

Press Release

100 new education places

Universities plan innovative programme for medical studies

Zurich, 11 September 2015

The University of Basel, the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI), the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich will together launch a new course of study in medicine. Participants would study at ETH Zurich for their bachelor's degrees and go on to complete a master's degree at one of the partner universities.

Four Swiss universities have joined forces to forge a new path in medical education. Their aim is to contribute to the education of more physicians, as well as react to rapid developments in the field of medicine as new therapies and products gain increasing global importance. In addition, new technologies are emerging with the potential to revolutionise diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment.

A collective journey to new horizons

The partner universities seek to develop an innovative and forward-looking course of study in medicine. ETH Zurich will contribute its scientific and technical expertise, while the other universities' medical faculties bring their clinical skills. In autumn 2017, ETH Zurich plans to offer a new bachelor's degree programme in medicine for 100 students. It will work in close cooperation with the other partner universities, which are responsible for the master's programmes. Successful completion of the bachelor's programme should qualify graduates to apply for a place at a master of medicine programme at the partner universities. "We would like to stay on top of technological developments in the field of medicine, as well as make a contribution to the training of more doctors through cooperation with our partners," explains ETH President Lino Guzzella.

At the University of Basel, the idea has already met with great interest. "This new course of study completely corresponds with the needs of north-western Switzerland as a hub for the life sciences industry," says Andrea Schenker-Wicki, Rector of the University of Basel. The Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) plans to offer a master's programme in medicine at its new Faculty of Biomedical Sciences as of autumn 2019. "ETH's planned bachelor's programme provides the right framework for the Università della Svizzera italiana's pioneering initiative," says USI President Piero Martinoli. "The

joint approach between ETH and USI is of great importance for Ticino as a research and business location because we are able to provide medical training that reflects the latest scientific and technical developments." The University of Zurich is also interested in participating in the new course of study. "UZH's Faculty of Medicine already offers 300 student places in human medicine each year," explains Michael Hengartner, President of the University of Zurich. "This new course of study will make an innovative and complementary contribution to the current education of doctors. At the same time, the joint venture strengthens our strategic partnership with ETH in the area of university medicine, while developing a new partnership with USI and the University of Basel on a national level." Guzzella also believes that "developing this new course of study with three partner universities is of utmost importance. We are of course open to further partners and would be very pleased if other universities join the programme."

Pilot project

ETH Zurich's bachelor's programme is to be designed as a six-year pilot project in accordance with both cantonal and federal guidelines for medical education. The relevant accreditation as defined in the Swiss Medical Professions Act would be given at the appropriate time. It should also comply with ETH Zurich's research-oriented learning standards. The programme's content will include several areas of focus, in particular biomedical imaging and engineering, medical informatics, personalised medicine, molecular health sciences and genetics. ETH Zurich would coordinate the number of graduates from its new bachelor's programme with the admission capacity of Swiss medical faculties at master's level. This would require the ability to restrict admissions, which is not provided for in the current ETH Law. It would therefore be necessary to adapt the article regarding admissions in the ETH Law.

Benefits for Switzerland as a whole

ETH's research-oriented learning as well as medical education are both costly. The four partner universities plan to make use of synergies in order to develop the most cost-efficient course of study, working together with universities that may join the programme in future.

The additional student places will allow for more doctors to be trained across Switzerland. With the new, complementary course of study in medicine, the university partners are helping to boost the number of clinical researchers and physicians with specialised technical and scientific knowledge. The goal is to develop new, interdisciplinary expertise, which is important for primary care and certain specialities, as well as for healthcare research. In addition, patients should also benefit: the implementation of new research results in clinical applications will be encouraged and qualitatively improved.

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