

Frequently Asked Questions among Robotics Master students

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Q: Having not found my answer under <https://sti.epfl.ch/smt/smt-msc-in-robotics/> (where there is a link to this 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 (services.etudiants@epfl.ch).

If the question is about the courses of the master, ask the robotics master study advisor (now Prof. Francesco Mondada, francesco.mondada@epfl.ch).

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.

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 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: Do I need to choose an orientation and if yes until when?

A: Yes, you have to choose an orientation, it's part of the rulebook. It's useful to choose it early to have a coherent choice of courses, but you can change orientation until the end of the master.

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, and attend courses (failed or new) in parallel to the final project to reach your 90 credits.

Q: Can I plan more than 90 credits of courses?

A: Yes, but you need to make them before your master project, and when you reach 90 validated credits you are forced to move forward to your master project.

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? Same question for orientation courses, if more credits taken than necessary.

A: No, the minor and all other optional courses are in group 3, that needs to have a total of 59 credits, therefore your additional credits can be used like other optional courses and sum up to reach the total of credits needed in group 3.

Q: Can I retake an exam when the grade is less than 4.00?

A: The rules say that “If, in a block or group, the required number of credits is not acquired, the courses with a grade of less than 4.00 may be retaken once, **imperatively in the regular session of the following year**. Be careful about this last part of the rule, as you will not be allowed to retake the course later on.

Q: What are the rules for passing a “group” or “bloc” of courses?

A: The rules are described under <https://www.epfl.ch/education/studies/en/rules-and-procedures/pass-conditions/requirements-passing-master-degree/>. A block (1 and 2 in robotics) is passed (and thus all the credits associated with the block are acquired) when all the subjects it contains have been examined at least once and the weighted average (by credits) of the block is 4,00 or above. A group (number 3 in robotics) is passed when enough subjects in the group are passed (final grade 4,00 or above) to reach the number of credits associated with the group.

Semester (PdS) and master (PdM) projects

(many infos are under <https://sti.epfl.ch/smt/smt-semester-project-guidelines/> and <https://sti.epfl.ch/smt/master-projects-guidelines/>)

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/smt/smt-lab-websites-with-semester-and-master-projects-proposals/>

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 labs affiliated to the master without validation, in any EPFL lab with validation.

Q: In which lab can I take a final master project (30 ECTS)?

A: In labs affiliated to the master without validation, in any EPFL lab with validation.

Q: I found a nice project in industry or in another university for my master project, can I go there and, in case of a company, combine master project and internship?

A: Yes, if you find an EPFL professor supervising the project! Often companies or other universities offer positions and subjects that are not approved by an EPFL 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 with the external partner, checking how good the supervision will be, check the topic of the project, and be competent in that specific field. This often ends in the professor refusing the supervision, and you can easily find no professor able to supervise the project. We recommend that you start looking for a project by contacting the professors and ask for connections, and start very early this process, 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, it's all what you need to do. It's like for a normal course.

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.
- Q: How can I manage a mix of robotics projects (1&2) and interdisciplinary projects?
A: By the end of your master you need to have completed:
- "Robotics project 1", compulsory
- ("Robotics project 2" OR minor project) AND/OR "Interdisciplinary Project"

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.
- Q: Is there any deadline for enrolling in a minor?
A: You can register for a minor (by selecting it in the course registration screen on IS-Academia) no later than the end of the first semester of your Master's studies.