Digital Society Initiative

The DSI Excellence Program
for New PhD Students

The best way to predict the future is to invent it...
Alan Kay

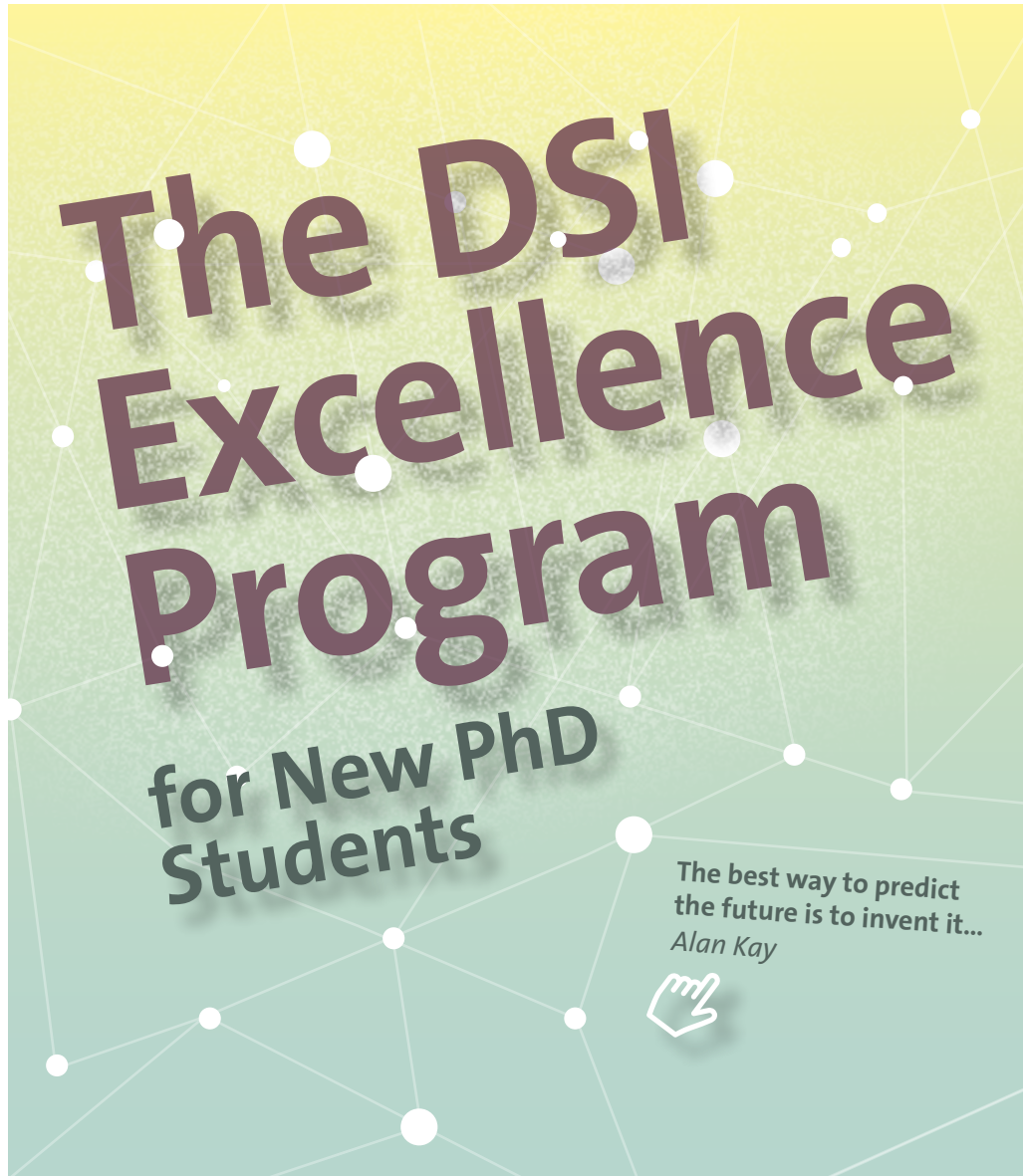**Digitalization is fundamentally changing science and society. The Digital Society Initiative (DSI) at the University of Zurich (UZH) offers a complementary Excellence Program for new doctoral students interested in the digital transformation. The DSI pilots the program in the Fall Semester 2020.**
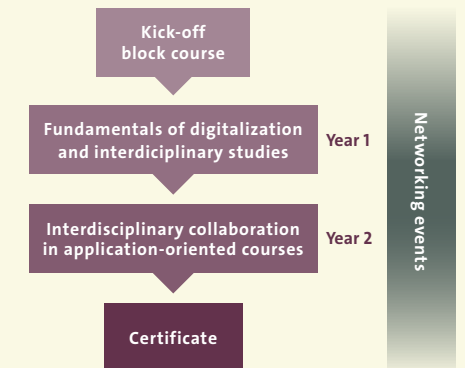
Whom is this for?

For excellent prospective PhD students of all disciplines committed to building up, deepening and expanding their digital competences and interdisciplinary skills in a cross-disciplinary environment while gaining their PhD in their home discipline.

Where will this happen?

At the Digital Society Initiative. The DSI is a center of competence for critically reflecting, studying and improving all aspects of the digital society, including the future of communications, democracy, health, mobility and work. Interdisciplinary by its nature, it involves members from all UZH faculties.

What is it exactly?

The DSI Excellence Program features interdisciplinary courses about digital skills and technical knowledge, interdisciplinary thinking and problem-solving, and critical reflection on all aspects of a digital society, including ethical, legal and societal aspects of digital change. Students accepted to the DSI program will enroll in a PhD program of their respective discipline at UZH and in addition participate in the Excellence Program studies. The Excellence Program is usually completed within two years and consists of compulsory and elective courses. Participants completing a PhD in their home discipline will additionally receive a DSI Excellence Program certificate upon successful completion.

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Kick-off
block course
      │
      ▼
Fundamentals of digitalization        Year 1
and interdiciplinary studies
      │
      ▼
Interdisciplinary collaboration       Year 2
in application-oriented courses
      │
      ▼
Certificate
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Networking events

The DSI Excellence Program in a nutshell

Program details

The Excellence Program kicks off with a one-week block course before the official beginning of the Fall Semester, followed by semester-long courses. The first year focuses on providing the fundamentals of digitalization and interdisciplinary studies. Examples include skills in data handling and analytics, data visualization, legal and ethical aspects of data management, and research methods in various disciplines. The second year puts the emphasis on application. Participants will collaborate in interdisciplinary teams with complementary competences to tackle research problems in digitalization. Interdisciplinary networking and team building across all UZH faculties is further strengthened by the DSI Fellowship network. Participants are expected to spend at least one day per week in the co-working space of the DSI. Regular events such as the DSI day and DSI summer school support networking during the entire PhD period and are excellent match-making opportunities for doctoral students, senior scholars and professors (potential thesis advisors, PhD committee members). Participants without a fixed PhD thesis advisor should find an advisor within three semesters. Conforming to UZH regulations, all DSI courses include performance assessments (module exams, presentations, paper writing, etc.).

Who can apply?

Prospective PhD students interested in the digital transformation of society who expect that digitalization will have a significant impact on their PhD research are invited to apply. Applicants are expected to have an MSc or MA degree with an excellent academic track record. A good command of English is a prerequisite. Students already enrolled in a UZH doctoral program can check our other announcement at www.dsi.uzh. ch/en/research/study/phd/details.html

How to apply?

To submit your application for the DSI Excellence Program, go to: www.dsi.uzh.ch/en/research/study/phd/appl-new.html

Please include the following in your application to the DSI (in a single PDF file):

- CV
- All university-level grade transcripts
- A short statement of purpose/research statement (i.e. your research interest, nonbinding, max. two pages)
- Two letters of recommendation from professors/advisors

The DSI program starts each Fall Semester and will run as a pilot project in Fall 2020. The application deadline is **28 February 2020.** Candidates will be notified by **30 April 2020.** Please note that you also need to apply for a PhD program of your choice at UZH and comply with its regulations to receive a PhD degree and participate in the Excellence Program (UZH PhD programs are listed at www.grc.uzh.ch/en/interest-phd/pgrs.html). The deadlines for the PhD programs are likely to differ.

More information:
www.dsi.uzh.ch/en/research/study/phd.html

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Digital Society Initiative

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