



Fact Sheet Master's Graduation MSD 2017

(discussed and approved by the teaching committee MSD on 11.12.18/published online in January 2019)

1. Master's graduation

The master's final graduation contains two modules:

1.1 Preparation Master's Thesis module

1.2 Master's Thesis module

This fact sheet provides general information¹ about the modules' content and the procedure regarding the application of master's thesis etc. and the graduation itself.

Concerning scheduling, we recommend students to consider the "optimal study progress plan" and to have a look at the attachment 1 "Scheduling master's thesis".

1.1 Preparation Master's Thesis module

For the preparation of the master's thesis, a "Preparation Master's Thesis" module (15 CP) is offered for each focus area, but all students must complete a "Research Design Master's Thesis" course (of 3 CP) before starting the thesis.

1.1.1 Preparation Master's Thesis in Natural Sciences module

The "Preparation Master's Thesis in Natural Sciences" module lists several courses and assignments:

The MSD Life Science Colloquium (1 CP) must be attended during the preparation and execution of the master's thesis. In addition to the "Research Design Master's Thesis" course (3 CP), the remaining 11 CP are earned through practical work for the master's thesis (in consultation). If the optional seminar paper (5 CP) is also written, the practical work comprises a total of 6 CP (if not, then 11 CP).

In due time, the standards for project works and seminar papers are to be specified in this fact sheet.

As none of the courses are published in the detailed course directory, the requirements for the CP are stipulated in a learning agreement (pursuant to study regulations, § 9, para. 3). The template is available on the website MSD/downloads MSD 2017.

¹ For this fact sheet the teaching committee (TC) MSD refers mainly to the study regulations (Studienordnung MSD 2017, only available in German) and guidelines (Wegleitung MSD 2017, in German; English translation available (download: <https://www.msd.unibas.ch/en/services/downloads/msd-2017/>))

1.1.2 Preparation Master's Thesis in Social Sciences module

The credit points are earned as listed (all classes are published in the detailed course directory and medium-term syllabus):

- Research Design Master's Thesis, 3 CP;
- Methods course, 3 CP;
- Research colloquium, 1 CP;
- Current topics, 3 CP.

Furthermore, the students have to submit a seminar paper of 5 CP. The topic should be related to the topic of the master's thesis.

In case of a "free" paper (not in connection with a seminar attended), details are stipulated in a learning contract. Use the form available on MOnA.

In case of a paper related to a registered seminar, students just have to clarify topic, length and deadline of submission with the responsible assessor. Title and mark are entered by the assessor directly on TeLL, no extra learning contract is necessary.

According to the optimal course progression plan, the seminar paper should be started during the 2nd semester, at latest when applying for the master's thesis. The paper should be submitted in the third semester at the latest.

1.1.3 Preparation Master's Thesis in Economics module

In addition to the Research Design course (3 CP), credit points are earned through courses that teach important disciplinary basics and methods. The courses are published in the medium-term syllabus and in the detailed course directory.

1.2 Master's Thesis module

The aim of the master's thesis is to demonstrate that the student is capable of scientific work. The master's thesis is a work of independent research on a topic related to sustainability using scientific methods. The questions and methods are based on the selected focus area, but an interdisciplinary embedding should be shown. Interdisciplinary master's theses that combine questions or methods from different disciplines are encouraged.

2. Application requirements for master's thesis

For admission to the master's thesis, students must have earned at least 50 program-relevant credit points (CP) within the scope of the MSD. In addition, they must provide proof of compliance with any additional requirements (Auflagen) (only for those students who must do them).

This means: The CP acquired must be recorded in the student's academic progress summary (Leistungsübersicht) or – in the case of external courses – confirmed with an official written certificate from the educational institution/lecturer. If an examination is pending or if no certificate can be provided, the application for the master's thesis cannot be made.

Fulfillment of these criteria will be confirmed during the credit point check (KP-Controlling). The students will agree a date for this with the manager of the MSD coordination office.

In addition to the admission letter, students must provide the following documents for this meeting:

- Current academic progress summary;
- any learning agreements;
- any learning contracts;
- any application approval;
- if existent: individual study progress plan (template on the [website](#)).

3. Attendance of the master's colloquia

During the master's colloquia, students learn to present and critically comment own and fellow student's master's thesis. The applied methods and results must be communicated to an interdisciplinary audience. The master's colloquia are attended for a total of three semesters according to the optimal course progression plan.

4. Formalities regarding master's thesis

4.1 Choice of master's thesis reviewer

The master's thesis is supervised and assessed by a qualified reviewer, who is the holder of a professorship at the University of Basel.

On request, it is possible to assign a second reviewer (from inside or outside of the University of Basel), who must have completed a doctorate as a minimum. Interdisciplinary work supervised jointly by lecturers from different faculties is actively supported.

The reviewer(s) take(s) on a supporting function in the development of the master's thesis. Furthermore, the reviewer(s) is/are responsible for the grading and the final report (for details see section 4.6 of this fact sheet).

4.2 Topic selection

The topic for the master's thesis is agreed between reviewer(s) and the student. The topic has to be related to sustainability.

The TC will assess whether the topic adequately meets the objectives of the master's degree program (relation to sustainability, scientific specialization, interdisciplinary embeddedness). Students are supposed to prepare the topic during the course "Research Design Master's Thesis".

4.3 Duration of the master's thesis

Usually, students write their master's thesis within the period of 6 months (by default). Students may also apply for the longer period of nine-month. However, they have to justify the longer period in the application form for the master's thesis (page 2, section 3: Methodology). The longer period is approved, when students realize e.g. a specific and extended data collection compulsory to answer the research question (whereas for the six-month period a small data collection is an option but not necessary). The TC is authorized to decide upon the submitted application whether the thesis is to be realized within the applied deadline or not.

According to the optimal course progression plan, the master's thesis within the focus area in natural sciences should rather be realized within the nine-month-period.

If a master's thesis is not submitted on time, it is deemed as failed.

Extensions can be granted only in accordance with the details in section 5.5 of the study guidelines (exam postponement, hindrance and absence, and failure to meet due dates).

4.4 Application for the master's thesis

To apply for the master's thesis, a form must be completed that specifies the start/end dates, the topic, the proposal and the choice of reviewer(s). The application is submitted to the teaching TC (via coordination office), which then reviews it. Applications are processed in the TC meetings. The TC [deadlines](#) must be observed in order to ensure timely processing.

On approval of the application by the TC, the students must provide the committee with the completed learning contract for the master's thesis within three weeks. The period for the master's thesis begins on submission of this learning contract. If the learning contract has not been received

within three weeks at the latest, a new application with a new topic must be submitted. If the application is rejected, a new or revised application may be submitted. In such cases, the TC will explain its reasons for refusal and the further course of action.

4.5 Submission of the master's thesis

The students must submit the required copies of the master's thesis to the coordination office on time (due date specified in the learning contract).

They have to submit

- 3 print copies sending by post (postmark = submission day) or handing in personally to the head of the coordination office (mail box in the building of the coordination office is fine as well);
- students with two reviewers submit one more copy;
- one digital copy on the last day of submission (one file, incl. attachments) to: coordination-msd@unibas.ch

If the file is too large, students have to send it by switch drive: <https://www.switch.ch/drive/>

The copies of the master's thesis must be printed whenever possible double-sided; they are to be submitted with spiral binding (plastic). The printed copies are forwarded to the reviewer(s), one is kept in the archives of the MSD coordination office and one in the MSD library (for more information see section 4.8: Declaration of consent for recording, preservation and accessibility of the master's thesis).

4.5.1 Layout front page of master's thesis

The front page contains the following points:

1. Header with the logo of the University of Basel and the logo of the MSD (attachment 2: Layout front page master's thesis)
2. Full name of student and swiss student number
3. Submission date
4. Title, full name(s) and institution(s) of reviewer(s)
5. Focal area of the MSD
6. Title (and subtitle) master's thesis

While the layout for the header is fix (e.g. no additional logo or institution to be put), students may layout the rest of the front page as they like, incl. pictures, as long as they insert all required information (see points 2 to 6 and attachment).

4.5.2 Abstract

The information of the front page (point 2 to 8) is to be repeated on the next page on the top, followed by an abstract (max. 200 words) of the master's thesis (all on one page). Thus, students are advised to keep the abstract comprehensible for a broader audience. Whenever possible, the MSD would like to publish the abstracts of the master's thesis on [edoc](#) (institutional repository of Unibas) according to a signed declaration of consent (see section 4.8).

4.5.3 Statement of plagiarism

The signed statement of plagiarism is to be placed at the beginning (after the abstract) or at the end of the master's thesis (in print and digital copies). Template see attachment 3.

4.6 Grading of the master's thesis and report

The master's thesis is awarded a grade. Within eight weeks, each reviewer prepares a report in English in which he/she justifies the award of the grade. The report is sent to the coordination office, which forwards it to the student. A recommendation of how to grade the thesis is available (attachment 4).

If more than one reviewer evaluates the master's thesis, the final grade of the thesis is calculated from the arithmetical mean of all grades.

If a grade is insufficient, or if there is a difference of one grade or more in the case of two reviewers, the TC will request a further, independent report, including grading. If the final grade for the master's thesis is still 3.9 or below after this additional review, the thesis will be deemed as failed.

4.7 Repeated attempt of a failed master's thesis

A failed master's thesis can be repeated once. In such cases, the student must select a new topic and reapply for the master's thesis in accordance with the requirements. If the master's thesis is failed at the second attempt, the TC can request that the student is excluded from the master's degree program. The examination committee will communicate this to the student.

4.8 Declaration of consent for recording, preservation and accessibility of the thesis

With this declaration students, reviewers and the TC agree to:

- The library recording incl. edoc: The signatories agree to the recording and listing of the bibliographic data including title, author's name and the name(s) of the reviewer(s) in the university catalogue and in the document server [edoc](#) (= institutional repository of the University of Basel). It lists the scientific publications produced at the university and is operated by the University Library.
- Publication of the abstract on edoc: With this agreement, not only the bibliographic data (see point 1) will be published on edoc, but also the abstract of the master's thesis. A link to edoc will be placed on the MSD Website.
- On-site use at the coordination office MSD: One of the submitted copies of the master's thesis will be provided for on-site use at the coordination office if approval is given. Borrowing is not possible.

Each student has to submit this declaration together with the master's thesis.

Each reviewer has to submit this declaration together with the report on the master's thesis.

5. Completion of master's degree

5.1 Master's grade

The final master's grade is calculated on the basis of the average graded course performance weighted according to the credit points and rounded to one decimal place. Half decimals are rounded up.

5.2 Documents: Certificate, diploma and diploma supplement

Students receive the diploma and the diploma supplement together with the certificate. These documents are created twice a year and, if possible, submitted to the graduates at the awarding ceremony.

6. Right of publishing and copy right

In accordance with the guidelines of the University of Basel, the research results obtained during the preparation of the master's thesis may be published. Nonetheless, students, reviewer(s) and the head of the TC MSD have to approve the publication signing the "declaration of consent of recording, preservation and accessibility of the master's thesis" (details see section 4.8). Template available on the website/downloads MSD 2017.

A declaration of consent regarding the use of data collected for the master's thesis by the research group of the reviewer(s) is required when signing the learning contract (LC) of the master's thesis. The declaration is included in this LC on page 2.

This fact sheet is based on the following regulations

(available on the [website MSD/downloads MSD2017](#))

- Study regulation MSD 2017 (only available in German);
- Wegleitung MSD 2017 (in German);
- guidelines MSD 2017 (available in English, translation of the "Wegleitung");
- optimal study progress plan.

Forms/templates

(available on the [website MSD/downloads MSD2017](#))

- Application master's thesis;
- learning contract (LC) master's thesis, incl. "declaration of consent on data release";
- "declaration of consent on recording, preservation and accessibility" (to be submitted with the master's thesis);
- learning agreement (LA) preparation master's thesis focus area in natural science;
- template "layout front page of master's thesis";
- template "statement of plagiarism".

Attachments of this fact sheet

1. Scheduling master's thesis;
2. layout front page of master's thesis (example);
3. statement of plagiarism (example);
4. recommendations how to grade the master's thesis.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Scheduling master's thesis MSD 2017

Note²: On approval of the application of the master's thesis by the TC, the student must provide the learning contract for the master's thesis within three weeks. The period for the master's thesis begins within this time limit (see study regulations § 18.4, study guidelines section 4.4.6.3):

Scheduling graduation after completion in fall semester (deadlines all in the same calendar year):

Duration to complete master's thesis ³	Semester of doing the colloquium "Research Design Master's Thesis"	Last TC meeting for application	Latest beginning of thesis on	Last submission day of thesis on
6 months	Same spring semester like application of the master's thesis	In May	15 June	15 December
9 months	Fall semester before the application of the master's thesis	In February	15 March	15 December

Scheduling graduation after completion of spring semester (deadlines within two calendar years):

² According to decision of the TC MSD on 14.07.2017/CCh

³ For the 9-month period, specific data collection is essential (= mandatory) to answer the research question. Theses that do not meet these criteria have a period of 6 months (study guidelines, sec. 4.4.6.5).

Duration to complete master's thesis⁴	Semester of doing the colloquium "Research Design Master's Thesis"	Last TC meeting for application	Latest beginning of thesis on	Last submission day of thesis on
6 months	Same fall semester like application of the master's thesis	In December	15 January (next year)	15 July
9 months	Spring semester before the application of master's thesis	In September	15 October	15 July (next year)

⁴ See footnote 3.



Attachment 2: Layout front page of master's thesis (example)

MSD 2017 – Title page specifications of the master thesis

1. The Unibas and MSD logo header **must** be placed at the top of the title page, as presented here. If you want, you can also integrate it as a header line in your entire work. The logos and the font may NOT be changed in size. If you want to display an additional logo (e.g. of a partner institution), you can do so – but NOT in the header.
2. According to the corporate design of Unibas, the text is left-aligned to the lettering within the logo.
3. MSD students must include the below listed bold headings on the title page of the Master's thesis. The exact content required is shown in square brackets. The exact representation (e.g. order) and designation (e.g. "author" instead of "from" or no designation) of the categories, font size or type, image design etc. is the responsibility of the author.

In case of doubts and questions: contact the coordination office in due time!
coordination-msd@unibas.ch; 061/207 04 20

Headings

From [first and last name of the author; swiss student number]

Date of submission [insert date of submission]

Reviewer 1 [academic title, first and last name] (we use reviewer for those who will have to write a report and have to mark the thesis)

Institution [university and department/working group]

Reviewer 2 OR Co-supervisor [academic title, first and last name]

(only for those who have put a 2nd reviewer in the learning contract; has to write a report and to mark the thesis).

Co-supervisor are not mentioned in the LC. Nonetheless, they are experts, who have supported the students with know-how, but do not have to write a report nor to give a mark).

Institution [university and department/working group]

Focal Area [according to study regulations]

Title (+ subtitle) [appears in the certificate]

Attachment 3: Statement of plagiarism

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that I have fully acknowledged the assistance received in completing this work and that it contains no material that has not been formally acknowledged.

I have mentioned all source materials used and have cited these in accordance with recognized scientific rules.

Below this statement (wording may differ, while the meaning has to be the same), students add the following information:

Full name/student number: [write your names] [swiss student number]

Date of issue: [= submission date of the thesis]

Signature [students sign this statement]

Attachment 4: Recommendations on how to grade the master's thesis

This list is to be considered as a recommendation and is not conclusive. Depending on the type of the thesis, the criteria must be weighted differently. Each reviewer creates a report in English within 8 weeks. With this report, the reviewer explains and justifies the grading.

1. Originality

- Ideas of one's own are introduced and they are original
- Specific scientific ideas are visible (according chosen focal area of the thesis)

2. Scientific tools

- The existing knowledge (literature, experience) is being incorporated
- Research gaps, based on literature analysis, are identified
- The procedure (used material and applied methods) is described in a comprehensible way
- The applied methods are suitable for dealing with the research question
- The possibilities and limitations of the applied methods are acknowledged
- The tasks (e.g. field work, data collection, experiments, modelling, analysis of scientific literature etc.) have been carried out with the required care and completeness
- The data have been evaluated in a statistical appropriate manner

3. Logic and structure of the disposition, scientific debate

- The scientific problem is presented clearly
- The objectives are formulated consistently
- The hypotheses are formulated precisely
- The structure of the scientific question is adapted to the concept of the thesis
- The results and conclusions of the thesis are clear and put in a logical sequence
- The questions of the scientific problem are answered
- The results are compared to existing data from literature and put into a broader context
- The generalizations are proved by facts
- Facts are clearly separated from hypotheses and assumptions
- Remaining questions are mentioned
- Suggestions for any further research are mentioned

4. Quality of layout and presentation of the thesis

- The formal requirements regarding graphics, tables and citations etc. are met
- Complete summary with required information is placed at the beginning of the document
- Thesis is written in a scientifically clean, comprehensible and linguistically correct way
- The layout is reader-friendly

5. Work progress

- Will and motivation to solve the task are clearly visible
- Knowledge gaps have been filled in
- The work has been carried out independently
- Critical feedbacks have been considered in a constructive manner

6. Grading

The grading system is based on the following principles (possible to use 0.1-scaling):

- Grade 6: Outstanding; far above average
- Grade 5.5: Very good; above average, with minor lacks
- Grade 5: Good; good average, with certain lacks
- Grade 4.5: Satisfying; below average, with some more lacks
- Grade 4: Satisfying (tight!); below average, with significant lacks
- Grade 3.9 and lower: Unsatisfactory, far below average, with heavy lacks