

# Policies for Academic Master Studies at Jacobs University

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## **1. About these Policies**

### **1.1. Scope of these Policies**

These policies constitute a preliminary version which is valid for all master study programs starting September 1, 2015 at Jacobs University. The policies are based on the previous version from September 1, 2013 and have been adapted to conform to the new curricular structure of master study programs starting in Fall 2015. A final version will supersede the current version as the binding policies. The Deans and the Education Advisory Panel will develop a final version for approval by the Academic and Executive Boards which will be valid as of Fall 2017.

For students who were enrolled in an academic master program at Jacobs University prior to 2015, these policies do not apply. For these students, the Procedures for Administering Graduate Programs valid as of September 2013 apply.

The Policies for Academic Master Studies apply to the entire domain of academic master studies at Jacobs University. In addition to these policies, individual academic master programs have program-specific policies. Program-specific policies are published in the respective program handbooks. Program-specific policies may not contradict the Policies for Academic Master Studies. In cases of conflict, the Policies for Academic Master Studies apply.

Until separate policies for executive studies at Jacobs University have been approved, pertinent rules of the Policies for Academic Master Studies also apply to the domain of executive education at Jacobs University.

### **1.2. Changing these Policies**

Changes of the Policies for Academic Master Studies are decided upon by the Academic Board in consultation with the body responsible for graduate education as stipulated by the academic constitution of Jacobs University. In cases in which policies need further interpretation or clarification, the binding decision will be taken by the Academic Board.

## **2. Definitions**

### **2.1. Academic Master Studies**

Academic master studies at Jacobs University comprise academic master programs, academic master modules, academic master courses and all other components of academic master programs.

### **2.2. Academic Master Programs**

Academic master programs consist of a predefined set of modules. The structure of academic master programs is based on the general curricular framework for academic master programs at Jacobs University. As a rule, academic master programs have a length of two years. They include coursework and a master's thesis. The list of academic master programs offered by Jacobs University is published on the university website.

### **2.3. Academic Master Modules**

Academic master modules are components of an academic master program. They usually consist of two or more academic master courses which are thematically linked. Academic master modules may also include components other than courses. For each course and each other component of an academic master module, a fixed amount of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credit points is awarded to the student upon successful completion.

### **2.4. Academic Master Courses**

Academic master courses are individual courses offered within an academic master program. Academic master courses are assigned to an academic master module. Academic master courses include lectures, seminars, laboratory courses and other types of instruction. Academic master courses entail a predefined student workload which is specified in ECTS credit points.

### **2.5. ECTS Credit Points**

One ECTS credit point is equivalent to 25 hours of student workload.

### **2.6. Student**

For the purpose of this policy, a student is someone who is enrolled in an academic master program or an academic master course at Jacobs University. Students who are enrolled in an academic master program are degree-seeking students. Students who are enrolled in an academic master course without being enrolled for an academic master program are non-degree-seeking students.

## **2.7. Degrees**

Upon successful completion of an academic master program (i.e. at graduation), degree-seeking students are awarded a Master of Arts (M.A.) or a Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree.

## **2.8. Program Coordinator**

Every academic master program has a Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator carries the general responsibility for administering the program and for maintaining the program handbook.

## **2.9. Academic Advisor**

Every degree-seeking student is assigned to a specific faculty member who acts as his/her Academic Advisor. The goal of academic advising is to provide detailed information to students concerning their program and above all to help students manage their time at the university to the best advantage and to graduate within the expected study period. Students may change their Academic Advisor at any time after their first semester of study.

## **2.10. Program Handbook**

Every academic master program has a program handbook. The program handbook contains the program-specific graduation requirements including a reference to the Policies for Academic Master Studies.

# **3. Admission and Enrollment**

## **3.1. Number of Admissions**

The Dean in consultation with the Program Coordinators determines the number of students to be admitted based on the available resources.

## **3.2. Admission Requirements**

Entry into an academic master program as a degree-seeking student requires a bachelor's degree or equivalent (minimum three years of study). Further admission requirements for academic master programs are specified in the respective program handbooks and on the university website.

Entry into an academic master course as a non-degree-seeking student requires a bachelor's degree or equivalent (minimum three years of study). Further admission requirements for

non-degree-seeking students are defined by the Instructor of Record in consultation with the Program Coordinator of the program which the course is assigned to.

### **3.3. Admission Procedure**

Applications for academic master programs are reviewed in a standardized procedure.

### **3.4. Scope of Admission**

Applicants who meet the admission requirements are admitted to a specific academic master program or to a specific academic master course. Admission cannot be transferred to another program or course.

### **3.5. Enrollment**

For their initial enrollment, admitted students need to provide the Student Records Office with certain required documents, as outlined on the Student Records Office website. In general, students who arrive more than three weeks after the beginning of the semester will not be allowed to enroll at Jacobs University for that academic year.

All students remain enrolled for the entire expected study period, unless they meet their graduation requirements before or after the expected study period. In case of an early graduation an early disenrollment from the Register of Students is possible. If a student needs more time to meet all graduation requirements, the student can, in exceptional cases, apply for an extension of studies.

Double enrollment is only possible for students who, in addition to their enrollment at Jacobs University, are enrolled at another non-German university. This may be the case for exchange students from non-German universities. In case of cooperation contracts between Jacobs University and another German university for the conduct of joint degree programs, an enrollment at the partner university is possible.

### **3.6. Disenrollment**

Students are automatically disenrolled in the semester of their graduation. In addition, students may voluntarily disenroll or they may be disenrolled as a consequence of academic suspension (see § 5.6) or as a consequence of academic misconduct.

### **3.7. Leave of Absence**

Students on a Leave of Absence remain enrolled at Jacobs University but may not participate in coursework at Jacobs University or receive credits towards their degree. Reasons for

leaves of absence are prolonged illness, military or civil service, maternity and/or parental leave, and internships. Leaves of absence must be approved in advance by the Academic Advisor and the Student Records Office via the Leave of Absence Form.

### **3.8. Readmission**

Students who have been disenrolled from Jacobs University but have not yet finished the degree they have originally been admitted to may apply for readmission to the university. Readmission is granted on the basis of the policies valid at the time of the student's readmission. Readmission to a previously enrolled study program cannot be guaranteed.

The application must include:

- The application form.
- An explanatory statement outlining why the student seeks for readmission to the university. If the student has left Jacobs University because of academic or disciplinary suspension or because of illness, he/she is required to bring proof that these circumstances have changed.
- A detailed study plan for the missing graduation requirements.

The university reserves the right to require additional documentation (e.g. medical confirmations, financial plan).

The application for readmission will be discussed and decided by an ad-hoc committee consisting of the Dean, the student's former Academic Advisor, the Program Coordinator of the program the student is applying to, and a member of the Student Records Office. The committee may invite further university members (e.g. College Coordinators, Counselors) if deemed appropriate. Every student who has been readmitted will be put on academic probation for the first semester after readmission unless there is only one semester left before the student's expected graduation.

## **4. Course Administration**

### **4.1. Registration**

At Jacobs University, the academic year is divided into a Fall semester and a Spring semester. The January Intersession belongs to the Fall semester. Mandatory courses can be scheduled for the Intersession period. Therefore, students are expected to be present during the Intersession, if they have to attend mandatory courses relevant for their studies.

Every semester, each student must register for the modules and courses relevant for the student's program. The deadlines for registration are published each semester by the Student Records Office. The university reserves the right to cancel a course in case fewer than 5 students have registered for it.

If a student is not formally enrolled in a course, no grade can be offered for that course, even if the student completes the work for it. If a student is formally enrolled in a course, the Instructor of Record must provide a result for that student at the end of the semester even if the student has not participated in the course.

Some modules/courses have pre-requisites that have to be fulfilled before registration. Additionally, there are co-requisites which require students to register in parallel to two or more associated courses.

Students may be exempted from the pre-requisite requirement upon approval of the Instructor of Record and/or the Study Program Coordinator.

#### **4.2. Pass Option**

Degree-seeking students may use a pass option for one designated course during their academic master studies. The title of the course designated as pass appears on the transcript but the grade is not listed on the transcript. A course may be designated as pass regardless of the number of credit points and regardless of whether the course is mandatory. The student may not use a pass option on the course in which the master's thesis is written.

If a student retakes a course formerly designated as pass in a subsequent semester, the title of the course and the grade of the retake appear on the transcript. The grade is counted towards the GPA. It is not possible to use the pass option of this course for any other course.

#### **4.3. Audit**

Degree-seeking students may register for courses as auditors. Students who attend courses as auditors will receive no ECTS credit points. The respective course will not be graded and will not be counted towards the degree. These courses will appear on the transcript with the indication that the course was audited.



#### **4.4. Drop/Add**

During a period of typically two weeks after the beginning of classes, students have the opportunity to change their class schedules by dropping and/or adding modules and courses. The drop/add deadline is published each semester in the Academic Calendar.

Under special circumstances students can apply to drop or add a course after the official drop/add deadline. In that case, the student has to submit a late drop/add form to the Student Records Office. A course can only be late dropped or added before the end of classes. The Student Records Office is responsible for the final decision on late drops and adds after consulting with the Instructor of Record and the student's Academic Advisor.

#### **4.5. Course Syllabi**

Each Instructor of Record must prepare a syllabus for a course before the beginning of teaching in any semester. This syllabus must contain the precise plan for course sessions and must specify, if pertinent, the literature or other appropriate work to prepare for any given session. Part of each syllabus is a precise specification of the tasks a student has to perform during the course and the extent (in percentages) to which these graded tasks will add up to the final grade in the course.

#### **4.6. Final Examinations**

Final examinations may be conducted in any academic master course and comprise, among others, written examinations, oral examinations, presentations, interviews, conversations, team projects and take-home examinations.

The final examination in a course should be comprehensive, synthetic, and address material covered during the entire course. That is, the final examination should not only be used to examine students concerning the material covered during the latter part of the course.

The final examination schedule will be designed so that no student will have more than two examinations on the same day. Make-up sessions will be scheduled to accommodate students who would otherwise have to take more than two examinations in one day, and faculty must provide for a make-up examination at a mutually agreeable time — either before or after the regularly scheduled examination time — in cases where a make-up examination is justified. In cases where a faculty member chooses not to adhere to the examination schedule, the final examination must be scheduled in such a way as to avoid overlapping examinations for any student or forcing a student to take three final examinations in one day.

Faculty members may not administer a final examination during a regularly scheduled class meeting.

In cases where the final examination consists of an oral presentation, interview, or conversation, a competent person other than the examiner must take minutes of the examination. The Instructor of Record must retain those minutes as a written record until at least one year after the student graduates or otherwise separates permanently from the university. In those cases where an oral presentation before a class constitutes a final examination, one examiner is sufficient. In cases where multiple examiners are used, the results of the examiners' deliberations must be unanimous.

Team projects may be used as a final examination. In such cases, the Instructor of Record must clearly indicate the method of determining credit for the participants in the team. Such a method may provide that the contributions of the individual team members be clearly identifiable and therefore gradable, or it may provide that all members of the team receive the same grade based on the collective achievement of the team.

Instructors of Record may administer take-home examinations. The deadline for turning in take-home Examinations will be the end of the regularly scheduled final examination period for the course in which the take-home examination was administered. In the case of a take-home final, the Instructor of Record must state in writing on the sheet containing the test questions the exact location, time, and date for turning in the final examination.

Instructors of Record may proctor examinations but they are not required to do so. Instructors of Record must, however, be available to students to clarify matters arising from the nature of the examination itself, for example, matters having to do with phrasing or possible ambiguity in an examination question. Instructors of Record have full discretion in determining what resources Students may or may not use in taking the final examination.

The Instructor of Record is responsible for the grade assigned to the final examination even in cases where other qualified individuals may actually perform the grading and assign the grade. Faculty Members are encouraged to have other members of the Faculty or qualified external parties serve as a second reader for grading a final examination as is deemed appropriate and useful.

The Instructor of Record may offer a make-up examination to students who have failed the final examination. The result of the make-up examination will be counted towards the course grade.

Any exam paper not picked up by students should be held for two years. Exam papers not picked up within two years should be destroyed.

#### **4.7. Excuse from Academic Obligations**

Students may be excused officially by the Student Records Office from taking examinations or from attending mandatory class/lab sessions for the following reasons only:

- Ill health or personal emergency: Illness must be documented with a sick certificate (i.e., Arbeitsunfähigkeitsbescheinigung) issued by a qualified physician. The university reserves the right to request a second medical opinion. Other emergencies must be appropriately documented in writing. Sick certificates and documentation for personal emergencies must be submitted to the Student Records Office by the third calendar day from the beginning of illness/of the emergency. Please note that these three days include the first day of the illness/of the emergency. If the third calendar day is a Saturday, Sunday or a public holiday, the deadline is extended to the next working day. If students submit a sick certificate after the deadline, an excuse may be issued, when applicable, only for the submission date and the two calendar days preceding it. Predated or backdated sick certificates – i.e., when the visit to the physician takes place outside of the documented sickness period – will be accepted only when the visit to the physician precedes or follows the period of illness by no more than one calendar day. Students may not attend any classes, lab sessions, exams or other academic events during the entire duration for which the excuse is issued.
- Class trip in a mandatory course: Excuses for class trips in mandatory courses will be sent out by the Student Records Office as early as possible after the drop and add period each semester.

Regardless of the reason for their absence, students must inform the Instructor of Record before the beginning of the examination or class/lab session that they will not be able to attend. The day after the excuse ends, students must contact the Instructor of Record in order to clarify the make-up procedure.

Make-up examinations have to be taken and incomplete coursework has to be submitted by no later than the deadline for submitting incomplete coursework as published in the Academic Calendar.

Students who go on a class trip in a course that is not mandatory for their program or participate in events of importance to the university may ask the Student Records Office to issue a recommendation for an excuse. Requests for recommendations must be made via email well in advance of the event or the class trip. The decision whether to excuse the student rests with the Instructor of Record.

#### 4.8. Language Courses

Degree-seeking students can register for language courses. Program-specific regulations are defined in the respective program handbook. Participants must take a placement test for all levels. A language course cannot be retaken when a higher level course has already been successfully completed. Students can, at their own risk, take for credits language courses half a level higher than the one in which they have been placed according to the placement test.

#### 4.9. Grading

As a rule, courses that are required for the attainment of a Master of Arts or a Master of Science degree are graded. In addition, courses may be offered on a pass/fail basis. Course grades are awarded by the Instructor of Record.

Courses at Jacobs University are graded according to the following table:

Percentage	Numerical grade	Letter Grade	ECTS
≥ 95%	1.00	A+	Excellent (A)
≥ 90%	1.33	A	
≥ 85%	1.67	A-	Very Good (B)
≥ 80%	2.00	B+	Good (C)
≥ 75%	2.33	B	
≥ 70%	2.67	B-	Satisfactory (D)
≥ 65%	3.00	C+	
≥ 60%	3.33	C	
≥ 55%	3.67	C-	Sufficient (E)
≥ 50%	4.00	D+	
≥ 45%	4.33	D	
≥ 40%	4.67	D-	Failing (F)
< 40%	5.00	F	

At the end of each semester, Instructors of Record calculate the final grade for each student. Instructors of Record submit all partial and final grades to the Student Records Office. The submission is done electronically. For security reasons the Instructor of Record must also provide the Student Records Office with a signed print-out for the grades submitted.

The deadline for submitting grades to the Student Records Office for the Fall semester is the subsequent January 15, or a workday close to that date as specified by the Student Records Office. The deadline for submitting final grades for the Spring semester is the subsequent June 15, or a workday close to that date as specified by the Student Records Office.

Disputes over course grades should be resolved in the first instance by the Instructor of Record in discussion with the student. In cases where students choose to appeal a course grade that appeal must be made in writing to the Student Records Office.

#### **4.10. Incomplete Course Work**

Students are permitted in unusual circumstances to request and receive in any course in which they are currently enrolled a temporary incomplete grade, indicated by an “I” on the transcript. An “I” will be awarded only in cases where a student requests from the Instructor of Record permission to turn in course work after the end of the semester. Such a request must be submitted in writing to the instructor on or before the last day of final examinations. The student’s Academic Advisor is informed about this.

The student must then submit any incomplete course work on or before the first day of classes next semester, whereupon the Instructor of Record will convert the “I” to a numeric grade based on the quality of work accomplished in the course. The instructor may choose not to award full credit for work that is turned in late, so that the penalty for using the “I” option may be that of receiving a lower grade in the course.

If the missing course work is not submitted by the deadline, the Instructor will treat that part of the course requirements as not having been met and issue a grade for the semester accordingly. Discretion concerning what course work may be appropriately turned in late — and therefore discretion over whether to permit an incomplete grade — rests with the Instructor of Record.

#### **4.11. Retake**

If a student wants to improve the grade of a course, he/she can retake the course. The following regulations apply:

- Retaking a course means not only repeating the final examination and/or other exams, but it means registering for the course again, attending all classes, and participating in all exams;
- The course with the better grade will appear on the transcript. The course with the worse grade will be deleted from the transcript.

#### **4.12. Advanced Placement and Transfer Credits**

##### **Advanced Placement**

Advanced Placement credits may be awarded for academic skills acquired outside of formal university-level coursework. Advanced Placement credit is conditional on a demonstrated level of competence equivalent to a university-level course regularly offered at Jacobs University. Not all Jacobs University courses are eligible for Advanced Placement. Language courses are generally excluded from Advanced Placement.

Approval of Advanced Placement is granted by the Program Coordinator and the Dean. All Advanced Placement applications must be submitted during the student's first semester at Jacobs University. Courses taken once at Jacobs University may not be replaced by Advanced Placement credits. The university may request students applying for Advanced Placement to pass a formal written examination.

##### **Transfer Credits**

Transfer credits may be awarded for coursework completed at another university or institution of higher learning. To apply for the recognition of Transfer credits, students must submit the Transfer credit form, the course syllabi and an official transcript indicating the courses taken to the Student Records Office. Upon recommendation of the Program Coordinator and the Academic Advisor, the Student Records Office rules on the acceptance of Transfer credits.

Jacobs University reserves the right to determine the number of ECTS credits awarded to each transferred course. The grade earned in the transferred course will not be shown on the transcript. Not all coursework completed at other institutions is eligible for Transfer credits at Jacobs University. Language courses in the languages taught at Jacobs University will be accepted if taken at other universities or at our partner institutes; credits acquired in languages other than those offered at Jacobs University will only be transferred if issued by a partner university of Jacobs University.

For coursework completed prior to enrollment at Jacobs University, students must apply for recognition of Transfer credit during their first semester at Jacobs University.

If a student takes part in a study abroad or a student exchange with a formal partner institution of Jacobs University, he/she can transfer the credits and grades earned at this institution to Jacobs University. Student exchange credits as well as the grade - transferred into the Jacobs University grading system - appear on the transcript. They count as regular Jacobs University courses toward the degree. Exceptions from this rule require the prior (i.e., before the attendance of the course) consent of the Academic Advisor and the Program Coordinator.

## **5. Graduation Requirements**

### **5.1. Credit Points**

A Master of Arts or a Master of Science degree requires at least 120 ECTS credit points, including a master's thesis of 15-30 ECTS credit points.

### **5.2. Course Work**

In order to graduate, degree-seeking students have to successfully complete all modules, courses and other components as specified in the respective program handbook.

### **5.3. Master's Thesis**

In order to graduate, degree-seeking students have to submit a master's thesis. The thesis is written under the guidance of a thesis supervisor.

The cover page of the master's thesis needs to show the title, the university's name, the month and year of submission, the name of the student and the names of the members of the examination committee. Furthermore, the thesis needs to contain a declaration signed by the student that the thesis is independent work that has not been submitted elsewhere. The thesis is submitted to the Students Records Office and is checked for plagiarism.

For the evaluation of the master's thesis, the Program Coordinator establishes an examination committee which consists of the thesis supervisor and at least one other member. The other members can be Jacobs University faculty members or external members.

The master's thesis is graded according to the Jacobs University grading scheme (see section 4.9) by all members of the examination committee. Each examiner must submit the completed "Master's Thesis Evaluation" form to the Student Records Office within four weeks after receiving the thesis. The grades of all examiners are averaged. If the average grade is not a Jacobs University grade, the examiners must agree upon a grade that is a Jacobs University grade.

The thesis is accepted if the resulting grade is 4.0 or better. If not, the examination committee decides whether the student is granted the right to resubmit within 3 months.

#### **5.4. Graduation**

A student may complete the requirements for an academic master program at any time during the academic year.

A degree-seeking student who wants to receive his/her diploma during graduation ceremony must submit his/her master's thesis at least two weeks before the ceremony. The examiners must provide the master's thesis evaluation form at least 24 hours before the beginning of the graduation ceremony to the Student Records Office.

Degree-seeking students who want to participate in the graduation ceremony as a so-called walkthrough must provide a written confirmation of their supervisor that they are expected to finish their thesis requirements by no later than August 31. The confirmation must be submitted to the Student Records Office by May 31.

#### **5.5. Diploma, Diploma Supplement and Final Transcript**

Upon graduation and after completing the formal checkout, every degree-seeking student receives the following document documents:

- Diploma: The diploma states the name and birth date of the degree holder, the degree and program, and the date of the conferral of the degree. The diploma carries the seal of Jacobs University and is signed by the President of the university and the Dean responsible for graduate studies.
- Diploma supplement: The diploma supplement conforms to the guidelines of the Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK) and provides more detailed information about the university and the specific program of study. It also includes the final GPA and



corresponding ECTS grade, the date of the conferral of the degree and, if applicable, further special achievements.

- Final transcript: The final transcript lists all modules a student has taken at Jacobs University, including the grades of the individual courses. It also lists the semester GPA for each semester of study, the cumulative GPA for the entire study and the corresponding ECTS grade. The final transcript also shows the Thesis title, the date of the conferral of the degree and, if applicable, further special achievements. The transcript is signed by a staff member of the Student Records Office and carries the seal of the University.

Upon successful completion of an academic master course, non-degree-seeking students are awarded a certificate and a transcript.

### **5.6. Progress Monitoring and Probation**

Any student who receives a semester grade point average worse than 3.0 or who does not receive at least 20 ECTS credit points in any single semester will be placed upon academic probation. The Student Records Office will inform the student, the Academic Advisor and the Dean. Thereafter, the Student must achieve a semester grade point average 3.0 or better and at least 20 ECTS credit points in the subsequent semester in which the Student enrolls at Jacobs University in order to be restored to good academic standing. Failure to do so will result in suspension from the University. A student whose semester GPA is below 4.33 will be suspended.

### **5.7. Extension of Studies**

Degree-seeking students who are not able to finish their studies within the time frame of the respective program must apply for an additional semester. The application will be discussed and decided upon by the Dean responsible for graduate studies, the student's Academic Advisor, the Study Program Coordinator and the Student Records Office. Jacobs University reserves the right to decline the application for an additional semester. In this case the student has to leave the university without a degree.

## **6. Administrative Details**

### **6.1. Committee on Examinations and Standing**

The Committee on Examinations and Standing is an academic body that decides on official appeals by students in matters such as academic examinations, extension of studies,

readmission, and suspension, as well as other complaints regarding examinations or academic standing that could not be solved otherwise. The committee is an independent appeals board which acts according to the policies of the university. Its decisions are binding. It is a non-public body. The committee consists of the following members with voting rights (which may be replaced by substitutes):

- one Dean for undergraduate education
- one Dean for graduate education
- one faculty member from the focus area Health
- one faculty member from the focus area Mobility
- one faculty member from the focus area Diversity
- one research associate
- one undergraduate student
- one graduate student

## **6.2. Administrative Fees**

All administrative fees for academic master studies are specified in a separate document (*Gebührenordnung*).