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Detailed information on Master's theses and exams at GIUZ

GEO 511 / ESS 511, GEO 510 / ESS 510, GEO 512 / ESS 512

This information is based on the Guidelines for the Study Program in Geography / Earth System Science, Master of Science, and the Program Regulations of the Bachelor and Master's Program of the Faculty of Science (MNF). *Aspects that are specifically concerning 60 ECTS Master's theses are set in italics.*

A Learning Objectives

- Independent development of a research project and a research plan documented in a master's thesis concept (see below).
- Selection and implementation of appropriate approaches and methods of data acquisition. *Extensive analysis of data quality.*
- Self-responsible acquisition of skills, competencies and knowledge required for a successful implementation of the research project.
- Presentation of research objective, research question, methodological approach, and discussion resp. defence of own results in the context of scientific research in the field.
- Application of appropriate scientific terminology.
- *Documentation of the project in an article acceptable for submission to a peer-reviewed research journal.*

B Starting Procedure

- 1 The Master's Candidate chooses an available topic or proposes a self-selected topic to a supervisor (who is internal or external to the department) on their own initiative. In addition to the supervisor, either an MNF faculty member or another person with the "right to confer a PhD" (Promotionsrecht) at MNF is required. A list of the people meeting this criterion can be found on the website (https://www.geo.uzh.ch/en/studying/during-your-studies/theses/master-thesis-exam/faculty_members.html).

The Master's candidate and the prospective supervisor discuss possible topics and explore the feasibility of a 60 ECTS master's thesis. The responsible supervisor must be a member of the department. If the supervisor agrees, a research plan is developed that outlines the workload difference to a 30 ECTS thesis. This extended research plan is part of the master's thesis concept and is additionally shared with teaching-support@geo.uzh.ch.

The person with the right to confer a PhD and the supervisor may be the same person. 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.

- 2 To start the Master's thesis, the agreement must be filled in and the draft concept (2-3 / 4-6 pages) of the agreed topic uploaded on Lean Gate (<https://lean-gate.geo.uzh.ch/prod/>).
- 3 Once the Master's agreement has been accepted by the supervisor and the respective person with the right to confer a PhD on Lean Gate, it is automatically assigned and does not need a genuine signature. In addition, the module GEO 511, ESS 511, GEO 510, or ESS 510 (Master's thesis) must be booked on the

module booking tool of UZH. If the Master's thesis is started before the next possible starting date, the prior starting date applies. This module includes, beside the Master's thesis, the regular attendance of the colloquium of the relevant research group. An overview over all the important dates is provided on <https://www.geo.uzh.ch/en/studying/during-your-studies/theses/master-thesis-exam/timetable.html>. We recommend to discuss the time management with the supervisor.

- 4 The Master's candidate presents their final concept at the respective unit's colloquium. The date is agreed with the responsible person of the unit. The presentation should address the following points: State of research and research question(s) including hypotheses/assumptions or research propositions, theoretical approach, research design, timetable and used literature.

C Requirements

- The amount of time spent on a Master's thesis corresponds to 30 resp. 60 ECTS credits (900 resp. 1800 hours or 6 resp. 12 months full time engagement). The thesis should be submitted at the latest 12 resp. 18 months after the starting date. During this period students are allowed to take unpaid leave (vacations) for 2 weeks if the duration is 6 months, 4 weeks for 12 months, and 6 weeks for 18 months, respectively, after consultation with their supervisor. This does not expand the submission time.
- The length (approximate number of pages) is agreed upon with the supervisor at the beginning of the Master's thesis. In accordance with the supervisor and the respective faculty member, French or Italian are alternative language options (only for 30 ECTS; Study Regulation §12). An abstract in English (and optionally in one other language) needs to be included.
For 60 ECTS: Standard is the preparation of a research article to be submitted to a peer-reviewed scientific journal plus an introduction and an overall synthesis. The Master's thesis must be written in English.
- Please note that the University of Zurich requires the use of gender-neutral language. For the Gender Code of Conduct see section 2.3 of https://www.gleichstellung.uzh.ch/en/ueber_uns/grundlagen/vkgrp.html.
- Master's candidates attest in a **written declaration** that they wrote their thesis independently and without any other means or sources than those declared in the paper. In English: "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 the thesis. Plagiarism automatically leads to failure of the module.
- The Master's thesis is assessed according to content and formal criteria (see evaluation criteria below). Guidelines for academic work ("Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten") should be followed. It is recommended to determine the referencing style with the supervisor.
- If the Master's candidate fails to meet GIUZ's standards for a Master's thesis, the module can be repeated once for the subsequent period a new Master's thesis must be written.

D Meetings with the supervisor

- For meetings, the student should contact the supervisor in time (check his/her availability well in advance). The approximate time frame of the meetings should be agreed at the start.
- The student should be well prepared at the meetings (e.g. questions, issues, text drafts).
- Especially important is the predefinition of important "milestones" during the Master's thesis (e.g. date for the final concept, date for the colloquium presentation).
- The student and the supervisor should agree which topics can be discussed via e-mail and which ones are discussed in face-to-face meetings.

E Insurance

UZH provides travel Insurance cover for fieldwork (<https://www.staff.uzh.ch/en/safety-health/travelinsurance.html>). This applies for health and accident insurance; it is especially important to check insurance coverage for stays abroad.

F Submission

The deadline for the submission of the Master's thesis is, at the earliest, 6 months and, at the latest, 12 /12 and 18 months after the starting date (see table above). A late submission is an automatic failure.

The Master's thesis must be submitted on Lean Gate (<https://lean-gate.geo.uzh.ch/prod/>). The electronic submission on Lean Gate is binding. The Department of Geography does not need any print versions. However, it is the responsibility of the Master's candidate to provide faculty member and supervisor(s) with a print version if they wish to have one.

G Cancellation of Master's thesis (GEO 511 / ESS511)

The deadline for deregistration from the Master's thesis is six months after booking and expires automatically with registration for the Master's exam. Deregistration must be carried out via both the module booking tool and Lean Gate (<https://lean-gate.geo.uzh.ch/prod/>). Upon deregistering, the Master's topic expires and may not be reappointed to the student at a later date. A cancellation after the deadline for deregistration is an automatic failure.

H Master's exam

After submission of the Master's thesis, the Master's exam can be taken. Please note the deadlines, the booking of the Master's exam module is usually before latest submission of the Master's Thesis, see <https://www.geo.uzh.ch/en/studying/during-your-studies/theses/master-thesis-exam/timetable.html>. There are four different Master's exam periods each year: calendar weeks number 09, 21, 39, and 47.

Students **register** for the Master's exam by booking Module GEO 512 / ESS 512. The booking needs to be done no later than on the Monday four weeks before the exam week starts and can be cancelled no later than on Friday two weeks before the exam (Study Regulations, 1 General section, §6). The invitation announcing the exact date and time of the Master's exam is sent by the secretariat.

External supervisors will not be informed by the secretariat about the date and time of the Master's exam, therefore, they have to be informed by the student taking the exam.

The **semester fees** for the semester, in which the Master's exam takes place must be paid (and cannot be refunded), even if the Master's exam takes place at the beginning of the semester and no further services of UZH are required.

The **content** of the Master's exam is based on the Master's thesis. 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 (20 min plus 10 min questions and answers) and defends it subsequently in front of the examination committee (30 min). This examination committee includes a faculty member, the supervisor (optional) and a person from another thematic subject area ("Fachgebiet") of the department. It 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 Master's exam.

I Request for Master's degree

If all modules of the study program are completed, the request for the final degree can be submitted, even if the grades for the Master's thesis and the Master's exam are not yet known. The application for the diploma must be submitted no later than two weeks before the validation by the office of student affairs. Graduates can apply for a temporary diploma after the submission of the request at the office of student affairs.

See <https://www.geo.uzh.ch/en/studying/during-your-studies/theses/master-thesis-exam/timetable.html>.

J Evaluation Criteria for the Master's thesis

Content

- Engagement with the scientific debate: Thorough analysis of relevant scientific debates.
- Research question: Identification of research gaps and specification of objectives, questions and corresponding thesis conception to solve the research gap.
- Methodology: Consistency and autonomy of the methodological procedure. *Defining and implementing a data experiment*. Comprehensible operationalization and implementation of the research methodology.
- Results: Validation and consistent outline of the results in respect to the content.
- Discussion and critical reflection: Assessment of data quality and discussion of results and research approach/experiment.
- Conclusions: Answers to research questions, shown limits of own research, and outlook on open research questions.
- *Synthesis: Handling of complex circumstances and arguments which collectively answer the research question and consolidate theory and empiricism.*
- *Documentation: Preparation of research article ready for submission in a peer reviewed scientific journal.*

Form

- Structure: Clear structure without repetitions and including the specified (above-mentioned) details.
- Language: Consistency and accuracy of the written language (incl. gender-neutral wording).
- 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.

Work process

- Elaboration of a clear research concept.
- *Definition of experiment / experimental design.*
- Data collection in the field/ data analysis / extensive data quality assessment.
- Preparation and participation at sessions and meetings.
- Independence and own initiative (*exemplary feedback by tutor instead of need for proofreading*).
- Keeping track of the schedule.

Content and form count for $\frac{3}{4}$, the work process for $\frac{1}{4}$ of the grade.

K Evaluation criteria for Master's exam

Content of the presentation

- Structure and composition (logical, comprehensible, balanced, etc.).
- General comprehensibility and scientific language (focused on target).
- Quality of the content (originality, relevance, etc.). Form of the presentation • Presentation style (volume, speech rate, eye contact, gestures, position, etc.).
- Use of resources (appropriate, readable, etc.). • Keeping the time limit. Disputation
- Quality of answers.
- Competence
- Embedding in the context of geographical research.

Content and form count together for $\frac{1}{2}$ and the disputation for the other $\frac{1}{2}$ of the grade.