

Research institutions: University, Biozentrum, Friedrich Miescher Institute, ETH

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The life sciences cluster of Basel rests on a dense network of public and private research institutions. The University of Basel, whose foundation in 1460 Part A described, has developed a strong profile in the life sciences. Its Biozentrum, founded in 1971, was one of the first interdisciplinary institutes of molecular biology in Europe. It brought together biochemistry, biophysics, cell biology, microbiology, pharmacology and structural biology under one roof. Several of its researchers have received the Nobel Prize, among them Werner Arber in 1978 for his work on restriction enzymes.¹ In 2021 the Biozentrum moved into a new research tower on the Schällemätteli site, whose construction was marked by long delays and cost overruns that became a subject of political debate in the two sponsoring cantons.²

The Friedrich Miescher Institute for Biomedical Research, named after the Basel physician who discovered nucleic acids in 1869, was founded in 1970 by the newly merged Ciba-Geigy and is today affiliated with the Novartis Research Foundation. It conducts basic research in neurobiology, epigenetics and quantitative biology and is associated with the University of Basel.³ The combination of a corporate foundation and academic affiliation is characteristic of the Basel model, in which the boundary between public and private research is permeable.

In 2006 the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH Zurich) established its Department of Biosystems Science and Engineering (D-BSSE) in Basel. It was the first ETH department outside Zurich, a decision that reflected the attraction of the Basel cluster for engineering approaches to biology. The department has moved into a new building on the Schällemätteli site, next to the Biozentrum and the university hospital.⁴ The Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, the University Hospital, the University Children's Hospital and the research units of the large

groups complete the scientific landscape. Their proximity forms the basis of the cluster that the cantons promote.

1 Notes

1. On the foundation of the Biozentrum of the University of Basel in 1971 and the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 1978 awarded to Werner Arber, see the history of the Biozentrum published by the University of Basel and the Nobel Foundation. To be verified. ↩
2. On the new Biozentrum building (completed 2021) and the delays and cost overruns of the project, see the reports of the governments and parliaments of Basel-Stadt and Basel-Landschaft. Status to be verified. ↩
3. On the Friedrich Miescher Institute for Biomedical Research (FMI), founded in 1970 and part of the Novartis Research Foundation, and on Friedrich Miescher's discovery of "nuclein" in 1869, see the FMI website and the history of science literature. To be verified. ↩
4. On the establishment of the ETH Zurich Department of Biosystems Science and Engineering (D-BSSE) in Basel in 2006 and its new building at Schällemätteli, see the ETH Zurich website. Status to be verified. ↩

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