dr. Simone Hornemann (UZH CRISPR Screening Hub) and Dr. Urs Ziegler (ZMB) gave an insight talk about the methods and services of the facilities. Prof. Emma Slack and Prof. Christoph Schneider held an interactive workshop on Scientific Integrity. The MIM student representatives have presented themselves and their role in a short talk and the co-directors Prof. Jörn Piel and Prof. Rolf Kümmerli gave a welcome and farewell speech, respectively. For the third time, a poster session was organized. 20 poster presenters gave short poster flash talks before the poster session. Furthermore, MIM PhD student Corina Hadjicharalambous gave an insight into her PhD journey and Daniel Steckhoven talked about "How to ensure rigorous, transparent, and reproducible research".
Responsible for the organization of the course were Dr. Anna Vagstad and Judith Zingg.

18th MIM Student Retreat (BME 644)
August 28-30, 2025 / Morschach

The 18th MIM Student Retreat took place in Morschach (Bildungshaus Mattli). The overarching theme was "AI and sustainability in Microbiology and Immunology" with talks given by the guest speakers Dr. Philipp Keller (Postdoc, Vorholt lab), Dr. Giorgia Greter (Cofounder Baxiva), Dr. Matthias Mölch (Deloitte) and Vilhelmiina Haavisto (Green Lab Zurich).
The MIM Student Retreat is an opportunity to exchange ideas, get to know colleagues of the MIM PhD Program, and establish contacts with guest speakers. It offered the students a chance to increase their presentation skills in a friendly atmosphere and to discuss research projects with fellow PhD students. Responsible for the organization of the retreat were the following MIM PhD students: Emma Alessandri, Paul Böhm, Charlotte Ossenbrink, Can Zeyneloglu and Luca Langlois.

The MIM Student Retreat was possible thanks to the financial support by the PIs (for the first time, a registration fee was borne) and sponsoring by Microsynth and Technopark Zurich. Poster and lecture prizes were provided by SYIS and SGM / SSM.

Effective and Efficient Scientific Writing
September 16 & 17, 2025 / Prof. Shinichi Sunagawa and Dr. Anna Sintsova

Research Data Management and related topics
Fall 2025
In collaboration with Scientific IT Services, ETH Library conducted a series of consecutive workshops, which focused on the various elements of research data management along the research data life cycle.

Translational Medicine: Infection & Immunity (BIO 684)
Fall Semester 2025 / Prof. Karin Metzner and other MIM PIs

Basic Scientific Presentation Skills Course
December 1 & 2, 2025 / Prof. Nicole Borel, Dr. Hanna Marti and Dr. Enrique Rayo

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Program-specific talks / webinars for doctoral students

MIM Forum 10
February 20, 2025 / Prof. Gregor Weiss
Imaging bacterial cell-cell interactions across scales - from proteins to patients

MIM Forum 11
April 3, 2025 / Prof. Sam Nobs
Follow the Data: Stories behind papers

Program-specific offerings for Principal Investigators

Welcome event for new MIM PIs
January 28, 2025
The co-directors introduced the new MIM PIs to the organization of the doctoral program and the benefits of a membership and thematized good mentoring of doctoral students.

MIM General Assembly
January 28, 2025
The program members meet once a year. This General Assembly elects new members of the program and decides about changes in the regulations of the program.

MIM PI workshop "Interview Training"
September 22, 2025 / Michelle Blattmann Oetiker (Team leader recruiting, ETH)

MIM career events and other activities

In 2025, a series of events was offered for candidates, current students & alumni on various topics (the events were organized with support of the MIM student representatives and PhDs):

Events for PhD candidates

LSZGS Recruitment Round / virtual meet-up with MIM PhDs	12.6.2025
LSZGS Recruitment Round / virtual meet-up with MIM PhDs	11.12.2025

Mentoring & Mental Health Events

MIM Mentoring Program Training 2 with Dr. Annika Martin	19.2.2025
MIM Mentoring Program Training 3 with Dr. Annika Martin	26.3.2025
MIM Mental Health Week	week 21/25

- Panel discussion "PhD Strife & Life" with Salomé LeibundGut, Annika Hausmann, Mark Mellet, Milena Sokoloswka, Michael Berney (moderated by Lina Kim & Corina Hadjicharalambous)
- PhD Love / Hate Exhibit
- Ice Cream at the lake, Yoga break & Karaoke at Irchelbar

MIM Helpline Training with Nadia Dörflinger	14.11.2025

Social Events

New Years Reception (Alumni Lounge)	21.1.2025
MIM Snow Day in Flumserberge	8.2.2025
MIM goes swimming	18.6.2025
Meet-up with candidates	10.7.2025
MIM BBQ	22.8.2025
Meet & Greet the new Student Representatives / Alumni Lounge	6.11.2025
Farewell Juan / Pubquiz in «Brauerei Oerlikon»	1.12.2025
Mulled wine at Christmas Market at HB	4.12.2025

& MIM Thursdays – every first Thursday of the month

Career Event

Company visit / Roche Diagnostics, Rotkreuz	19.9.2025
Company visit / Novartis, Basel	9.10.2025
Company visit / Gilead, Zug	29.10.2025
Company visit / INTEGRA Biosciences, Zizers	9.12.2025

Advisory Services

MIM Mentoring Program

As the demand for getting a mentor (senior PhD or Alumnus/a) was still high, new mentors were trained by Dr. Annika Martin in 2025, and our newly recruited PhDs can continue to benefit from a 1:1 mentoring support by an assigned mentor.

MIM wellbeing helpline

In November 2023, the MIM wellbeing helpline was launched. The MIM helpline is an initiative offered by PhD for PhD students. It aims to provide support, guidance, and a listening ear to its community. The helpline team is composed of Dario Burri, Jasmin Tschumi, Lina Kim, Manal Bel imam, Maria Hesselman and Paolo D'Avino (all ENSA mental health first aid helpers). The team coordinator is Paolo D'Avino.

Ombudsperson

Various members of the program got in contact with Prof. em. Hans-Martin Fischer (MIM Ombudsperson), the MIM coordination office or / and the co-directors of the MIM PhD Program.

Travel Grants

The MIM Program provides travel support for national / international conferences / meetings. The following travel grants have been approved:

Yukino Gütlin	Congress of the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID Global)
Camille Schmid	EMBO I FEBS Lecture Course “Cell biology of host-pathogen interactions”
Alessandro Streuli	The European Peptide Synthesis Conference of 2025
Thi Nguyen	25th International meeting of the European Light Microscopy Initiative
Thierry Marti	Enzyme Engineering XXVIII
Emma Alessandri	International Fungal Biology Conference: from Molecules to Communities

Outlook

MIM activities, such as the offered courses, career and social events, as well as the program's core activities (MIM PhD student retreat, MIM Introductory Course), were well-attended and will therefore be continued in 2026.

The existing support services (MIM Mentoring Program, MIM Wellbeing Helpline, MIM Ombudsperson) will remain available to those seeking help in the future.

MIM will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2026 by hosting a symposium to bring together current and former members.

The ongoing uncertainty regarding the future funding of the LZSGS / the PhD Programs remains an important and pressing issue. Despite efforts, neither LSZGS nor MIM was able to secure a stable and sustainable funding solution in 2025. As a result, MIM will be forced to cut expenditures in 2026, and PIs will be required to contribute to the funding of the program. At the same time, MIM is intensifying the efforts to secure external sponsorship to help bridge the financial gap.

Molecular Life Sciences

Program Motivation

The Molecular Life Sciences Ph.D. program is a 4–5-year Ph.D. program with the aim to recruit and train outstanding young scientists in biochemistry, genetics, microbiology, as well as cell, computational, developmental, molecular, structural, and systems biology. The MLS program recruits internationally and strives to bring the very best students interested in aspects of molecular life sciences to Zurich. Through its activities, the program aims at strengthening Zurich as a center of excellence in graduate education and cutting-edge research in life sciences.

Overview

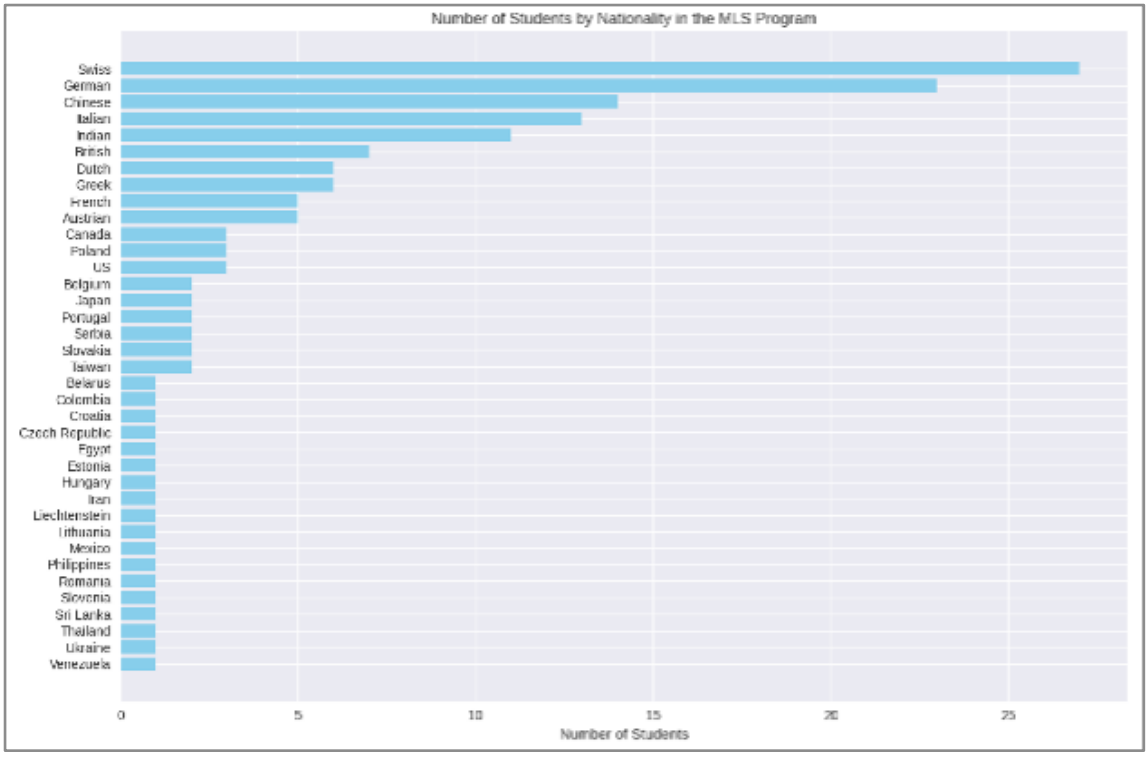
Founded in 2003, the MLS program has currently 94 faculty members, who are associated with over a dozen different departments/institutes at the ETH Zurich (ETH) and the University of Zurich (UZH). 156 graduate students were enrolled in the MLS program by the end of 2025 of which 92 (59%) are women and 64 men. 35 MLS students graduated in 2025. The program has now 688 alumni in total. The average time to successfully complete a Ph.D. thesis in the MLS program is 4 years, 7 months and 29 days (7 days longer compared to the year 2024).

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	**as of 31 December 2025**
Program students	154
UZH	82
ETH	72
Other affiliation	0
Track I students	98
Track II students	56
Female students	91
Male students	63
International students	127
Swiss students	27
Program drop-outs	5
Completed PhD	36
Program alumni	689
Faculty members	94

Student Body

Currently, the program trains 82 UZH and 74 ETH students. Swiss (27) and German (23) students account for a bit less than one third of all students. The next larger groups are the Chinese (14), Italians (13), Indians (11), and the British (7) followed by the Dutch (6), Greeks (6), French (5) and Austrians (4). Three students come from Canada and the US. Two students hail from Belgium, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, and Taiwan. In addition, we have one student each from Belarus, Colombia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Hungary, Iran, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mexico, Philippines, Romania, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Ukraine and Venezuela in the MLS program.



Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	245	237
Invited candidates	23	22
Drop-outs before interview	2	3
Free slots (MLS priority program)	13	11
Filled slots	6	7
Total matches	10	8
Candidates without matches	12	9
Drop-outs after virtual interview	2	1
Drop-outs after site-visit	3	5
Decision against program (reject offer)	1	-
Rejected candidates	1	-
Change to other LSZGS programs	4	2
Gained from LSZGS programs (included in total of matches)	4	3

Program Organization

The program is led by an elected Steering Committee (SC) with executive power. Since November 2006 the steering committee is formed of 7 faculty representatives and two student representatives (one of an institute from UZH, and one of an institute from ETH):

SC Members

Prof. Matthias Altmeyer (UZH)

Prof. Stefanie Jonas (ETH)

Prof. Gabriel Neurohr (ETH - vice chair)

Prof. Francesca Peri (UZH - chair)

PD Dr. Raffaella Santoro (UZH)

Prof. Markus Seeger (UZH)

Prof. Anton Wutz (ETH)

Ariane Kühn (ETH – student representative, until August 2025)
Adhuresa Ramosaj (UZH – student representative, until August 2025)
Elias Knop ((ETH – student representative, since August 2025)
Maria Melissourgou (UZH – student representative, since August 2025)
Over the entire year, the SC met 3 times to discuss and decide on various program activities. All reunions were held online.

The MLS program faculty consists of 94 principal investigators (PIs) from several different institutes and faculties of the UZH and the ETH. Since Fall 2005, all group leaders who want to become member of the MLS faculty, have to submit their application to the SC, irrespective of their affiliation. Five new faculty members joined the MLS program in 2025. MLS program faculty members support the program by serving on admission or travel grant committees as well as by teaching course tutorials.

PIs leaving:
Urs Greber, Department of Molecular Life Sciences, UZH
Christian Wolfrum, Institute of Food, Nutrition and Health, ETH
New PIs:
Michelle Frei, Organic Chemistry, ETH
Akanksha Jain, Department of Molecular Life Sciences, UZH
Kristin Kosse, Institute of Molecular Health Sciences, ETH
Massimo Lopes, Institute of Molecular Cancer Research UZH
Gregor Weiss, Institute of Medical Microbiology, UZH

A program coordinator oversees the day-to-day program matters. The program coordinator monitors the students' progress, schedules the interviews and lab visits, organizes meetings and admission sessions and manages the finances of the program. The employment of the MLS program coordinator is currently 35%. Dr. Susanna Bachmann, who joined the MLS program as program coordinator in the fall of 2003, continued in this function in 2025.

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1		
Income		
ETHZ	40'000	
UZH	12'130	
Fees	16'200	
Sponsoring	1'800	
Total income	70'130	
Expenses		
Salaries program (with social benefits)		52'711
Recruitment May 24 (visits July 24)		9'985
Recruitment November 24 (visits Jan 25)		4'229
Program activities: Retreat		32'999
Travel Grants		9'891
Christmas Party		2'535
Overhead		128
Total expenses		112'478
Balance as of December 31	-42'348	

The loss could be covered with the program's remaining reserves. For the measures taken to deal with this structural deficit, please refer to the outlook.

Program Activities

Teaching

Module	Length	Dates	Participants	Facilitator/Remarks
BIO662: Ethical Issues in Human Genetics and Genomics	2x 1 day	24 & 31 January	15 students	Anna Deplazes
BIO661: Scientific Writing – Effective Communication	4x ½ day	30 January, 4, 6 & 11 February	19 students	George Hausmann
1st-year-Presentations	4x ½ day	17, 22, 29 January & 5 February	11 students & 3 moderators	Susanna Bachmann
MLS Retreat	3 days	13 - 15 August	43 MLS & 4 Kors-CB students	7 organizers
BIO661: Scientific Writing – Effective Communication	4x ½ day	7, 12, 19 & 21 August	20 students	George Hausmann
BIO663: Impact of Ethics on Doing Science	2x 1 day	29 August & 5 September	16 students	Anna Deplazes & George Hausmann
1st-year-Presentations	4x ½ day	18, 20, 27 August & 3 September	19 students & 4 moderators	Susanna Bachmann

Though most courses are taught in-person and on-site, we have kept some virtual sessions in the 1st-year presentation course to give the participants the opportunity to present in-person as well as online.
Since the SUK support ended in 2021, the program cannot offer transferable skills courses in its own right. However, these courses are still organized by the Life Science Zurich Graduate School and other units of the University and ETH. Thus, the program students have a lot of possibilities to gain cross-disciplinary skills.

Tutorials

Also in 2025, several tutorials were offered by faculty members of the MLS program and external trainers to a small group of students. In contrast to previous years, the average number of participants was higher than the usual 6 persons, which made up for a lower total of tutorials. The workload for the students is approx. 25-30 hours. The tutor and the participants decide when and how often they meet. A minimum of 6 contact hours with the tutor is required per tutorial by the MLS program.

Topic	Tutor
Tutorial on Data Collection and Facilitation for Sustainable Lab Practices	Enno Bockelmann & Nils Handler
Tutorial on High-throughput multiplexed image processing using Fractal	Kelvin Groot & Virginie Uhlmann
Tutorial on Molecular dynamics simulation - a practical introduction	Madhav Jagannathan
Tutorial on An introduction to proteomics	Ino Karemaker
Tutorial on Project Management in Science	Dmitry Linde
Tutorial on Targeting the undruggable amyloid protein condensates	Jinghui Luo
Tutorial on Basics of Ribosome Display	Lena Morstein

Given that PhD students and PIs continued to report a scarcity of tutorials and difficulties in attending or organizing them, the steering committee has decided to reduce the required participation in tutorials from two to one. As of January 1, 2026, students will only need to obtain 6 ECTS through program activities instead of the previous 7 credits.

Retreat

The 21st MLS retreat was held from 13th to 15th August 2025 at Hotel Alpenrose in Schruns, Austria. The aim of the retreat is mainly to allow students to exchange knowledge, and to provide them an opportunity to improve their presentation skills. All first-year students who had started their Ph.D. before 1 June 2025 either gave a talk or presented a poster. The external speaker Prof. Dr. Anna Dowbaj (Technical University of Munich) provided the students insights into her field of research and Dr. Michael Cangkrama (Novartis) gave an outlook on career possibilities in the life sciences. Apart from the poster presentations, talks and discussions, the retreat committee organized different leisure activities like hikes, games or a visit to the spa. The organizing committee was formed by: Simon Hansmann, Ariane Kühn, Huan Liu, Adhuresa Ramosaj, Milena Ronchetti, Nadezhda Rotankova, Louisa Selbert, and Dominik Zanetti.

Awarded Travel Grants

As the funding of the travel grants was the part of the program's budget with the most severe cuts, the program does not advertise the travel grants very intensively anymore. Despite the financial restrictions, the committee managed to fund most of the applications but awarded often less than the required maximum of CHF 1'000. Because of the budget uncertainties, the 1 November deadline was skipped in 2025.

The deadlines for application were 1 March and 1 July:

Student	**Attended conference/summer school/ course/ workshop**
Yumi Arima	EMBO Workshop on Membrane Contact Sites: Methodology, Biology & Pathology
Anja Barth	15th Tooth Morphogenesis & Differentiation Conference
Evangelos Bouris	PRION 2025

Laura Evers	15th Tooth Morphogenesis & Differentiation Conference
Irina Ferapontova	19th International Workshop on Scleroderma Research
Kelvin Groot	Biomolecular Imaging and Informatics 2025 conference
Anastasiia Kovalenko	FASEB: Protein Aggregation: Polymorphic Species
Nithyapriya Kumar	Stem Cell Society Singapore Meeting
Dhanashree Lakhe	EMBO Workshop – EvoChromo: Evolutionary approaches to research in chromatin
Ruchi Manglunia	Protein Quality Control Workshop, Crete Greece
Sofia Micheli	Neural Influence on Cancer, Tumor Microenvironment and Cancer Immunology, and Tumor Microenvironment: Metastasis and the Host
Luca Riermeier	73rd Conference on Mass Spectrometry and Allied Topics
Arpita Sahoo	Annual Global Congress of the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases
Charlotte Schilling	Gordon Research Conference “Biology of Mycobacteria”
Janik Scotton	Plant Epigenetics and Epigenome Engineering Conference
Nevena Srejic	Cell Contact and Adhesion Gordon Research Conference
Julia Vornberger	Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL) Meeting: Telomeres &Telomerase
Leo Willig	BioMatter: From Cytoskeleton to Embryo
Benedikt Wimmer	New approaches and concepts in microbiology

Travel grant committee: Martin Müller (PI, UZH), Madhav Jagannathan (PI, ETH), Ayodya Kande (MLS student). In total, the program awarded CHF 12'150 as travel grants.

Social and Other Activities

Newsletter: In 2025, we dispatched only one newsletter on 10 September. Among other items the newsletter contains a presentation of a faculty member or a member of the steering committee, information about past and forthcoming events, feedback about one or several tutorials from the organizing PI (tutor) and/or the participants and an overview which students have started in the program and left it in the past six months. The letter is sent out to current and former program students as well as to all faculty members. It is planned to issue the MLS newsletter in 2026 again twice per year.
Students in charge in 2025: Jacqueline Kientsch & Abhinaya Swaminathan

Career and Networking event 2025: Because of the budget cuts there were no career and networking events organized in 2024. Since a lot of very similar events are happening throughout the year, the doctoral students have plenty of opportunities to get in touch with former students at the Life Science Zurich Graduate School to learn about their professional careers. The program might consider continuing the series, when the financial situation is again prosperous.

However, with the Christmas Party another “traditional” event could take place in 2025. It was celebrated on 5 December in the “Loch Ness” on the ETH Hönggerberg Campus.

Outlook

As anticipated last year, the difficult financial situation resulted in a significant loss of more than CHF 42,000. Fortunately, the program’s remaining reserves were sufficient to cover the deficit. It has nevertheless become unmistakably clear that, without corrective action, the program will run out of funds within only a few years—an outcome that must be prevented.

Following extensive discussions, the steering committee decided to propose to the faculty the introduction of a CHF 600 participation fee for the retreat. In addition, track 2 interviews will be subject to a reduced commission fee of CHF 300. The faculty was informed of these changes over the summer, and so far no objections or negative feedback have been raised regarding this additional financial responsibility for each doctoral student. It is expected that these measures may make it harder for advanced students to attend the retreat a second time, potentially reducing interactions between junior and senior participants. This is, however, a consequence the program must accept. The steering committee hopes that these substantial steps will be sufficient to maintain the program at the same standard as in recent years.

Regrettably, the broader financial outlook remains uncertain. Both host institutions, ETH and the University of Zurich, are facing general budget cuts, and it cannot be ruled out that these austerity measures will affect our program in the near future.

Despite these challenges, the Molecular Life Sciences program has demonstrated remarkable resilience throughout its 22-year history and remains committed to operating as smoothly as in the past while preserving the high quality of its core services.

Neuroscience

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	312
UZH	219
ETH	91
Other affiliation	2
Track I students	43
Track II students	269
Female students	177
Male students	135
International students	235
Swiss students	77
Program drop-outs	11
Completed PhD	43
Program alumni	34
Faculty members	160

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	177	173
Invited candidates	15	0
Drop-outs before interview	3	-
Free slots (priority program)	5	0
Matches	4	-
Candidates without matches	8	-
Decision against program	-	-
Rejected candidates	-	-
Change to other LSZGS programs	-	-
Gained from LSZGS programs	1	-

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1		
Income		
ETHZ	40945	
UZH	40945	
Fees	400	
Other		
Expenses		
Salaries program		22397
Social benefits		
Recruitment November 24 /Juli 2025		1857
Recruitment May 25 / Jan 25		909
Program activities (retreat, symposia, travel grants, etc.)		40268
Open invoices Retreat 2025 hotel costs		12000
Total		
Balance as of December 31	82290	77431

Program Activities

1) Courses

- Introductory Course in Neuroscience I (Fall term 2025)
- Introductory Course in Neuroscience II (Spring term 2025)
- Neuroimaging Block Courses, May + November 2025
- Course in Science Ethics for Cancer Biologists and Neuroscientists, May 2025
- Crash Course in Statistics for Neuroscientists, August 2025
- Writing in Neuroscience Research, an Intensive Course (Dr. Simon Milligan), June/July 2025
- BIO 628, Block Course for MD PhD Students in Neuroscience, June-July 2025

2) Symposia, conferences and other scientific activities

- ZNZ PhD Retreat in Valens, June 2025
- ZNZ Symposium and Best PhD Thesis Award and Best Poster Awards, September 2025

Plant Sciences

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	120
UZH	38
ETH	62
Other affiliation	20
Track I students	5
Track II students	117
Female students	67
Male students	55
International students	92
Swiss students	30
Program drop-outs	3
Completed PhD	17 (in 2025)
Program alumni	727 (since 2002)
Faculty members	15 (UZH)

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	145	77
Invited candidates	0	0
Drop-outs before interview	0	0
Free slots (priority program)	0	0
Matches	0	0
Candidates without matches	0	0
Decision against program	0	0
Rejected candidates	0	0
Change to other LSZGS programs	0	0
Gained from LSZGS programs	0	0

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1	64’459.16	
Income	41’900.00	
ETHZ		
UZH		
Fees		
Other		
Expenses		
Salaries program		48’592.45
(Gujas)		6’120.00.-
Social benefits		Included above
Recruitment November 24		0
Recruitment May 25		0
Program activities (retreat, symposia, etc.)		25’072.65
Overhead		Reported elsewhere
Total		66’972.65
Balance as of December 31		32’694.06

Governance of the Program

The PhD Program in Plant Sciences is approved as a structured PhD program by leading universities: the ETH Zurich (ETHZ), the University of Zurich (UZH) and the University of Basel (UNIBAS) and is part of Life Science Zurich Graduate School (LSZGS). It is led by one representative of PSC principal investigators (PI, director: Prof Ueli Grossniklaus, UZH), PSC head of studies (Dr. Melanie Paschke, PSC) and the PSC PhD program coordinator (Dr. Bojan Gujas, PSC) who is the main contact point.

Each host university—and in some cases individual departments—defines its own doctoral regulations and expectations for PhD candidates, including requirements related to ECTS credits, doctorate progress monitoring, and other formal responsibilities throughout the doctoral studies. The PhD Program in Plant Sciences is designed to operate downstream of the university and faculty regulations. Its program-specific training regulations provide a transparent framework for coursework and skills development, while ensuring complete compatibility with existing governance structures.

Program Activities

The PSC has core infrastructure and personal resources to carry out and manage training for 500+ participants per year. In 2025, PSC admitted more than 350 participants in our trainings. Established training formats range from workshops, colloquia and lectures to summer schools, and face-to-face events to blended learning and e-learning formats that make our education highly scalable in number of participants. Didactical formats include case-study work, cognitive apprenticeship models, role play scenarios, simulations but also hands-on training in tools and methodology and experimentation that make our education highly successful in targeting learning objectives to the different target groups and demands of a multi-faceted academic education.

The PhD Program in Plant Sciences provides a structured, interdisciplinary training framework that complements doctoral research conducted at the host institution. Its training activities are designed to support doctoral candidates in developing advanced scientific, methodological, digital, and transferable skills relevant to academic and non-academic career paths, while fully respecting the doctoral regulations and training responsibilities of ETH Zurich, the University of Zurich, and the University of Basel.

Registration to the PhD Program

The PhD Program is open to doctoral students officially enrolled at the University of Zurich (UZH), ETH Zurich (ETHZ) or at the University of Basel (UNIBAS). The candidate can be conditionally accepted into the PhD Program after the requirements are fulfilled. However, the final acceptance depends on the formal admission requirements of the host university (UZH, ETHZ or UNIBAS).

The PSC offers a fully implemented Track I admission channel (recruitment via Life Science Zurich Graduate School, LSZGS) following LSZGS guidelines that were used for 0 of the 21 PhD students recruited to the program in 2025. For Track II admission channel (direct application to principal investigator, PI): We request formal admission interview with future PhD students to be organized by PI. The interview should be conducted in the presence of at least one other principal investigator or faculty member and is confirmed with signed PhD Program interview protocol. This admission channel is used for 21 of the 21 PhD students recruited to the program in 2025.

Curriculum for the PhD Program in Plant Sciences

Since 2003 the PSC has offered the PhD Program in Plant Sciences with 20 – 30 ECTS per year of methodological training in several areas of plant sciences. Truly interdisciplinary our lectures and workshops are focusing on current and innovative research concepts from molecular plant biology to ecosystems. Hands-on training introduces up-to-date research techniques including a large set of workshops on digital skills, statistical methods, machine learning or the use of artificial intelligence in the plant sciences. Transferable skill training is encompassing the understanding standards of good research practice and ethical standards, research project management, training of communication skills (e.g. scientific writing, scientific presentation, scientific communication practice), finding research funding (grant proposal writing), networking and teamwork as well as career management.

To complete the PhD Program in Plant Sciences, doctoral candidates must document participation in a defined amount of structured training activities, expressed in ECTS credits, completed in parallel with their doctoral research. Doctoral candidates enrolled at **ETH Zurich** and **the University of Zurich** are required to document **12 ECTS**, while doctoral candidates enrolled at the **University of Basel** are required to document **18 ECTS**, in accordance with institutional requirements.

ECTS credits may be acquired through lectures, courses, workshops, summer schools, and other accredited training activities that form part of the regular curriculum of the PhD Program in Plant Sciences. One ECTS corresponds to approximately 25–30 hours of workload, including contact hours, self-study, preparatory work, and assignments. This typically corresponds to a one-hour lecture per week over one semester or a two- to three-day intensive workshop including preparatory and follow-up work. Full presence and active participation during the entire course is necessary for earning ECTS credits. Participation in some course involves an individual or group work e.g. by completing homework assignments, a presentation or a report during the course.

The general curriculum structure is illustrated in the table below and it is composed from compulsory activities, core elective activities and other elective activities. Training in **Research Integrity** is a mandatory requirement for all doctoral candidates. This requirement must be fulfilled in accordance with the regulations of the host university. The specific format of the course, credit allocation, and documentation depend on the doctoral candidate's home institution.

Curriculum of the PhD Program in Plant Sciences	
COURSE CATEGORY	TRAINING
PhD Program Compulsory Activities	**PSC Colloquium "Challenges in Plant Sciences" (2 ECTS)**
	Research Integrity training from your host University/Department* *ECTS may vary depending on the training
Core Elective Activities (Min 6 ECTS)	**Research & Technical Skills Courses** **Digital Skills & Statistics Courses** **Transferable Skills Courses** **PSC Summer/Winter Schools** Courses of the PhD Program in Science and Policy External trainings*
Other Elective Activities (optional)	**Talk or Poster at an International Scientific Symposium** **Green Labs Projects** **Organisation of PSC PhD Symposium (2 ECTS)**
12 | 18* ECTS	**TOTAL**

* For students enrolled at UNIBAS, as a total of 18 ECTS are requested. The remainder of 18 ECTS can be chosen from activities at University of Basel course catalogue.

In 2025, PhD Program in Plant Sciences offered 30 standard courses to students in our program (excluding courses and workshops of PhD Program in Science and Policy). All courses of the PSC have been developed to advance the acquisition of research and technical skills, digital skills or transferable skills.

Technical and research skills of the program are developed in all areas from molecular biology to ecology and system approaches. The courses are developed to allow an understanding and mastering of relevant research methodologies and techniques and their appropriate application. Courses offered are represented in the table below.

PSC COURSE CATALOGUE: Research and Techniques	ECTS	Ferquency	Location	offered in 2025
Research				
Basic Plant Disease Diagnostics (Block Course)	1	biennial	ETHZ	YES
Colloquium: Challenges in Plant Sciences		annual		YES
Concepts of Evolutionary Biology (Seminar)	1	annual	UZH	YES
Crop Phenotyping (ETHZ 751-4106-00L)	2	annual	ETHZ	NO
PReSens: Proximal and Remote Sensing for Soil and Vegetation (ETH VVZ: 701-1634-00L) -> **STARTS in 2026**	2	annual	ETHZ	NO
Current Challenges in Plant Breeding	2	annual	ETHZ	YES
Sustainable Plant Systems (Seminar)	2	annual	ETHZ	YES
Transdisciplinary Seminar on Research: Challenges of Interdisciplinarity and Stakeholder Engagement (ETH VVZ 701-0015-00L)	2	annual	ETHZ	YES
Techniques				
Advanced course on 3D microscopy imaging of plant tissues and image processing	1	triennial	UZH	YES
Chlorophyll Analysis: Principles and Analysis	1	TBA	ETHZ	NO
Genetic Diversity: Analysis	2	annual	ETHZ	YES
Genetic Diversity: Techniques	2	annual	ETHZ	YES
Microbiomics 1: The Microbiome of the Plant-Soil-Syst	2	annual	ETHZ	YES
Microbiomics 2: Metabarcoding - from Bioinformatics to Statistics	1	annual	ETHZ	YES
Introduction to Machine Learning for Genomics (BIO610)	1	annual	UZH	YES
Next-generation Sequencing 2 - Continuation Course: Transcriptome and Biological Interpretation	1	TBA	UZH	NO

Additional Providers of Training Opportunities in Research and Techniques Topics	**Location**
ETHZ Course Catalogue https://www.vvz.ethz.ch/Vorlesungsverzeichnis/sucheLehrangebotPre.view?lang=en	ETHZ
UZH Course Catalogue https://courses.uzh.ch	UZH
UNIBAS CourseCatalogue https://vorlesungsverzeichnis.unibas.ch/en/course-directory	UNIBAS
Functional Genomics Center Zurich https://fgcz.ch/education.html	Zurich
ScopeM Microscopy Training Program https://scopem.ethz.ch/education/MTP.html	ETHZ

Digital Skills and Statistics competencies are very important for our PhDs, and thus, the PhD Program is enhancing the curriculum with courses that are related to them.

PSC COURSE CATALOGUE : Digital Skills & Statistics	ECTS	Ferquency	Location	Offered in 2025
Data Management				
Advanced Data Management and Manipulation using R	1	biennial	ETHZ	NO
Reporting using Quarto, R Markdown & Shiny	1	annual	ETHZ	YES
Plant Science Data Analysis Clinic ->**NEW from 2025**	1	annual	UNIBAS	YES
Data Visualisation				
Scientific Visualisation using R	1	annual	ETHZ or UNIBAS	YES
Machine Learning				
Introduction to Machine Learning for Plant Scientists - Module 1	1	annual	ETHZ	YES
Introduction to Machine Learning for Plant Scientists - Module 2	2	annual	ETHZ	YES
Statistics				
Compositional Data Analysis	1	biennial	ETHZ	NO
General Linear and Linear Mixed Models in R	1	annual	UZH	YES
Introduction to Genome-Wide Association Studies (GWAS)	1	annual	UZH	YES
Introduction to R	1	annual	ETHZ	YES
Introduction to Structural Equation Modeling	1	annual	UZH	YES
Statistical Modeling	1	biennial	ETHZ	YES
Scientific Workflows Automatization Using AI (LLMs)				
Explore the responsible use of AI in generating scientific texts, images, audio and code	1	TBA	ETHZ	YES

Additional Providers of Training Opportunities in Digital Skills	Location
ETH Zurich Scientific IT Services https://sis.id.ethz.ch/services/consultingtraining/	ETHZ
UZH IT Training of Central IT Services https://zi-training.zi.uzh.ch/en/page/home	UZH
Swiss Institute of Bioinfromatics https://www.sib.swiss/training/upcoming-training-courses	Zurich

A wide range courses concerning **transferable skills** for PhD students are available within the PSC PhD Program in Plant Sciences.

PSC COURSE CATALOGUE: Transferable Skills	ECTS	Ferquency	Location	Offered in 2025
Innovation and Career Management				
Feminno program (for female scientists)		annual	ETHZ	YES
Project Management for Research	1	Triennial	ETHZ	NO
Resarch Integrity, Research Ethics				
Ethics and Scientific Integrity for Doctoral Students	1	annual	ETHZ	YES
Value-based design: Enhancing value-sensitivity in use and development of emerging technologies	1	On demand	ETHZ	NO
Research Funding				
Writing a Post-doctoral Grant	1	Biennial	ETHZ	NO
Science Communication and Teaching				
Creative Science Communication	1	On demand	ETHZ	NO
Filmmaking for Scientists	1	Biennial	UNIBAS	YES
Science Communication and Excursion Management in Botanical Gardens	1	Annual	UNIBAS	YES
Scientific Communication Practice	2	Biennial	ETHZ	NO
Teaching Science at University	1	Annual	UZH	YES
Scientific Writing, Publishing and Information management				
Advanced Scientific Writing in Natural Sciences	1	annual	UNIBAS	YES
Scientific Presentation Practice	1	biennial	ETHZ	YES
Scientific Writing 1	1	biennial	ETHZ	NO
Scientific Writing 2	1	biennial	ETHZ	YES

Additional Providers of Training Opportunities in Transferable Skills	Location
Life Science Zurich Graduate School https://www.lifescience-graduateschool.uzh.ch/en/courses.html	UZH / ETH
ETH Library https://library.ethz.ch/en/kurse-und-beratung/courses.html#	
myPath https://mypath.ethz.ch/en/index	ETHZ
Graduate Campus (GRC) https://www.grc.uzh.ch/en/skills.html	UZH
GRACE https://www.unibas.ch/de/Forschung/Graduate-Center/Doktorierende/Training-Coaching-und-Beratung/Transferable-Skills.html	UNIBAS
Communication Academy https://ethz.ch/staffnet/en/service/communication/communication-academy.html	ETHZ

Courses carried out in the reporting period

In the reporting period, the PSC (co)organized 30 standard courses. We report 331 student admissions to the courses

Number of courses carried out and number of course participations						
Year	**Total Course Nr**	**Part. University of Zurich**	**Part. ETH Zurich**	**Part. University of Basel**	**Part. Other**	**Course Participations**
2025	30	78	167	66	20	331

Courses offered in 2025	Participants				
	Total	ETH	UZH	UNIBAS	other
Advanced course on 3D microscopy imaging of plant tissues and image processing	9	6	2	1	0
Advanced Scientific Writing in Natural Sciences (Basel)	7	1	2	4	0
Alpine Plant Ecology	21	0	0	3	18
Basic Plant Disease Diagnostics	8	3	1	4	0
Colloquium: Challenges in Plant Sciences (= Spectrum in Plant Sciences)	18	15	3	0	0
Concepts in Evolutionary Biology	4	2	2	0	0
Current challenges in plant breeding	1	1	0	0	0
Ethics and Scientific Integrity for Doctoral Students	34	34	0	0	0
Explore the responsible use of AI in generating scientific texts, images, audio and code	40	33	7	0	0
Filmmaking for Scientists	10	1	0	9	0
General Linear and Linear Mixed Models in R	7	6	1	0	0
Genetic Diversity: Analysis	2	2	0	0	0
Genetic Diversity: Techniques	1	1	0	0	0
Introduction to Genome-Wide Association Studies (GWAS)	5	2	1	2	0
Introduction to Machine Learning for Genomics (BIO610)	23	6	16	1	0
Introduction to Machine Learning for Plant Scientists 1	16	6	10	0	0
Introduction to Machine Learning for Plant Scientists 2	7	3	4	0	0
Introduction to Structural Equation Modeling	2	2	0	0	0
Microbiomics 1: The Microbiome of the Plant-Soil-Syst	4	0	1	3	0
Microbiomics 2: Metabarcoding - from Bioinformatics to Statistics	8	2	2	3	1
Plant Science Data Analysis Clinic (Basel)	5	0	0	5	0
Reporting using R Markdown & Shiny	16	6	8	2	0
Science Communication and Excursion Management in Botanical Gardens	8	0	0	8	0
Scientific Presentation Practice	14	6	7	1	0
Scientific Visualisation using R	11	4	0	6	1
Scientific Writing 2	14	8	4	2	0
Seminar Sustainable Plant Systems	18	6	1	11	0
Statistical modelling	18	11	6	1	0
Teaching Science at University (Introduction to University Teaching and Learning)	0	0	0	0	0
Transdisciplinary Seminar on Research: Challenges of Interdisciplinarity and Stakeholder Engagement (ETH VVZ 701-0015-00L)	0	0	0	0	0

From 01.01.2025 to 31.12.2025, the evaluations of 21 of 30 courses were conducted by the PSC directly: Participants rated these courses between 2.0 to 4.0 (= fully agree) in “I learned & benefited from this course” and several other aspects.

Course	Number of Questionnaires	The Course was well organized?	The topics covered met my expectations?	The instructor explained clearly?	Manual was helpful & useful also for future?	Good balance between theoretical & practical?	level of course was according to my needs?	working atmosphere was good?	I learned & benefited from this course?
Advanced course on 3D microscopy imaging of plant tissues and image processing	9	3.67	3.56	3.67	3.67	3.56	3.75	4.00	3.56
Advanced Scientific Writing in Natural Sciences (Basel)	6	4.00	3.83	4.00	3.67	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.83
Alpine Plant Ecology	19	3.84	3.84	3.95	3.53	3.95	3.84	3.84	3.95
Basic Plant Disease Diagnostics	7	4.00	3.86	4.00	3.86	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Colloquium: Challenges in Plant Sciences (= Spectrum in Plant Sciences)	15	3.38	3.06	3.38	3.07	3.00	3.00	3.33	2.75
Ethics and Scientific Integrity for Doctoral Students	11	3.36	3.55	3.40	3.45	3.60	3.40	3.30	3.30
Explore the responsible use of AI in generating scientific texts, images, audio and code	34	3.38	3.21			3.32	3.14	3.65	3.53
Filmmaking for Scientists	10	3.70	3.70	3.80	3.80	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.67
Introduction to Machine Learning for Genomics (BIO610)	10	3.10	2.78	2.90	2.90	2.80	2.80	3.70	3.00
Introduction to Machine Learning for Plant Scientists 1	8	3.75	3.63	3.75	3.50	3.63	3.38	3.63	3.50
Introduction to Machine Learning for Plant Scientists 2	4	3.50	3.75	3.75	4.00	3.50	3.25	4.00	3.50
Microbiomics 1: The Microbiome of the Plant-Soil-Syst	4	4.00	3.60	4.00	3.75	3.25	3.25	3.75	3.25
Microbiomics 2: Metabarcoding - from Bioinformatics to Statistics	7	3.75	3.86	4.00	4.00	3.63	4.00	3.86	4.00
Plant Science Data Analysis Clinic (Basel)	3	3.33	3.33	3.33	3.33	3.33	3.33	4.00	3.33
Reporting using R Markdown & Shiny	6	3.67	3.57	3.67	3.86	3.83	3.50	3.71	3.83
Science Communication and Excursion Management in Botanical Gardens	2	3.00	2.50	3.50	2.00	2.50	2.50	4.00	3.00
Scientific Presentation Practice	11	3.91	4.00	3.92	3.73	3.91	4.00	4.00	3.91
Scientific Visualisation using R	7	4.00	3.71	4.00	3.86	4.00	3.57	4.00	3.71
Scientific Writing 2	10	3.70	3.80	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.80	3.80
Seminar Sustainable Plant Systems	13	3.46	3.47	3.31	3.31	3.31	3.38	3.69	3.69
Statistical modelling	5	3.80	3.80	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.80	4.00	4.00

Highlighted trainings from 2025

Winter School and Symposium on Machine Learning 2025

In **2025**, we organised Winter School (3 days) and Symposium (2 days), from March 10-14th, 2025 on the topic: ***Harnessing Machine Learning for Breakthroughs in Plant and Environmental Sciences***. Winter School, to which 27 students were admitted, was an intensive three-day program is designed for PhD students eager to deepen their knowledge in machine learning and gain practical, hands-on experience. The Winter School featured interactive workshops using real-world datasets,

complemented by short seminars addressing current challenges in analysing plant and environmental data. Participants learned how ML can address such challenges with an overview of ML tools and algorithms applied to these fields. The topics covered: *ML for predicting ecosystem fluxes*, *Plant Species Identification from Photos and Local Habitat Conditions*, *Individual Tree Species and Health Detection Using Deep Learning Model*, *image-based wheat head detection to analyse heading dynamics in a diverse winter wheat genotype set*, and *Plant Tissue Segmentation for microscopy using ML*. **The Symposium** that followed was open to all interested academics and focused on broad ML applications in plant sciences while providing the audience with crucial understanding of the methodology. The Symposium provided a broader perspective on how ML can advance our understanding and management of environmental challenges, climate adaptation, biodiversity, and precision agriculture. Symposium involved more than 160 participants, including 25 speakers (national and international).

Training on Generative AI (2024/2025)

The "**Doctoral Student Experimenting Lab: Explore the Responsible Use of AI in Generating Scientific Texts, Images, Audio, and Code"** was an Innovedum-funded (ETHZ) project under the focus topic "AI in Teaching and Learning," led by Dr. Melanie Paschke and coordinated by Dr. Bojan Gujas at the Zurich-Basel Plant Science Center. From July 2024 to June 2025, the project organized two intensive training sessions for PhD students.These sessions provided participants with hands-on experience in using generative AI tools in a responsible way, addressing the growing demand for structured guidance in this topic. This project represented a new phase of the earlier sucesfull Innovedum project *"Assessing the Potential of AI for Scientific Writing,"* with an aim to expanded the focus from text generation to include:

- Image and audiovisual creation for scientific communication,
- Coding, data extraction and analysis workflows,
- Privacy and security aspects of AI tools.

The project took place in the context of **rapidly evolving generative AI technologies**, which are transforming research and education while also posing new risks—such as data privacy concerns, bias, and questions of academic integrity. Recognizing both the immense opportunities and the challenges, the project created a safe environment for experimentation and reflection, equipping participants to use these powerful tools responsibly. A central goal was to empower early-career researchers to experiment openly with generative AI while upholding scientific integrity and ethical standards. The **key objectives** of the project included:

- Raising awareness on generative AI limitations by showcasing how AI actually works
- raining participants to laverge the AI in their daily work in a responsible manner
- Encouraging critical reflection on the ethical implications of AI in scientific work.
- Discussing and developing best practices and use case studies for teaching and research;
- Documenting lessons learned

The project was structured into two intensive 4-day block courses held in November 2024 and May 2025. In total, 69 participants (mainly doctoral students) from various Universities/departments participated. The courses combined lectures, inputs, hands on workshops, and discussions with 17 expert lecturers and tutors.

The course was carefully structured to build core competencies essential for today's PhD students—analytical thinking, creativity, data literacy, and ethical awareness—through the lens of Generative AI. Starting with an overview of large language models and prompting, participants gained the ability to engage critically and responsibly with AI. Subsequent sessions delved into advanced skills such as bibliometric analysis for identifying research gaps, AI-assisted coding in Python, and the use of generative AI for literature mapping and data extraction. The course also addressed crucial aspects of research integrity, including bias and limitations of LLMs, secure handling of personal and confidential data, and privacy risks associated with memorization, inference, and watermarking in LLMs. Workshops on responsible image creation, visual communication, and scientific visualization showcased the creative and communicative potentials of GenAI tools, while grounding them in ethical frameworks and regulatory compliance (e.g., GDPR, EU AI Act). This progressive structure enabled participants to integrate generative AI into their own research and communication workflows while fostering critical thinking, ethical literacy, and an understanding of responsible AI adoption. The course is expected to take place again in 2026.

Outlook & Strategic Focus for 2026

PSC is constantly upgrading training offer. Starting in 2026, the PSC aims to expand its course offerings with a heightened focus on **Advanced Research Courses on Plant Phenotyping** - enhancing depth and expertise in scientific inquiry. Newly introduced courses include:

- PReSens: Proximal and Remote Sensing for Soil and Vegetation (ETHZ),
- Introduction to Plant Image Analysis (UNIBAS), and
- Applied Crop Modelling for Climate Risk Assessment (UNIBAS).

Additionally, from 2026 onwards, PSC will implement a series of course updates and replacements, including Project Management for Research, Scientific Presentation Practice, and Writing a Postdoctoral Grant. At the same time, existing courses are being enhanced to reflect emerging competencies, notably through the integration of generative AI applications (e.g. in Scientific Writing) and machine learning approaches in research-oriented courses such as Introduction to Machine Learning for Genomics and Crop Phenotyping.

In December 2026 PSC will host the next **PSC PhD Symposium,** organised by a committee of doctoral candidates from the PhD Program in Plant Sciences. This initiative provides a unique opportunity for participants to develop transferable skills in the planning and delivery of an international and interdisciplinary scientific event, recognised within the doctoral training framework (2 ECTS). The symposium is currently being prepared under the tentative title "***From Genes to Landscapes: Integrating Plant Science for Informed Biodiversity and Conservation Decisions.***" The organising committee is actively defining the scientific programme and engaging national and international speakers, with a strong focus on interdisciplinary exchange across scales of plant science.

PSC is actively engaged in coordinating **MSCA Doctoral Network (MSCA-DN) proposals** (call November 2026), including *PlantRegNEXT* (AI-assisted plant regeneration) and *PHENO-Field* (advanced field phenotyping for precision agriculture). The overarching vision is to build international cohorts of leading experts and **provide our doctoral candidates with access to interdisciplinary, high-level training at the interface of plant science, data science, and emerging technologies.**

Through these initiatives, PSC reaffirms its commitment to advancing scientific research, fostering innovation, and equipping the next generation of plant scientists with cutting-edge skills and knowledge.

March 09, 2026

Bojan Gujas, coordinator of the PhD Program in Plant Sciences
Melanie Paschke, education director PSC

RNA Biology

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	38
UZH	7
ETH	12
Other affiliation	19
Track I students	25
Track II students	13
Female students	27
Male students	11
International students	31
Swiss students	7
Program drop-outs	1
Completed PhD	5
Program alumni	55
Faculty members	28

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	33	35
Invited candidates	6	4
Drop-outs before interview	0	0
Free slots (priority program)	7	5
Matches	2	2
Candidates without matches	4	2
Decision against program	0	0
Rejected candidates	1	2
Change to other LSZGS programs	0	0
Gained from LSZGS programs	1	0

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1	13907.00	
Income		
ETHZ		
UZH	4960.00	
Fees		
Other		
Expenses		
Salaries program		0.00
Social benefits		0.00
Recruitment November 24		3567.60*
Recruitment May 25		854.30**
Program activities (retreat, symposia, etc.)		680.70
Overhead (transfer NCCR and travel grant balance)		11612.93
Total		16715.53
Balance as of December 31	2151.47	

**including Recruitment costs Juli 2024 that was billed in January 2025*

Program Activities

NCCR RNA & Disease Seminar Series 2025
there is a PhD Luncheon with the speakers at the day of the Seminar

Mar 2025	Wojciech Galej, EMBL Grenoble, Grenoble, France Pietro Fratta, University College London, London, UK
Apr 2025	Kelly Nguyen, MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge, UK
May 2025	Joshua Mendell, HHM &UT Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, USA
Jun 2025	Rotem Karni – Hebrew University Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel
Oct 2025	Olivia Rissland - University of Colorado School of Medicine, USA
Nov 2025	Tsutomu Suzuki - University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan
Dec 2025	Cosmin Saveanu - Pasteur Institute, Paris, France

Swiss RNA Workshop 2025, January 26
Bern, Switzerland

9th Annual NCCR Retreat 2025, January 27 – 29
Kandersteg, Switzerland

in-person recruitment; dinner with PhD Students for PhD applicants
Students Dinner in January 2025 at Miss Miu Zurich
Students Dinner in June 2025 at Nooba Zurich

Outlook

NCCR RNA & Disease Seminar Series 2026
there is a PhD Luncheon with the speakers at the day of the Seminar

Mar 2026	Danny Nedialkova – Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry, Martinsried, Germany Kamena Kostova - Stowers Institute for Medical Research, Kansas City, USA
May 2025	Sami Barmada – University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA

Swiss RNA Workshop 2026, January 16
Bern, Switzerland

Final NCCR Retreat 2026, January 26 – 29
Joint international conference with RNA communities from Austria, Germany and France, held in St. Moritz, Switzerland

RNA Biology PhD Program Mini Retreat, March 25 2026
Day retreat organized by the students including scientific exchange and social activities

Science and Policy

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	64
UZH	7
ETH	44
Other affiliation	13 (Uni Basel)
Track I students	12
Track II students	52
Female students	38
Male students	27
International students	48
Swiss students	17
Program drop-outs	11
Completed PhD	15 (6 at UZH)
Program alumni	100 (total until 2025)
Faculty members	15 (UZH)

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	25	23
Invited candidates	0	0
Drop-outs before interview	0	0
Free slots (priority program)	0	0
Matches	0	0
Candidates without matches	0	0
Decision against program	0	0
Rejected candidates	0	0
Change to other LSZGS programs	0	0
Gained from LSZGS programs	0	0

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1	38’845.35	
Income	31’050.00	
ETHZ		
UZH		
Fees		
Other		
Expenses		
Salaries program		40932.15 (Last)
Social benefits		Included above
Recruitment November 24		0
Recruitment May 25		0
Program activities (retreat, symposia, etc.)		16’149.45
Overhead (transfer NCCR and travel grant balance)		Reported elsewhere
Total		57’081.60
Balance as of December 31		12’813.75

Governance of the Program

The PhD Program in Science and Policy is approved as a structured PhD program by leading universities: the ETH Zurich (ETHZ), the University of Zurich (UZH) and the University of Basel (UNIBAS) and is part of Life Science Zurich Graduate School (LSZGS). It is led by one representative of PSC principal investigators (PI, director: Prof Sam Zeeman, ETH), PSC head of studies (Dr. Melanie Paschke, PSC) and the PSC PhD program coordinator (Dr. Luisa Last, PSC) who is the main contact point.

Each host university—and in some cases individual departments—defines its own doctoral regulations and expectations for PhD candidates, including requirements related to ECTS credits, doctorate progress monitoring, and other formal responsibilities throughout the doctoral studies. The PhD Program in Science and Policy is designed to operate downstream of the university and faculty regulations. Its program-specific training regulations provide a transparent framework for coursework and skills development, while ensuring complete compatibility with existing governance structures.

Program Activities

The PSC has core infrastructure and personal resources to carry out and manage training for 500+ participants per year. Established training formats range from workshops, colloquia and lectures to summer schools, and face-to-face events to blended learning and e-learning formats that make our education highly scalable in number of participants. Didactical formats include case-study work, cognitive apprenticeship models, role play scenarios, simulations but also hands-on training in tools and methodology and experimentation that make our education highly successful in targeting learning objectives to the different target groups and demands of a multi-faceted academic education.

The PSC educational programs are embedded in several educational platforms that operate nationally and internationally and make the course offer of the PSC and of corresponding programs fully transferable: Life Science Zurich (www.lifesciences.ch), an international graduate school in life sciences, Swiss Plant Science Web (www.swissplantsciencwweb.ch, now Swiss Society of Plant Biology, housing 9 national PhD programs in Plant Sciences, Graduate Campus University of Zurich (www.grc.uzh.ch), bringing together all PhD students of the University of Zurich.

Registration to the PhD Program

The PhD Program is open to doctoral students officially enrolled at the University of Zurich (UZH), ETH Zurich (ETHZ) or at the University of Basel (UNIBAS). The candidate can be conditionally accepted into the PhD Program after the requirements are fulfilled. However, the final acceptance depends on the formal admission requirements of the host university (UZH, ETHZ or UNIBAS).

The PSC offers a fully implemented Track I admission channel (recruitment via Life Science Zurich Graduate School, LSZGS) following LSZGS guidelines that were used for 0 of the 17 PhD students recruited to the program in 2025. For Track II admission channel (direct application to principal investigator, PI): We request formal admission interview with future PhD students to be organized by PI. The interview should be conducted in the presence of at least one other principal investigator or faculty member and is confirmed with signed PhD Program interview protocol. This admission channel is used for 17 of the 17 PhD students recruited to the program in 2025.

Curriculum for the PhD Program in Science and Policy

Since 2009, the PSC has pioneered **the PhD Program in Science & Policy**. Highly specialized skills for the interface of Science & Policy are offered to the PhD students: they acquire tools for policy work, learn about policy sciences and attend international conferences at the interface of science and policy.

Activities	ECTS
Compulsory Activity: **Policy Workshops:** 4 out of Policy workshops A - F: • Course A: Evidence-based Policymaking • Course B: Stakeholder Engagement • Course C: Communicating Science • Course D: Building Political Support • Course E: Analysis and Communication of Risks and Uncertainties • Course F: Understanding Policy Evaluation 1 Lecture in **Basics of Policy Sciences** (e.g., Introduction to Political Sciences, 1 ECTS) At ETHZ: 1 ECTS through visiting a course on **Research Integrity** in your department. Register in myStudies. *For details, see section "Course on Research Integrity*.	Min 9
At UZH and UNIBAS: In minimum the LSZGS "**Introductory Lecture to Good Scientific Practice and Scientific Integrity**" (0 ECTS) must be visited. *For details, see section "Course on Research Integrity"*.	
Remainder of 12 | 18* **ECTS may be chosen from:** **Elective Activities (PhD Program):** • Strategic Foresight (1 ECTS) • Systems Thinking and Design for Social Change and in Policymaking (1 ECTS) **OR:** **Other Elective Activities: *** • Other Technical Courses or Transferable Skill Courses (from PSC, LSZGS, GRC, GRACE) • Official course lists (e.g., ETHZ, UZH or UNIBAS) • Participation in international scientific symposium with own scientific contribution (oral or poster presentation) (max. 1 ECTS) • Part of PSC PhD Symposium organization committee (2 ECTS) • ETHZ: committee work (min. 1 year of participation) (1 ECTS) UZH: Engagement in Green Labs (max. 2 ECTS): Refer to the PSC website for detailed information: https://www.plantsciences.uzh.ch/en/teaching/coursecatalogue.html	Min 3 | 9*
TOTAL	**12** | 18*

* For students enrolled at UNIBAS, as a total of 18 ECTS are requested.

** Please consult the PhD regulations of your host institution and get the approval of your principal investigator or thesis committee.

* with approval from principal investigator or thesis committee

PhD education

The PSC PhD Program "Science and Policy" is finished with a **PhD Program certification**. The certification is part of the diploma supplement of the doctoral certificate that is awarded by the University of Zurich, ETH Zurich or University of Basel. The certification includes a transcript of records of all PhD courses carried out by the PhD student.
In the reporting period, the PSC organized / co-organized 6 courses. We report on 83 course visits of PhD students.

Table 1: Number of courses carried out and number of course participations. Participants per University are summarized over all courses.

Year	Total Course Nr	Part. University of Zurich	Part. ETH Zurich	Part. University of Basel	Part. Other	Course Participations
2025	6	9	57	8	8	83

Table 2: Courses in the PhD Program in Plant Sciences and number of participants.

Date	Course	Speakers / case study supervisors	Participants
05.02.2025, 19.03.2025 and	Building Political Support	Dr. Sarah Bütikofer (Global Governance; ETH Zürich), Dr. Sebastian Koehler	ETH (13) UZH (1)
28.03.2025		(Queen Mary University of London), Larissa Mettler (effectiva), Marcel Falk (Swiss Academies of Sciences)	UNIBAS (2) Other (0)
12.05.2025 & 19.05.2025	Introduction to Political Sciences	Dr. Sarah Bütikofer (Department of Political Science, UZH and DeFacto)	ETH (9) UZH (1) UNIBAS (2) Other (0)
02.-04.06 and 09.07.2025	Stakeholder Engagement	Dr. Minu Hemmati, Dr Minu Hemmati Consulting, Berlin; Dr. Rémi Willemin (Ea-wag), and Dr. Luisa Last (PSC)	ETH (8) UZH (2) UNIBAS (1) Other (1)
Cancelled	Contributing to Policy Action – Analysis and Communication of Risks and Uncertainties	Prof. Dr. Tina Nana (TUM, Germany), Dr. Christoph Beuttler (Climeworks AG), Dr. Melanie Paschke (PSC)	ETH (0) UZH (0) UNIBAS (0) Other (0)
03.04.2025	Science & Policy Talk: Bridging Science and Policy to achieve Earth Trusteeship	Mr. Neshan Gunasekera, CEO, World Future Council	ETH (10) UZH (3) UNIBAS (0) Other (4)
24.09. & 22.10.2025	Understanding Policy Evaluation	Dr. Tobias Arnold, Interface	ETH (5) UZH (2) UNIBAS (2) Other (0)
05.11.2025	Science & Policy Talk: Engaging at the interface of environmental research and policy: lessons learnt and strategies	Dr. Mialy Rann Andriamahefazafy (Geneva Science-Policy Interface)	ETH (10) UZH (0) UNIBAS (1) Other (3)

From 01.01.2025 to 31.12.2024, the evaluation of 4 of 6 courses were completed by the PSC directly: Participants rated these courses between 3 to 4 (= fully agree) in “I learned & benefited from this course” and several other aspects. Note: In the last column “The instructor moved at an appropriate pace” a different scale was used.

Course	Number of questionnaires	The course was well organized?	The topics covered met my expectations?	The instructor explained clearly?	Manual was helpful & useful also for future?	Good balance between theoretical & practical?	Level of course was according to my needs?	Working atmosphere was good?	I learnded & benefited from this course?	The instructor moved at an appropriate pace? 1 = too slow/too fast, 2 = just right
Science and Policy: Communicating Science	12	3.50	3.40	3.60	3.30	3.40	3.40	3.70	3.50	1.90
Science and Policy: Evidence-Based Policy Making in Plant Sciences	9	3.75	3.50	3.75	3.75	3.25	3.75	4.00	3.75	1.75
Science and Policy: Building Political Support	12	3.75	3.42	3.75	3.33	3.92	3.75	3.92	3.75	1.92
Science and Policy: Introduction to Political Science	17	3.60	3.60	3.40	3.20	3.90	3.50	3.90	3.70	2.00
Science and Policy: Stakeholder Engagement	12	3.50	3.40	3.60	3.30	3.40	3.40	3.70	3.50	1.90

100% of the participants would recommend these workshops to others!

In 2025, the PSC offered 2 **Science and Policy Talks** focusing on Bridging Science and Policy to achieve Earth Trusteeship (April 3, 2025, Neshan Gunasekera, CEO, World Future Council) and Engaging at the interface of environmental research and policy: lessons learnt and strategies (Nov 5, 2025, Dr. Mialy Rann Andriamahefazafy (Geneva Science-Policy Interface).

Outlook

In 2026, we are offering the following science and policy workshop as listed in the PhD program curriculum: Communicating Sciences (02.03. & 23.02.2026), Strategic Foresight (20.05.& 22.06.2026), Evidence-Based Policymaking (26.05.&29.06.2026), Building Political Support (28.08., 24.09., and 29.09.2026), Stakeholder Engagement (9.-11.11., and 08.12.2026), as well as Introduction to Political Sciences (dates to be defined).

Moreover, the PSC is planning to offer 2 Science and Policy Talks per year focusing on Science4Policy presented by the Joint Research Center of the European Commission JRC (28.05.2026, Dr. Anastasia Deligkiaouri, Policy Analyst, JRC) and on the GreenEngage Science-Policy Toolbox (date tbd, Dr. Tome Sandevski, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt a. Main).

Systems Biology

The program in figures and numbers

Program statistics	as of 31 December 2025
Program students	81
UZH	18
ETH	63
Other affiliation	
Track I students	37
Track II students	44
Female students	33
Male students	48
International students	59
Swiss students	22
Program drop-outs	0
Completed PhD	11
Program alumni	151
Faculty members	39

Recruitment

Recruiting statistics	November 24	May 25
Complete applications	125	89
Invited candidates	14	10
Drop-outs before interview	3	3
Free slots (priority program)	8	4
Matches	1	2
Candidates without matches	10	5
Decision against program	0	0
Rejected candidates	111	79
Change to other LSZGS programs	0	0
Gained from LSZGS programs	0	0

Finances in CHF

	Income	Expenses
Balance as of January 1	50’716	
Income		
ETHZ	32’910	
UZH		
Fees		
Other		
Expenses		
Salaries program		22’266
Social benefits		3’491
Recruitment November 24		436
Recruitment May 25		722
Program activities (retreat, symposia, etc.)		12’637
Overhead (transfer NCCR and travel grant balance)		0
Total		39’552
Balance as of December 31	44’074	

Program Activities

(i) The compulsory introduction course “Systems Approaches in Biology”, conducted by the Systems Biology program, took place on October 6-15, 2025. 9 Systems Biology PhD students attended the course, which was held on-site in Zurich.
The aim of this course is to experience and understand systems biology as a scientific process for hypothesis generation in complex and dynamic situations and networks.

(ii) The advanced course “Computational Biology”, conducted by the Systems Biology program, was held on June 10-20, 2025.7 Systems Biology PhD students completed the course. The course is aimed at students with sufficient theory background for in-depth review of mathematical / computational approaches to systems biology problems, combined with practical case study performed in groups (based on project proposals by PhD students).

(iii) The annual Systems Biology PhD program retreat, organized by the Systems Biology PhD student community, took place on September 24-26, 2025, in Locarno (Ticino). Participants and speakers stayed at hotel "La Palma Au Lac", right on the shores of Lago Maggiore. The retreat once again brought together a diverse range of voices from academia, publishing, and industry — each offering a personal take on career paths, challenges, and opportunities in the evolving world of biology. The location also invited for social activities on and around the lake for a perfect balance between scientific exchange and relaxation in the beautiful surroundings