



Information Sheet on the Master's Thesis GEO 510 / ESS 510 (60 ECTS) and Master's Exam GEO 512 / ESS 512 (2 ECTS) at the Department of Geography, University of Zurich

Starting dates: February, May, July and October

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 MNF

A Learning Objectives

- Development of a research project and a research plan documented in a master's thesis concept (see 5)
- Acquisition of data and analysis of data quality using appropriate methods
- 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 defence of own results in the context of scientific research in geography
- 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 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 (see 3 and 4).
2. In addition to the supervisor, either a faculty member (or an internal person with the "right to confer a PhD", list of lecturers meeting this criterion www.geo.uzh.ch/geolean/en/studying/master/master_thesis_exam/faculty_members) is required. The faculty member and the supervisor may be the same person.

3. To start the Master's Thesis, an agreement must be filled out and the draft concept (3-4 pages) of the agreed topic uploaded on Lean Gate (<https://lean-gate.geo.uzh.ch/prod/>).
4. Once the Master's Agreement has been accepted by the supervisor on Lean Gate, Module GEO 511 / ESS 511 (Master's Thesis) must be booked on the UZH module booking tool. The following starting dates are possible: 01.02., 01.05., 01.07., 01.10¹. If the Master's Thesis is started before the next starting date, the prior date applies. In addition to the Master's Thesis, Module GEO 511 / ESS 511 includes the regular attendance of the colloquium of the relevant research group.
5. The Master's Candidate presents his/her final concept at the colloquium. The date is agreed with the responsible person of the relevant Unit. The concept should include the following points: State of research and research question(s) including hypotheses or research propositions, theoretical approach, research design, timetable and literature list.

C Requirements of the Master's Thesis

The amount of time spent on a Master's Thesis corresponds to 60 ECTS credits (1800 hours or 12 months full time engagement). The thesis should be submitted at the latest 18 months after the starting date.

The length (approximate number of pages) is agreed upon with the supervisor at the beginning of the Master's Thesis. Standard is the preparation of a research article to be submitted to a peer-reviewed scientific journal plus an introduction and a synthesis over all. The Master's Thesis must be written in English.

¹ If you want to attend the colloquium in the same semester, you have to register on Lean Gate in the beginning of September.



The official **cover page** is generated by Lean Gate during the online submission process of the Master's Thesis and is automatically added as the first page of the document. The uploaded document (Master's Thesis) with an optional individual cover page will be added automatically after the official cover page.

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 www.kommunikation.uzh.ch/dam/jcr:931b05d2-f5dc-425d-a1a0-35463e81af31/UZH_WritingGuide_V4_20170615.pdf.

Master's Candidates attest in a **written declaration** that they wrote the Master's 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.»). The declaration must contain this exact formulation, signed and added to the last page of every version. The detection of plagiarism automatically leads to failure of GEO 510 / ESS 510.

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 that the referencing style 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 510 / ESS 510 can be repeated once for the subsequent period and another Master's Thesis must be written.

D Insurance cover

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.

E Submission of Master's Thesis (GEO 510 / ESS 510)

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. A late submission is an automatic failure.

The Department of Geography does not need any print versions. However, it is the responsibility of the student to provide the faculty member and supervisor with a print version if they wish to have one.

F Cancellation of Master's Thesis (GEO 510 / ESS510)

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 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 reapointed to the student at a later date. A cancellation after the deadline for deregistration is an automatic failure.

G Master's Exam

After submission of the Master's Thesis, the Master's Exam can be taken. There are four different Master's Exam periods each year: calendar week number 09, 21, 39 and 44.

Students register for the Master's Exam week by booking Module GEO 512 / ESS 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). The invitation announcing the exact date and time of the Master's Exam is sent by the teaching administration.

Communication with **external supervisors** is the responsibility of the student.

The **semester fees** for the semester in which the Master's Exam takes place must be paid, even if the Master's Exam takes place at the beginning of the semester and no further services of the 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 submission.

The Master's Candidates present their Master's Thesis in an open colloquium and defends it subsequently in front of the Examination Committee. The 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 a person from another Thematic Subject Area ("Fachgebiet") of the Department takes at most 30 minutes and serves to put the study into context with 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 once on the subsequent



date for the Master's Exam.

H Schedule for Master's Thesis and Master's Exam

An overview over all the important dates is provided on www.geo.uzh.ch/en/studying/master/master_thesis_exam/timetable.html. We recommend to discuss the time management with the supervisor.

I Request for Master's Degree

If all modules are completed, the application for the degree can be submitted to the Student Counselling, 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 one week before the validation by the Committee for Student Affairs (each month, see latest submission dates and validation by the Committee for Student Affairs on www.mnf.uzh.ch/de/studium/wie-studieren/termin.html#Studienabschluss). Graduates can apply for a temporary diploma after the submission of the application at the Dean's Office.

J Evaluation Criteria for Master's Thesis

Written Thesis (ca. 3/4)

Content:

- Engagement with scientific debate: Throughout analysis of relevant scientific debates
- Research question: Identification of research gaps and specification of objectives, questions and corresponding Thesis conception to solve research gap
- Methodological procedure: 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
- Critical reflection: Assessment of data quality and discussion of results and research approach / experiment
- 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
- Documentation: Preparation of research article ready for submission in a peer reviewed scientific journal

Form:

- Structure: Clear structure without repetition and includes 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 (ca. 1/4)

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

K Evaluation Criteria for Master's Exam

Presentation (1/2)

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

Defense (1/2)

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