Information Sheet on the Master’s Thesis (GEO 511) and the Master’s Exam (GEO 512) at the Department of Geography, University of Zurich. Starting dates: February, May, July and October

Based on the Guidelines of the Geography Curriculum – Master’s Degree Program in Geography (in particular, Master’s Thesis and Master’s Exam)

A Conditions
Enrolment on the Master’s program is first required before starting the Master’s Thesis (GEO 511 30 CP; Study Regulations, 1 General Section, §11). Information about the attendance and/or the grades of certain modules is formulated by the respective departmental Units before starting the Master’s Thesis and forms part of the Master’s Agreement. Submission of the Master’s Thesis (GEO 511) is required before enrolling onto the Master’s Exam (GEO 512). The content of the Master’s Exam is based on the Master’s Thesis.

B Learning Objectives
• Independent development of a scientific approach which includes formulation of a research question
• Development of a research plan
• Selection and implementation of appropriate research methods
• Acquisition and analysis of information and data
• Clear description and interpretation of results
• Clear presentation of conclusion and further recommendations
• Links to the current state of the research
• Presentation of research objective, research question, methodological approach and defence of own results in the context of scientific research in geography
• Application of appropriate scientific terminology

C Proceedings
1. The selection of the topic must be discussed and approved by the Chair of the appropriate Unit before the beginning of the Master’s Thesis. Students may choose an announced topic or propose a new idea to a supervisor (who is internal or external to the Department) on their own initiative. In both cases the supervisor must have the “right to confer a PhD” (Promotionsrecht). The agreed topic must be summarised in a draft concept (ca. 1 A4 page).

2. There are four possible starting dates each year for the Master’s Thesis (see Timetable on www.geo.uzh.ch/studying/master). First of all, the Master’s Agreement must be signed. The Master’s Agreement and draft concept must be submitted to the Secretariat of the relevant Unit.

3. In particular, the Master’s Agreement includes the conditions of the Master’s Thesis and attendance at Unit specific small colloquia.

4. Module GEO 511 (Master’s Thesis) must be booked under http://www.students.uzh.ch/booking.html. Registration and deregistration deadlines are regulated under the Study Regulations, 1 General Section, §6 (see Timetable on www.geo.uzh.ch/studying/master). If the Master’s Thesis is started before the next possible starting date, the prior starting date applies.

5. Insurance cover – e.g. for fieldwork or for stays abroad – is the responsibility of the student. This applies for health and accident insurance; it is especially important to check the insurance cover for stays abroad. Reimbursement of expenses and the use of equipment are, especially in the case of an external Master’s Thesis, to be clarified with the supervisor.

D1 Requirements of the Master’s Thesis
The amount of time spent on a Master’s Thesis corresponds to 30 CP (900 hours or 6 months full time engagement). The submission deadline is, at the latest, 365 days after the starting date. A late submission is an automatic failure. The length of the Master’s Thesis (the ap-
proximate number of pages) is subject to agreement with the supervisor at the beginning of the Master’s Thesis. Master’s theses can be written in German or English. In accordance with the supervisor and the respective faculty member, French or Italian are alternative language options (Study Regulation §12).

The cover page must contain the following information:

- module number and name,
- title of the Master’s Thesis¹,
- academic title and first name/surname of the supervisor (in case of an external tutor: Institution, postal address and e-mail),
- academic title and first name/surname of the responsible faculty member,
- date of submission,
- first name/surname and matriculation number of the student.

¹Master’s candidates attest in a written declaration that they wrote the Master’s Thesis independently and without any other means or sources other than those declared in the paper («Personal declaration: I hereby declare that the submitted thesis is the result of my own, independent work. All external sources are explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.» In German “Persönliche Erklärung: Ich erkläre hiermit, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbständig verfasst und die den verwendeten Quellen wörtlich oder inhaltlich entnommenen Stellen als solche kenntlich gemacht habe.”). The declaration must contain this exact formulation, signed and added to the last page of every printed version. The detection of plagiarism automatically leads to failure of GEO 511.

The Master’s Thesis is assessed according to content and formal criteria (see Evaluation Criteria below). See also guidelines for academic work (“wissenschaftliches Arbeiten”). It is recommended that the type of reference list is determined with the supervisor.

If the Master’s Candidate fails to meet the standards of the Geography Department for a Master’s Thesis, GEO 511 can be taken one more time for the subsequent period and another Master’s Thesis must be written.

D2 Submission of Master’s Thesis (GEO 512)
The thesis must be submitted to the library desk (please check the opening hours) or sent by “A-Post” (priority post) no later than the due date (the date stamp on the envelope counts) with the following elements:

- 4 paper examples², considering specifications for cover page and including personal declaration with personal signature
- 1 CD³, labeled (in printed form) with the information corresponding to the Title Page of the Master’s Thesis
- 1 copy of the cover page⁴
- re-signment of Master’s Agreement, including statement whether it is allowed for the Department of Geography to publish (also online) the Master’s Thesis or not (copyright)⁵

D2 Break off of the Master’s Thesis (GEO 512)
Deregistration must be carried out via the Booking Tool and at the library desk. Upon deregistering, the Master’s topic expires and may not be reappointed to the student at a later date.

E Requirements for the Master’s Exam (GEO 512)
Eligibility to take the Master’s Exam requires a passed Master’s Thesis. A negative decision is communicated two weeks after the submission of the Master’s Thesis. The Master’s Candidate presents his/her Master’s Thesis in an open colloquium and defends it in front of the Examination Committee. The oral presentation takes 20 minutes and is followed by 10 minutes of discussion. The Defense in front of the Examination Committee (including a faculty member, supervisor (optional) and another person from another Thematic Subject Area (“Fachgebiet”) of the Department) serves to relate the study to the context of geographical research. The Master’s Exam is assessed according to the content and formal criteria (see Evaluation Criteria below).

A failed Master’s Exam can be repeated on the subsequent date for the Final Exams.

F Schedule for Master’s Thesis and Final Exam
The following starting dates are given:
01.02., 01.05., 01.07., 01.10.

For exact dates for submission of Master’s Thesis, registration and deregistration from Master’s Exam, Master’s exam, submission for Master’s degree and Study Commission meeting, see Timetable on www.geo.uzh.ch/studying/master.

¹ No logos are allowed on the cover page, neither UZH, nor the Department of Geography, or other institutes. Gender-neutral formulations in German like “…Innen” are no more allowed.

² Paper: spiral or bound print versions (2 for the library, 1 for the supervisor, 1 for a faculty member).

³ CD: pdf and rtf or similar, in a hard case.

⁴ Information according to section D1 must be enclosed.

⁵ When sending by post, please print this accordant page of the Master’s Agreement, fill out, sign and enclose it.
The due date for the submission of the Master’s Thesis is on the Friday four weeks before the Master’s Exam week (unless indicated otherwise on www.geo.uzh.ch/studying/master) or latest 365 days after start. Students can choose either an earlier exam date, the next possible date for their Master's Exam after the submission of their Master’s Thesis or a later one. The time management should be discussed with the supervisor. The deadline for deregistration from the Master’s Thesis will expire with registration for the Final Exam (unless this has happened already because of the half year deregistration limit for the Master’s Thesis).

Students register for the Master’s Exam week by booking Module GEO 512. The booking needs to be done no later than on Monday four weeks before the exam date and can be cancelled no later than on Friday two weeks before the exam date (Study Regulations, 1 General section, §6; unless indicated otherwise in the table below). The invitation announcing the exact date and time of the Final Exam is sent by the Secretariat.

G Application for Master degree

If all Modules are absolved, the application for the degree can be submitted to the Student Counseling, even if the marks for the booked Modules – including the Master’s Thesis and the Master’s Exam – are not yet known. The application for the diploma must be submitted no later than four weeks before the Study Commission meeting (see the Timetable for dates, latest submission dates and Study Commission meetings on www.geo.uzh.ch/studying/master). Graduates can apply for a provisional diploma after the submission of the application at the Dean’s Office. The semester fees for the coming semester must be paid (and cannot be refunded) if the Final Exam date takes place at the beginning of the semester (for Final Exams in February and September) and/or further services of the UZH are required.

G1 Evaluation Criteria for Master’s Thesis

Written thesis (ca. ¾)

Content

- Research question: Specification of the objectives, questions and corresponding conception of the thesis
- Engagement with scientific debate: Linking of the research question with relevant scientific debates
- Theory and empiricism: Clear theoretical basis and theory-driven empiricism: Deduction of meaningful and measurable hypotheses and questions
- Methodological procedure: Consistency and autonomy of the methodological procedure. Comprehensible operationalization and implementation of the research methodology. Critical reflection and discussion of the material
- Results: Validation and consistent outline of the results in respect to the content
- Synthesis: Handling of complex circumstances and arguments which collectively answer the research question and consolidate theory and empiricism
- Conclusions: Make conclusions, show limits of own research and provide an outlook on open research questions

Form:
- Structure: Clear structure without repetition and includes the specified (above-mentioned) details
- Language: Consistency and accuracy of the written language
- Literature: Correct use and citation of appropriate literature and applied where relevant
- Pictures: Illustrations according to rules of graphics and cartography
- Results: Precise and clear presentation of results
- Summary: Informative summary of the thesis (2–3 pages)

Work process (ca. ¼)

- Elaboration of a definitely research concept
- Data collection / data analysis
- Preparation and participation at sessions and meetings
- Independency and own initiative (exemplary feedback by tutor instead of need for proofreading)
- Tracking of the schedule

G2 Evaluation criteria for Master’s Exam

Presentation (½)

Content

- Structure and composition (logical, comprehensible, balanced, etc.)
- General comprehensibility vs. scientific language (focused on target)
- Quality of the content (Originality, relevance, etc.)

Form

- Presentation style (volume, speech rate, eye contact, gestures, position, etc.)
- Use of resources (appropriate, readable, etc.)
- Keep time limit

Disputation (½)

- Quality of answers
- Embedded in the context of geographical research