

Press release

Semester start 2024

ETH Zurich is growing faster than in previous years

Zurich, 12 September 2024

On 16 September, ETH Zurich will welcome about 27,000 students for the Autumn Semester, according to provisional figures. The growth in student numbers continues apace.



This coming Monday, around 27,000 students and doctoral candidates will start the Autumn Semester at ETH Zurich. (Photograph: ETH Zurich / Gian Marco Castelberg)

Key points:

- According to the latest figures, around 3,700 Bachelor's students have registered for a degree programme. That's roughly 13 percent more than in the previous year.
- A similar trend is emerging among new Master's students – a considerably higher number of them will begin their studies at ETH this autumn.
- To maintain the quality of teaching and a good faculty-student ratio, ETH's financial resources must grow as well.

This coming Monday, around 27,000 students and doctoral candidates will start the Autumn Semester at ETH Zurich. Around 47 percent of them are studying for a Bachelor's degree, 36 percent for a

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Master's degree and 17 percent for a doctorate. In addition to these, there are also guest students and people who are continuing their education at ETH.

According to the latest figures, around 3,700 Bachelor's students have registered for a degree programme – more than ever before. This marks an increase of some 13 percent in the number of new students at Bachelor's level compared to the previous year. That figure is subject to change, as not all those enrolled actually start their studies.

Of the new Bachelor's students in the Autumn Semester, roughly 35 percent are women. About 80 percent of new Bachelor's students come from Switzerland or qualified for university admission there. Of the approximately 20 percent of new undergraduates with foreign entry qualifications, most acquired their previous education in Germany or Austria.

New admissions at Master's level are also increasing

The exact number of new admissions at Master's level won't be known until after the semester starts, as matriculation hasn't yet been completed. However, it's already becoming clear that significantly more students will begin their Master's programme at ETH than in the previous year.

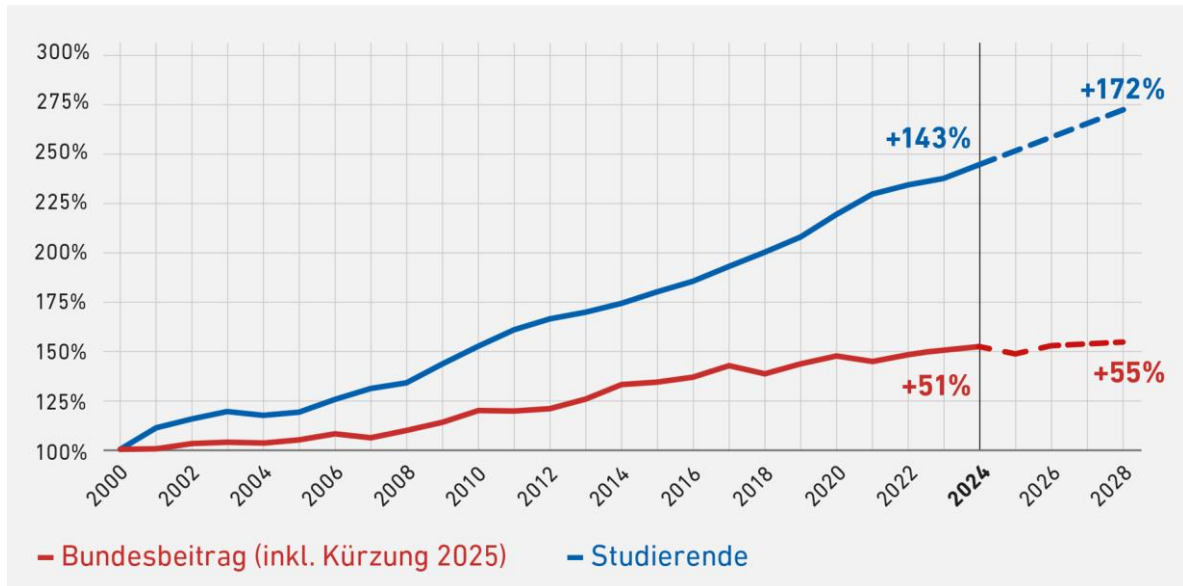
Traditionally, the majority of ETH Bachelor's graduates decide to continue their studies and pursue a Master's at ETH. Then there are those students who have obtained their Bachelor's degree at another university in Switzerland or abroad and have to apply for an ETH Master's programme.

The number of these applications has risen by around one-third compared to the previous year, with the vast majority of all applications coming from students outside Switzerland. "This shows the great interest in our university and is key to our success. After all, ETH Zurich needs the brightest minds from all over the world if it is to offer top-level research, teaching and knowledge transfer," explains ETH Rector Günther Dissertori. The requirements for an ETH degree programme are high: only one in three applicants previously educated outside Switzerland is admitted to a Master's degree programme. In total, students with foreign entry qualifications make up 43 percent of all Master's students.

Financial resources have to grow, too

Over the past twenty years, ETH Zurich's student body has more than doubled in size (see chart below). This growth is necessary in view of the worsening shortage of skilled workers, as Switzerland is dependent on well-trained scientists and engineers.

But growth brings challenges: "To maintain the quality of teaching and a good faculty-student ratio, ETH's financial resources must also grow accordingly," says Dissertori. But the reality is, they haven't kept up: there has been a clear gap between student growth and the ETH budget for some years now. The cuts planned by politicians thus jeopardise ETH Zurich's leading international position, and with it, the university's attractiveness for talented people from Switzerland and abroad.



There is a significant gap between student growth and the ETH budget. (Graphic: ETH Zurich)

The most popular courses

Among first-year Bachelor's students, the mechanical engineering, computer science, architecture and health sciences degree programmes are consistently popular. The programmes in electrical engineering, physics and mathematics also continue to attract a great deal of interest. Three degree programmes saw a particularly relevant increase in enrolment: mechanical engineering, health sciences and architecture.

Among Master's students, the computer science, mechanical engineering, architecture and physics programmes rank at the top of the popularity scale. It's also clear that interest in the three Master's degree programmes in computer science is rising strongly.

Master's degree programme in space systems

A new degree programme starting this Autumn Semester is the Master's in Space Systems. Initiated by ETH Professor Thomas Zurbuchen, it offers an overview of modern space systems – from the propulsion and navigation of launch systems to scientific experiments. This degree programme also places particular emphasis on analysing satellite data and on the topic of sustainability in space.

With this Master's in Space Systems, ETH Zurich is responding to a need in industry: "The space industry is constantly growing and urgently needs skilled workers. With the new Master's programme, we want to help ensure that Switzerland can compete at the highest level in this field," Rector Dissertori says.

New continuing education programmes in AI and spatial planning

ETH also fosters the transfer of knowledge to industry and society with its continuing education programmes. One of these is the [MAS ETH in AI and Digital Technology](#). For the first time, this programme gives managers the opportunity to acquire in-depth expertise in the fields of artificial intelligence, machine-assisted learning and algorithms.

And with its new [CAS ETH in the Future of Spatial Development](#), ETH Zurich is responding to a central social problem. The programme focuses on the question of how to make a success of sustainably transforming urban and rural areas in affordable, climate-friendly and energy-efficient ways in the face of climate change.

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