

# MAS

Master of Advanced Studies  
Maîtrise universitaire d'études avancées

## Toxicology

September 2024 > June 2026

The only part-time curriculum in Toxicology in Switzerland  
compatible with the needs of scientists already in employment



## Contact

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[www.unige.ch/formcont/en/courses/mas-toxicology](http://www.unige.ch/formcont/en/courses/mas-toxicology)

[www.scaht.org](http://www.scaht.org)





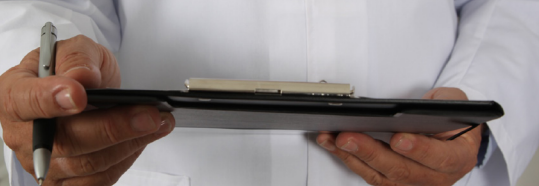
The Master of Advanced Studies in Toxicology provides a comprehensive educational programme recognized by national and international professional bodies as a postgraduate academic qualification in toxicology. It is designed to fulfill the needs of recently graduated students who are already in employment and potential employers in industry, academia and regulatory bodies.

**T**he assessment of the potential risk of chemicals and pharmaceuticals to which humans and the environment are exposed provides the necessary basis for protection measures. This increasingly complex process has created a demand for qualified scientists in industry, academia and regulatory bodies with the appropriate knowledge, experience and professional qualification. The MAS in Toxicology was initiated in 2010 by the Swiss Centre for Applied Human Toxicology (SCAHT) as part of its mandate to promote education and continued professional development in this important discipline. The curriculum has been developed by the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences of the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne (Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences of Western Switzerland). The master is part of an educational platform of collaboration with the Universities of Zürich and Basel, the Swiss Society of Toxicology, the Swiss Register of Toxicologists, the Centre of Competence in Analytic Chemistry and Toxicology (CCCTA), the Centre for Ecotoxicology, regulatory authorities, and the pharmaceutical and chemical industry.

The curriculum is designed to comply with the regulations for toxicological training set by the Swiss Register of Toxicologists<sup>1</sup> and EUROTOX<sup>2</sup>. Successful completion of the course may be used towards fulfillment of the requirements for professional registration as a toxicologist. Please note that in order to achieve professional registration other conditions apply as well.

1 [www.swisstox.ch/swisstox-en/register/reglement.php](http://www.swisstox.ch/swisstox-en/register/reglement.php)

2 [www.eurotox.com/sub/eurotox.com/images/ert/ert-guideline-updated-2016/ERT\\_GUIDELINES\\_Main\\_text\\_2016.pdf](http://www.eurotox.com/sub/eurotox.com/images/ert/ert-guideline-updated-2016/ERT_GUIDELINES_Main_text_2016.pdf)



## MAS Programme Management

The programme is run by the University of Geneva.

### Director

- **Prof. Caroline Samer**, Department of Anaesthesiology, Pharmacology, Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences of Western Switzerland, Faculty of Sciences, University of Geneva

### Coordinators

- **Dr Jean Terrier**, Department of Anaesthesiology, Pharmacology, Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine, University of Geneva
- **Mrs Amita Sehmi Guigoz**, Administrative Coordinator, Faculty of Medicine, University of Geneva

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- **Prof. Ellen Fritsche**, Director, Swiss Centre for Applied Human Toxicology, SCAHT



### Scientific Committee

- **Prof. Alexander Jetter**, Head of Scientific Services and Postgraduate Education, Tox Info Suisse, Zürich
- **Dr Argyro Nikolaou**, Department of Anaesthesiology, Pharmacology, Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine, University of Geneva
- **Prof. Alex Odermatt**, Division of Molecular and System Toxicology, University of Basel
- **Dr Jean Terrier**, Department of Anaesthesiology, Pharmacology, Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine, University of Geneva

### Teaching Methods

- Module leaders and teachers are specialists in their various toxicological disciplines from academia, industry and regulatory authorities.
- Access to dedicated e-teaching tool throughout the course.
- Teaching in English.
- Possibility for accreditation of prior postgraduate education on a case-by-case basis.
- Each module is assessed by examination.



## Objectives

- To provide specialised education and training in toxicological sciences and risk assessment with a focus on human toxicology, leading to a recognized academic qualification.
- To fulfill the educational requirements of national and international professional bodies towards registration as a toxicologist.

## Competencies

- Scientific understanding of the mechanisms and consequences of adverse effects in living organisms caused by chemical exposure.
- Ability to ethically apply the science of toxicology in research, product development and safety assessment.

## Who should apply?

- Graduates employed in a toxicological discipline who wish to obtain a recognized academic qualification in toxicology. Those who have already received formal postgraduate training in toxicology may be eligible for recognition of equivalence for some courses.
- Graduates wishing to embark on a career in toxicology who have completed a master's degree in medicine, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, biochemistry, chemistry, biology or a qualification which is judged equivalent.



## Programme Structure

- MAS programme of 90 ECTS credits including 14 modules (60 ECTS credits) and a Master Thesis (30 ECTS credits).
- Complete course corresponding to 16-week teaching over 4 semesters on a modular schedule plus e-learning and self-teaching (14 modules).
- Minimum of 80 % attendance by each student in each module.
- Possibility to attend individual modules with free-student status if places are available. For those attending the complete MAS, Part A of Module 1 must be completed and passed before attending any other module.
- Master thesis in an academic, regulatory or industrial environment corresponding to ca. 16 weeks (full time basis).
- Option to take the full course over two cycles (4 years).

## Diploma Awarded

Students who successfully complete the programme (90 ECTS credits) will be awarded the Master of Advanced Studies in Toxicology / *Maîtrise universitaire d'études avancées en Toxicologie* by the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Geneva.



# Programme

## Module 1 |

### Basic Principles in Toxicology

6 ECTS Credits

**Dr Marie-Christine Broillet, Prof. Bernard Rossier,**

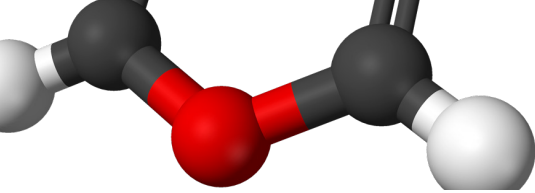
**Dr Michelle Rossier**

This module is given in e-learning format created and developed by HSeT (Health Sciences e-Training foundation) and in face-to-face lectures. It gives the basic concepts of general toxicology: pharmaco- and toxicokinetics (absorption, distribution, metabolism, excretion, bioavailability, absorption rate constant, half-life, volume of distribution, clearance, area under the curve), toxicodynamics or mechanistic toxicology (non receptor and receptor mediated mechanisms, binding, dose-response relationship, potency versus efficacy, agonism, antagonism, synergy, potentiating, tolerance, sensitization), basic principles of toxicology (administration or exposure routes, role of metabolites, accumulation, characteristics of toxic effects, toxicity targets).

The basics of risk characterization and an overview of the effects of the main toxic agents that will be further developed in later modules completes the list of available topics.

The module is divided into two parts. Part A must be passed (multiple choice questions) in order to attend any other module. The evaluation of Part B is based on students' written assignments and oral presentations (article or case). The final mark is a combination of marks A and B.





## Module 2 |

## Xenobiotic Metabolism, Toxicogenetics

5 ECTS Credits

**Prof. Youssef Daali, Prof. Chin Eap**

This module describes the metabolic pathways involved in the biotransformation of xenobiotics leading to poisonous compounds, detoxification or producing toxic intermediates.

The students will learn to interpret methods to quantify or predict cytochrome P450 activities.

Toxicokinetic and toxicodynamic principles and physiologically based toxicokinetic modelling will be presented.

The student will be able to understand, describe and interpret the impact of gene polymorphisms on the safety of medications, drugs and environmental agents (toxicogenetics), as well as the technologies involved in their assessment.

The present and the future use of genetic tests in pharmacogenetics / toxicogenetics will also be discussed.

Finally, the role of toxicology in drug development will be described.

The evaluation of the module is based on a written exam (short open answer questions).



## Module 3 |

### Organ Toxicology

8 ECTS Credits

**Dr Olivier Sorg, Dr Marie-Gabrielle Zurich Fontanellaz**

This transversal module is the largest module of the programme. Its content is linked to several other modules as it describes the basic physiology of liver, kidney, heart, lungs, brain and skin (this background knowledge will be delivered partly as e-learning), as well as their specific susceptibilities to toxicants. General mechanisms of toxicity, such as oxidative stress, inflammation, induction of apoptosis and necrosis, as well as mechanisms of toxicity specific to the different organs will be taught by internationally recognized researchers based on their expertise in these fields. As illustration of the adverse effects in the different organs, the toxic “signature” of some environmental toxicants or drugs will be analyzed.

The evaluation of this module is a combination of oral presentations and written exam (short open answer questions).

## Module 4 |

### Analytical Toxicology

3 ECTS Credits

**Prof. Serge Rudaz, Dr Alexander Scherl**

This module is given in e-learning format and in face-to-face lectures.

This technical module presents some important aspects in toxicological analysis including the matrices of interest and sample preparation methods prior to qualitative and/or quantitative determination. The most important analytical techniques (spectral or separation approaches) used for determining potential toxic substances in different matrices are presented, including hyphenation



with mass spectrometry. Students will be able to choose and evaluate appropriate analytical tools related to toxicological situations.

The evaluation of this module is divided into two parts. The first part consists of individual responses of thought questions related to scientific articles after the face-to-face session. Questions are given on the e-learning platform (homework). The second part is an oral (individual) exam (15 minutes preparation and 15 minutes discussion) based on a critical analysis of a scientific article dealing with an analytical technique.

## Module 5 |

### **Biostatistics**

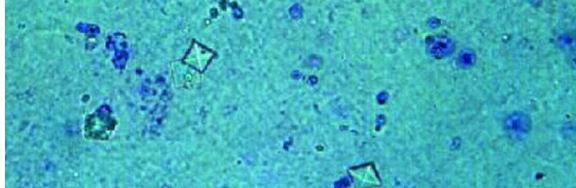
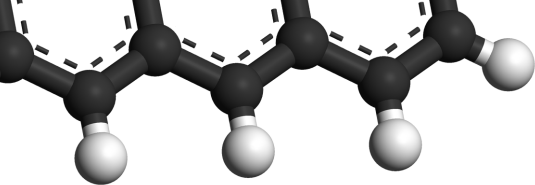
#### **4 ECTS Credits**

**Dr Julien Boccard, Prof. Nadia Elia**

This course introduces the fundamentals of epidemiology and the principles of the statistical methods most frequently encountered in human toxicology. While it includes short formal presentations of concepts and techniques, emphasis is placed on their application to real data in toxicology. Seminars are held in a computer room, where hands-on sessions focus on conducting analyses and interpreting results.

After completing this course, students should be able to identify basic study designs, appreciate the concepts of bias and confounding, and understand principles of statistical methods, to interpret main results and to critically discuss the conclusions of many scientific publications in clinical toxicology. They should also be able to carry out simple data analyses using statistical software.

The module exam consists of presentation and discussion of a scientific article, focusing on statistical aspects. Completion of homework assignments proposed during the course is a prerequisite for participation in the exam.



## Module 6 |

### **Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis and Teratogenesis**

3 ECTS Credits

**Prof. Muriel Cuendet, Dr Emanuela Felley-Bosco,  
Prof. Shana Sturla**

This module is given in e-learning format and in face-to-face lectures.

In this module, the students will be able to understand the cellular and molecular basis underlying carcinogenesis and the multi-stage process of carcinogenesis, as well as teratogenesis.

Moreover, they should be able to describe various factors, such as chemicals, tobacco and alcohol, radiation, viruses or the diet, which can cause/prevent carcinogenesis, as well as their mechanisms. The students will have a basic introduction to test strategies, focusing primarily on in vitro mutagenesis and in vivo models, as well as on cancer chemoprevention.

Finally, the students will practice organizing data and information from various areas of research impacting our understanding of carcinogenesis, and to critically discuss publications on these topics.

The module is evaluated through individual paper presentations.

## Module 7 |

### **Molecular Endocrinology**

5 ECTS Credits

**Dr Argyro Nikolaou, Prof. Bernhard Wehrle-Haller**

Endocrine disruptors and reproductive disorders caused by disrupting endocrine functions are current critical concerns.

This course focuses on the biochemistry of hormones, their biosynthesis, their metabolism, their regulation,



their measurement and their molecular mode of action at the level of receptors. Various endocrine systems are described in animals and humans, and physiological and pathophysiological contexts are presented, such as the consequences of given genetic mutations or of exposure to toxicants.

The following topics are discussed by experts in the field, giving the students the opportunity to interact with them: endocrinology, receptors and cellular signaling, steroid hormones, reproductive function (including pregnancy, sexual differentiation and puberty, testis and ovary functions), thyroid function, hormone-dependent cancer, lipotoxicity and diabetes, neuroregulation of energy metabolism, chronobiology of endocrine systems, endocrine disruptors.

The evaluation of this module is based on a written exam (short open answer questions).

## Module 8 |

### **Risk Assessment and Regulatory Toxicology**

4 ECTS Credits

**Dr Rex FitzGerald, Prof. Ellen Fritsche, Prof. Martin Wilks**

In this module, students will learn methods of toxicological hazard and exposure assessment and how to apply them to risk characterization. Risk management, risk-benefit analysis, risk perception and communication will also be discussed. In addition, experts from federal authorities and industry will provide insights into the role of safety assessment in the regulation of human and veterinary pharmaceuticals, pesticides, cosmetics, food and food additives and industrial chemicals.

The module is evaluated by a written exam (multiple choice questions and open book exam).



## Module 9 |

### Clinical Toxicology

4 ECTS Credits

**Prof. Alexander Jetter, Prof. Caroline Samer**

Clinical toxicology is concerned with the adverse effects of drugs and other chemicals in humans. The students will be able to understand the evaluation and treatment of acute poisoning with the relevant mechanisms of toxicity, describe and interpret qualitative and quantitative aspects of intoxications and adverse drug reactions, with specific references to the harmful effects on individuals and specific vulnerable populations, as well as on the immune system (immunotoxicology) and be able to interpret laboratory tests. Based upon the principles of toxicokinetics and toxicodynamics, the students will be able to analyze intoxications and harmful drug effects such as major clinical toxicology syndromes ("toxidromes") and to establish general preventive and therapeutic measures.

The evaluation of this module is based on a written exam (short open answer questions).

## Module 10 |

### Epidemiology, Food and Industrial Toxicology

5 ECTS Credits

**Prof. Nancy Hopf, Dr Didier Ortelli, Dr Alex Scherl**

Food safety and occupational health are major concerns. The goal of the module is to identify the problems related to these issues and to assess the toxicological risk of toxicants present in food and in the workplace for consumers and workers, respectively.

This module introduces basic concepts in occupational epidemiology and occupational toxicology, and includes discussions on the importance of routes of entry into the human body, biomonitoring concepts and programs, and dose estimates for exposure scenarios. These topics are discussed focusing on typical occupational toxicants such



as particles, nanoparticles, bioaerosols, gases, and vapors. Food toxicology encompasses nutritional toxicology, regulation and risk assessment, microbiology, natural toxins, contaminants, and toxicants resulting from technological processes. At the end of this module, students will have acquired the competencies related to the understanding of where, which, how and why toxicants are found in the workplace and in food.

For those wishing to follow the module individually, it is strongly recommended that they follow Module 5 Biostatistics beforehand.

The evaluation is based on practical work performed during the module and on an individual, open book written exam (on-line, short open answer questions).

## Module 11 |

### **Ecotoxicology**

3 ECTS Credits

**Dr Nathalie Chèvre, Dr Benoît Ferrari**

This module will enable participants to understand and to be able to apply ecotoxicological concepts to evaluate the risk and the impact of pollutants in the environment. In the theoretical part, they will learn about general principles of ecotoxicological testing for water, sediment and soil compartments. Statistical aspects (dose-response curves), risk assessment of single substances and mixture as well as risk management will also be addressed. During the practical part, participants will be trained in substance toxicity testing with daphnids and earthworms. They will learn how to estimate EC<sub>50</sub> and NOEC and how to conduct risk assessment.

The module is evaluated through a presentation and a short report based on the risk assessment procedure learned during the course.





## Module 12

### Forensic Toxicology and Doping

4 ECTS Credits

**Dr Nicolas Leuenberger, Prof. Aurélien Thomas**

This module profits from the world-renowned expertise of the University Center of Legal Medicine (CURML).

Forensic toxicology (FT) deals with the study of behavioral and toxic effects of psychoactive, doping substances, harmful drugs or chemicals on humans and living systems in a medico-legal context. FT relies heavily on analytical toxicology for the screening of unknown molecules, their unequivocal identification and quantitative determination in biofluids, tissues and seized illegal narcotic substances.

This course will provide a basic knowledge of doping and forensic toxicology. The content will be divided in different sections aiming to give a broad cover of the field. Students will have an overview of the main classes of drugs that are relevant in forensic toxicology, they will learn how to perform toxicological analyses of biological samples, and how to interpret their findings.

Students are assessed by written exam (theoretical and practical questions). They also have to discuss and interpret sample case data from routine practice in forensic toxicology.

## Module 13

### Animal Experimentation

3 ECTS Credits

**Dr Christelle Cadilhac, Mrs Danielle Gerster**

This module is given in e-learning format.

This course (also called Module 1) is organized by the ResAL and follows Swiss federal guidelines regarding legislation for animal experimentation.

The module includes a theoretical part presenting the main aspects of the laboratory animal (anatomy, physiology, breeding, housing, enrichment and transport), as well as the knowledge and manipulations required for



animal experimentation (anesthesia, pain assessment, diseases, allergies, identification of rodents, genetically modified animals and euthanasia). In addition, a reflection is proposed about ethics. The rules to get an authorization for animal experimentation according to Swiss legislation are also addressed.

The practical part of the module can only be followed by people involved or being involved in animal experimentation license. It allows handling of mice and rats and teaches several technical procedures described during the theoretical part, as well as perfusion and organ dissection.

The module is evaluated by a written exam (multiple choice questions).

## Module 14 |

### **In Vitro Toxicology**

3 ECTS Credits

**Prof. Adrien Roux, Dr Olivier Sorg**

This module introduces alternative methods to animal experimentation for toxicology studies. The students will acquire the basic knowledge on the different techniques and methods used to perform *in vitro* screening of toxic molecules and to replace classical animal experimentation. The models described are the 3D cultures as well as the stem cells (rodent/human origin), cell lines, primary cultures, slices and the Zebra fish. Such alternative methods allow a mechanistic understanding of the toxicity pathways, which will be useful for risk evaluation.

The module will also highlight the importance of the 3R in the different *in vitro* methods.

The evaluation of this module is based on a practical work as well as a written exam (short open answer questions).



## Master Thesis

30 ECTS Credits

**Prof. Ellen Fritsche, Prof. Martin Wilks**

The master thesis involves 14 weeks of research work in one of the areas of toxicology covered by the MAS programme.

This comprises carrying out the research itself (bibliographical research and practical work, which may or may not include an experimental part), writing up a report (thesis) and attending a viva voce (thesis oral defence) at the University of Geneva.

The thesis requires an original piece of work by the student which consists primarily of defining the topic, organizing the research, contributing new information or insights adding to the sum of knowledge in the chosen field, expressing a viewpoint and presenting a clearly written text.

The master thesis is carried out under the supervision of a director from a Swiss University appointed by the Board of Directors.

Admission to a master thesis project is open to students who have obtained sufficient credits to pass Module 1 (Basic principles in toxicology).

Attending the viva requires the successful completion of all course modules.

## General Information

### Admission Criteria

- Master in Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Pharmacy, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Biology or equivalent, or
- Bachelor in Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Pharmacy, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Biology or equivalent + at least 3 years of professional experience in a field related to toxicology
- Letter of application including motivation to take the course
- Strong command of both written and spoken English

### Application

- Registration online or Registration form (pdf) to be downloaded (if the online process is not used) from [www.unige.ch/formcont/en/courses/mas-toxicology](http://www.unige.ch/formcont/en/courses/mas-toxicology)
- Registration deadline for the whole programme: **July 31, 2024**
- For individual module: one month prior to the beginning of the module

### Information

#### Dr Jean Terrier

Department of Anesthesiology, Pharmacology and Intensive Care  
Faculty of Medicine / Geneva University

[mas-toxicology@unige.ch](mailto:mas-toxicology@unige.ch)

### Tuition Fee

- CHF 15,000.- for the programme
- CHF 1,100.- for those attending the practical part of Module 13 (animal experimentation)
- Special fees for individual modules (for persons who do not seek the MAS degree)

### Course Location

Courses are held in both Geneva and Lausanne  
For more details see:

[www.unige.ch/formcont/en/courses/mas-toxicology](http://www.unige.ch/formcont/en/courses/mas-toxicology)

## Partnership

- University of Basel
- University of Lausanne
- University of Zürich



[Swiss Centre for Applied Human Toxicology](#)



[Centre de compétence en chimie et toxicologie analytiques](#)



[Swiss Society of Toxicology](#)  
[Swiss Register of Toxicologists](#)



[Centre de compétence suisse d'écotoxicologie appliquée](#)