



# Information Sheet Research Modules 1-4, and Master's Thesis in the Master Program Social and Cultural Anthropology

## General information

A central component of the master's program in Social and Cultural Anthropology is an independent research project that culminates in the master's thesis. This research is planned, conducted 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.
- In *Research Module 3*, students conduct empirical field research for their research project.
- After returning from the field or completing the practical work, students 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 to the master's thesis, which is usually completed in the fourth semester.

Students usually complete *Research Module 1* in the fall semester, at the start of their master's studies, *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. Depending on individual circumstances, students may choose to extend their master's program and schedule their attendance at 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.

The following sections detail:

- (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 registration and requirements for *Research Module 3*
- (d) the research report after returning from the field
- (e) the master's thesis

## (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. The supervisor may also be invited to attend the presentation of preliminary research ideas toward the end of the semester in *Research Module 1*.

## **Supervision**

A master's research project and thesis can be supervised by persons who hold at least a doctoral degree and are employed at one of contributing departments (ISEK-Social and Cultural Anthropology, GIUZ-Department of Geography, AOI-Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies). A list of possible supervisors can be found on the Social Anthropology website under [Research and master's thesis](#).

## **(b) The research design**

Students develop 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 design 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) Conducting research**

**Requirements:** To be eligible for Research Module 3, students must have successfully completed Research Modules 1 and 2 and obtained approval for their research plan from their supervisor. Once approved, the supervisor will sign the [Request for the Booking of Research Module 3](#).

Research Modules 1, 2, and 4 can be booked online via the UZH module booking page, like other modules. In contrast, Research Module 3 can only be booked using the signed request form, which must be submitted before the research begins to: [miriam.wohlgemuth@uzh.ch](mailto:miriam.wohlgemuth@uzh.ch)

**Objectives:** Research Module 3 involves field research in which students empirically investigate a research topic and develop skills in qualitative methods and initial data analysis. The research project can be conducted independently, planned in collaboration with a partner university, or integrated into an organizational setting. In all cases, the data collected will serve as the foundation for the student's master's thesis.

**Duration:** The field research stay lasts at least three months to gather sufficient data for the master's thesis (exceptions need to be discussed with the supervisor and program director).

**Supervision and interim report:** The supervisor acts as the primary contact during 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 design by the supervisor.

**Financial support:** Students are expected to ensure that they have sufficient personal funds to cover all costs related to fieldwork activities. They may apply for a travel allowance from ISEK to cover (part of) the outward and return trip for an MA fieldwork project; however, approval is subject to availability and cannot be guaranteed. Students conducting fieldwork in the framework of an existing project may be eligible for funding through that project.

## (d) The research report

The research report should be written shortly after the completion of the field 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: [m-iam.wohlgemuth@uzh.ch](mailto:miriam.wohlgemuth@uzh.ch)

Ideally, students should attend Research Module 4 after completing their research report; however, they may also attend while working on it. The following points 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 perspective, successes, problems, and ethical questions
3. Preliminary research results
4. Preliminary outline of the master's thesis
5. Open questions

## (e) 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.

Information regarding booking the master's thesis and the completion of the master's degree program 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 chosen for the second booking.

### **Booking the module “Master’s Thesis in Social and Cultural Anthropology”**

Students book the “Master's thesis in Social and Cultural Anthropology” via the online module booking system, observing the relevant booking deadlines. Before booking, they should consult their supervisor to ensure that the master's thesis can be completed and submitted within one or two semesters. It is important 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, you will receive an e-mail from the office of the Dean of Studies to your UZH address asking you to log in to their website and enter the provisional title of your master's thesis and the name of your 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; students receive this, 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**.

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

Following submission, students will present their final master’s projects at a designated presentation event.

### **Further questions**

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact our study advisor for our master's program Social and Cultural Anthropology.

## **Contacts**

### **Study advisor Master Social and Cultural Anthropology**

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### **Program coordinator**

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