



Information Sheet Research Modules and Master's Thesis in the Master's program "Social and Cultural Anthropology"

General information

A central component of the Master's program in "Social and Cultural Anthropology" is an independently conducted research project that culminates in the Master's thesis. This research is prepared, carried out and analyzed in several stages.

- In Research Module 1, students define a topic and select a suitable supervisor for their research project.
- In Research Module 2, students develop a thematic and methodological research plan.
- Before beginning the actual research (Research Module 3), the supervisor must approve the project.
- The research project may involve empirical field research, practical research at the museum or extended literature and theoretical research.
- After returning from the field or completing the practical work, student write a research report, which must be submitted to and approved by the supervisor.
- Concurrently, students can attend Research Module 4, in which they begin analyzing their data. Research Module 4 leads culminates in the Master's thesis, which is usually completed in the fourth semester.

Students who begin their Master's degree in the fall semester should ideally take Research Module 1 in the fall semester, Research Module 2 in the spring semester, Research Module 3 during the semester break, Research Module 4 in the following fall semester and complete their Master's thesis in the spring semester. For students starting their studies in the spring semester, the timing of these steps changes. They will take Research Modules 1 and 2 in their first semester, while the rest of the Master's program remains the same. Additionally, depending on individual circumstances, students may choose to extend their Master's program and schedule their attendance in research modules differently. It is important to know that Research Modules 1 and 4 are offered every semester, while Research Module 2 is only offered in the spring semester.

Further explanations can be found in the [guidelines](#) and in the [module catalogue](#). It is recommended that you read the guidelines first.

In the following we will now discuss

- (a) the first steps in developing a research project
- (b) the research design that students submit to their supervisor prior to their research
- (c) the booking of Research Module 3
- (d) the possible types of research in and the booking of Research Module 3
- (e) the research report after returning from the field or completing the museum or literature research
- (f) the Master's thesis
- (g) financial support

(a) Developing a research project

In Research Module 1, students begin exploring potential research topics. Over the course of the semester, they discuss ideas and outline possible topics to gradually gain clarity about the research they would like to pursue and to become familiar with the relevant literature. Students also select and contact a suitable supervisor for their research project. This person will accompany them on the journey toward the Master's thesis, including determining the final topic, discussing and monitoring the research process, and evaluating the final thesis.

Supervision

A Master's thesis can be supervised by persons at the Institute who hold at least a doctoral degree in Social and Cultural Anthropology. With the exception of titular professors and privatdozents, supervisors must be employed at ISEK-Social and Cultural Anthropology at the time of booking. Exceptions require approval from the program director. Co-supervision of Master's theses is not envisaged. A list of possible supervisors can be found on the ISEK-Social and Cultural Anthropology website under "[Master's Theses](#)".

(b) The research design

Students work out a research design in Research Module 2. Building on the topic search and literature review from Research Module 1, the research question is further refined here, and its scientific relevance is established. The research design also outlines how and which data will be collected and analyzed using specific methods to answer the research question.

The exact requirements for writing the research design can be found in the syllabus for Research Module 2. The research plan should comprise between 3,000 and 4,000 words, excluding the title page, table of contents and references.

The supervisor designated in Research Module 1 must approve the project before research (Research Module 3) can commence. Students should maintain regular contact with their supervisor throughout the entire process of preparation, implementation, analysis and reporting of their research. They should inquire in advance about specific expectations regarding the content and submission of the research design. As part of Research Module 2, students normally create a recorded presentation of their research design, which they should share with their supervisor for feedback.

(c) Booking Research Module 3

When the supervisor approves the research plan, they will sign the "[Request for the Booking of Research Module 3](#)". This form must then be submitted to the teaching administrator Miriam Wohlgemuth prior to the commencement of the research.

Additionally, students must have successfully completed Research Modules 1 and 2 to book this module.

Research Modules 1, 2, and 4 can be booked online through the UZH module booking page, just like the other modules.

(d) The possible forms of research in Research Module 3

1) Fieldwork

Learning outcome: Through independent field research, students empirically explore a research topic and acquire skills in ethnographic methods and initial data analysis. The research project is planned and carried out independently, with data collected serving as the foundation for the student's Master's thesis.

Duration: The field research stay typically lasts around three months to gather sufficient data for the Master's thesis.

Supervision and interim report: The supervisor serves as the main contact during the field research. Any questions or issues that arise in the field can be discussed with the supervisor, usually via e-mail or online meetings. Midway through the field research, students are required to submit a short interim report to their supervisor. This report facilitates a preliminary synthesis of the research activities and findings, helps students to refine their focus, and enables supervisors to provide timely feedback and guidance.

Conducting fieldwork: Students are required to conduct their field research in accordance with the ethical standards of the disciplines (e.g. the [ethical charter for ethnologists by the Swiss Anthropological Association](#)). It is the student's responsibility to inform themselves about appropriate travel, accident and health insurance (see also the information on the UZH website on [Business Travel and Fieldwork](#)) and to obtain additional information about the field research location, e.g. through the [FDFA's travel advice](#). With the supervisor's approval, field research may also take place following an excursion or summer school. In all cases, students must sign the [Information and Acknowledgement Form](#) for conducting field research prior to commencing their research.

Prerequisites: Research Modules 1 and 2 and approval of the research plan by the supervisor.

2) Museum Research at the Ethnographic Museum

Learning outcome: Students gain insight into the practice and theory of museological research. In cooperation with technical or scientific staff, they can conduct research within the collection using museum ethnographic methods or explore other museum-relevant topics. The research project is developed similarly to a field research project in consultation with the supervisor, and is planned and carried out independently. The data obtained will subsequently be used for the student's Master's thesis.

Duration: The research typically lasts about three months in order to provide an in-depth insight understanding of a museological topic, a collection, or an exhibition area.

Supervision and interim report: The supervisor serves as the main contact during the museum research. Any questions or issues that arise can be discussed with the supervisor. In the course of the museum research, students are required to submit a short interim report to their supervisor.

Conducting museum research: During practical research at the museum, students should employ museum-specific methods according to the chosen research topic and in consultation with the supervisor. Depending on the topic, they may also collaborate with other museum staff as needed. Students will be granted permission to use the collections of the Ethnographic Museum and a research agreement will be signed in conjunction with the supervisor.

Prerequisites: Students should have completed the module “Core Field: Anthropology of Material Culture, Everyday Technology and Arts” (*Kernbereich Materielle Kultur, praktisches Wissen und Kunst*) and, if possible, the “Museum Internship” (*Praxismodul Museumsethnologie*), during which received a systematic introduction to all areas of the museum. It may be necessary to acquire additional skills, which will be discussed in the research agreement. A willingness and interest in an in-depth examination of museum-relevant topics in social anthropology are prerequisites; practical skills (such as learned crafts, hobbies, graphic talents, textile knowledge, etc.) can also be relevant. Research Modules 1 and 2 must be completed before the beginning of the practical research, and the research plan must be approved by the supervisor. Any necessary language skills will be determined during the first meeting with the supervisor.

3) Extended Literature Research

Learning outcome: Through an extended study of literature and theory, students acquire skills in in-depth academic research, text analysis and theoretical inquiry within the field of “Social and Cultural Anthropology”. The research project is planned and carried out independently, with the knowledge gained from the literature and, if applicable, from archival materials utilized for the students’ Master’s thesis.

Duration: The duration of the research for the extended literature and theory study should correspond to the time typically required for field research. Field research, excluding preparation and follow-up, usually takes three months.

Supervision and interim report: The supervisor serves as the main contact during the literature research project. Any questions or issues that arise can be discussed with the supervisor. In the course of the literature research, students are required to submit a short interim report to their supervisor. The purpose of this interim report is for students to attempt a preliminary synthesis of their research. This allows students to refine their focus, while supervisors can provide valuable feedback and guidance as needed.

Conducting literature research: The literature and/or archive research can be carried out in Switzerland or abroad.

Prerequisites: Research Modules 1 and 2 and approval of the research plan by the supervisor.

(e) The research report

The research report should be written relatively soon after the completion of the research. It serves as preparation for the Master’s thesis. Research Module 3 is recorded as successfully passed once the supervisor has approved the research report. Students should bring the “[Attestation for Research Module 3](#)” to the meeting with their supervisor to discuss the research report. The supervisor will sign the form and submit a copy to the teaching administrator Miriam Wohlgemuth.

Ideally, students should attend Research Module 4 after writing their research report; however, they may also attend while working on it. The criteria that the research report should fulfill are at the discretion of the supervisor. The following explanations provide an approximate guideline for writing the research report:

1. Initial situation: topic; research questions; regional, thematic and theoretical background and possible adaptations
2. Presentation of the research process and methodological reflections: research methods, sampling, changes in one’s own observer point of view, successes, problems, and ethical questions
3. Preliminary research results
4. Preliminary outline of the Master’s thesis
5. Open questions

(f) The Master's thesis in Social and Cultural Anthropology

Formalities

The module *Master's thesis* lasts two semesters but can also be completed within one semester. It is worth 30 ECTS credits. The master's thesis comprises 25,000-35,000 words or consists of a film accompanied by a written thesis of 15'000-25,000 words.

The information regarding the booking of the Master's thesis and the completion of the Master's degree program applicable at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences can be found at <https://www.phil.uzh.ch/en/studies/studyessentials/graduation.html>

If the Master's thesis is not passed, the module can be booked again; however, a new topic must be specified for the second booking.

Booking the module “Master’s Thesis in Social Anthropology”

Students book the Master's thesis in Social and Cultural Anthropology through the online module booking system, keeping in mind the specified booking deadlines. Before booking, they should consult their supervisor to confirm that the Master's thesis can be completed and submitted within one or two semesters. It is crucial to avoid booking the “Master’s Thesis” module if the preparatory work is not yet sufficiently advanced.

After the end of the module booking period, students will receive an e-mail from the office of the Dean of Studies to your UZH address asking them to log in to their website and enter the provisional title of your Master's thesis and the name of their supervisor.

Interim discussions and revision

At least two to three interim meetings should be scheduled with the supervisor, along with a preliminary and a follow-up meeting to discuss the status of the thesis and any questions regarding its content. In consultation with the supervisor, one or more chapters or a complete draft version may be submitted before the final deadline, to allow for revisions based on feedback.

Before the writing process begins, the supervisor will outline the evaluation criteria and their weighting. The document “Master Thesis Evaluation” can be used for this purpose.

Evaluation

An evaluation report is prepared for each Master's thesis, which students receive, along with the grade, from their supervisor.

Submission dates and deadlines

For **completion in the fall semester**, the Master's thesis must be submitted to the supervisor by **December 1** at the latest. The supervisor must submit the grade and the report to Miriam Wohlgemuth by **January 9**.

For **completion in the spring semester**, the Master's thesis must be submitted to the supervisor by **June 1** at the latest. The supervisor must submit the grade and the report to Miriam Wohlgemuth by **July 9**.

Students who are unable to meet the submission deadlines due to a case of hardship (e.g. illness, accident, birth of a child, death of close relatives) must inform their supervisor as soon as the case of hardship arises. They must also contact the program director with a request in which they explain their case in detail and indicate the requested duration of the deadline extension. Any confirmations (e.g. medical certificates) must also be submitted. An extension of the deadline is possible until 30 June at the latest in spring semester, until De-

cember 31 at the latest in fall semester. An extension of the deadline requires the consent of the supervisor as well as the approval of the program director.

After the deadline students will receive an e-mail from the office of the Dean of Studies to their UZH address to log in to their website and enter the definitive title of their thesis.

Further questions

If you have any administrative questions, please contact our teaching administrator Miriam Wohlgemuth, for content-related questions please contact the study advisor Jan Patrick Heiss, for other questions, e.g. concerning mobility or internships, please contact the program coordinator Juliane Neuhaus.

(g) Financial support for student research trips

The ISEK supports students of social and cultural anthropology in the MA program with travel grants for outward and return journeys to facilitate their research. Students can be funded once. The research stays must be carried out within the framework of booked modules. Further information and the application form can be found [here](#).

Contacts

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