



Information Sheet on the Master’s Thesis GEO 511 / ESS 511 (30 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

- 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 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

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 his/her own initiative. In addition to the supervisor, either a faculty member or a person with the “right to confer a PhD” (Promotionsrecht) is required. A list of the lecturers meeting this criterion can be found on the website (www.geo.uzh.ch/geolean/en/studying/master/master_thesis_exam/faculty_members). The person with the right to confer a PhD and the supervisor may be the same person.
2. 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.

3. To start the Master’s Thesis, the agreement must be filled out and the draft concept (1-2 pages) of the agreed topic uploaded on Lean Gate (<https://lean-gate.geo.uzh.ch/prod/>).
4. If the Master’s Agreement has been accepted by the supervisor on Lean Gate, it is automatically assigned and doesn’t need a genuine signature. Module GEO 511 / ESS 511 (Master’s Thesis) must be booked on the module booking tool of the University of Zurich. The following starting dates are given: 01.02., 01.05., 01.07., 01.10¹. If the Master’s Thesis is started before the next possible starting date, the prior starting date applies. The module GEO 511 / ESS 511 includes beside the Master’s Thesis, the regular attendance of the colloquium of the relevant research group.

Starting date	Booking period (course catalogue)
01.02.	01.02. – 30.04.
01.05.	01.05. – 30.06.
01.07.	01.07. – 31.07.
01.10.	01.10. – 31.01.

5. The Master’s Candidate presents his/her final concept at the colloquium. The date is agreed with the secretariat of the relevant Unit. The concept should include following points: Research question, hypothesis, procedure, timetable and present literature list.

C 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.

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



D Meetings with the Supervisor

- For meetings, the student should contact the supervisor on time. The approximate time frame of the meetings should be agreed in advance.
- The student should be well prepared at the meetings (e.g. prepared questions, 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 are discussed by e-mail and which topics are discussed in a personal dialog.

E Requirements of the Master’s Thesis

The amount of time spent on a Master’s Thesis corresponds to 30 ECTS credits (900 hours or 6 months full time engagement). The submission deadline for the Master’s Thesis is, at the latest, 365 days after the starting date.

The length of the Master’s Thesis (the approximate number of pages) is subject to agree with the supervisor at the beginning of the Master’s Thesis. The Master’s Thesis 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). An abstract in English (and optionally in one other language) needs to be included.

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.² For the gender-neutral formulation in German, please observe the following guidelines (<http://www.gleichstellung.uzh.ch/de/angebote/sprachleitfaden.html>).

² In the cover page, German abbreviations like StudentInnen, Student_innen, Student/innen, Student*innen are not accepted

Master’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 (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 every version. The detection of plagiarism automatically leads to failure of GEO 511 / ESS 511.

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 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 / ESS 511 can be taken one more time for the subsequent period and another Master’s Thesis must be written.

F Submission of Master’s Thesis (GEO 511 / ESS 511)

The submission deadline for the Master’s Thesis is, at the earliest, 6 months and, at the latest, 365 days after the starting date. 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 your responsibility to provide your faculty member and supervisor with a print version if they wish to have one. Please check with them individually and indicate on Lean Gate, who has requested a print version of your Thesis.



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 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. 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 secretariat.

External supervisors will not be informed by the secretariat about the date and time of the Master's Exam and 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 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 the submission of the Master's Thesis.

The Master's Candidate presents his/her Master's Thesis in an open colloquium and defends it adjacently in front of the Examination Committee. The open colloquium takes 20 minutes and is followed by 10 minutes of discussion. The defence 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 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 Schedule for Master's Thesis and Master's Exam

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

J Request for Master's Degree

If all modules are completed, the request for the final degree can be submitted, even if the marks 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 four weeks before the validation by the Office of Student Affairs (see latest submission dates and validation by the Office of Student Affairs on https://www.geo.uzh.ch/en/studying/master/master_thesis_exam/timetable.html). Graduates can apply for a temporary diploma after the submission of the request at the Office of Student Affairs.



K Evaluation Criteria for Master's Thesis

Written Thesis (ca. 3/4)

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
- Connection between theory and empirical research: Theoretically-informed empirical research, clear use of terminology and concepts; development of meaningful and operationalized research 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 (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
- 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

L 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

Disputation (1/2)

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