

# REGULATIONS FOR Ph.D. STUDENTS OF BICEL

## General remarks:

- regulations as stated in the "Règlement et plans d'études" of the Faculté des Sciences are applicable and superimposed on the following.
- thesis is done within the framework of the PhD program "Basic and Applied Life Sciences" (<http://www.unige.ch/sciences/biochimie/doctoral>). Unless mentioned below, it's the rules of the program that apply.
- a thesis from this department will have the "mention biologie".

## Requirements for entering program:

- Master in biology or biochemistry or other equivalent degree (bachelor is usually not sufficient).
- getting accepted by the PhD program.
- assemble a thesis advisory committee (TAC) that includes your thesis adviser and two other group leaders (from within the program or outside of it). The thesis adviser has the right to veto choice of co-advisers.

## During the thesis:

- Compulsary courses/seminars throughout thesis:
  - BICEL progress report
  - BICEL journal club
  - Life Science Seminar series
- thesis adviser can demand that the student takes additional courses.
- students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of symposia, practical courses and meetings organized by the "3ème cycle romand" (all are free for students). However, choice should be discussed with thesis adviser.

## WHAT TO DO AT THE END OF THE THESIS

### The end:

Submitting thesis can be considered usually after 3 years in agreement with the TAC.

### Doctoral exams:

1. There is an oral and a written exam. They have to be taken (passed) before you can submit the thesis to the "Section de Biologie", but they could be taken *before* you are totally done with experiments or while you are writing your thesis. Discuss it with your adviser.
2. You need two examiners for each exam (group leaders); one examiner should be the same for both exams, the other *can* be the same. Your adviser is excluded from both exams and at least one examiner has to be from BICEL. Work out a date and time (and place) with your examiners for the oral exam.
3. The candidate may choose one of the following two formats for the written exam:
  - Complete an EMBO or HSFP post-doctoral fellowship application (or equivalent if approved by the designated examiners). Ideally, this would be based on research that the candidate would like to pursue during his/her post-doctoral work.
  - Write a ~2500 word review on a topic not immediately related to the candidate's own thesis work.
4. The oral exam should be scheduled between 1 and 4 weeks after submission of the written exam: In this exam the student should be prepared to defend what he/she wrote for his/her written exam. The exam will begin with a 10-15 minute "chalk talk" by the candidate (no other visual aids should be used, since the examiners have received the written report). This presentation will be continued with a scientific discussion of relevant topics. The duration of this examination will be approximately 1 hour.
5. Before (!) the exams, sign up for both doctoral exams at the "Secrétariat des étudiants de la Faculté des Sciences" (floor 0 of Sciences 3). For the written exam, give them a date that can correspond to the day when you hand in your exam.

### Thesis and public defense:

1. Writing your thesis: check guidelines of the "Section de Biologie" (<http://www.unige.ch/sciences/biologie/etudes/documents.html>). Both "Title page" and inside format are critical. See also suggestions below.
2. Can be written in French or English. If written in English, you still need a summary in French of 1-2 pages (your responsibility, not that of the thesis adviser!).

3. Can include publications. When a substantial portion of the thesis work has been published in refereed journals, only a general Summary, Introduction, and Discussion need to be added (see guidelines on the web as mentioned above). Otherwise, you also have to write up a substantial Results and Materials & Methods sections.
4. Make suggestions to your adviser for thesis jury. It must comprise three persons: thesis adviser, one co-adviser plus an expert from outside of Geneva. Contact members of jury to ask whether he/she will do it and ask about approximate time when he/she would be available (regarding scheduling, see further comments below).
5. Once your thesis has been accepted by your thesis adviser, send copies to the other members of the thesis jury and circulate one copy amongst other BICEL group leaders.
6. Thesis report: your thesis adviser has to write a 1-2 page report in French or English ("rapport de thèse"), which has to be signed by all members of the jury (a jury member from outside of Geneva can fax a signed copy, or send an e-mail, and then sign the original when he/she comes for the thesis defense; it is in your interest to check that a fully signed original is on file at the latest at your thesis defense). The report must conclude that the jury considers that the thesis is acceptable and that one can proceed to the public thesis defense.
7. Once your thesis has been accepted by the department (group leaders) and your thesis jury, a complete version in paper form (at least with a spiral binding) can be submitted along with the signed thesis report and, a list of the members of the jury and their full addresses (on a separate sheet), and the planned date of the thesis defense to the "Section de Biologie" (office 2004, Sciences III). At the same time, you must send an electronic version of  $\leq 10$  Mb (omit bibliography; does not need to include figures) to [secretariat-biologie@unige.ch](mailto:secretariat-biologie@unige.ch).
8. While all this is cooking, it is up to you to figure out a date for the public thesis defense ("soutenance") that suits the whole jury. It can be at the earliest 20 days *after* the "Président de la Section de Biologie" has transmitted the thesis from the "Section de Biologie" to the Dean's office ("Décanat"), which usually happens within a day or two. However, if you have a tight schedule, make sure the "Président" is around at all to sign it off. In other words: in setting the date of the thesis defense, consider that you have to count back 20 days (plus a few extra for the President's signature) and at least another 7-10 days for acceptance by the other members of the jury and the department. And this only works if the thesis is formally correct (see point 1 above). Otherwise, the President cannot accept the thesis and you cannot have your thesis defense as planned. One of the requirements that is all too often not met is the one regarding a "general discussion". This is crucial!!! The thesis must have a substantial general discussion that puts the whole thing (all chapters) in perspective. Having discussion sections after each results chapter is not enough!
9. Reserve a lecture room for your public defense ("soutenance").
10. Sign up for the "soutenance" at the "Secrétariat des étudiants" de la "Faculté des Sciences" (floor 0 of Sciences III) (give them a title, date, time and place, a copy of the first page of your thesis, etc.).

11. "Soutenance": your public talk (30' - 45') in French or English (depending on jury) with questions by the jury (and the public). Note that the entire jury has to be physically present.

### **After the public defense:**

1. You are almost there, but right now, you are not yet allowed to call yourself "Doctor"!
2. You need the official o.k. (= *Imprimatur*) from the Dean to go to press. To obtain it, you need to get a form ("Mode de publication") that your adviser received, complete it, and take it to the Dean's office / Secrétariat des Etudiants.
3. In the meantime, finalize your thesis by revising it according to the last comments of your thesis jury. Discuss the details of the electronic version of your thesis with your adviser (if it includes published papers, there may be copyright issues).
4. With the imprimatur, have your thesis printed. You will need to deposit 2 copies at the DIS (Uni Dufour, office 310). In addition, don't forget copies of the thesis for your advisers, the lab, the department, your friends and family, and for yourself. In parallel, deposit the final (and complete) electronic version in the open archives of the University of Geneva (<http://archive-ouverte.unige.ch>).
5. The cost of printing is on you. Currently the "Faculté des Sciences" will reimburse 50% up to Frs 500 (see Dean's office with original invoice).

### **Additional suggestions for writing your thesis**

- Collect your data (gels, films, microscope images, etc.), order them the way you would like to present them in your thesis and discuss it with your adviser.
- Discuss form, contents, and procedure with your adviser BEFORE starting to write.
- Do NOT start with the title or the abstract. Those are the toughest parts.
- Prepare the figures. Think about the order in which they should appear. Doing this first, gives you an overview of your thesis and helps you assemble the results. Do NOT use Powerpoint to prepare your figures. Keep images at 300 ppi. Use a single font for labeling figures, e.g. Arial or Helvetica (NOT Times new roman or similar)
- For the text, don't use fonts larger than point 12. Whenever you give text to read to your adviser, use a line spacing of 1.5 or 2. Once the thesis is done, you can use a narrower spacing.
- Insert references into the text from the beginning. It is easiest to do this while you are writing.

- All abbreviations should be defined when they are first mentioned. Don't define abbreviations several times and USE them once they are defined.
- If you have to write a Results section of the thesis in the form of a manuscript:
  - a. for Figures: crop gels and remove unnecessary parts, minimize blank space, indicate markers, indicate band(s)/structures of interest.
  - b. write the figure legends. Include all necessary details that are not mentioned in Materials and methods and/or apply only to the particular experiment shown in the figure. Doing this at an early stage helps you to have all information on how the experiment was performed (e.g. which lanes/panels show what) at hand.
  - c. write Materials and methods with all necessary details.
  - d. Introduction of "manuscript" (Results chapter of thesis): Don't write a review of the literature but include everything that is relevant to your own results.
  - e. Results: (i) start each section with the rationale of the experiment (Why was the experiment done? What did you want to find out?); (ii) briefly mention how the experiment was done; (iii) explain the figure/table/images; (iv) give a short conclusion of individual results where appropriate.
  - f. Discussion: DISCUSS your results considering related work by others, discrepancies, problems, etc. This comment applies of course also to the general Discussion that you have to write for your thesis.
- Future perspectives: Additional experiments that could be done to follow up on your project.