

**These study regulations are an English translation. They are for informational purposes and have no legal force. Only the original of the “Ordnung für das spezialisierte Masterstudium in Sustainable Development” in German is legally binding.**

## **Regulations for the Specialized Master’s Degree program in Sustainable Development at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Science and Faculty of Business and Economics of the University of Basel**

Dated 25. September 2025 / 6. / 14. October 2025

Approved by the University Council on 17. November 2025

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Science and Faculty of Business and Economics of the University of Basel issue the following regulations based on § 16 (d) of the Statute of the University of Basel (University Statute) dated 3. May 2012<sup>1</sup>.

### **I. General provisions**

#### *Purpose and scope*

**§ 1.** These regulations govern the specialized master’s degree program in Sustainable Development at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Science and Faculty of Business and Economics (hereinafter: faculties) of the University of Basel.

<sup>2</sup> It applies to all students following the master’s degree program in Sustainable Development at the University of Basel [hereinafter: MSD].

<sup>3</sup> Details on the program can be found in the study guidelines (hereinafter: guidelines). The guidelines must not introduce selection criteria or procedures that go beyond these regulations. The guidelines are issued by the inter-faculty teaching committee for Sustainable Development (hereinafter: teaching committee) and approved by the faculties.

#### *Academic degree awarded*

**§ 2.** The faculties jointly award the degree of “Master of Science in Sustainable Development” (MSc) to students who pass the master’s program.

<sup>2</sup> The program allows for majors (specializations). The selected major is named after the academic degree awarded.

#### *Admission to master’s program*

**§ 3.** The prerequisites and the process for admission to the program are set out in the student regulations of the University of Basel and the admission regulations issued by the President’s Office [Rectorate].

<sup>2</sup> Holders of a bachelor’s degree from a Swiss university-level higher education institution in one of the following subject areas will be admitted to the MSD without additional requirements, provided they are able to submit evidence of at least 90 credit points from one or at least 150 credit points from two of the following subject areas [alphabetical order]:

agricultural sciences, biology, business administration, chemical engineering, communication and media sciences, earth sciences, electrical engineering, environmental and geomatics engineering, environmental sciences, geography [incl. geosciences], macroeconomics, mechanical engineering, pharmaceutical sciences, philosophy, political science, social and cultural anthropology/ethnology, social work and social policy, sociology.

<sup>3</sup> The following condition must also be met:

- a) Bachelor's degree with an average grade of at least 5/unrounded (Swiss grading system 1 to 6, where 6 = max./4 = pass);
- b) Basic knowledge of mathematics, statistics or empirical social research methods at university level in the form of at least 6 credit points.

<sup>4</sup> As an alternative to the condition set out in para. 3 (a), holders of a bachelor's degree from a recognized university-level higher education institution may submit a current test result from the Graduate Record Examination® General Test (GRE® General Test), provided that the result in the area of "Quantitative Reasoning" is at least among the top 30% and in the area of "Analytical Writing" at least among the top 20%.

<sup>5</sup> Any credits and grades to be completed as additional requirements and/or conditions must not exceed a total of 30 credit points, otherwise admission will not be possible.

<sup>6</sup> In the case of bachelor's degrees from a recognized higher education institution that do not fall under § 3 para. 2, the teaching committee will review the equivalence of the degrees listed therein in terms of content. The provisions listed in paras. 3 and 4 shall be considered equally.

<sup>7</sup> For bachelor's degrees pursuant to paras. 2 and 6 that do not have a grade or grade average, the equivalence of the grade to the average grade of at least 5/unrounded (Swiss grading system 1–6, where 6 = max./4 = pass) will be determined by the examination committee for Sustainable Development (hereinafter: examination committee).

<sup>8</sup> Any student who has definitively failed to pass the examination for a course at the University of Basel that is relevant for exclusion from this degree program will not be admitted.

<sup>9</sup> On the recommendation of the teaching committee, the examination committee will submit a corresponding application to the President's Office. The admission letter is issued by the President's Office.

### *Start of program*

§ 4. The program can be started in the fall or spring semester.

### *Language skills*

§ 5. The language of instruction is English.

## **II. Degree program**

### *Degree program and model of study program*

§ 6. The program consists of modules from the [MSD] with the majors "Economics and Management", "Natural Sciences", "Social Sciences"; and a free master's program without a major, and of some electives.

<sup>2</sup> When applying for the program, students select a major pursuant to para. 1 or choose the free master's program without a major.

<sup>3</sup> It is possible to change the major or switch to the free master's program. The general conditions to be taken into account here are outlined in the study guidelines.

### *Scope of the degree program*

§ 7. The program consists of 120 credit points. This corresponds to a regular period of study of 2 years for full-time study. For part-time study, there is a corresponding extension to the duration of study.

### *Structure*

§ 8. The degree program is divided into modules. A module is a grouping of one or more courses with inner coherence arising from the study objectives.

<sup>2</sup> The program consists of the following modules:

- a) Introduction to Sustainability Science
- b) Interdisciplinary Research and Applications
- c) Topics and Methods in Sustainable Development: Economics and Management
- d) Topics and Methods in Sustainable Development: Natural Sciences
- e) Topics and Methods in Sustainable Development: Social Sciences
- f) Complementary Knowledge Economics and Management
- g) Complementary Knowledge Natural Sciences
- h) Complementary Knowledge Social Sciences
- i) Electives
- j) Master's thesis

### *Passing*

§ 9. The student is deemed to have passed the program if 120 credit points (CP) have been earned as follows:

1. Major in Economics and Management

- a) 12 CP from the module Introduction to Sustainability Science
- b) 15 CP from the module Interdisciplinary Research and Applications
- c) 30 CP from the module Topics and Methods in Sustainable Development: Economics and Management
- d) 9 CP from the module Complementary Knowledge Natural Sciences
- e) 9 CP from the module Complementary Knowledge Social Sciences
- f) 15 CP from electives: free selection of courses from the master's programs of all faculties at the University of Basel, as well as language courses, campus credits and internships
- g) 30 CP from the master's thesis

[or]

2. Major in Natural Sciences

- a) 12 CP from the module Introduction to Sustainability Science
- b) 15 CP from the module Interdisciplinary Research and Applications
- c) 30 CP from the module Topics and Methods in Sustainable Development: Natural Sciences
- d) 9 CP from the module Complementary Knowledge Economics and Management
- e) 9 CP from the module Complementary Knowledge Social Sciences
- f) 15 CP from electives: free selection of courses from the master's programs of all faculties at the University of Basel, as well as language courses, campus credits and internships
- g) 30 CP from the master's thesis

[or]

3. Major in Social Sciences
  - a) 12 CP from the module Introduction to Sustainability Science
  - b) 15 CP from the module Interdisciplinary Research and Applications
  - c) 30 CP from the module Topics and Methods in Sustainable Development: Social Sciences
  - d) 9 CP from the module Complementary Knowledge Economics and Management
  - e) 9 CP from the module Complementary Knowledge Natural Sciences
  - f) 15 CP from electives: free selection of courses from the master's programs of all faculties at the University of Basel, as well as language courses, campus credits and internships
  - g) 30 CP from the master's thesis

[or]

4. Without a major (free master's program)
  - a) 12 CP from the module Introduction to Sustainability Science
  - b) 15 CP from the module Interdisciplinary Research and Applications
  - c) A total of 30 CP from the modules Topics and Methods in Sustainable Development: Economics and Management; Topics and Methods in Sustainable Development: Natural Science; Topics and Methods in Sustainable Development: Social Sciences; including at least 12 CP from the module in the discipline in which the master's thesis is written.
  - d) 18 CP from the modules Complementary Knowledge Economics and Management, Complementary Knowledge Natural Sciences and Complementary Knowledge Social Sciences. The selection of courses is recorded by a learning agreement, which must be approved by the teaching committee.
  - e) 15 CP from electives: free selection of courses from the master's programs of all faculties at the University of Basel, as well as language courses, campus credits and internships
  - f) 30 CP from the master's thesis

<sup>2</sup> The program is deemed to have been failed if it is no longer possible to attain the required number of credit points in accordance with § 9 para. 1.

### III. Assessments

#### *Earning credit points*

**§ 10.** Credit points are assigned for academic performance with sufficient rating, whereby credit points can only be issued once for the same or similar achievement.

<sup>2</sup> Credit points are calculated in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). One credit point (CP) is equivalent to 30 hours of student learning.

<sup>3</sup> The assessment modalities for a course are independent of its [module] assignment to a degree program or subject. The same number of credit points will be awarded.

#### *Performance assessment*

**§ 11.** Academic performance is assessed by the teaching staff - with a grade or according to the pass/fail principle.

<sup>2</sup> The grading scale ranges from 6.0 to 1.0, with a minimum grade of 4.0 required to pass.

<sup>3</sup> An assessment may use grading in whole, half or one-tenth fractions of grades. The following grading key is used: 6.0 outstanding; 5.5 very good; 5.0 good; 4.5 satisfactory; 4.0 sufficient; less than 4.0 failed.

<sup>4</sup> Academic performance which is graded as at least sufficient cannot be repeated.

<sup>5</sup> The final master's grade is calculated on the basis of the average graded course performance of all modules as well as the master's thesis according to credit points and rounded to one decimal place. Half one-tenth

fractions are rounded up.

### *Courses*

§ 12. Credit points are earned as part of the following teaching and learning formats:

- a) core lecture
- b) lecture
- c) lecture with practical course
- d) seminar
- e) field trip
- f) internship
- g) course
- h) project
- i) colloquium

<sup>2</sup> The teaching committee approves the number of credit points that can be earned in the courses each semester.

<sup>3</sup> The courses are published in the course directory with information on the credit points that can be earned through them.

### *Assessment formats*

§ 13. Academic performance is assessed using the following assessment formats:

- a) Provider-defined assessments [offered by other units of the University of Basel]
- b) Degree program-specific assessments for courses pursuant to these regulations

<sup>2</sup> Provider-defined assessments for the courses of participating or other faculties take place pursuant to the rules of the study regulations of the respective degree program offering the course.

<sup>3</sup> Degree program-specific assessments for courses pursuant to these regulations take place through:

- a) assessment for core lectures
- b) assessment for lectures and lectures with practical courses
- c) Continuous assessments
- d) Seminar paper
- e) Assessment through learning contract
- f) Master's thesis

<sup>4</sup> An assessment must be completed in every course.

### *Assessments for core lectures*

§ 14. Assessments for core lectures are based on written examinations. They last between 30 and 105 minutes and are graded.

<sup>2</sup> The assessments and grading are conducted by the teaching staff responsible for the core lectures.

<sup>3</sup> By registering for the core lecture course, the student registers for the assessment for the core lecture. It is not possible to deregister once the registration period has expired.

<sup>4</sup> If students do not attend the assessment for a core lecture, they will be deemed to have failed and will receive a grade of 1.0.

<sup>5</sup> An assessment in a core lecture graded as fail can be repeated once; the better attempt is counted. Students who fail to pass the first attempt will be registered automatically for the repeat examination. The repeat examination will take place no earlier than 4 weeks after notification of the first examination result and no

later than immediately before the beginning of the lecture period of the following semester. If a student fails to attend the repeat examination for a core lecture, they will be deemed to have failed and will receive a grade of 1.0.

<sup>6</sup> A second fail will result in exclusion from the program.

<sup>7</sup> Details regarding the form, duration and timing of the assessment for the core lecture as well as the timing of the repeat examination will be announced in due time in the course directory.

#### *Assessments for lectures and lectures with practical courses*

**§ 15.** Assessments for lectures and lectures with practical courses are based on written examinations. They last between 30 and 105 minutes and are graded.

<sup>2</sup> The assessments and grading, as well as the execution and grading of any repeat examinations are conducted by the teaching staff responsible for the lectures.

<sup>3</sup> By registering for the course, the student registers for the assessments for lectures and lectures with practical courses. It is possible to deregister until the end of the registration period.

<sup>4</sup> If a student fails to attend the assessment for lectures and lectures with practical courses, they will be deemed to have failed and will be graded as “no show”.

<sup>5</sup> Students who fail assessments for lectures or lectures with practical courses in which a repeat examination is offered, the failed assessment may be repeated once; the better attempt is counted. Failure to appear for a repeat examination will be considered as withdrawal of the repeat attempt and will be graded as “no-show”. If the repeat examination is waived or failed, the student must re-register for the course or another available course.

<sup>6</sup> Details regarding the form, duration and timing of the assessments as well as the timing of the repeat examination will be announced in due time in the course directory.

#### *Continuous assessments*

**§ 16.** Assessments for seminar, field trip, internship, course, project and colloquium take place through continuous assessments.

<sup>2</sup> Continuous assessments are graded or assessed as pass/fail.

<sup>3</sup> Continuous assessments take place during or after the course. They are the responsibility of the teaching staff responsible for the classes.

<sup>4</sup> Continuous assessment can be conducted through:

- a) presentations
- b) moderated discussions
- c) written reports
- d) essays

<sup>5</sup> By registering for the course, students are automatically registered for continuous assessment. Any student who does not wish to take the assessment must cancel their registration by the end of the registration period. If the course registration is not canceled and the assessment is not taken, the course will be graded as “no-show”.

<sup>6</sup> If an assessment takes place as a group performance, the performance of each student must be assessed and graded individually.

<sup>7</sup> Details regarding the format, scope, assessment format and timing of continuous assessments will be announced in due time in the course directory.

### *Seminar paper*

§ 17. In the [MSD] with a major, a seminar paper must be written in the Topics and Methods in Sustainable Development module of the selected major (Economics and Management, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences). In the free program without a major, a seminar paper must be written in one of the Topics and Methods in Sustainable Development modules.

<sup>2</sup> The seminar paper is graded.

<sup>3</sup> Registration for seminar papers that are not written within a seminar takes place through a learning contract.

<sup>4</sup> Before starting the seminar paper, the responsible member of teaching staff and the student set out the topic, content, scope, start date, end date and any revision and repetition options in the learning contract. The learning contract is approved by the head of the teaching committee prior to starting the seminar paper.

### *Assessment through learning contract*

§ 18. Academic achievement can be performed outside of courses, in particular through internships outside the university, tutoring or activities in the academic self-government.

<sup>2</sup> Registration for academic achievement outside of courses takes place through a previously concluded learning contract.

<sup>3</sup> In the learning contract, the responsible member of teaching staff and the student set out the details of the assessment [topic, content, scope, start date, end date], as well as the assessment format and credit transfer in a specific module. The learning contract is approved by the head of the teaching committee before starting.

<sup>4</sup> Academic achievement can be performed outside of courses and is assessed with pass/fail or graded.

### *Master's thesis*

§ 19. Students can register for the master's thesis if at least 50 CP have been earned in the major selected pursuant to § 9 para. 1 or in the free master's program without a major, and if any additional requirements are met.

<sup>2</sup> The master's thesis is written within the selected major; for interdisciplinary theses, the supervisor must belong to the selected major. Students taking doing the free master's program without a major can choose the discipline (Economics and Management, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences) in which they wish to write their master's thesis or may write an interdisciplinary thesis.

<sup>3</sup> The master's thesis is supervised and assessed by a holder of a professorship at the University of Basel (from Grouping I or II). The teaching committee may also submit an application to the examination committee to grant permission to lectureships [Privatdozierende, Universitätsdozierende, wissenschaftliche Mitarbeitende, Lehrbeauftragte] to supervise and assess master's theses. An additional supervisor may be involved on request. This supervisor must have at least a completed doctorate.

<sup>4</sup> The application for the master's thesis must include information on the type and duration of the master's thesis, its scope, topic and the selection of supervisors. It is examined and approved by the teaching committee.

<sup>5</sup> Once the teaching committee has approved the application, students must submit the learning contract to the teaching committee, completed in full and in accordance with the approved application, within three weeks. If this deadline is not met, a new application must be submitted.

<sup>6</sup> If the grade or average grade of the master's thesis is insufficient, or if a difference of one grade or more exists between two supervisors, the teaching committee will request another independent review including grading.

<sup>7</sup> Where there is more than one review, the grade for the master's thesis is calculated from the arithmetic average of these grades. Half-hundredths are rounded to one decimal place.

<sup>8</sup> If the final grade for the master's thesis is still 3.9 or below after an independent review, the thesis will be deemed as failed.

<sup>9</sup> Students will receive the reports written for their thesis when notified of the grade for the master's thesis.

<sup>10</sup> If a master's thesis is not submitted on time, it will be deemed as failed.

<sup>11</sup> A failed master's thesis can be repeated once with a new topic. The second fail will result in exclusion from the program.

#### *Resources to be used for assessments*

**§ 20.** If assessments allow for resources, these must be specified by the respective examiners in due time before the assessment begins.

<sup>2</sup> If special resources or measures are required for medical reasons, these must be disclosed when registering for the assessment.

#### *Postponement, illness and absence*

**§ 21.** An application to postpone assessments or due dates must be submitted in writing to the teaching committee, with the assertion of valid reasons and no later than three weeks before the respective examination or deadline.

<sup>2</sup> If the examination or deadline is missed for health reasons, a doctor's certificate must be submitted to the teaching committee immediately, but no later than five days after the examination or deadline.

<sup>3</sup> If a student fails to attend an assessment or observe a deadline contrary to the requirements of para. 1 or para. 2, the examination or assessment will, depending on the assessment format, be deemed as failed, no-show or receive a grade of 1.0.

#### *Unfair examination conduct*

**§ 22.** Should a student use dishonest means to influence or attempt to influence an assessment result or exhibit dishonest behavior in the case of written papers, considered in particular to be unauthorized use of contents by claiming authorship, the examination in question will count as a fail or will be assessed with a grade of 1.0. Lecturers will report any such cases to the teaching committee.

<sup>2</sup> The teaching committee may also request exclusion from studies.

#### *Right to inspection*

**§ 23.** After completion of written assessments, the candidate may, upon request, view the written examination documents. Further details can be found in the guidelines.

#### *Recognition of course and examination credits*

**§ 24.** The teaching committee decides on the recognition of equivalent course and examination results as well as credit points that have been attained or acquired in another course of study at the University of Basel or at another university, upon request of the student. Equivalent results can only be recognized once.

<sup>2</sup> The scope of the recognized external course and examination results or credit points must not exceed half of the total credit points required. Master's theses are not recognized.

<sup>3</sup> The student in question will be notified of the recognition of course and examination results as well as credit points by means of a ruling.

### *Exclusion*

§ 25. Students who have failed the program or are no longer able to pass will be notified of their exclusion from the program by the examination committee by means of a ruling.

### *Degree certificate, degree transcript and diploma supplement*

§ 26. Students who have passed the master's program in accordance with § 9 para. 1 will receive a degree certificate signed by the deans of the three responsible faculties containing the academic degree awarded.

<sup>2</sup> The coursework completed for the degree is listed in a degree transcript that contains full details of the courses attended, the credit points and grades acquired, the title and grade of the master's thesis and the master's final grade.

<sup>3</sup> The student will additionally receive a diploma supplement.

## **III. Responsibilities**

### *Teaching committee*

§ 27. The teaching committee consists of one lecturer from each of the three faculties (usually from Grouping I), one member from each of Grouping II, III and V as well as the head of the MSD Office (ex officio).

<sup>2</sup> The faculty delegates are elected by their faculty assemblies. The remaining members are elected by the Groups. The appointment is held for two years.

<sup>3</sup> The teaching committee constitutes itself. It elects the chairperson and their deputy from among the members of Grouping I. If a vote is tied, the chairperson has the casting vote.

<sup>4</sup> The teaching committee performs the functions assigned to it in these regulations.

### *Examination committee*

§ 28. The deans of studies of the responsible faculties perform the functions assigned to them in these regulations as the examination committee.

<sup>2</sup> The examination committee constitutes itself. Under a rotation system, a dean of studies is appointed as the contact person with signing authority.

### *Cases of hardship*

§ 29. In cases of hardship, the examination committee can grant justified exceptions to the provisions of these regulations, provided that these are fundamentally within the authority of the examination committee.

## **IV. Right of appeal**

### *Rulings and appeals*

§ 30. In accordance with these regulations, the person concerned must be notified in writing by the responsible office including instructions on the right of appeal. According to the agreement between the Cantons of Basel-Landschaft and Basel-Stadt concerning the joint sponsorship of the University of Basel, and in accordance with the statutes of the University of Basel, they may be contested before the Appeals Committee of the University Council.

## V. Transitional and final provisions

### *Transitional provisions*

§ 31. These regulations apply to all students who begin the program in Sustainable Development on or after 1. August 2026.

<sup>2</sup> Students who started the Sustainable Development studies before 1. August 2026 can complete their studies based on the Regulations for the Specialized Degree of Master of Sustainable Development at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Science and Faculty of Business and Economics of the University of Basel dated 1. / 5. / 13. December 2016 by no later than 31. January 2029; or transfer to the program as set out in these regulations. Applications must be submitted to the teaching committee by 31. January 2027. For a later graduation, students have to switch to the program as set out in these regulations. Coursework that has already been successfully completed will be credited to the relevant modules, provided that it is part of these modules. Failed assessments for courses relevant to exclusion will also be taken into account.

### *Final provision*

§ 32. These regulations must be published. They enter into force on 1. August 2026. At the same time, the Regulations for the Specialized Degree of Master of Sustainable Development at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Business and Economics of the University of Basel dated 1. / 5. / 13 December 2016 are repealed.