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## Investigating the «after death»

# Master of science (MSc) in Human Taphonomy

### GENERAL OUTLINE

#### Objectives

The Master of Science in Human Taphonomy is intended for students who are interested in the mechanisms and challenges related to the decomposing human body and the associated biological, ethical and environmental issues, including public health risks.

This Master's programme provides in-depth knowledge of the relation between human beings and their dead, as well as the post-mortem management of human remains across space and time. It also provides advanced teaching on the interactions between the human cadaver and its environment in forensic, humanitarian and societal contexts.

#### Career prospects

This Master will provide high-level training in human taphonomy, analytical and critical thinking, written and oral communication abilities, as well as management of bibliographic resources, familiarisation with scientific literature and other transversal skills.

As such, this programme serves as a foundation for potential careers in:

- Academic research
- Hospitals and forensic environments
- Police and security forces
- Environmental industry
- Biomedical and biotechnology sectors
- Medical laboratories
- Museums and cultural sectors
- International (non) governmental organisations

Other examples of opportunities and alumni's profiles:

[www.unil.ch/perspectives/unil-et-apres](http://www.unil.ch/perspectives/unil-et-apres)

### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### Organiser

School of Biology  
Faculty of Biology and Medicine:  
[www.unil.ch/ecoledibiologie](http://www.unil.ch/ecoledibiologie)

#### Degree awarded

Master of Science (MSc)  
in Human Taphonomy

#### ECTS credits

120

#### Duration

4 semesters

#### Teaching language

English. Mandatory level: C1.

#### Contact

School of Biology  
Quartier UNIL-Sorge  
Amphipôle  
CH-1015 Lausanne  
Tél. +41 (0)21 692 40 10  
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[biologie-etudiants@unil.ch](mailto:biologie-etudiants@unil.ch)

#### Additional information

[www.unil.ch/eb-ht](http://www.unil.ch/eb-ht)

## EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

### Description

The first semester of studies consists of compulsory courses covering both conceptual and methodological aspects linked to human anatomy and the management of dead bodies. The acquired knowledge and skills will be put to use in three small projects done in pairs.

The second semester consists of compulsory courses, field courses, demonstrations and visits dedicated to the immediate surroundings of the decomposing human body. The acquired knowledge and skills will be applied in the context of two small projects done in pairs.

The third semester consists of compulsory courses, on-site demonstrations, medical operations and visits dedicated to the forensic management of dead bodies. Communication workshops and seminars will teach participants how to present human taphonomy. The acquired knowledge and skills will be used in the design of a specialised website focusing on a forensic discipline.

The fourth semester focuses on the completion of the personal Master research project.

### Mobility

The personal Master research project can be conducted in a partner institution recognised by UNIL.

## SYLLABUS

### 1<sup>st</sup> semester - 30 ECTS

#### Compulsory courses

- Human Anatomy and Ethics
- Medical Devices and Epidemiology
- Thanatopraxy, Thanatology and Taphonomy
- Humanitarian Funerary Management
- Scientific and Expertise Writing

### 2<sup>nd</sup> semester - 30 ECTS

#### Compulsory courses

- Environmental Microbiology, Soil Biology, Botany
- Cultural and Societal Management
- Remote Sensing, Geology, Archaeology
- Forensic Macro- and Microbiology
- Field course on real exhumations

### 3<sup>rd</sup> semester - 30 ECTS

#### Compulsory courses

- Communication and Media Training
- Psychological Risk Management
- Cadaver Sciences: Legal Medicine, Forensic Toxicology and Imaging, Forensic Anthropology and Odontology, Forensic Human Genetics

### 4<sup>th</sup> semester - 30 ECTS

Personal Master research project

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Admission requirements

Candidates must be holders of a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Biology, Medicine, Forensic Science or in a field considered to be equivalent awarded by a Swiss university. Other degrees awarded by a foreign university may be considered equivalent and grant access to the programme with or without further conditions.

**Attention:** candidates must also have certified experience in taphonomy.

For the full list of requirements: [www.unil.ch/eb-ht](http://www.unil.ch/eb-ht) > how to apply

### Administrative information

Ms. Almudena Vazquez  
[biologie-etudiants@unil.ch](mailto:biologie-etudiants@unil.ch)

### Director of the programme

DrSc. Vincent Varlet  
[Vincent.Varlet@unil.ch](mailto:Vincent.Varlet@unil.ch)

### Enrolment

Applications must be submitted to the Admissions Office before April 30<sup>th</sup>: [www.unil.ch/immat](http://www.unil.ch/immat)

Candidates requiring a visa to study in Switzerland: February 28<sup>th</sup>.

### Start of courses

Mid-September  
Academic calendar:  
[www.unil.ch/central/calendar](http://www.unil.ch/central/calendar)

### Full-time Master's degree

This programme can only be followed full-time.

### General information on studies, guidance

[www.unil.ch/soc](http://www.unil.ch/soc)

### Accommodation and financial assistance

[www.unil.ch/sasme](http://www.unil.ch/sasme)

### International

[www.unil.ch/international](http://www.unil.ch/international)



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Faculté de biologie  
et de médecine