MEG Master Thesis Administrative Guideline for those MEG students in PO 2023 or earlier

Updated November 2026

Beginning the Thesis



The earliest possible point to begin with the master's thesis is:

Proof of at least 70 ECTS credits (Generations MEG 1-18 PO2016)

Proof of at least 60 ECTS credits (Generations MEG 19-21 PO 2023 and MEG 22+ PO2026)

Deadline to register:
There are no deadlines for registering and starting the thesis. It is up to you to decide when to begin.

Guide on "How to Write a Master Thesis" : LINK

List of previous MEG Master thesis topics: LINK
incl. first supervisors plus, indicative information on their availability, avail end of November each year on the MEG webpage under Master Thesis

Links to MEG Study Regulations:

MEG Study Regulations 2023 and earlier

MEG Study Regulations 2026

What to consider when you are planning the time line of your thesis

Matriculation

You must stay matriculated until you have fulfilled all requirements of your study programme. If your last requirement is the thesis, you have to stay matriculated until the submission date of the thesis and pay the tuition fee (if applicable for you) for that semester.

Exceptions:

If you hand in your thesis within 4 weeks after the start of lectures of a particular semester and ex-matriculate immediately after submission, the tuition fee of that semester can be returned to you. You do not have to apply for the reimbursement. By handing in the ex-matriculation form the admissions office knows that you have to be reimbursed and transfers the fees back to you automatically.

If you ex-matriculate later than 4 weeks after the start of lectures, the tuition fee of that semester cannot be reimbursed.

Note: You do not have to stay matriculated while waiting for the grade of your thesis and the certificate. You can ex-matriculate as soon as you have submitted the thesis, if you wish to do so.

If you do not ex-matriculate, you will stay enrolled until the end of the semester in which you submitted the thesis and then be automatically ex-matriculated.

Health Insurance:

If you are not exempt from German public health insurance, you have to pay your health insurance fees until you submit the thesis, independent from where you stay during thesis writing. Even if you leave Freiburg and write the thesis abroad, you have to pay the public health insurance, as it is a requirement for matriculation.

Special case:

You submit your thesis a month or two before the semester ends, but would like to stay enrolled as long as possible, preferably for the following semester. As long as your thesis is not graded, you have the right to stay enrolled.

Example: Your thesis is not graded before the registration period starts (15.01.-15.02. or 15.6.-15.7.) → if you want, you can register for the following semester. If your thesis will be graded before the semester ends (31.3. or 30.9.), but after your registration for the following semester, this will not affect your matriculation for the following semester. You will stay matriculated.

Ex-matriculation

We recommend to actively ex-matriculate by handing in a form instead of making use of the automatic ex-matriculation. Only if you submit the form, will you receive a confirmation of your ex-matriculation. You will need this confirmation in case you want to enroll again at a German university or if you wish to claim your pensions for the time of your studies. The letter will be sent to you by postal mail. It is therefore important that your address in Campus Management is always current.

There are two options for submitting the ex-matriculation form:

1. If you are still in Freiburg you should hand in the form personally at the Service Center Studium (Studierendensekretariat) in Sedanstraße - after having gone to the university library to get a stamp to confirm that no books are checked out on your account.
2. If you left Freiburg already you can send the form as a scan to the Service Center Studium Student Affairs and ask them if they can contact the university library to verify that you returned all books and if they can send you the letter to confirm your ex-matriculation per email as a PDF.

Supervisors



Choosing Supervisors:

You will need a supervisor and a second examiner. Your supervisor is the one who is supervising you actively. The second examiner, in most cases, is just an examiner; his/her task is to grade your thesis, not to supervise it. In some instances, the second examiner might also have a more active role, but that needs to be "negotiated" with the supervisory team.

It is your responsibility to find a thesis topic and an appropriate supervisor and second examiner. The chosen topic can either come from your own interest; then, the main task/challenge will be to find a supervisor who is competent and interested in your topic. Alternatively, the topic might also come from one of the chair groups of our faculty. Some researchers and chair groups are actively announcing relevant thesis topics on their webpages; some of those are collected on the MEG webpage under Thesis. For others you will have to actively scan Faculty Chair webpages on your own.

When you look for a supervisor you can contact all professors and PDs of our Faculty as well as lecturers/scientists with a PhD degree (Dr.). Some of them will have the official permission to supervise a thesis and thus be allowed to sign the thesis registration form independently. Others will need the additional signature of the head professor on the form. Professor emeriti do not qualify for supervision.

Important: There cannot be an official or personal relationship of dependence between the supervisor and second examiner (e.g. a professor is the first supervisor and their assistant is the second examiner).

"UNR Knowledge" - https://suite.bricomgap.uni-freiburg.de/chat

- UNR Knowledge is an AI system that draws on a knowledge base solely focused on our Faculty (UNR).
- In the chat, you could, for example, prompt as follows:

I am a Master's student in Environmental Governance (MEG) at UNR, and I am looking for possible supervisors for my master's thesis. I plan to write my thesis within the broader field of XXXX. Which professors or postdoctoral researchers at UNR could supervise such a topic, and what expertise do they bring to this topic?

Internal / external supervisors

In most cases both persons, supervisor and second examiner, will be internal, meaning they will be members of the Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources.

However, when needed, an external supervisor/second examiner can be involved. It is not allowed to fill both positions with external persons.

Both, internal and external supervisors/second examiners have to be professors or senior lecturers with a PhD degree at a University and must be authorized to supervise a master thesis. Researchers without a position at a University are not accepted.

How to apply for an external supervisor:

The choice of an external supervisor or second examiner needs to be justified vis-à-vis the Examination Office. Bringing in an external person is justifiable when there is no professor involved in your particular field of research at the Faculty, but someone from outside our Faculty can bring the relevant expertise.
If you want to involve an external supervisor:

1) write an email to the Exams Office and supply them with the link to the possible external supervisor's official university webpage profile. The Exam Office can then check the credentials and let you know if the person can be a supervisor e.g. proof that the person has a professorship at a university or authorization to execute a Master exam.
2) After pre-approval has been gained you and your internal thesis supervisor/second examiner have to write a letter to the Chair of the Examinations Committee. In the petition, you should explain why you wish to have an external supervisor/second examiner and again supply the proof that they hold a professorship at a university and authorization to execute a Master exam.

Role of thesis proposal?

What is the role of the thesis proposal (as outlined in the Thesis Guide, section 3.2)? There is no formal regulation on a master thesis proposal (e.g. in the Exam Regulation), but supervisors have different wishes/demands towards students to what degree they expect you to come with a research proposal when asking for supervision. E.g. some ask for 2 pages, others for a full proposal. You will need to discuss this with the supervisor. The thesis proposal as recommended in the Thesis Guide (section 3.2) has a procedural function and should help you to develop your master thesis research design in a systematic way.

Registering your thesis



Once you have your two supervisors and and a clear research design (research questions, methods, theoretical framework) you have to formally register for the thesis. The thesis title on the form is provisional; it can be changed slightly at the end.

Registration Form: The appropriate form can be downloaded from the Examination Office website or from the website of your MSc program.

Study Regulations 2023 and earlier: https://www.jsl.uni-freiburg.de/informationen_fuer_studierende_web/pruefungsordnungen/master_of_science/M-Sc-Pruefungsordnung-Environmental-Governance.pdf

Study Regulations 2026:

https://intranet.uni-freiburg.de/public/downloads/sgv/satzungen/M.Sc._Pr%C3%BCfungsordnung_03.06.2026_Environmental_Governance_11A95798.pdf

Signatures: The registration form must be signed by you and your first supervisor and must show the name of the second examiner.

Starting Date: Together with your supervisor, you have to agree on a starting date for your thesis and record it on the registration form. From this date on the 6 months will count (e.g. 18 April – 18 September)

Submission: Please submit the registration form as PDF per E-mail or printed in-person to the Examinations Office. From there it will be forwarded to the Chair of the Examinations Committee for approval. You can submit the form before the starting date that you put on the form, but not more than two weeks in advance.

Registration Confirmation: Once the Committee has approved your thesis registration, the Examinations Office will send you a letter (by postal mail, make sure your address is correct in Campus Management) to confirm the submission date of your thesis.

If you have left Freiburg already and have no physical address in Freiburg any more, make sure that you update your physical address for correspondence in Campus Management. For legal reasons the Examination Office has to send all official letters by postal mail. If you live abroad and know that letters will take very long, please contact the examination office and ask if they can also send you the letter as a PDF as well.

Equipment



MAXQDA (for qualitative and quantitative text and data analysis)

- 4 portable licences in the MEG Coordinators Office for Windows operating systems (send email to book a license)

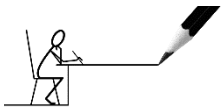
- 30 portable licences in Computer Center of University (RZ) Windows and IOS
- Installed in IT pool room CIP3 (faculty) on all computers
- Installed in IT pool rooms in Werthmannstraße 4 (RZ)

Another option is to use QDA Miner Lite, a free software for qualitative data analysis, which provides almost the same functions as MAXQDA for Windows users. Please note that most MEGs only need the Lite version and rarely the full version for their analysis.

Voice Recorders

MEG purchased 6 voice recorders for student use. You can borrow them in the MEG Coordinator's office (04055).

Writing the thesis



Time Frame:

You have exactly six months to complete the thesis.

Changing the Topic:

You can suspend the writing of your master's thesis only once and only during the first two months after approval. A new topic must be submitted within four weeks.

Title:

The thesis title written on the registration form is a provisional title. You can change the title slightly without further notice, as long as it is obvious that you did not change the topic of your thesis. The key words should be maintained.

If you change the title in a way that the Exam Office would not be able to recognize your initial topic in it, you had to inform the examination office about the new title, together with your supervisor, before submitting.

Extension of deadline:

An extension of a maximum of 3 months is possible, but only in exceptional cases (illness or problems of force majeure that hinder you from collecting or processing data). Requests for extensions must be submitted per letter to the Examinations Office immediately but in any case, not later than the original submission date of the thesis. For an extension of deadline due to illness follow the procedure described in the next section; for an extension due to e.g. problems of data collection you should ask for supervisor to approve and support your application with a letter / e-mail to the Examination Office.

Illness:

Should you fall ill during the writing of your thesis you have to immediately submit a doctor's attestation to the Examinations Office. Your doctor has to attest to your illness by filling in this form **at the beginning of the illness**. If you hand in the certificate after your illness it will not be considered. An extension can only be granted for the duration of your illness (maximum of 3 months) and only for illnesses that clearly prevent you from working on your thesis.

Submission of the thesis



You have to submit three hard copies of your thesis and one CD with the electronic version of the thesis. Each copy must be bound. Spiral binding is not accepted.

Testimony: In all three copies of your thesis the last page must contain an ORIGINALLY signed declaration which states, "I herewith declare that I have written this paper on my own and that I have not used any other sources and materials than those indicated. I properly cited the materials I have relied upon. I have not submitted this document as a master thesis elsewhere".

The examination office will stamp the three copies, keep one and return two copies to you for you to immediate bring to your supervisor and second examiner or the Examinations Office will forward the copies to the appropriate Chair if your thesis arrived per post.

The thesis must be submitted to the Examinations Office by the agreed upon submission date. You may submit your thesis earlier if you wish.

Submitting personally:

> The thesis can be handed in Monday to Friday from 8.00 to 12.30. You do not have to submit only during the consultation hours of the Examinations Office. Please also double-check these hours.

Submitting by postal mail:

> If you send the copies by postal mail from within Germany or any other country, the post stamp has to be at least from the day of the submission date. When you send the parcel, make sure that a dated post stamp is visible and clear.

Asking a friend to submit:

> Any person can submit the thesis for you. No authorization is necessary

Late Submission:

If the master's thesis is submitted after the submission date, your thesis will be graded as 'unsatisfactory' (5.0) and fail.

Evaluation of the thesis



The thesis should be evaluated by your supervisor and the second examiner within 6 weeks after submission. In practice it often takes a bit longer. The final grade of your master's thesis is the average of the two grades awarded by the two examiners.

Grade to Pass:

To pass, the master's thesis must be graded as sufficient (4.0) or better.

Failing the thesis:

→ you have to register for a **new topic within two months** upon receipt of the respective letter of failure from the examination office. If you wish, you can also change the supervisor.

Make sure your **postal address** in HisInOne is up-to-date and that you are able to receive the letter.

Receiving your Master´s degree certificate



The examination office doesn´t inform you automatically once your thesis is graded and your certificate issued. They wait for you to contact them.

If you are still enrolled, you can check in Campus Management if the grade of your thesis has been entered or not.

If you ex-matriculated already you cannot access Campus Management anymore. In this case, contact your supervisors to ask when you can expect the grading. You can also ask the MEG Coordinator to check your Campus Management account.

As soon as the grading is finished, you should contact the examination office and inform them of how to proceed with your degree certificate. The amount of time between the grade being submitted and issuance of the degree certificate is only a few days. Inform the examination office if you wish to pick up the certificate or if they should send it to you by postal mail.

The examination office is not allowed to post certificates by DHL or similar services, but only via regular mail.

If you want someone else to pick up your certificate, you have to issue an authorization letter for the person to present to the Examination Office when picking up the certificate. The person that picks up the certificate also has to present their passport as identification.

Further information can be found in the examination regulations