



WELCOME

Key Points for your
Master's Studies
Data Science

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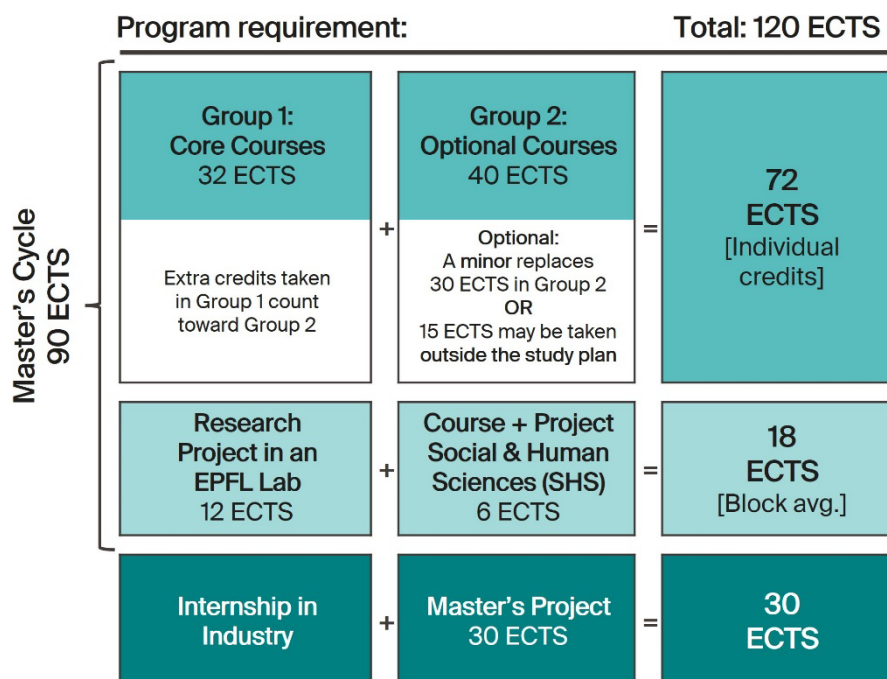
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Introduction

This quick guide provides information to help students successfully complete the Master's program in Data Science. Students are encouraged to establish a personal study plan at the beginning of the program to structure their studies and ensure that all requirements are met. For any questions, please reach out to the relevant administrative contacts listed at the end of this document.

1. Program structure

The program consists of two main components: the Master's cycle (90 ECTS), followed by the Master's project (30 ECTS), totalling 120 ECTS.



Notes:

- **Master's cycle (90 ECTS):** This includes at least 3 semesters of coursework (typically 30 ECTS per semester) with a maximum duration of 6 semesters. All semesters in the Master's cycle must be completed at EPFL.
 - A complementary minor offered by another program at EPFL may be pursued.
 - If no minor is chosen, up to 15 ECTS from unlisted courses, that is, courses not included in the data science study plan, may be used to partially fulfil the Group 2 requirement.
- **Internship requirement:** A mandatory industry internship must be completed, either as an 8-week summer internship or as a 6-month internship during a full semester. The internship may also be combined with the Master's project at the end of the Master's cycle.
- **Master's project (30 ECTS)** for a duration of 18 weeks (including 1 week of vacation) if completed at EPFL, or 26 weeks (including 1 week of vacation) if completed in industry or at another university in Switzerland or abroad. If the project is carried out at EPFL or another university, students must have completed and validated either an 8-week or 6-month internship in industry beforehand.

2. Duration

The maximum duration of the Master's cycle is six semesters, comprising 90 ECTS of coursework and project work. However, students are encouraged to take an average of 30 ECTS per semester to complete the Master's cycle in three semesters, prior to beginning their Master's project (PDM).

All semesters in the Master's cycle must be completed at EPFL.

If students wish to take a semester off for personal reasons during the Master's cycle, they may request to be placed "on leave". However, the six-semester limit will not be extended. For more information:

go.epfl.ch/interruption-studies-master

3. Master's cycle (90 ECTS)

The 90 ECTS required for the Master's cycle provide a balance of foundational knowledge through core courses and flexibility through elective options and project work. Coursework is organized into three categories: (i) core courses, (ii) optional courses, and (iii) a block consisting of a research project carried out in an EPFL lab and a course + project in the social and human sciences (SHS).

- **32 ECTS** must be selected from a set of **core courses** (Group 1). Since each course in this group is weighed at 8 credits, students must select at least four to fulfil the 32 credits.
- **40 ECTS** must be chosen from a broad range of **optional courses** (Group 2). Any additional credits earned in Group 1 count toward Group 2.
- **12 ECTS** must be completed through a mandatory **research project** in an EPFL lab. An optional second research project worth 8 ECTS may be undertaken and counts toward Group 2.
- **6 ECTS** must be earned through a course on transversal competencies in the social and human sciences, which includes a project component.

3.1 SHS Course + Project

Students must earn 6 ECTS in transversal competencies in the social and human sciences (SHS). The SHS course is offered only in the Autumn semester and is followed by a related project in the subsequent Spring semester. The Autumn semester includes a 3 ECTS course introducing the selected topic, while in the Spring, students complete a project—individually or in groups—based on the course themes. This is not specific to the School of Computer and Communication Sciences (IC); it is a general requirement of the SHS program applicable to all EPFL Master's students.

Students who have difficulty finding a suitable SHS course or project, particularly in English, are encouraged to contact the SHS administrative team at: scienceshumaines@epfl.ch, for assistance.

3.2 Research project

New external master's students are not required to complete the 12 ECTS mandatory research project in their first semester. For international students, it is recommended to first become familiar with EPFL, its faculty, and labs. The research project may be carried out in either the Autumn or Spring semester during the Master's cycle but must be completed before starting the Master's project.

Students are encouraged to begin searching for a project at the end of the preceding semester. Project listings on lab websites may not be exhaustive, and additional opportunities may be found by contacting labs of interest directly. Students are advised to meet with the supervising professor or assistant to clearly define the project objectives and expected deliverables before enrolling in a research project.

Students may also undertake an optional 8-ECTS research project at EPFL. These credits count toward Group 2 (options).

Both the mandatory (12 ECTS) and optional (8 ECTS) research projects must be conducted in an EPFL lab during the semester and have a duration of 14 weeks.

Students may not carry out a 12 ECTS mandatory research project and the 8 ECTS optional research project in the same semester.

The sections will notify students in April (for the Autumn semester) and October (for the Spring semester) when the project lists on the lab websites are updated and registration information available.

More details including registration, authorized labs, and additional information can be found at: go.epfl.ch/IC-master-semester-projects

3.3 Courses outside the study plan

Students who decide not to pursue a minor may opt to take up to a maximum of 15 ECTS from unlisted courses, that is, courses not included in the data science study plan, excluding Bachelor-level courses (with a few exceptions). These courses must either be included on the list of pre-approved courses or be approved on a case-by-case basis.

For courses not on the pre-approved list, students must request approval by submitting a form available on this [page](#) at the start of the semester.

Please note that for EPFL courses with a maximum capacity, students who do not have these courses in their study plan are not authorized to register for them.

For more information: go.epfl.ch/IC-courses-outside-study-plan

3.4 Minors

Students who choose not to pursue a specialization may opt to pursue a minor offered by another EPFL Master's program. Minors allow students to deepen their expertise in a specific field or explore interdisciplinary areas. Some minors follow a [predefined study plan](#) while others require selecting courses in consultation with the minor advisor, based on the student's academic background.

Data Science Master's students cannot enroll in the Minor in Computer Science offered by IC. However, they may choose to enroll in the Minor in Cyber Security or Computational Biology. For the Minor in Cyber Security, it is important to note that students must obtain at least 18 of the required 30 ECTS credits from courses marked as "depth" in the Cyber Security minor study plan.

Furthermore, students registered for a minor may not take courses outside their study plan, except for CS- and COM-codified courses offered by IC.

To successfully complete a minor, students must earn at least 30 ECTS, with no compensation allowed between courses. These credits replace 30 ECTS of optional courses in Group 2 of the student's study plan.

Students are strongly encouraged to choose their minor carefully. Dropping a minor later in the Master's program can result in a loss of credits, particularly if many minor courses have already been completed. If a minor is dropped, only up to 15 ECTS credits from unlisted courses (i.e., courses not included in the Data Science study plan) may count toward the Master's degree (Group 2), in accordance with the maximum allowed for courses outside the study plan.

To register for a minor, students must follow the procedure outlined on the website of the Master's program offering the minor. Once the registration form is completed and signed by the minor advisor, a copy must be submitted, along with the list of approved courses, to the administrative specialist in their home section. Students must also register for the minor in the "*Course registration*" tab of their IS-Academia portal by the beginning of the second semester (Friday of the second week), during the official course registration period.

Upon successful completion, the minor will be officially recorded in the Diploma Supplement.

For more information: <https://go.epfl.ch/IC-master-minors>

4. Internship / Master's project (PDM)

An internship in industry is mandatory and must be approved in advance by the section. There are three possible types of internships:

- **Short internship in industry** (8 weeks)
Takes place during the summer and only after the student has completed the exam session. The student must be back on campus in time to begin the Autumn semester.
- **Long internship in industry** (6 months)
Carried out during a semester in which the academic clock for the Master's cycle is suspended. No courses may be taken in parallel.
- **Integrated internship with a Master's project in industry** (6 months > 26 weeks)
A long internship that also fulfils the Master's project requirement, carried out in an industrial setting.

The Master's project (worth 30 ECTS), which may also be integrated with the internship in industry, is always carried out at the end of the Master's cycle. It must be supervised by an EPFL authorized professor.

The Master's project can also be carried out in an EPFL lab (duration: 18 weeks) or at another university (26 weeks, including ETH Zürich). In such cases, students must have completed and validated either a short or long validated internship in industry beforehand.

Students intending to pursue a PhD at EPFL or another institution are advised to carry out their Master's project in lab at EPFL (duration: 18 weeks) or at another university (duration: 26 weeks), ideally in the field they wish to orient their doctoral studies. A short or long internship in industry must have been completed and validated beforehand.

Students should begin the internship search process 4-5 months in advance. An information session is held at the start of each semester, giving students time to prepare and plan accordingly.

International master's students must complete one full academic year before being able to undertake an internship. Earliest possible start date: **summer/autumn 2026**.

For more information:

- go.epfl.ch/IC-internships
- go.epfl.ch/IC-master-thesis

5. About Master's studies

5.1 Conditional admission to the Master's program

In their admission letter, students may have been assigned a number of additional credits that must be acquired during the first year of the Master's program. These credits must be prioritized, as admission to the Master's program is conditional upon acquisition of these credits. These credits do not count towards the Master's degree.

The final list of required courses will be determined upon receipt of the student's official Bachelor's transcripts, which must be submitted directly to the Office of the Registrar according to the instructions outlined in the admission letter.

Once the documents are reviewed, the Registrar's Office will send the student the official decision titled "*Supplement to the decision regarding admission to the Master's program*", along with all relevant details. The procedure for registering for these courses will be communicated by the Registrar's Office once the student receives the official form.

5.2 Course types, registration and assessment rules at EPFL

EPFL courses fall into two main categories:

- **Courses examined during the semester**

The final grade is based on continuous assessments such as quizzes, labs, projects, reports, presentations, posters, etc., conducted throughout the semester.

- **Courses examined in the exam session (Winter or Summer)**

The final grade is based, at least in part, on a written or oral exam that takes place during the official exam session. For these courses, it is imperative to be present at EPFL during the exam session.

- **Course registration periods**

- **Autumn semester:** From August until Friday of the second week of the semester
- **Spring semester:** From January until Friday of the second week of the semester

- **Exam registration**

At EPFL, exam registration is automatic, based on your course registration—regardless of whether the course is assessed during the semester or in the exam session. Important: If a student forgets to withdraw and has submitted any coursework or assessments—whether during the semester or the exam session—they will receive a grade, which will appear on their transcript.

- **Course and exam withdrawal deadlines**

Withdrawals must be made through your secure access to IS-Academia.

- **Autumn semester:** From October until Friday of the 10th week of the semester
- **Spring semester:** From March until Friday of the 10th week of the semester

After these deadlines, withdrawal is no longer possible.

Note: Some courses cannot be dropped after the registration deadline. These are marked “*sans retrait*” in the study plans and flagged with an alert in the registration tab in IS-Academia. Students registering for such courses are expected to fully commit to completing them.

- **Missed assessments – Justification required**

Absences from any assessment—whether during the semester or during the exam session—must be justified with official documentation (e.g., medical certificate, birth or death certificate, or a training certificate for elite athletes).

- **For continuous assessments during the semester (e.g., midterms, quizzes, homework):** Students must notify the teacher as soon as possible and submit justification within three days. A substitute assessment may be offered at the teacher’s discretion, but it is not guaranteed.
- **For exams during the official exam session:** students must inform the teacher immediately and submit justification to [Student Services](#) within three days of the exam date, copying the teacher. Deferred exams are not available, even for justified absences.

In both cases, the student will receive a grade of “M” and may re-register for the course and retake the missed assessment the following academic year. The grading scheme cannot be adjusted, and the missed assessment cannot be excluded from the final grade. Note: If the course evaluation method changes, the student must complete all assessments—not just the one originally missed.

- **Grading**

The final grade for a course reflects the performance across all assessments (e.g., graded homework, exercises, quizzes, midterm exam, final exam, etc.). If a student completes only part of the assessments without providing an official justification (such as a medical certificate), they will

receive a score of “0” for each missed component. The final grade will be calculated as the weighted average of all assessments.

- If the final grade is below 1.00, the student receives an “NA” (Not Acquired).
- A grade of NA does not count toward the GPA.

- **Course retake**

- Students who fail a course (grade below 4.0) may retake the same course the following year.
- The grade for the second attempt replaces the grade from the first attempt. If the course is not retaken, the failing grade remains on the transcript.
- Once a student has taken an exam or submitted an assessment, they cannot retroactively cancel the result by submitting a medical certificate or any other documentation. If unsure about their ability to complete an assessment, whether during the semester or during the exam session, students should consult a doctor in advance.

For more information:

- go.epfl.ch/registering-courses-exams
- go.epfl.ch/withdrawing_subjects_tests
- go.epfl.ch/master-pass-conditions

5.3 Exam sessions, academic calendar, special arrangements

- **Exam sessions**

- January/February
- June/July

- Academic calendar and important deadlines: go.epfl.ch/academic-calendar

- Special arrangements for students with disabilities (courses and/or exams): go.epfl.ch/arrangements-courses-exams

- Medical certificates: go.epfl.ch/medical_certificate

5.4 Conditional admission to the Master's project

Students may be conditionally admitted to the Master's project if they are missing no more than 8 ECTS from their Master's cycle, provided the following conditions are met:

- The student is not at the end of the maximum duration of the Master's cycle (i.e., 6 semesters of courses).
- The mandatory research project (12 ECTS) must be completed prior to starting the Master's project.
- If the Master's project is not carried out at EPFL or near Lausanne, the possibility of taking a course remotely in parallel must be discussed with the section beforehand.

5.5 Leave of absence after the Master's cycle and before the Master's project

Students may request a one-semester leave of absence, which may be extended by an additional semester, after completing the Master's cycle, provided they have not exceeded the maximum duration of six semesters for the Master's cycle. The deadline for the Master's project will be adjusted accordingly. However, leave is not permitted during the Master's project or between project attempts.

5.6 Master's degree and graduation

Upon completion of the Master's program in Data Science, graduates are awarded a *Master of Science (MSc) in Data Science*, delivered by EPFL.

The final official transcripts confirm program completion and serve as a provisional diploma until the official diploma is awarded at the graduation ceremony, held on the first Saturday of October.

The GPA is calculated as the weighted average of all subjects for which a grade between 1 and 6 has been attributed.

Graduates also receive a Diploma Supplement, which outlines the courses completed and the skills acquired throughout the program.

6. Other useful links

- go.epfl.ch/master-DS
- go.epfl.ch/IC-master-FAQ
- go.epfl.ch/SAC-rules-and-procedures

IC Student Association - CLIC

Don't hesitate to join the **Telegram channel for IC students**, run by our student association **CLIC** to meet other IC students and exchange about courses, life on campus, or any other topics.

<https://go.epfl.ch/ic-ma>

7. Contacts

The Administrative Specialist of your Master's program is your first point of contact for all queries about your study plan, courses and program rules.

Carole Dauphin
carole.dauphin@epfl.ch

Office hours – INN 111

Morning: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 10:00 > 12:00

Afternoon: Tuesday, Thursday: 14:00 > 16:00

- **Deputy Head, Bachelor's and Master's programs**
Eileen Hazboun
- **Internships and Master's Project Coordinator**
Patricia Genet
- **Program Director, Data Science & Communication Systems**
Prof. Haitham Al Hassanieh (as of September 2025)

EPFL Student Services

The Student Services desk is the contact point for general queries about matriculation, campus services, official documents, special arrangements and social consultation.

From Monday to Friday

- **In-person**
09:00 > 17:00
Building BP 1229
- **Phone**
Morning: 09:00 > 12:00
Afternoon: 13:30 > 17:00
+41 (0)21 693 4345

student.services@epfl.ch