

Thomas Ward is Professor of Chemistry at the University of Basel. Trained as a chemist with a strong interest in coordination and bioinorganic chemistry, he has devoted much of his career to exploring the interface between homogeneous catalysis and biology. His pioneering work on artificial metalloenzymes has helped expand not only what catalysis can achieve, but also how catalysts can be developed and optimized. By embedding organometallic catalysts within genetically encoded protein scaffolds, his research has sought to endow them with genetic memory, enabling directed evolution to be applied to reactions with little or no precedent in nature. More recently, his group has extended these concepts to repurpose natural enzymes for abiological transformations.

From 2016 to 2026, Ward served as Director of the Swiss National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) Molecular Systems Engineering, bringing together chemists, biologists, physicists, and engineers to develop functional molecular and cellular systems. His research has been supported by two ERC Advanced Grants and recognized through several international distinctions, including the 2027 A. C. Cope Distinguished Scholar Award of the American Chemical Society. Throughout his career, he has greatly enjoyed working across disciplinary boundaries and mentoring young scientists from around the world.