

**Examination Regulations**

**for the Master's program**

**Agriculture, Ecology and Societies**

**at the**

**University of Kassel**

**Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences**

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# **Examination Regulations for the Master's Degree Program Agriculture, Ecology and Societies in the Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences of the University of Kassel**

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## **§ 1 Scope**

The examination regulations for the consecutive Master's program Agriculture, Ecology and Societies of the Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences at the University of Kassel complements the General Provisions for Subject Area Examination Rules for Degrees at the Bachelor's and Master's (AB Bachelor/Master) at the University of Kassel.

## **§ 2 Academic degrees**

(1) Provided that a student obtains at least 30 credits from modules in the Agriculture and Ecology specialization area, as arranged in § 10 (7), and writes the Master's thesis in this area, the academic degree Master of Science (M.Sc.) is awarded after successful Master's examination.

(2) Provided that a student obtains at least 30 credits from modules in the Society and Environment specialization area, as arranged in § 10 (8), and writes the Master's thesis in this area, the academic degree Master of Arts (M.A.) is awarded after successful Master's examination.

(3) The Examination Board determines the degree upon registration for the Master's thesis on the basis of paragraphs (1) and (2).

## **§ 3 Standard study period, Scope and structure, Start and language**

(1) The standard period of study for the Master's program, including the Master's degree module, is four semesters.

(2) A total of 120 credits shall be awarded for the successfully completed Master's degree program. The distribution of credits among the modules is specified from § 9.

(3) The master's program in Agriculture, Ecology and Societies starts annually in winter semester.

(4) The language of instruction is English.

#### **§ 4 Examination Board**

(1) The responsibility for decisions concerning examinations matters lies with the Examination Board for the degree program Agriculture, Ecology and Societies.

(2) The members of the Examination Board are:

- three professors,
- one academic staff member,
- one student of the study program Agriculture, Ecology and Societies of the University of Kassel.

One of the professors sitting on the Examination Board is based in Faculty 2 or 5. The academic staff member may also be a member of Faculty 2 or 5.

#### **§ 5 Admission Requirements**

(1) Admission to the Master's program is open to students who hold

- a first professional degree of at least six full-time study semesters according to German law, in agricultural sciences, economics, humanities, or social sciences, with a grade point average of 2.4 or better.

or

- a degree with a grade point average of 2.4 or better in a related field of study. In this case, subject and methodological competence in the agricultural sciences, economics, humanities, or social sciences has been acquired to the extent of 60 credits, which is necessary for successful completion of the Master's program. The Examination Board decides on each individual case.

(2) If the grade of the final degree is less than 2.4, or if the applicant cannot provide sufficient proof according to Paragraph 5 (1), a Selection Committee appointed by the Examination Board according to §28 (3) of the General Provisions (AB) Bachelor/Master shall decide upon application whether the applicant has the necessary professional qualifications for admission to the Master's program. The commission consists of three members from different subject areas, including at least two professors. Proof of knowledge is provided by a personal selection interview lasting 30 minutes. The interview focuses on:

- a) relevant professional practice acquired after obtaining the first academic degree, which is conducive to the qualification objectives of the Master's program,
- b) motivation to study this specific program, and
- c) knowledge obtained in the Bachelor's program that is of specific relevance to the learning objectives of the master's program and the applicant's intended career objectives.

The selection committee can award up to three points for each of these aspects, so that a total of nine points can be achieved in the selection interview. The points are added together. Admission is granted to applicants who achieve at least five points in the selection interview. Minutes are taken of the selection interview.

(3) In addition, submission of a max. 3.500 characters including spaces motivation letter in English is required, including:

- Motivation to study the AGES Master program with reference to career aspirations, previous subject-related educational and professional qualifications as well as professional experiences.
- Expectation of the master's program in terms of content, teaching and learning formats with reference to their interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary dimension, as well as own specialization options and own commitment to the transformation of agricultural and food systems.
- Longer-term professional goals regarding field of activity, employer and position, and the contribution which the expected qualifications and content profile of the Master's program make.

The selection committee can award up to three points for each of these aspects, so that a total of nine points can be achieved. The points are added together and admission is granted if at least five points are achieved.

(4) In addition, evidence of English language proficiency must generally be provided at the CEFR level B2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) or equivalent. Exceptions are made if the applicant provides a letter by the management of an internationally active professional organisation or company, in which they worked for at least one year within the two years prior to sending the application, confirming that English is the organisation's working language.

#### **§ 6 Study objectives**

(1) Graduates of the Master's program in Agriculture, Ecology and Societies understand agricultural production systems in different climatic zones in their agronomic structure and the biophysical drivers of changes in these

systems; they know the agronomic vocabulary and the relevant agronomic fields of knowledge and are able to comprehend and reflect context-specific agronomic problems.

- (2) Graduates know the socio-cultural, economic and political drivers of change in agri-food systems and bio-economies; they are able to investigate such systems in concrete case studies and critically reflect on contemporary development paths.
- (3) Graduates understand data collection and analysis methods from the social sciences, humanities and natural sciences; they can assess and critically categorize these methodologies and apply some of these methods. They are able to contribute their knowledge to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and to shape and communicate the resulting transformation processes towards a sustainable re-orientation of agricultural production and food systems.

### **§ 7 Teaching- and learning formats**

- (1) The structure and organisation of studies shall take special account of the program's interdisciplinary character.
- (2) In principle, all the usual forms of teaching are available for the program. Particular emphasis is placed on:
  - Lectures and seminars
  - Guided inter- and transdisciplinary group projects with a duration of one or two semesters
  - Excursions
  - Digital learning, blended learning, hybrid teaching formats
  - Self-directed topic-related work
  - Guided and independent scientific work
  - Activities abroad (excursions and/or projects abroad and/or exchange semester)

### **§ 8 Examination performance, Module examinations, Repetitions**

(1) The module examinations during the course of studies are to be completed in temporal and objective connection with the respective module. The format of each module or sub-module's examinations is determined by the lecturer at the beginning of the course, within the framework of the university's Study and Examination Plan.

(2) The following methods are eligible to examine performance:

- Written exam (usually 120 minutes for a 6-credit-module, correspondingly shorter for partial modules),
- Oral examination (= technical discussion) (usually 30 minutes per person for a 6-credit-module, correspondingly shorter for partial modules),
- Student research project (usually 7,000 words for a 6-credit-module, correspondingly shorter for partial modules),
- Presentation with written report (usually 20 minutes of presentation and usually 3,500 words of text for a submodule of 3 credits),
- Project report (usually 12,000 words of text for 6 credits),
- Work report by tutors of autonomous seminars (usually four weeks of preparation for a multi-hour/multi-day event, min. 2,500 words of text for a 6-credit module).
- Answer-choice exams (multiple choice or dual choice) are permitted as part of an examination. The share of answer-choice procedures in a module's examinations may not exceed 30 %.

Module examinations that have not been passed can be repeated twice. A repetition of passed module examinations is not permitted.

(3) A failed or definitively failed compulsory elective module may be changed once.

(4) The keeping of attendance lists is permitted in courses with capacity restrictions, such as laboratory practices and excursions, or for which no further examination or course work is required beyond active participation.

(5) Partial examinations within a module are assessed with points in a uniform point system. The grade for the module is calculated from the points of all partial examinations, which are weighted according to their credits.

### **§ 9 Attainment of the Master's degree, Composition and weighting of grades**

(1) The master's program is structured as follows:

3 Compulsory modules

24 credits

2 Bridging modules	12 credits
9 Compulsory elective modules	54 credits
The Master's thesis and colloquium, lasting 22 weeks	30 credits
Total	120 credits

(2) The Master's examination consists of

- the module examinations during the course of study according to paragraphs (3) - (8)
- the Master's thesis and colloquium according to § 10.

(3) As part of the Master's program, module examinations must be completed in the following 2 compulsory modules, each with 6 credits:

- Agriculture and ecosystem services
- Food systems governance and agriculture

(4) As part of the Master's program, an interdisciplinary project worth 12 credits must be completed. Alternatively, two interdisciplinary projects of 6 credits each can be completed. The work is supervised by a lecturer from the natural sciences and another from the social sciences or economics.

(5) As part of the Master's program, module examinations must be completed in the following 2 bridging modules, each with 6 credits. The bridging modules serve as a complementary introduction to previously unknown disciplines and are assigned to the students during the admission process.

Bridging modules for students with undergraduate degrees in the natural sciences:

- Research methods in social sciences
- History, societies and environment

Bridging modules for students with undergraduate degrees outside of the natural sciences:

- Research methods and data science in the life sciences
- Principles of organic farming **or** Soil and plant sciences **or** Organic livestock farming under temperate conditions.

(6) As part of the Master's program, examinations in methodological modules of at least 12 credits must be completed. Methodological modules are marked with (M) in § 9 (7) and (8).

(7) As part of the Master's program, module examinations of at least 12 credits from Compulsory Elective Area I: Agriculture and Ecology must be completed during the course of study. Compulsory Elective Area I includes:

- Applied statistical modeling (M)
- Modeling climate impacts on agroecosystems (M)
- GIS and remote sensing in agriculture (M)
- Nutrient dynamics, experimental design and statistical modeling - bilingual (M)
- Organic cropping systems under temp. and tropical conditions
- Agrobiodiversity and plant genetic resources in the tropics
- Ecology and agroecosystems
- Soil-plant interactions (M)
- Water in the soil plant system (M)
- Nutrient acquisition by plants
- Digitalisation in agriculture
- Digitalisation in livestock systems
- Livestock nutrition and feed evaluation under (sub)tropical conditions (M)
- Livestock-based sustainable land use
- Unconventional livestock and wildlife-management
- Innovative sustainable breeding
- Grassland-based livestock systems and climate change mitigation
- Management of (sub)tropical land use systems
- Organic agriculture in Europe
- Sustainable land-use and climate mitigation
- Biodynamic agriculture
- Food processing

- Bioeconomy and sustainability
- If not chosen as bridging modules:
- Principles of organic farming
  - Organic livestock farming under temperate conditions
  - Research methods and data science in the life sciences (M).

(8) As part of the Master's program, module examinations of at least 12 credits from Compulsory Elective Area II: Society and Environment must be completed during the course of study. Compulsory Elective Area II includes:

- Participatory research methods for sustainability (M)
  - Rural Sociology
  - Socio-ecology in livestock production systems
  - Critical perspectives on the global food system
  - EU policies, organic farming and food system transformation
  - Political agroecology
  - Management and management accounting
  - Marketing research (M)
  - International organic food markets and marketing
  - Sustainable food systems and management
  - Sustainability-oriented environmental social science
  - Climate change governance
  - Sustainable? Development?
  - Environment and health
  - Education for sustainable development and agriculture
  - One Health: Human, animal and environmental interactions
  - Land use conflicts in Latin America
  - Philosophy of sciences (M)
  - Philosophy of environment and society
  - Methods of sociology and humanities (M)
  - Global political economy and environment
  - Spatial dimensions of sustainability transitions
  - Supply chain management
  - Sustainable behavior and governance (depending on seminar also M)
  - Decision support tools in sustainability management
- If not chosen as bridging modules:
- History, societies and environment
  - Research methods in social sciences (M)

(9) After individual study counselling, external modules of up to 30 credits can also be credited from other agricultural or social science/humanities Master's programs. Language courses at B2 level can be credited up to 6 credits. Excluded are language courses in English and in the student's native language(s). An exchange semester at a partner university of Faculty 2, 5, 7 or 11 is explicitly supported. Modules instructed in German can be credited up to 12 credits.

Overview:

Area	Study part	CP	Notes
Mandatory area	Mandatory modules	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students take the two modules "Agriculture and ecosystem services" and "Food systems governance and agriculture"</li> </ul>
	Interdisciplinary project work	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students complete one or two interdisciplinary projects with a total of 12 CP (= Core Competences area).</li> </ul>
	Bridging modules	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with a first degree in the natural sciences choose the two bridging modules in the social sciences.</li> <li>• Students with a first degree in the social sciences or humanities choose two agronomic bridging modules.</li> </ul>
Compulsory Elective Area II	I: Agriculture and Ecology	54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A total of nine elective modules, for a total of 54 CP. Of these:</li> </ul>

	II: Society and Environment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum of 12CP must be acquired in methodological modules (= Core Competences area).</li> <li>• A minimum of 12 CP must be earned in each of the two compulsory elective areas.</li> </ul>
Master's degree	Master's thesis including colloquium	30	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	

#### **§ 10 Master thesis and colloquium**

- (1) Master thesis and Master colloquium form the Master degree module. 30 credits are awarded for this module.
- (2) The assignment of the chosen thesis topic to Compulsory Elective Area I: Agriculture and Ecology, or Compulsory Elective Area II: Society and Environment, has an influence on the Master's degree as specified in §2 (3).
- (2) The topic of the Master's thesis will be issued upon application. At this point, the student must have successfully completed at least 78 credits. Issuance of the topic and appointment of the supervisors is carried out by Examination Board. The Examination Board also decides on exceptions.
- (3) The timeframe for developing the Master's thesis is 22 weeks, beginning on the day the topic assigned by the Examination Board. The topic of the Master's thesis may only be returned once, within a period of six weeks. The project must be of a scope and nature that can be fulfilled within the scheduled timeframe.
- (4) If the first deadline cannot be met for reasons for which the candidate is not responsible, the Examination Board shall extend the submission deadline by the time the candidate has been impeded. Extension(s) shall be granted for no more than eight weeks.
- (5) The Master's thesis must be submitted to the Examination Board in due time in three hard copies as well as one copy in electronic form.
- (6) The Master's thesis must be presented in a Master's colloquium. In addition to the candidate, the first supervisor and an assessor shall participate in the colloquium. The colloquium shall take place no later than six weeks after submission of the Master's thesis. The duration of the entire colloquium is 60 minutes. Participation in the master colloquium requires that the Master's thesis has been graded at least "sufficient" (4.0). A colloquium that has not been graded at least "sufficient" (4.0) can be repeated once. The grade of the Master module is formed by the grade of the Master's thesis multiplied by the factor 3, plus the grade of the colloquium multiplied by the factor 1.

#### **§11 Composition and weighting of the final grade**

The overall grade is calculated according to § 13 of the General Provisions AB Bachelor/Master and as a weighted average of all grades (modules, final examination). The weighting is performed according to the respective credits.

#### **§ 12 Entry into force**

These Examination Regulations shall enter into force on the day following their publication in the Official Journal of the University of Kassel (Mitteilungsblatt der Universität Kassel).

Witzenhausen, \_\_  
The Dean of the Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences  
Prof. Dr. Maria Finckh