Frequently Asked Questions among Robotics Master students
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Q: I have a question not listed in the FAQ, whom should I ask?
A: If the question is administrative, ask the section office. If this is a very generic question, you can ask the Service Académique (SAC).
If the question is about the courses of the master, ask the robotics master study advisor (now Prof. Francesco Mondada).
If the question is about a minor, ask the minor director or administrative staff.

Q: Where can I find the official documents with rules and courses?
A: They can be found under https://www.epfl.ch/education/studies/reglement-et-procedure/plans_etudes/ (search for “robotics”)

Q: I am starting the 3rd or 5th semester of the master and I see that the rules of the master and/or the study plan has changed, should I correct all my plans of courses?
A: No, you have to follow the rules that were valid when you started the master. If some compulsory courses have changed their number of credits, please check with the robotics master study advisor about the corrective measures that are applied.

Choice of courses

Q: I know I need to choose an orientation (industrial, mobile or medical). Is there a deadline to make this choice?
A: No, there is no deadline, just be sure you satisfy the rules by the end of the master.

Q: How do I have to choose my courses?
A: You have some courses that are compulsory, no choice there. Then you have to choose a set of courses (17-19 ECTS, depending when you started the master) from a list corresponding to your orientation. Finally, you have 30 ECTS of free optional courses if you do not choose a minor. If you choose a minor with a project in it, the remaining credits for free optional courses are 10. If the minor has no planned project (management minor, for instance), you have no free optional courses, as the 10 ECTS remaining after the minor need to be used for a semester project.

Q: Can I choose a course that is not of in the robotics courses list, or in other masters? How many such courses can I take?
A: Yes, you can take any course that makes sense in your curriculum, and put it in the free optional courses. If the course is outside the proposed list, you have to ask approval from the study advisor. In short, you have to convince him/her that the course fits in your personal curriculum. There is no limitation on how many courses you get approved by the study advisor.
Q: Can I choose a course for my orientation that is not in the official list?
A: In principle no, the orientation is there to give a specific robotic taste to your master, and the courses have been carefully chosen for this.

Q: Are there courses reserved to robotics? Are there courses reserved to other masters that I cannot take?
A: Yes, some courses, like for example “robotics practicals”, are reserved for the robotics students. The same rules apply for other masters, where courses could be reserved for their students. These are generally courses requiring heavy equipment or have other limitation imposing a limited number of students.

Q: Are there courses giving priority to one master or another?
A: No, courses can be restricted by number, but not by curriculum of the student.

Q: Can I plan courses in parallel to the final master project?
A: No, you need to plan the 90 course credits to be finished (and register to them) before accessing the final project. If you fail to obtain all 90 credits, you can conditionally start the master project if the number of missing credits is not greater than 8, but these should be courses that you already attended and where you failed the exam.

Q: Do I need to validate my choice of courses with somebody?
A: No, you can make your own study plan within the provided course list. You can however show you study plan to your study advisor and ask for advice. However, minor’s course list has to be approved by the Minor director.

Q: I have a minor where I took 32 credits instead of 30, are the 2 credits lost?
A: No, the minor is in a group that needs to have a total of 59 credits, therefore your 2 additional credits can be used like other optional courses.

Semester (PDS) and master (PDM) projects

Q: How many semester projects should / can I do?
A: You have to take at least two semester projects. You can take a third one if you do not take a minor and if one of the three is an official interdisciplinary project at EPFL level.

Q: How can I find a semester project?
A: Semester projects take place in labs under the responsibility of a professor. Often labs have a web page on their web site advertising the available projects. A list of lab pages related to robotics or microengineering is here: https://sti.epfl.ch/research/institutes/iem/project-proposals-eng/
Once you find an interesting proposal you need to contact the professor or the assistant in charge to get accepted.

Q: In which lab can I take a semester project (Robotics project I and II, 10 ECTS)?
A: In any EPFL lab.
Q: In which lab can I take a final master project (30 ECTS)?
A: In labs affiliated to the master.

Q: I found a nice project in industry for my master project, can I go there and combine master project and internship?
A: Yes, you can, but you need to have a professor supervising the project! Often companies offer positions and subjects that are not approved by a professor, asking you to find the professor. This is a very hard job, as the professor has to guarantee the quality of the project, meaning having a contact in the company, checking how good the supervision will be, check the topic of the project, and be competent in that specific field. This is often very hard to achieve for the professor, and you can easily find no professor able to supervise the project given by a company. We recommend that you engage with potential professors very early on and at least 3 months before the start.

Q: How do I register to a project?
A: After having reached an agreement with a professor, register your project on IS Academia, print out the page of the registration and ask the professor to sign it. Send or bring the signed page to the section office.

Q: Can I take two semester projects in the same semester?
A: No, this is not allowed. The semester projects are a very important learning experience, taking a lot of energy. Taking two projects at the same time reduces considerably the learning experience.

Q: Can I start my master project before having completed the other 90 credits?
A: You cannot start your master project before having registered to 90 credits. If you failed to obtain all credits, you can conditionally start the master project if the number of missing credits is not greater than 8.

Q: Can I start my master project before having done my internship?
A: You cannot start your master project before having done your internship, but you can combine internship and master project by doing the master project in industry.

Choice of minor

Q: Is the minor compulsory?
A: No. The minor gives an additional taste to your master but is fully optional.

Q: Why choosing a minor?
A: The added value of a minor is the recognition that you have taken a set of courses which give you a deeper understanding of the field. This is mentioned in the title that you have on your master diploma. All the courses available in a minor are also available as option in the major. Do not choose a minor to take just some courses in this field. A minor is a considerable effort.
Q: How to choose a minor?
A: The minor should complement your major. Please do not choose a minor aligned with your orientation of the master, go for minors that complement well the title you will get by the major.

Q: What should I be careful about choosing a minor?
A: One common important issue is the minor project. Some minors have a project (often 8 credits), some do not have a project, some have an optional project. In the whole master you have to do at least two semester projects. If you do one in the minor, this is considered as one of the two you have to do. If the minor has no project, you have to do 30 credits of courses in the minor and then make two projects outside the minor, reducing your free optional courses to zero credits.

Q: Can I ask details on the minor to the robotics master study advisor?
A: Not really, each minor is highly independent and has its own rules, please ask the minor director.