‘PhD ScientMed’ – an interdisciplinary PhD curriculum for physicians and natural scientists

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Based on the demand and continuous interest by applicants and supervisors during the last years, there is an evident need for a doctorate (PhD) open for both physicians (MDs) and natural scientists (e.g. MSc) at our institution. The aim was to design a modern curriculum topically open to a broad spectrum of applicants encompassing current requirements in curricular organization and an optimal framework for the student’s research project.

Considering the experiences from currently offered doctoral studies at PMU, the formal (legislative) demands and the available (international) literature on this topic, a new curriculum ‘PhD Medical Sciences’ (PhDScientMed) has been developed (accreditation pending).

PMU has admitted a relatively constant number of 11.0+/−2.4 (mean+/−stdev) doctorate applicants during the last seven years at >25 departments (clinical departments, institutes) with a background in roughly 15 different science- or medicine-oriented disciplines. The curriculum comprises a 3-yr full time doctorate with a total workload of 180 ECTS – allocated to 80% vs. 20% for dissertation work (research project) and curricular work (lectures), respectively. Distinct measures for quality assurance for curricular lectures, study organization and supervision have been outlined.

One goal of this curriculum was to provide sufficient time and creditable workload to conduct original research as the chief component of a doctorate [1]. These are nevertheless accompanied by ‘formalised courses’ [2] providing sufficient i) subject-oriented background for non-medical graduates, ii) methodological background for medical graduates, and iii) courses regarding ‘transferable skills’ necessary for optimal presentation, publication and follow-up of research projects.

The current curriculum provides an attractive, interdisciplinary framework for medicine / science graduates to conduct doctoral projects as early stage researchers [1].
References: