



Is identity  
a proof  
in itself?

# Master of science (MSc) in forensic science orientation Physical Identification

## GENERAL OUTLINE

The Master of Science (MSc) in Forensic Science, orientation Physical Identification offers in-depth training, both theoretical and practical, in the identification of people or objects.

Transdisciplinary teaching covers the main areas of identification: fingerprinting, DNA analysis, biometrics, toolmarks, firearms and handwriting/signatures. It lays particular emphasis on probabilistic methods of interpretation.

The Master is designed to lay the foundations of legal expertise in the field of identification. Practical teaching is therefore strongly oriented towards the resolution of fictitious cases and case analysis. You are encouraged to consider problems relating to research, detection and identification in investigative and evaluative mode and to conduct your research in the manner of an expert's report intended for civil or criminal courts.

## Career prospects

University studies develop, in addition to specific academic skills, a great many transverse skills such as: communication, critical, analytical and summarising faculties, abilities in research, and so on.

This panoply of skills, combined with specialist knowledge acquired in the course of studies, is excellent preparation for a wide range of employment opportunities such as:

- Forensic science laboratories in Switzerland or abroad
- Technical and scientific police services in Switzerland or abroad
- Institutes of legal medicine in Switzerland or abroad
- Police services at the cantonal and federal levels
- Administrative services dealing with questions of identity
- Academic and research careers in the forensic field
- Service companies active in biometrics

Alumni move into a wide variety of roles, for example as a specialist in identification documents for the Federal Police.

[www.unil.ch/perspectives/esc](http://www.unil.ch/perspectives/esc)

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Organisers

School of Criminal Justice, Faculty of Law, Criminal Justice and Public Administration:  
[www.unil.ch/esc](http://www.unil.ch/esc)

### Degree awarded

Master of Science (MSc) in Forensic Science, orientation Physical Identification

### ECTS credits

120

### Duration

4 semesters

### Teaching language

French. Recommended level: C1.

A good understanding of English is necessary since most of the literature is published in English and a few courses may be taught in English.

### Contact

Secretariat  
School of Criminal Sciences  
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### More information

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



## EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

### Description

The Master of Science (MSc) in Forensic Science has been entirely reworked and reorganised to offer an even more flexible, specialist and applied course, with a particular focus on practical aspects in each orientation. The "mandatory courses" in year 1 cover cross-disciplinary areas of forensic science, which can be supplemented with the equivalent of 18 ECTS credits from a choice of options, depending on your expectations and interests.

"Specialist subjects" and "additional subjects" are offered in both years of the course and provide a choice of specialist options in both theoretical and practical aspects of most areas of forensic science.

Classes in the Physical Identification orientation allow students to improve their understanding of different areas and techniques relating to identification: revelation of prints, fingerprint identification, forensic genetics, analysis and interpretation of biometric data.

In the second year, as part of the module "Cross-disciplinary practical work", which supplements the "mandatory courses", you put your knowledge into practice by working on fictional cases covering several types of traces and requiring the coordinated involvement of several groups of forensic experts. The fourth semester is dedicated to a dissertation based on a piece of ambitious personal research, worth 30 ECTS credits.

### Mobility

The School has agreements in place with several international universities. You may spend one semester (max. 30 credits) abroad as part of your course, during your second year. Semesters or projects successfully completed abroad are, in principle, recognised on the student's return from the relevant study periods. Some dissertation work may be completed in a professional setting with one of our partners.

## SYLLABUS

### Module 1: Mandatory courses

- Appraisals, Mandates and Reports
- Interpretation of Scientific Evidence and Decision-Making
- Lectures and seminars
- Cross-disciplinary practical work
- Choice of options (18 ECTS)

**38 ECTS credits**

### Module 2: Specialised subjects (choice of options)

- Identification of Papillary and Sole Traces
- Identification by Forensic Genetics
- Identification of Firearms based on Munitions Information
- Advanced Practice in Physical Identification
- Operational Criminal Analysis
- Causes of Fire or Explosion
- Appraisal of Handwriting and Signatures
- Choice of options (8 to 16 ECTS)

**40 ECTS credits**

### Module 3: Additional subjects (choice of options)

- Data Treatment: Introduction to Bayesian statistics
- Dating and chronology
- Biometrics
- Security data and intelligence analysis

**12 crédits ECTS**

### Module 4: Master's Thesis

**30 ECTS credits**

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Admission requirements

The candidate must be a holder of a Bachelor of Science in Forensic Science affiliated to the "Forensic Science" study branch (swissuniversities). Another degree or university title may be judged to be equivalent and give access to this Master's degree course, with or without further conditions. The School of Criminal Justice is competent for the final decision on equivalence (mailto: info.esc@unil.ch), subject to the candidate's formal admissibility to the Master's degree course.

### Enrolment and final date

Applications must be submitted to the Admissions Department ([www.unil.ch/immat](http://www.unil.ch/immat)) before 30 April.

Candidates needing a visa to study in Switzerland: 28 February

### Start of courses

mid-September

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

### Part-time Master's degree

Under certain conditions, a Master programme can be followed part-time. See [www.unil.ch/formations/master-temps-partiel](http://www.unil.ch/formations/master-temps-partiel). See also the Master's degree regulations: [www.unil.ch/esc](http://www.unil.ch/esc)

### Timetables

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

### General information on studies, guidance

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

### Career prospects

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

### 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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