

**Degree Program and Examination Regulations for the Master's Degree Program M.A.
Iranian Studies within the Department of History and Cultural Studies at Freie
Universität Berlin**

Disclaimer: Please note that only the German version of this document is legally binding. This translation is intended for the convenience of the non-German-reading public and is for informational purposes only.

Preamble

On the basis of Section 14.1.1.2 of Freie Universität Berlin's supplemental rules and regulations [*Teilgrundordnung (Erprobungsmodell)*] from October 27, 1998, published in Freie Universität official bulletin *FU-Mitteilungen* 24/1998, the Department Council (*Fachbereichsrat*) of the Department of History and Cultural Studies at Freie Universität Berlin issued the following degree program and examination regulations for the master's degree program M.A. Iranian Studies within the Department of History and Cultural Studies on Wednesday, February 13, 2019:¹

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¹ The Executive Board of Freie Universität Berlin approved these regulations on March 4, 2019.

Section 1 Scope

(1) These regulations define the objectives, content, and structure of the master's degree program M.A. Iranian Studies within the Department of History and Cultural Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. These regulations apply in conjunction with Freie Universität Berlin's framework regulations for degree programs and examinations as they outline the requirements and processes necessary to complete coursework and assessments toward completion of a master's degree program.

(2) The degree program is a consecutive master's degree as defined by Section 23.3.1.1a of the Berlin Higher Education Act (BerlHG) from July 26, 2011 (GVBl. p. 378), last amended on February 2, 2018 (GVBl. p. 160). It is designed with a focus on research and is offered in English.

Section 2 Learning Objectives

(1) Graduates of this degree program will have built upon the knowledge and skills acquired during their bachelor's degree program B.A. History and Culture of the Middle East with a focus on Iranian Studies, have expanded their knowledge and proficiency in additional Iranian languages, have acquired deeper knowledge of philological tools and methods, and can apply these skills across selected special topics in Iranian literature and the history of Iranian culture, religion, law, gender, and society. They are capable of independently carrying out high-quality research work in the field of Iranian studies.

(2) Graduates will have gained the ability to communicate and critically discuss subject-specific content as well as to develop empathy for the different cultures and cultural objects they encounter and analyze them appropriately. They are capable of placing partial results within a wider context. The degree program strengthens graduates' ability to act creatively, independently, and responsibly. It also fosters open-mindedness toward questions of gender and diversity.

(3) The master's degree program qualifies graduates to carry out professional roles in academic research on Iran (e.g., in universities, academies, research projects, museums) as well as in a range of institutions and organizations that deal with Iran (and its bordering countries/regions). This may include work in the following sectors: the media, international governmental and non-governmental organizations, publishing, adult education and vocational training, or tourism.

Section 3 Curriculum Contents

(1) The master's degree program imparts extensive knowledge of Iranian languages, textual legacies, and literatures, as well as an understanding of relevant research questions in the field of Iranian studies. Courses with a focus on language and literature hone students' ability to use sources in their original language – both in older variants of Iranian languages as well as modern variants. The degree program also provides students with the opportunity to practice utilizing philological working methods and combine them with other research methods from literary studies and history. The latest findings from gender and diversity research are a fundamental aspect of all modules. Courses aimed at supporting students in acquiring language and methodology skills build upon the language and history courses that comprise the bachelor's degree program B.A. History and Culture of the Middle East and/or the knowledge obtained during a comparable (bachelor's) degree program. These courses convey knowledge of Iranian history and literatures through the application of both diverging and complementary research methods.

(2) Students of the degree program work independently and productively with a range of primarily linguistic and textual materials and are capable of interpreting them in an empathic, comparative, analytical, communicative, and critical manner. They are able to situate their results within wider academic contexts and discourse.

Section 4 General Academic Advising and Departmental Advising

(1) The Center for Academic Advising and Psychological Counseling at Freie Universität Berlin provides general academic advising for students.

(2) Instructors who teach courses offered in the master's degree program provide departmental advising during their office hours. A student aid is also available to give additional advising support.

Section 5 Examination Board

The examination board is appointed by the Department Council of the Department of History and Cultural Studies, Freie Universität Berlin. The board is responsible for organizing examinations and the other tasks stipulated by the framework regulations for degree programs and examinations (RSPO).

Section 6 Standard Time to Degree

The standard time to degree is four semesters.

Section 7 Structure and Components; Distribution of Credit Points

(1) Students need to earn 120 credit points in order to complete the master's degree program. The various components of the master's degree program include:

1. Required modules totaling 60 credit points,
2. Required elective modules totaling 10 credit points,
3. An inter- and transdisciplinary area totaling 20 credit points, and
4. A master's thesis, including presentation of results, totaling 30 credit points.

The following required modules are to be completed:

- Module: Old Iranian Philology (15 credit points),
- Module: Middle Iranian Philology (15 credit points),
- Module: Iranian Religions in History (10 credit points),
- Module: Iranian Literatures (10 credit points), and
- Module: Iranian History in Its Sources (10 credit points).

One of the following required elective modules must be chosen and completed:

- Module: Modern Iranian Languages (10 credit points),
- Module: Introduction to Iranian Linguistics (10 credit points), or
- Module: Iran and Turan (10 credit points).

(4) The inter- and transdisciplinary area offers students of the master's degree program the opportunity to develop their own unique skills profile by selecting from a range of elective modules. These can be selected from across Freie Universität Berlin, provided that there is enough capacity within the modules in question. The elective modules will be made available to students in good time and in a suitable format. In particular, it is recommended that students select these modules from the following: the modules currently being planned by the Center for Area Studies; the module "Interdisciplinary Module Gender and Diversity Studies" offered by the Interdisciplinary Forum Gender and Diversity Studies within the Department of History and Cultural Studies; the modules "History of Islam," "Cultural History of Islam," "Politics and Society – Islamic and Middle East Studies," and "Law in Islamicate Societies" from the degree program M.A. Islamic Studies within the Department of History and Cultural Studies at Freie Universität Berlin; the modules "Semitic Philology I: Selected Semitic Written Records" and "Semitic Philology II: Written Records of the Christian Orient" from the Semitic studies focus of the degree program B.A. History and Culture of the Middle East within the Department of History and Cultural Studies at Freie Universität Berlin; the modules "Arabic I" and "Arabic II"

from the Arabic studies focus of the degree program B.A. History and Culture of the Middle East within the Department of History and Cultural Studies at Freie Universität Berlin; and “Arabic I” from the General Professional Skills area offered in conjunction with the bachelor’s degree programs at the Department of History and Cultural Studies, Freie Universität Berlin. Students are also encouraged to consider modules from other master’s degree programs at Freie Universität Berlin, for example: M.A. General and Comparative Literature; M.A. German Literature; M.A. English Studies: Literature – Language – Culture; M.A. History; M.A. Islamic Studies; M.A. Jewish Studies; M.A. Social and Cultural Anthropology; M.A. Religious Studies; M.A. Romance Literature; M.A. Theater Studies; and M.A. History, Theory, and Practice of Jewish-Christian Relations. The degree program coordinator can advise students on selecting suitable elective modules.

(5) The module descriptions in Appendix 1 provide information on the prerequisites, the contents and learning objectives, the modes of instruction, the workload, the different types of active participation, the various assessments that students must take during the program, information on participation requirements in the different modes of instruction, the standard duration, and how often courses are offered.

(6) Appendix 2 is a standard plan for completing the master’s degree program.

Section 8 Modes of Instruction

(1) The following modes of instruction will be offered as part of the curriculum:

1. Lectures (V) impart to students an overview of an overarching subject area and its methodical and/or theoretical foundations, as well as knowledge regarding a specific topic and related research questions where applicable. They thus serve to provide wider context for the subject area and outline its theoretical foundations. The main mode of instruction is a presentation prepared by the respective instructor. Students are also provided with the opportunity for brief interactions and group exercises.

2. Introductory courses (GK) are introductory in nature. The main mode of instruction is an in-person presentation prepared by the respective instructor, followed by conversations and discussions on fundamental topics, problems, or questions.

3. Seminars (S) convey knowledge on a clearly defined subject area and teach students the skills of independently researching an issue, presenting the results, and discussing the subject using critical thinking. The coursework consists mainly of seminar discussions conducted with the aid of learning materials, specialist literature and sources, and group work.

4. Advanced seminars (HS) provide students with a chance to engage intensively with a defined area of study and to gain practice in carrying out independent academic work. These courses primarily consist of seminar discussions guided by readings of specialist literature and sources, as well as presentations that the students prepare on their own and in which they present their findings from the assigned readings, orally and/or in writing. The level of independent study is significantly higher than in a regular seminar.

5. Proseminars (PS) focus on enabling students to deepen their understanding of course content by engaging with relevant academic literature and helping them to achieve learning objectives by applying typical working methods. The main modes of instruction are active participation in group discussions and individual study of the academic literature.

6. Textual analysis courses (LK) promote students’ ability to independently read, analyze, and interpret complete texts, and provides techniques as to how to independently strengthen reading skills and work with large corpora of texts. In these courses, students precisely explain the terms used within the texts and carefully map the specific references made to other texts and sources of information.

7. Practice sessions (Ü) instill practical knowledge and skills in students as well as

techniques related to a specific subject area. Students learn how to independently work on a task according to academic standards, present the results, and discuss the subject using critical thinking. Practice sessions encourage students to think through problems from a variety of approaches in order to expand their understanding. Coursework consists predominantly of practice using methods and techniques to improve practical skills and language ability, as well as in-depth conversations, group work, and the practical application of subject-specific skills. Practice sessions are often offered in conjunction with a lecture or internship. The instructor leads students in the various activities and monitors them.

8. Language courses (sprÜ) are designed to provide students with the modern languages skills they need to communicate in a variety of situations. These require students to actively participate in conversation during classes. Depending on students' preexisting language skills and learning objectives, students will be expected to engage with different text types and participate in independent and collaborative language-related work. This will be carried out both in person and online with support from an instructor.

(2) The modes of instruction as outlined in Section 8.1 above can be implemented through blended learning formats. Blended learning combines on-site education with digital, internet-based media (e-learning). In this context, certain educational activities can be offered through Freie Universität Berlin's central e-learning applications. Students can work on these activities individually or in groups. They can complete them on their own or with the guidance of an instructor. Blended learning can be used both as part of the active learning phase (discussing educational materials, sharing solutions to assignments, vigorous communication between instructors and students), and for follow-up activities (evaluating students' progress, applying and transferring knowledge).

Section 9 Master's Thesis

(1) The master's thesis is intended to demonstrate that a student has the ability to work independently on a research topic from the field of Iranian studies at an advanced academic level. They should be able to present their findings in a form that is appropriate to the topic and situate them within an academic context, as well as document their findings in writing and discuss them orally.

(2) Students will be admitted to work on their master's thesis after submitting a request to do so, provided that at the time of the request:

1. they were most recently enrolled in a master's degree program at Freie Universität Berlin, and
2. they have already successfully completed modules totaling at least 50 credit points in the course of the master's degree program.

(3) The admission request for the master's thesis must be accompanied by proper documentation of the prerequisites listed above under Section 9.2, as well as confirmation from an instructor who is authorized to administer examinations, stating that they are willing and able to act as supervisor for the master's thesis. The relevant examination board is responsible for approving requests. If the request does not include confirmation from an instructor as described above, the examination board will appoint the student a supervisor. Students have the opportunity to propose topics for their thesis; however, there is no guarantee that their proposed topics will be approved.

(4) The examination board in coordination with the thesis supervisor provide the topic of the master's thesis. The topic and assignment must be designed in such a way as to ensure the work can be completed by the deadline. The assignment and compliance with the submission deadline must be documented and kept on file. There is no guarantee that the proposed topic will be approved.

(5) The student has 900 hours to complete and submit the master's thesis together with a presentation of results. Students have 19 weeks to complete and submit the written part of the

master's thesis. The thesis may be written in either German or English.

(6) The work period for the master's thesis begins with the date that the topic is assigned by the examination board. The master's thesis will be accompanied by a colloquium. The topic can be declined once within two weeks of being assigned, in which case it will be deemed not issued. When the student submits their master's thesis they must include a written statement confirming that they alone are responsible for the content of the thesis and that they only used the sources or references cited in the thesis.

(7) Following its submission, the master's thesis is to be assessed by the supervisor of the thesis and one other examiner. The two grades should be submitted to the examination board within four weeks after the submission of the thesis. The grade for the written examination is calculated as the arithmetical mean of the grades awarded by the two examiners.

(8) The presentation of results (approx. 40 minutes) forms the oral part of the master's examination and takes place directly after the evaluation. Students will be informed of the date and time for the presentation of results in a suitable format. The oral part of the master's examination will be assessed by two authorized examiners. They must be the same examiners who graded the master's thesis. The grade for the oral defense is calculated as the arithmetical mean of the grades awarded by the two examiners.

(9) The grade awarded for the written master's thesis amounts to four-fifths of the cumulative grade for the master's thesis, with the grade for the oral presentation of results contributing one-fifth.

(10) The master's thesis and presentation of results is considered passed if the overall grade awarded according to Section 9 is "sufficient" (4.0) or higher.

(11) A student's work on a master's thesis elsewhere can be recognized/transferred to Freie Universität. The recognition request should be submitted to the examination board. In order for the master's thesis to be recognized, the examination conditions and the assignment of the submitted work must not differ substantially in terms of quality, level, learning outcomes, scope, and profile when compared to the examination conditions and the assignment of a master's thesis completed in this master's program, which characterize the type of professional qualification this master's degree program in particular provides.

Section 10 Retaking Exams and Assessments

(1) If a student does not pass their master's thesis, they can attempt the assessment a second time. For all other exams and assessments in the program, they can retake them three times.

(2) Exams and assessments that receive a grade of "sufficient" (4.0) or better cannot be retaken.

Section 11 Study Abroad

(1) Students are encouraged to study abroad. When studying abroad students should complete coursework that can be accredited within the master's degree program.

(2) The study abroad period must be preceded by a learning agreement between the student, the chair of the examination board for the degree program, and the responsible point of contact at the host university. The agreement contains provisions on the length of the study abroad period, the coursework to be completed while studying abroad, which must equate to the courses of the master's degree program in terms of credit points, and the number of credit points to be awarded for the coursework. Coursework completed in accordance with this agreement will be recognized.

(3) It is recommended that students undertake a study abroad period during their second or third semester once they have completed the modules on Old and Middle Iranian Philology.

Section 12 Degree Completion

- (1) In order to graduate, students must complete the coursework and assessments outlined in Sections 7 and 9 of these regulations.
- (2) A student is not eligible for graduation if they have definitively failed some coursework or assessment or are involved in a pending examination procedure at a university in the same course of study or in a module that is identical or comparable to one of the modules to be completed in the master's degree program here and that will be taken into account when determining their overall grade.
- (3) The application request for the award of a degree must be accompanied by documentation showing the student has completed the requirements mentioned in Section 12.1 and by a guarantee that the applicant is not subject to any of the eligibility restrictions mentioned in Section 12.2. The relevant examination board is responsible for approving the application.
- (4) Upon successful completion of the assessment, the student will receive a Master of Arts (M.A.) university degree. Students receive a degree certificate and a diploma (Appendices 3 and 4), in addition to a diploma supplement (English and German versions). A degree certificate supplement with details of the individual modules and their components (transcript) is also prepared. Additional English versions of the transcript and degree certificate may be issued upon request.

Section 13 Entry into Force and Interim Regulations

- (1) These regulations enter into force on the day following their publication in *FU-Mitteilungen* (the official bulletin of Freie Universität Berlin).
- (2) The degree program regulations for the master's degree program M.A. Iranian Studies from July 4, 2012 (*FU-Mitteilungen* 84/2012, p. 1884), and the examination regulations for the master's degree program M.A. Iranian Studies from July 4, 2012 (*FU-Mitteilungen* 84/2012, p. 1897), therefore lapse when the new regulations come into force.
- (3) This regulation applies to students who are enrolled at Freie Universität Berlin after its entry into force with regard to the master's degree program. Students who have been enrolled in the master's degree program in Iranian studies at Freie Universität Berlin before this regulation's entry into force shall study and complete courses of study on the basis of the degree program and examination regulations pursuant to Section 13.2, provided that they do not submit a request to the examination board to continue their degree program and complete courses of study pursuant to this regulation. Should this request be granted, the examination board shall decide on the extent to which modules that the student has already begun or completed at the point in time at which the request was submitted shall be recognized and to what extent they can be accredited under the requirements of the currently valid regulations, whereby the requirements of the right to confidentiality and equal treatment shall be taken into account. The decision concerning the student's entitlement to continue their degree program pursuant to the currently valid regulations will apply from the beginning of the lecture period of the following semester onward. Once the request for continuation under the newest regulations has been approved, it is final and the student may not then apply to transfer their studies back to the previous regulations.
- (4) Students are entitled to complete their degree on the basis of the degree program and examination regulations pursuant to Section 13.2 up until the end of the 2021 summer semester.