

FGLM Guidelines for Thesis Committee Meetings

This document outlines how thesis committee meetings should be organized and held. For further details also see the FGLM bylaws.

Establishment of the PhD thesis committee

- The Fribourg Graduate School of Life Sciences and Medicine (FGLM) requires that the doctoral students, together with their supervisors, establish a thesis committee during the first year of their studies.
- The establishment of the committee has to be done in compliance with the rules for supervision of PhD/MD students and thesis committees, specified in Articles 9 and 12 of the "Regulation for the award of the doctorate at the Faculty of Science & Medicine" (<https://www3.unifr.ch/apps/legal/fr/document/927509>) and in Articles 9 and 11 of the "Regulation for the award of the doctorate in medicine at the Faculty of Science & Medicine" (<https://www3.unifr.ch/apps/legal/de/document/916986>). For PhD students in science or medicine, the supervisor can request, according to Article 12 mentioned above, the installation of a PhD thesis committee until the end of the 1st year of the PhD studies. For MD students, following Article 11 mentioned above, the installation of a thesis committee requires the approval of the permanent Medical Doctorate Commission specified in Article 11.
- The doctoral fellow, in agreement with her/his supervisor, has to choose 2 experts / thesis committee members (PIs) in addition to the supervisor and communicates the composition of the committee to the FGLM administrative office. At least one of the two experts should be an external (non-UniFR) expert. The committee supports and advises the doctoral student as well as the PhD advisor in all aspects of the thesis work. The composition of the thesis committee can be changed if the members of the committee agree. The supervisor and the experts form the thesis committee of the respective FGLM doctoral student.

Annual PhD thesis committee meetings

- Optimally in each year during the thesis work (but at least 2-3 times during the duration of the thesis work), the doctoral student has to submit a written progress report and give an oral presentation to the members of the thesis committee. If possible, the first meeting should preferentially be held at the end of the first year to allow sufficient progress of the project and to make sure that the PhD project is viable and on the right track.

- The written report (typically 3-4 pages) should be sent at least 1 week before the meeting to the committee members. After the meeting, a copy of this report (together with the committee meeting form) is to be given to the FGLM administrative office. The exact length and format of the report should be decided by the thesis supervisor.
- For the meeting, the doctoral fellow should prepare a presentation of maximally 30 min, summarizing the progress made and outlining the planned work for the next year. She/he is encouraged to specifically address experimental/scientific problems. The thesis committee members should critically evaluate the progress and especially the planned future work.
- After scientific progress and problems have been discussed, any personal matters may be addressed. For this the supervisor should leave the room to allow the doctoral fellow to speak privately to the thesis committee members; after this, the fellow should leave the room to allow the supervisor to speak privately to the thesis committee members.
- Finally, the progress and recommendations should be documented in the evaluation form, signed by all participants and returned to the FGLM office. Within the first week after the meeting, the fellow should send out a short text summarizing the feedback and suggestions (1-2 pages). If a physical meeting cannot be arranged, the meeting can be held via teleconference or using a hybrid model. The experts will provide feedback to both the thesis supervisor and the doctoral fellow concerning any scientific or personal questions related to the thesis work. The costs for organizing these meetings (travel, hotel, meals for the committee members) are carried by the thesis supervisor.

PhD thesis exam committee

- The final PhD/MD thesis exam committee which examines the PhD/MD candidate at the end of the thesis can - but must not necessarily - be different from the above-mentioned committee; the composition of this exam committee must be approved by the Faculty: see Article 17 ("Regulation for the award of the doctorate at the Faculty of Science & Medicine") and Article 16 of the "Regulation for the award of the doctorate in medicine at the Faculty of Science & Medicine".