

Bylaws of the Fribourg Graduate School of Life Sciences & Medicine (FGLM)

Art. 1. This document states the purpose, organization, tasks, responsibilities and the course offerings of the *Fribourg Graduate School of Life Sciences and Medicine* (FGLM), a joint initiative of researchers in Biology and Medicine at the University of Fribourg (UniFR), Switzerland.

Art. 2. Purpose. The FGLM is an interdisciplinary graduate school, which offers, on a voluntary and participatory basis, a coordinated doctoral program in life sciences at the University of Fribourg. It addresses all doctoral students in the field of life science (including biology, medicine, biochemistry, bioinformatics, but also doctoral students in chemistry, physics, statistics and mathematics with a life science focus). The aim of the FGLM is to complement the regular training of PhD / MD students in the life sciences at UniFR by fostering and offering continuing education opportunities on a voluntary basis; it aims to prepare the next generation of life scientists for future challenges in academia and society. It is open to all PhD/MD students performing research in the life sciences at UniFR.

The Faculty of Sciences at UniFR offers the following degrees related to life sciences / biology:

- PhD in Biology
- PhD in Biochemistry
- PhD in Bioinformatics
- PhD in Medicine
- MD in Medicine

The participation of PhD/MD students in the FGLM (i) requires the formal approval of the official thesis supervisor and (ii) is elective/ optional, *i.e.* participation in the FGLM is not compulsory and not formally required for obtaining a PhD or MD degree.

PhD/MD students (and their supervisors) who do wish to voluntarily enroll in the FGLM program agree to abide by the FGLM bylaws defined here; both the student and the supervisor sign an agreement to that effect. PhD/MD students and their supervisors can leave the FGLM at any point if both wish to do so.

The requirements for continuing education of PhD/MD students are specified in Article 13 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 Article 12 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>). These articles state that the official thesis supervisors have the right to decide on the details of the continuing training of their PhD/MD students; by signing the above-mentioned agreement the supervisors agree to the continuing education / training program offered by the FGLM.

Art. 3. Organization. The members of FGLM consist of three groups: (1) principal investigators (PIs) who are PhD/MD supervisors; (2) doctoral students; and (3) the FGLM committee (see below).

PIs are researchers in the life sciences at UniFR (e.g., in biology, medicine) and include full and assistant professors, SNF / ERC professors, and senior lecturer/researchers (*i.e.*, maître-assistants [MA] and maîtres d'enseignement et de recherche [MER]) who finance PhD/MD positions. All PIs commit themselves to the activities and regulations of FGLM (see Article 2 above).

FGLM doctoral students are all PhD/MD students in the life sciences at UniFR (e.g., in biology, medicine) who have signed up, with the consent of their supervisors, for participating in the FGLM.

The FGLM committee consists of the co-heads (co-directors) of the FGLM (e.g., typically 1 from biology and 1 from medicine), the academic coordinator and 2-4 FGLM doctoral students. The FGLM committee meets regularly to plan and organize the school's activities. The co-heads of the FGLM and the coordinator are responsible for overseeing the organization, budget and activities of the FGLM; the co-heads and the coordinator also organize the FGLM general assembly (see below). The PhD student committee members are responsible for planning and organizing the annual FGLM activities. The co-heads of the FGLM typically change every 2 years or so; the current co-heads of the FGLM are responsible for finding their successors. The FGLM doctoral students who serve on the committee are elected or re-elected at the General Assembly.

The FGLM is financially supported by its member departments and by the doctoral program funding scheme provided by UniFR; the FGLM administration is performed and supported by the member departments under the directorship of the co-heads of the FGLM.

The FGLM holds an annual general assembly, typically in October or November, or at the beginning of the new year. During the general assembly the FGLM student representatives are elected or re-elected (see above).

The FGLM is also associated with academic partner programs at the Universities of Bern, Southern Switzerland and Geneva.

Art. 4. Responsibilities and tasks.

The FGLM offers an interdisciplinary program of continuing education activities; the FGLM administrative office keeps records of each doctoral student's required participation in FGLM training activities; at the end of the doctoral studies the two co-heads of the FGLM confirm that the doctoral student has successfully completed the voluntary FGLM training program.

The FGLM cannot and does not formally attest / accredit ECTS credits for any of the courses taken by the doctoral students.

PIs as well as the doctoral students themselves are responsible for ensuring adherence to the rules of FGLM and to fulfill the responsibilities and tasks defined here.

All FGLM doctoral students are enrolled at UniFR as doctoral students according to the university regulations. By co-signing the agreement with their supervisor mentioned in Article 2 the FGLM doctoral students commit themselves to following the continuing training program offered by the FGLM and to complete the required course work. It is the students' duty to provide course attestations and signatures that certify her/his successful participation in postgraduate courses, congresses, practical courses, and seminars. When the signature of an organizer cannot attest the student's participation in these events, the PhD supervisor can sign instead.

The 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.

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. The first meeting should preferentially be held at the end of the first year to allow sufficient progress of the project. 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. 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.

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”.

Art. 6. Continuing training offer.

The FGLM offers to its member doctoral students a voluntary program of continuing training and course activities. By signing, together with their supervisor, the agreement mentioned in Article 2 they voluntarily agree to follow the FGLM training program. The program consists of the following (also see separate document with the course & training offer):

(1) Each year, FGLM doctoral students commit themselves to attending courses covering at least 2 ECTS per year. Courses should be divided between scientific/methodological courses and “soft skills” courses. The FGLM doctoral students are encouraged to take the course exams but they are not obliged to do so; if they do take the exam, they need to be officially enrolled for the exams and pay the exam fees. The FGLM does not formally accredit ECTS points.

(2) In addition, FGLM doctoral students must have followed during the duration of their thesis work at least three courses, conferences, or symposia designed specifically for postgraduate studies. Such courses are offered, among others, by the following societies and doctoral schools:

- FEBS: <http://www.febs.org/index.php?id=86>;
- EMBO: <http://www.embo.org/events/calendar.html>
- LS2 (Life Sciences Switzerland): <http://www.usgeb.ch>
- SGM/SSM: <http://www.swissmicrobiology.ch>
- StarOmics (CUSO, doctoral school): <http://biologie.cuso.ch/accueil/>
- Microbiology (CUSO, doctoral school): <http://biologie.cuso.ch/accueil/>
- Swiss Chronobiology Meeting: <http://www.unifr.ch/biology/events/chrono4/>
- Doctoral Program in Ecology & Evolution (CUSO): <http://biologie.cuso.ch/ecologie-evolution/welcome/>
- Interuniversity Doctoral Program in Organismal Biology: <http://www2.unine.ch/dp-biol>

(3) FGLM doctoral students are also expected to have participated in and presented a poster or talk at least one international congress. Participation in any of the above mentioned events should be discussed beforehand with, and approved by the PhD supervisor, who has to judge if a given scientific conference or course will be appropriate for the training of the doctoral student. FGLM doctoral students should try to participate in congresses also beyond the required minimum, especially if they take place in Switzerland, if the supervisor agrees with this.

(4) If a doctoral student wishes to participate in another specialized education program or doctoral school of CUSO, she/he can ask for these courses to be counted towards the FGLM training offer / curriculum. Participation in any specialized education program or doctoral school requires the consent of the PhD supervisor.

(5) The regular and active participation in progress reports, journal clubs, conferences and seminars organized, e.g. by the Departments of Biology or Medicine at UniFR, form an integral part of the education of FGLM doctoral students (see recommended course schedule).

(6) To support cross-disciplinary approaches, the FGLM encourages doctoral students to undertake short-term laboratory rotations, in which interested PhD students have the opportunity to carry out up to two rotations in another laboratory associated with the FGLM.

- (7) FGLM doctoral students commit themselves to actively participating in student-organized FGLM activities (e.g., the FGLM retreat, etc.).
- (8) To facilitate the training, FGLM doctoral students are expected to prepare a career development plan (see respective FGLM document), preferably within the first 6-12 months of their PhD studies. Students must review and, if necessary, revise the plan regularly (e.g. every year). All versions of the career development plan should be sent to the FGLM office.
- (9) The successful completion or the non-completion of the FGLM training offer does not affect in any way the PhD/MD thesis submission and examination; the fulfillment of the FGLM curriculum does not represent a formal obligation or pre-requisite for being admitted to the PhD/MD thesis exam/defense.

For FGLM doctoral students who perform thesis work at another university or research institution in cooperation with FGLM, it is the duty of the PhD supervisor to define an equivalent training program and to make sure that the requirements are equivalent to the ones of the FGLM and the University of Fribourg.

At the end of the thesis work the student submits documentation of the completed coursework to the FGLM administrative office; the two co-heads of the FGLM then issue a postgraduate study report which confirms that the required FGLM coursework has been completed. This document represents simply a confirmation; it does not formally accredit coursework or ECTS points and it does not represent a formal certificate or diploma.

Exemptions from and modifications of the above rules are decided by the FGLM committee.

Fribourg, 04 October 2024

- Prof. Jörn Dengjel, DepBL, UniFR
- Prof. Jens Stein, Department of Oncology, Microbiology and Immunology, UniFR
- Prof. Patricia Boya, Department of Neuro- and Movement Sciences, UniFR
- Dr. Jun Abe, Department of Oncology, Microbiology and Immunology, UniFR