rijksuniversiteit groningen / faculteit der letteren

Academic year 2025/2026

Assessment Plan

Master's Programme Middle Eastern Studies

1 / Vision of teaching and assessment

a. Vision of the RUG

In line with the educational vision of the University of Groningen the programme of Middle Eastern Studies has opted for a student-oriented approach to education. It focuses on creating strong links between students and staff, between education and research and between education and relevant social issues, in a national and international context (see https://www.rug.nl/about-ug/policy-and-strategy/strategic-plan/).

The associated teaching strategy aims to encourage students to become respected participants in the academic community. This goal is achieved by:

- create an academic and social environment in which students are actively involved in their own learning and in which learning and the development of their own talents are central;
- deliver top-quality education that is based on research skills of staff and allows students to study and work at the frontiers of knowing;
- equip students with the necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge needed to compete successfully in the international labour market.

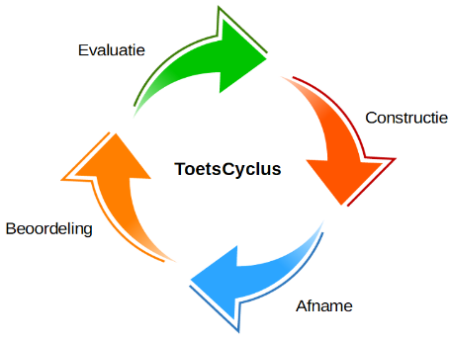
b. Faculty vision

The faculty's educational vision is consistent with that of the RUG, and can be summarised thus (see https://www.rug.nl/let/onze-faculteit/organisatie/diensten-en-voorzieningen/cliq/publicaties/strategieplan-cliq.pdf):

- Being able to do research with big data should be integrated into education;
- We offer an interactive learning environment, in which dialogue is central;
- Eminent scientists from home and abroad are brought in;
- Teachers develop forms of work that encourage interaction;
- Efforts are being made to permanently improve educational quality;
- Together, students and teachers form a true learning community;
- Education is built on recognisable curricula;
- Assessment, apart from assessing performance, also serves to provide insight into their progress towards final qualifications. Here, formative evaluation (feedback) plays a more important role.

2 / Rules for completing the test cycle (from design to evaluation and optimisation)

The programme follows the protocols proposed by the Faculty of Arts for designing, evaluating, and optimising tests. The diagram below depicts this testing cycle:



3 / Assessment dossier

a. The assessment dossier

The requirements of the assessment dossier are set out in §4 of the 'Protocol for Quality Assurance in the Assessment of Course Units' drawn up by the Board of Examiners.

All the examiners of a degree programme must provide the Board of Examiners with an 'assessment dossier' containing the following:

a. the syllabus

b. the list of marks, comprising all marks that count towards the final mark

c.

- for assessments in the narrower sense of the word (i.e. tests): the test that was set, incl. model answers/key
- for written assignments: the formulation of the assignment, information about the assessment method (assessment criteria and standards) if this is not listed in the syllabus, and the completed assessment forms
- for final assignments: the completed assessment forms and the work submitted (with or without the lecturer's comments)

d. the assessment blueprint, minutes of peer-support meetings, evaluations and self-evaluations of course units, etc., if available

e. an evaluation form completed by the examiner with information about how the assessment proceeded.

b. Parties involved

The following parties are involved in fulfilling duties related to the assessment dossier:

- Examiners of the individual modules
- Programme Committee
- Board of Examiners

4 / Assessment timetable

Overview of learning outcomes of the degree programme + matrix	Appendix 1
Schematic overview of time periods intended for assessment, modes of assessment used and, if relevant, learning pathways	Appendix 2
Overview of the intended learning outcomes of the course units and their modes of assessment	Appendix 3
Additional regulations for the graduation dossier	Appendix 4

The objectives of the degree programme, set out in the learning outcomes of the degree programme (Appendix 1), form the guiding principles. All course units together fulfil a role in working towards these learning outcomes. This is reflected in a coherent curriculum with a transparent structure. The matrix of learning outcomes (Appendix 1) defines the course units that include summative assessments and distinguishes between a) course units with assessments that *lead up to* the attainment level set out in the programme-level learning outcomes and b) course units with assessments *at this attainment level* (in the latter case the learning outcomes of the course unit are thus identical to the programme-level learning outcomes of the degree programme). This distinction is expressed as follows:

'x', i.e. underlined, is used for summative[1] assessments at the level specified in the programme-level learning outcomes
'x' for summative assessments at lower performance levels
'fx' for formative[2] evaluations at lower performance levels

In parallel with the curriculum, the assessment programme (Appendix 2) offers a balanced, well-structured overview of modes of assessment and exam periods. Course units taught within one learning pathway may be given matching visual markings in the overview.
In order to gain insight at the programme level into whether the chosen modes of assessment tie in with the learning outcomes of the course units and create a balanced mix in the run-up to the programme-level learning outcomes of the degree programme, the intended learning outcomes of the course units are related to their modes of assessment (Appendix 3).
Specific rules may apply to certain components of the graduation dossier (e.g. for the thesis: approval of the thesis proposal, amount of supervision, resit). These rules are set out in Appendix 4.

[1] Summative assessment aims to assess a student's knowledge and skills. Such assessments are usually awarded a mark, accompanied by a justification of the mark (adapted from *Toetsen in het hoger onderwijs* (2017)).
[2] Formative evaluation relates to the process of searching, aggregating and interpreting information, which students and lecturers can then use to determine how students are doing in their learning process, what they should work towards and how this can be most effectively done (adapted from *Toetsen in het hoger onderwijs* (2017)).

5 / Safeguarding of assessment quality by the Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners is responsible for safeguarding the quality of assessment at both the degree programme level and the level of individual course units.

a. Safeguarding of assessment quality at degree programme level

The Board of Examiners annually issues advice on each degree programme's draft assessment plan for the coming academic year.

b. Safeguarding of assessment quality at course unit level

The Board of Examiners has a procedure for the assessments of all course units in a degree programme, bearing in mind the osition of the course unit in the curriculum and in a specific learning pathway.

6 / Archiving

Subject coordinators and lecturers archive the test file on the Student Portal of the relevant subject. Thesis assessments and justifications are archived by the secretariat. Digital and written tests are archived in accordance with the general common rules of archiving.

7 / List of documents relevant to assessment

Faculty vision of teaching and assessment – see https://myuniversity.rug.nl/infonet/medewerkers/let/onderwijs/vision-for-education.

Rules and Regulations – the internal regulations of the Board of Examiners.

Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER = OER; *Onderwijs- en examenregeling*) – a legally binding document that applies to the entire cohort of students who start a degree programme in a certain academic year. The TER may also contain transitional arrangements for previous cohorts.

Matrix of learning outcomes – an appendix to the Assessment Plan that specifies the course units with *summative* assessment leading up to or at the level specified in the programme-level learning outcomes and the course units with formative assessment.

Placement manual – a manual for the placement course unit.

Syllabus – a document that sets out the details of the TER and the Assessment Plan at course unit level in accordance with the information in Ocasys.

Assessment programme – the implementation of the TER, Part A, Article 4.16

Appendix 1. Learning outcomes of the degree programme + Matrix of learning outcomes

Qualifications Master level (Dublin-descriptors)	**Final qualifications and programme learning outcomes Master**
	The graduate students in the Master programme MES demonstrate:
Knowledge and understanding Students have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;	**1.** Specific knowledge in the field of political and religious developments in the contemporary Middle East. **2.** Insight in order to study the field from a theoretical and methodological point of view. The student is aware of current approaches. **3.** Knowledge of the scientific codes of conduct / ethics with regard to referring to and making use of the work and insights of others, and with regard to the collection and processing of empirical data (data). **4.** In-depth knowledge and insight into current developments within the field.
Applying knowledge and understanding Students can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;	**5.** The ability to formulate independently a scientific problem and to choose and use an adequate theoretical framework and one or more relevant research methods. **6.** The ability to deal with complex issues systematically and creatively, and to arrive at a well-founded opinion. **7.** The ability to write independently and scientifically, and speak as a well-informed critic, or as an empirically oriented scientist, while making adequate use of relevant issues, debates and developments in media and culture. **8.** The ability to investigate scientifically the relationship between characteristics of the western world and the Middle East. **9.** The ability to investigate scientifically how concepts and activities contribute to the social functioning of utterances related to the Middle East. **10.** The ability to provide a scientific analysis of a genre, a period, a movement or an oeuvre in relation to the Middle East. **11.** The ability to carry out independently theoretical and empirical research within their own field. **12.** The ability to use the acquired scientific knowledge, insights and skills in the performance of a social and / or academic function with due regard for ethical and societal issues.

Making judgements Students have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements;	**13.** The ability to adopt a well-considered position in current developments within the discipline independently and to defend this in debate (oral and written). **14.** The ability to provide an independent well-founded (comparative) analysis and interpretation of aspects of the Middle East. **15.** The ability to assess critically theoretical and empirical research within their own field.
Communication Students can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;	**16.** The ability to use scientific research and present the results of this research both in writing and orally to an audience of specialists and non-specialists.
Lifelong learning skills Students have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.	**17.** The ability to process large amounts of complex information efficiently and effectively. **18.** To realize that the developments in the field and beyond require continuous training, as well as the necessary written and oral skills to be able to (continue to) follow the scientific literature and the debate in his / her field. **19.** The ability to keep track of developments in the scientific field, to deepen and supplement their own knowledge and insights, and to apply these in a professional practice. **20.** The skills required for successful professional practice. These include: o showing initiative and personal responsibility; o being able to make decisions in complex and unpredictable situations; o the ability to work independently; o the ability to function as a member of a team.

Matrix of learning outcomes

	Knowledge and understanding				**Applying knowledge and understanding**								**Making judgements**			**Commu-nication**	**Learning skills**					
Year 1, sem. 1	**1.**	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**	**5.**	**6.**	**7.**	**8.**	**9.**	**10.**	**11.**	**12.**	**13.**	**14.**	**15.**	**16.**	**17.**	**18.**	**19.**	**20.**	**Taal E: Engels**	**ECTS**
Conflicts in the Middle East	x	**x**		x	x	x	x				x		x		fx	x	x				E	10
International Organizations, Imperialism and the Middle East	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x		x	x	x	x	x			**x**	**E**	**5**
Understanding Sectarianism and Minorities in the Middle East	X	X		X		X	X	**X**	X		X		X	X		X	X				E	5
Contemporary Developments in the Middle East	**x**			x			**x**						x	x		x		x			E	5
Memory, Heritage and Politics	x	x	x						x	x	x			x		x	x				E	5
Year 1, sem. 2																						

Appendix 2. Learning outcomes and their assessment in course units

Tutorial		x	x	x		x	x				x	**x**		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	E/NL	10
Internship							x					**x**				x		x	x	x	E/NL	10
Thesis		x	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**			**x**	**x**	**x**		**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**E**	20

Year 1	**Semester 1**	
Module	Code	Learning outcome
Conflicts in the Middle East	LXX029M10	Upon successful completion of this course unit, students are able to: – Identify and interpret different dimensions of conflicts in the contemporary Middle East (1, 4) – Recognise and explain relevant academic theories about, approaches to and perspectives on the contemporary Middle East (2, 13, 17) – Apply relevant theoretical and methodological insights to contemporary conflicts in the Middle East (11) – Compose, carry out and present a research demonstrating that the student is able to apply the knowledge and insights obtained to a specific case (5, 6, 7, 16) – Critically review research of fellow students with regard to content, composition and academic quality (15)
International Organizations, Imperialism and the Middle East	LXX037M05	Upon successful completion of this course unit, students are able to: – Understand the roles and functions of international organisations in the Middle East (1) – Identify, assess, and deploy different theoretical and conceptual perspectives on international organisations (2, 9, 15) – Apply insights regarding the variety of international organisations in the Middle East and their imperialist patterns (1, 4, 15) – Provide constructive feedback and commentary on the research of peers (3, 13, 15) – Communicate findings and arguments effectively in oral and written forms (5, 6, 11, 14, 16, 17)
Understanding Sectarianism and Minorities in the Middle East	LXX034M05	Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able: · to acquire insight into 'majorities' and 'minorities' in the Middle East · to have an understanding of how communal boundaries are defined · to critically analyse and use primary sources from past and present in their own research

		· to develop an awareness of the diversity of scholarly traditions concerned with sectarianism and minorities in the Middle East studies · to foster reflexive analytical tools, based on an awareness of multiple perspectives · to obtain familiarity with interdisciplinary approaches to the study of diasporas and minorities · to carry out a research project on a well-defined topic, based on primary source texts
Contemporary Developments in the Middle East	LXX032M05	Upon successful completion of the course unit, the student – has specialized knowledge of historical, political, social, religious and economic developments in the Middle East (1) – is well-acquainted with contemporary developments in the modern Middle East (4) – is able to independently conduct critical, academic research about contemporary developments in the Middle East (7) – can analyze contemporary developments in the Middle East and position him/herself in the wider academic debate (14) – knows how to present a contemporary subject in an academic presentation (16) – is capable of digesting large amounts of complex information (18)
Memory, Heritage and Politics	LXX031M05	Upon successful completion of the course unit, the student - has developped an understanding of key themes in the politics and international relations of the modern and contemporary Middle East - has acquired the ability to analyse the role of regional and global powers as well as non-state actors in shaping the Middle Eastern political landscape - has been able to combine historical and conceptual approaches - has developped and applied comparative skills in analysing case studies and drawing on past and present events - can communicate findings and arguments effectively in oral and written forms

Year 1	**Semester 2**	
Module	Code	Learning outcome
Tutorial	LXX024M10	Upon successful completion of the course unit, the student – has advanced knowledge of the field of expertise on which the tutorial is conducted (4) – is able to critically assess the knowledge-level in this field of expertise (2; 15; 18; 19) – is able to independently search for, analyze and interpret research data in this field of expertise (3; 11; 14; 17; 20) – is able to adequately report his/her findings, both verbally and in writing (7; 12; 16; 20)
Internship	LXX111M10	Upon successful completion of the course unit, the student

		– is able to function adequately and independently in the organization – has proven to be able to realise the specific output (products and/or services) as listed in the placement plan – is able to report adequately and accessibly on the internship in the final report by describing the performed tasks – is able to reflect on the internship with sufficient depth – has proven to be able to realise the personal learning outcomes as listed in the placement plan
Thesis	LXX998M20	Upon successful completion of the course unit, the student – has acquired specialist knowledge and understanding of one or more themes related to and/or regions within the Middle East as well as scholarly research thereon – has acquired advanced knowledge and understanding of theories, methods and techniques (including interdisciplinary ones) in Middle Eastern Studies – has acquired knowledge and understanding of the complexity and diversity of the Middle East and scholarly research thereon – is able to independently and academically draw up a convincingly contextualised research question, select the relevant theories and methods, and to gather and critically analyse various sources and literature – is able to apply the acquired knowledge of the Middle East and Middle Eastern Studies and its theories, methods and techniques to the assessment of research within the field – is able to apply transferable skills related to Middle Eastern Studies in professional contexts, (skills) such as: a. personal responsibility b. the ability to take well-founded decisions in complex and unpredictable situations c. problem-solving skills d. the ability to constructively address feedback by experts – is able to evaluate complex academic knowledge and research results and to discuss these critically and effectively with academics, while reflecting on their own standpoints and those of others – is able to set up and implement a research project of a predefined scope based on a complex yet transparent question and to process its results into a well-founded conclusion, bearing in mind the possible academic, social or ethical aspects of the question. – is able to to communicate in a clear, accurate, attractive and linguistically correct way in written form the results of their own research and that of others. – is able to actively participate in oral discussions on the results of their own research and to defend these – is able to to systematically identify their own learning needs with regard to current and new topics and to independently initiate a learning process

Appendix 3. Schematic overview of the assessment programme

YEAR 1 semester 1		**Teaching unit 1**		**Teaching unit 2**	
Course title	**Code**	**Weeks 1-7: classes**	**Weeks 8-10 : exams**	**Weeks 11-17: classes**	**Weeks 18-20 : exams**
Conflicts in the Middle East	LXX029M10	Weekly assignments	Exam: essay questions (30%)	Weekly assignments	Paper (70%)
International Organizations, Imperialism and the Middle East	LXX037M05	Weekly assignments Oral presentation (25%) In-class participation (10%)	Research paper (65%)		
Understanding Sectarianism and Minorities in the Middle East	LXX034M05			Source & case study assignment (30%) & pitch (30%)	Local newspaper article (40%)
Contemporary developments in the Middle East	LXX032M05	Weekly assignments	Paper		
Memories, Heritage and Politics	LXX031M05			Podcast (30%)	Research paper (70%)
Total ECTS assessed		2	11	4	13
YEAR 1 semester 2		**Teaching unit 3**		**Teaching unit 4**	
Course title	**Code**	**Weeks 1-7: classes**	**Weeks 8-10 : exams**	**Weeks 11-17: classes**	**Weeks 18-20 : exams**

Tutorial	LXX024M10				Final report
Internship	LXX111M10				Final report
Master’s thesis	LXX999M20				Thesis
Total ECTS assessed					30

Academic year 2023 - 2024 | Semester II

Manual Master's Thesis Middle Eastern Studies

MA Middle Eastern Studies

LXX998M20

Coordinator: dr. S. Goldstein-Sabbah

Supervisors: Prof. dr. K. Sanchez-Summerer, dr. L.Admiraal, dr. P. Nanninga, dr. S. Goldstein-Sabbah, dr. P. Nanninga, dr. K. Santing, dr. M. Madbouly, dr. K. El Taki

1 /	Type of course unit, number of ECTS credit points and admission requirements	
	a.	**Type:** Major
	b.	**ETCS credit points:** 20 ECTS
	c.	**Admission requirements:** having obtained at least 20 ECTS from the compulsory course units from the following courses in Master's programme Middle Eastern Studies: Conflicts in the Middle East; Contemporary Developments in the Middle East; International Organisations, Imperialism and the Middle East; Religion and Politics; Understanding sectarianism and minorities in the Middle East

2 / Content of the course unit

A Master's thesis is one of the most important instruments to determine whether the student meets the learning outcomes of the Master's programme. The student applies the learned knowledge, insights and skills obtained in the programme by designing and executing a research project on a topic related to conflicts and coexistence in the modern Middle East, supervised by one of the staff members. For this purpose, the student designs a well-defined research question, which is answered by means of a number of analytic and reasoned chapters, based on academic literature and, if possible, primary sources.

In short, a Master's thesis is a reasoned essay based on a student's analysis. It is the result of substantial study of literature and (a) primary source(s) and requires students to systematically gather, analyse, and present complex material with demonstrable original contributions and critical reflection. What this means specifically:

- **Reasoned essay based on analysis**: An answer to an academically relevant and substantiated research question, which is formulated based on carefully argued answers to sub-questions. The discussion must demonstrate knowledge of the current state of research and enrich existing academic knowledge. It must not be simply a reformulation of what is found in the literature.
- **Substantial study of literature and sources**: The publications studied must be thoroughly analysed from the perspective of the research question, and interrelated arguments, views and conclusions must be assessed and compared in terms of their value and validity. This will result in a research report that is not merely reproductive but demonstrates the student's ability to analyse and critically evaluate – based on subject knowledge – what others have written about the subject. The report is thus an original contribution to the subject area. For this reason, the thesis should include critical analysis of at least one primary source.

- **Feedback and synthesis**: The discussion must demonstrate cohesion and structure and the conclusion must follow logically from the arguments presented in the various chapters.
- **Important**: The Master's thesis must be the credible result of 560 hours of full-time study at an academic level (20 ECTS).

3 / Position of the course unit in the degree programme

The thesis marks the conclusion of the master's programme and builds upon the knowledge, insights, and skills acquired during the master's studies. Typically, the thesis is written during the second semester of the year. If there are valid reasons, with approval from the thesis coordinator, the thesis can be written during the first semester (if the admissions requirements are met, see 1c).

4 / Learning outcomes of the course unit

Upon successful completion of the course unit, the student:

1.	has acquired specialist knowledge and understanding of one or more themes related to and/or regions within the Middle East as well as scholarly research thereon (1, 4)
2.	has acquired advanced knowledge and understanding of theories, methods and techniques (including interdisciplinary ones) in Middle Eastern Studies (2,3)
3.	has acquired knowledge and understanding of the complexity and diversity of the Middle East and scholarly research thereon (2, 4)
4.	is able to independently and academically draw up a convincingly contextualised research question, select the relevant theories and methods, and gather and critically analyse various sources and literature (5, 6, 11, 15, 17)
5.	is able to apply the acquired knowledge of the Middle East and Middle Eastern Studies and its theories, methods and techniques to the assessment of research within the field (9, 14)
6.	is able to apply transferable skills related to Middle Eastern Studies in professional contexts, (skills) such as: a. personal responsibility b. the ability to make well-founded decisions in complex and unpredictable situations c. problem-solving skills d. the ability to constructively address feedback from experts (12, 20)
7.	is able to evaluate complex academic knowledge and research results and to discuss these critically and effectively with academics, while reflecting on their own standpoints and those of others (14, 18, 19)
8.	is able to set up and implement a research project of a predefined scope based on a complex yet transparent question and to process its results into a well-founded

		conclusion, bearing in mind the possible academic, social or ethical aspects of the question (10, 13)
	9.	is able to communicate in a clear, accurate, attractive and linguistically correct way in written form the results of their own research and that of others. (16)
	10.	is able to actively participate in oral discussions on the results of their own research and to defend these (16)
	11.	is able to systematically identify their own learning needs with regard to current and new topics and to independently initiate a learning process (18, 19)

5 / Mode of instruction and learning activities

The thesis process primarily involves individually conducting scientific research. During the research and writing process, the student has regular meetings with the supervisor individually, as well as with the thesis working group, to discuss progress and review submitted texts. Students submit a mini-proposal at the beginning of the semester, followed by a full proposal, then draft chapters, and finally the complete thesis.

6 / Assessment

a. Mode of assessment

The thesis is independently evaluated by the thesis supervisor and the pre-designated second assessor.

b. Assessment: duration, time and place; topic, writing process, deadlines and procedures; perusal and resits

Deadlines for submission to the supervisor in **semester 1**:

- Mini-proposal: 15 September
- Full proposal: 1 October
- First example chapter: 31 October
- Other chapters: based on deadlines in the full proposal
- Complete thesis for evaluation: 15 January
- Resit: 10 February

Deadlines for submission to the supervisor in **semester 2** (for deadlines within the thesis working group, see appendix 3):

- Mini-proposal: 15 February
- Full proposal: 1 March
- First example chapter: 31 March
- Chapters: based on deadlines in the full proposal
- Complete thesis for evaluation: 15 June
- Resit: 10 July

		The full timeframe for the thesis is set out under heading 10. Weekly Schedule. The following rules apply: ● The deadlines mentioned above, as well as the deadlines formulated in the approved thesis proposal, are strict deadlines. If the student does not meet these deadlines, they may be excluded from the module. Deviation from these deadlines is only allowed after explicit approval by the supervisor. ● Deviations from the deadlines for submitting the thesis for evaluation (15 January/10 Feb. or 15 June/10 July) are only allowed with the approval of the Board of Examination. ● After evaluation, the student will receive an assessment form with the result and feedback from both assessors. If desired, a final discussion can take place. ● The student has the right to submit a 'resit' version of the thesis only if a complete first version has been submitted in time and if this version has been graded with a fail. ● If the resit is also assessed as insufficient or if the student does not pass the module for another reason, the student can participate in the thesis process again in a subsequent semester. This must be done with a new topic and a different supervisor.
	c.	Assessment criteria
		Submitted theses will only be assessed if they meet the **formal criteria**, which are as follows: a. The thesis has been submitted before the deadline via i) Brightspace and ii) an email to the supervisor and the second assessor. b. Formatting: - The thesis includes a title page with title and subtitle; name and student number; study program; names of the supervisor and second assessor; and word count. - The thesis contains a table of contents, clearly distinguished chapters, and a bibliography. - The thesis includes citations using a consistently applied annotation system (in footnotes or in-text). It is recommended to use the annotation system taught in Academic Skills. c. Language: the thesis is written in clear English of (at least) a sufficient level. If there are good reasons (content and/or sources-related), the thesis may be written in Dutch. To do this, a motivated request must be submitted in advance to the thesis coordinator (see mini-proposal, attachment 2). d. For the thesis, one or more primary sources have been analysed, possibly in translation.

		e. Length: the thesis is 18,000 words with a maximum 10% deviation. This excludes references, table of contents, bibliography, and any attachments. The thesis will be assessed based on the following aspects: 1. *Content* a. Research question; formulation and justification b. Subject, presentation, and motivation c. Argumentation and analysis d. Methodology; mastery of research skills e. Research results, sources, and literature; relevance and mastery f. Originality and creativity g. Critical reflection 2. *Reporting* a. Structure; structure of the argument, organization of chapters/sections b. Annotation; source references, notes, bibliography c. Language; language use, clarity, accuracy, style d. Layout e. Size and layout (title page, table of contents, etc.) 3. *Process* a. Independence b. Planning c. Commitment The level of difficulty and originality of the thesis will also be taken into account, and it will be assessed whether the research, given the nature of the subject, has been sufficiently independent. Further information can be found in the enclosed assessment form, which is completed independently by both the supervisor and the second assessor. The feedback from both assessors will subsequently be combined in one feedback form that will be sent to the student. If the thesis is assessed as sufficient (5,5 or higher), it cannot be resubmitted for obtaining a higher grade. If the second version is assessed as insufficient, the student has to start again with a new topic and a new supervisor in the following semester.
	d.	Calculating preliminary and final marks
		After submission, the thesis is assessed by the supervisor and the second assessor. The grade they jointly determine constitutes the final grade for the module. For a passing grade, the minimum grade is 5.5.
	e.	Conditions of taking exams

		To submit the thesis for evaluation, the student must adhere to the agreements made with the guidance, both in terms of individual supervision and in terms of the thesis working group (in semester 2; see attachment 3). Additionally, a mini-proposal and the full proposal must have been submitted at a sufficient level according to the deadlines mentioned in section 6b. The submission of the first chapter serves as a go/no-go moment: if a student has not complied with the agreements and/or has submitted work of insufficient quality, the supervisor, in consultation with the thesis coordinator/thesis working group instructor, may exclude the student from further participation in the thesis process.
	f.	Example of theses
		Examples of theses can be accessed through the University Library's repository.

7 / Cheating and plagiarism

The thesis must always be the result of independent scientific research. Fraud and plagiarism are heavily penalised. This entails the following:

Citations: Specific terminology, information, ideas, and formulations borrowed from other authors must be accompanied by clear citations. Direct quotations are enclosed in quotation marks and are also immediately followed by a citation. Because it must always be clear that the student is the actual author of the piece, inadequate, inaccurate, or incorrect citations will be attributed to the student. The instructor has the right to review the consulted literature and sources, and the student must provide these materials for inspection if required and requested.

AI Chatbots: Because it must always be clear that the student is the actual author of the piece, it is not allowed to use AI chatbots, such as Chat GPT, to generate text that is included in the thesis in whole, in part, or paraphrased. In addition to potential access to the sources used the supervisor may request an oral account from the student.

Collaboration: Without explicit permission from the supervisor, collaboration with or receiving assistance from others is prohibited.

Previous Work: Research and/or texts produced in the context of other educational modules, such as papers and assignments, may not be included in the thesis in whole or in part. In case of doubt about the relationship between the thesis and other work, the student must submit it to the supervisor.

Data: Inventing or intentionally misrepresenting research data is considered fraud.

Theses must be submitted through Brightspace, after which plagiarism and fraud detection software will be used to identify cases of plagiarism and deceit.

In cases of fraud and plagiarism, the provisions of the Education and Examination Regulations (BA OER part A, article 7.18; MA OER part A, article 4.13) apply. In cases of suspected fraud or plagiarism, the Examination Committee for Humanities (ECL) will always be informed. This may result in exclusion from the thesis module or from the entire study programme. For more information go to:

https://student.portal.rug.nl/infonet/studenten/let/facultaire-organisatie-en-voorzieningen/bestuur/examencommissies/?lang=en

8 / Calculation of student workload

- Initiating research and writing the mini-proposal: 56 hours (2 ECTS)
- Continuing research and writing the full outline: 56 hours (2 ECTS)
- Continuing research and writing the sample chapter: 112 hours (4 ECTS)
- Finalising research and writing the thesis: 336 hours (12 ECTS)

Total: 560 hours (20 ECTS)

Note: This workload includes supervision appointments during the various phases of the process.

9 / Literature

Students independently gather and study literature and primary sources related to the topic of their thesis.

10 / Weekly Schedule

The schedule below outlines the weekly schedule for individual guidance in semester 2. For a description of the thesis working group meetings, refer to attachment 3. Students who have permission to write their thesis in the first semester will receive similar semester-specific deadlines.

Step-by-step plan	**Deadline sem. 1**	**Deadline sem. 2**
1. Reflection on possible thesis topics; meeting with intended supervisor to discuss topic	Before 15 September	Before 1 February
2. Submission of the mini-proposal via Brightspace, after which supervisor and second assessor will be formally appointed.	15 September	15 February
3. After approval of the mini-proposal the student composes and submits a full proposal	1 October	1 March
4. After approval of the full proposal, the student writes and submits a draft chapter	31 October	31 March
5. Student writes the thesis and submits separate	November-	April-May

	chapters according to the deadlines set in the thesis proposal. During this period, the student has at least one meeting with the supervisor to discuss progress and draft chapter(s)	December	
6.	Student formally submits the thesis for assessment to the supervisor and second assessor	**15 January**	**15 June**
7.	Assessment by supervisor and second assessor	29 January	29 June
8.	Student submits revised version (if necessary)	10 February	10 July
9.	Lecturer and second assessor assess final version, decide on final mark and submit it for processing	24 February	24 July

11 / Copyright

Respect the copyright to the teaching material. All teaching material is protected by copyright. Students may not make photocopies of teaching material, exams and lectures other than for their own study purposes. In addition, teaching material may not be further distributed in any format. Deliberate violation of copyright is a criminal offense. The University of Groningen will take appropriate measures upon detecting such violations.

Appendix 1. End qualifications MA Middle Eastern Studies

Qualifications Master level (Dublin-descriptors)	**Final qualifications and programme learning outcomes Master**
	The graduate students in the Master programme MES demonstrate:
Knowledge and understanding Students have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;	**1.** Specific knowledge in the field of political and religious developments in the contemporary Middle East. **2.** Insight in order to study the field from a theoretical and methodological point of view. The student is aware of current approaches. **3.** Knowledge of the scientific codes of conduct / ethics with regard to referring to and making use of the work and insights of others, and with regard to the collection and processing of empirical data (data). **4.** In-depth knowledge and insight into current developments within the field.
Applying knowledge and understanding Students can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;	**5.** The ability to formulate independently a scientific problem and to choose and use an adequate theoretical framework and one or more relevant research methods. **6.** The ability to deal with complex issues systematically and creatively, and to arrive at a well-founded opinion. **7.** The ability to write independently and scientifically, and speak as a well-informed critic, or as an empirically oriented scientist, while making adequate use of relevant issues, debates and developments in media and culture. **8.** The ability to investigate scientifically the relationship between characteristics of the western world and the Middle East. **9.** The ability to investigate scientifically how concepts and activities contribute to the social functioning of utterances related to the Middle East. **10.** The ability to provide a scientific analysis of a genre, a period, a movement or an oeuvre in relation to the Middle East. **11.** The ability to carry out independently theoretical and empirical research within their own field. **12.** The ability to use the acquired scientific knowledge, insights and skills in the performance of a social and / or academic function with due regard for ethical and societal issues.
Making judgements Students have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements;	**13.** The ability to adopt a well-considered position in current developments within the discipline independently and to defend this in debate (oral and written). **14.** The ability to provide an independent well-founded (comparative) analysis and interpretation of aspects of the Middle East. **15.** The ability to assess critically theoretical and empirical research within their own field.
Communication Students can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;	**16.** The ability to use scientific research and present the results of this research both in writing and orally to an audience of specialists and non-specialists.
Lifelong learning skills	**17.** The ability to process large amounts of complex information efficiently and effectively.

Students have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.	**18.** To realize that the developments in the field and beyond require continuous training, as well as the necessary written and oral skills to be able to (continue to) follow the scientific literature and the debate in his / her field. **19.** The ability to keep track of developments in the scientific field, to deepen and supplement their own knowledge and insights, and to apply these in a professional practice. **20.** The skills required for successful professional practice. These include: o showing initiative and personal responsibility; o being able to make decisions in complex and unpredictable situations; o the ability to work independently; o the ability to function as a member of a team.

Appendix 2. Additional guidelines

Thesis topic

The Master's thesis is officially scheduled for the second Master's semester, but Master's students can also write their thesis during the first semester if there are good reasons for doing so (e.g. an placement in the second semester). In all cases, students are advised to begin writing their thesis at any time during the academic year, preferably in good time. It is therefore advisable to use the months before the thesis semester for orientation on possible thesis topics, including an examination of whether sufficient primary source material and secondary literature is available for the desired topic. The thesis is linked to the specialisations offered by the degree programme, which means that it should relate to the theme of conflicts and coexistence in the modern Middle East. It preferably builds on one of the Master's course units and/or the expertise of the staff.

It is also advisable to choose a topic that aligns with your interests, expertise, and aspirations. Writing a thesis is largely an individual process, and intrinsic motivation for the research is important. Additionally, the thesis provides an opportunity to specialise in a particular subject, which can be advantageous in a Master's programme and your future career.

For the thesis topic, the following guidelines and considerations apply:

- The thesis should align with the program's profile and must, therefore, relate to 1) the modern Middle East (including North Africa) and 2) the theme of conflicts and coexistence.
- Choosing a topic that does not primarily focus on the Middle East itself is only allowed if there is a clear connection to the region. Examples include Middle East policies, migration and refugees, security and terrorism, and representations of the Middle East in culture, politics, or media.
- The topic should broadly relate to (one of) the themes covered in the Master's modules (in terms of themes and/or case studies).
- Ideally, the topic should align with the expertise of one of the faculty members within the programme. It may be possible to discuss the topic with one of the instructors during the first semester.

Mini-proposal

In the first half of September/February, the student elaborates on the chosen topic in a mini-proposal, which is submitted via Brightspace. In the mini-proposal, the student answers the following questions (maximum 500-750 words in total):

1. *Topic*
   - Provide a brief description of the chosen topic.

2. Relevance and integration to Middle Eastern studies
   - What is the academic relevance of the chosen topic?
   - How does this topic fit within Middle Eastern Studies as a field of study?
   - How does the topic relate to courses you have taken in Middle Eastern Studies?

3. Research Question
   - Formulate a preliminary research question.
   - Formulate preliminary sub-questions that can help answer the main research question.

4. Literature and sources
   - Select three key publications that you will use for your research and briefly explain why each one is relevant. It is recommended to use the referencing style taught in academic skills (Chicago Manual of Style). If you have a preference for a different system, it is allowed as long as the system is clear and consistently applied.
   - Indicate which primary source material you intend to analyse. How will this source material help you answer the research question? Is the source material accessible/easy to locate?

Optional: 5. Special Considerations and Special Permission (if yes, provide a brief explanation)
   - Do you want to write the thesis in Dutch?
   - Are you planning to go abroad for your thesis?
   - Will you be using interviews or sensitive material?
   - Do you need permission to access libraries or archives?

Complete thesis outline

In the second half of September/February, the student expands the mini-proposal into a complete thesis outline (750-1000 words in total). The outline includes the following components:

1. Introduction
Provide a description of the thesis topic, the relevance of the topic, and the chosen approach.

2. Integration with research field
Explain how the thesis relates to existing literature: what the research builds upon and how it is original and relevant compared to existing literature. Indicate which academic debates it connects to and what the broader underlying scientific questions or issues are (the 'problem field').

3. Research question
Formulate a well-defined research question. Sub-questions may be added to help answer the central research question incrementally.

4. Hypotheses
What are the expected outcomes of the research? Why are these original and relevant?

5. Theory and method; source selection
Discuss the chosen theoretical approach or central concepts (if applicable) and the method; how the material/sources will be selected and subsequently analyzed.

6. Table of contents
Provide provisional titles for the various chapters, if possible with an indication of the word count per chapter.

7. Schedule
Provide a timeline with submission dates for the individual chapters and the complete thesis. Keep in mind that supervisors need time to provide feedback on submitted texts, and you also need time to incorporate this feedback.

8. List of literature and sources
Provide a preliminary list of literature and sources to consult. It is recommended to use the referencing style taught in academic skills (Chicago Manual of Style). If you have a preference for a different system, it is allowed as long as the system is clear and consistently applied.

Thesis

Length
The thesis should have a length of 18,000 words (excluding table of contents, citations, source list, and any appendices). A maximum deviation of 10% is allowed.

Composition
The thesis consists of the following parts:

1. *Title page*
    - The thesis includes a title page with title and subtitle; name and student number; study program; name of the supervisor and second assessor; and word count.
    - Choose a title and subtitle that together provide a clear picture of the research content and invite the reader to read the thesis, but are not too long.
2. *Table of contents*
    - The thesis includes a table of contents with chapter titles and page numbers.
3. *Introduction*
    - Introduction to the thesis topic.
    - Relevance of the topic, potentially in a societal context, but definitely in an academic context, including reflection on existing literature on the topic and the added value of the thesis.
    - A well-defined research question and any sub-questions.
    - Explanation of the theoretical framework and/or central concepts.
    - The approach and method: which sources have been used and how they have been analysed.
    - Overview and justification of the thesis structure.

    (N.B. It is possible to choose to include an introduction to the research field ('literature review'), theoretical framework, and methodology in separate chapters.)
4. *Chapters*

- The main report is divided into chapters and sections. Write the chapters like short papers, with a brief introduction indicating the central focus and rationale, and a brief conclusion with the main findings in the context of broader research.

5. *Conclusion*
    - The conclusion includes a summary of the findings and an answer to the thesis research question.
    - The conclusion interprets/reflects on the findings, discussing the research's
6. *List of references*
    - List of sources used (i.e., those referenced in footnotes), optionally divided into primary sources and literature.

Optional additions may include:

- Abstract
- Preface
- List of abbreviations used
- Appendices, such as important source material, summaries of research data, tables, images

Language, style and formatting

- The writer of a Master's thesis should always have the readers in mind, and aim to ensure that they can understand the thesis. The readers may include experts or advanced fellow students in the field of Middle Eastern Studies who are not specialists in the subject area of the Master's thesis. Since a Master's thesis aims to transfer academic knowledge, it must be written in an academic and accurate style.
- The text is written in proper English (or possibly Dutch). Supervisors are not text editors and will only comment on deficient language and style in the submitted texts based on an example passage.
- The style of the thesis should be academic and focused on precision. By providing well-founded information, critical analysis, and logical argumentation supported by scientific sources, the aim is to convince the reader. The hallmark of scientific texts is verifiability, so the information, insights, and analysis must be well and clearly substantiated.
- There are no strict style requirements regarding quotes, references, notes, paragraph structure, etc. The most important thing is to use the same system consistently. For references (footnotes and bibliography), the use of Chicago Manual of Style is recommended. If the student prefers another referencing system (e.g. because of training in the BA programme), this is allowed after consultation with the supervisor.
- Quotations are enclosed in quotation marks and followed by a citation. Long quotations (>5 lines) are presented as block quotes (with white space, narrowed margin, and smaller font size). See section 7 for citing, fraud, and plagiarism.
- Images may be included in the thesis, provided they are accompanied by a source citation.
- The formatting of the thesis should be well-maintained. Font type and size, line spacing, and page margins are at the discretion of the student, but it is recommended to choose a common font (e.g., Times New Roman). Pages should be numbered.

The complete version of the Master's thesis must be presented neatly in A4 format for assessment. Once the final version has been discussed with and approved by the lecturer, a neat complete version must be produced and submitted to the supervisors as a PDF file and, if desired by the supervisor, in print.

Supervision

The individual supervisor is assigned after the submission of the mini-proposal. The guidance process consists of:

Semester 2 (regular thesis semester)

- Four meetings of the thesis seminar
- A meeting with the individual supervisor after the submission of the mini-proposal
- One or two interim meetings with the individual supervisor to discuss chapters
- Optionally: an evaluation meeting afterwards

Semester 1 (only with coordinator's permission)

- A meeting with the individual supervisor after submission of the mini-proposal
- A meeting with the individual supervisor after submission of the complete thesis outline
- Two or three interim meetings with the individual supervisor to discuss chapters
- Optionally: an evaluation meeting afterwards

In both semesters, students have the right to have each chapter (including the introduction and conclusion) reviewed once by the supervisor before the official submission (provided they are submitted in a timely manner and according to the agreement).

Once a student has gained some ideas for the thesis, they can make an appointment with one of the staff members from the degree programme to discuss these ideas. Ultimately, the staff decides on who will act as supervisor and as second assessor, taking into account the expertise of staff members, their availability and (possible) earlier meetings between the respective student and (a) staff member(s) on the thesis topic.

The lecturers must be kept regularly up to date on the progress of the Master's thesis. In order to ensure the best possible supervision, students should submit the relevant thesis structure and draft chapters to the supervisors at least a week before each discussion session. N.B. Lecturers may be absent for shorter or longer periods in connection with conferences, research or vacations. Students are advised to find out about this in good time, preferably before the timeframe is drawn up.

Courses on ‘how to write a Master's thesis’ are available for students who have or expect problems with the research for and the writing of their Master's thesis. More information about these courses can be obtained from the Student Service Center or the study advisor. The study advisor can also provide information about incorporating the Master's thesis into the study programme as a whole.

Appendix 3. Thesis seminar group structure

In **semester 2**, students participate in a thesis group that guides them through the initial phase of the Master's thesis, up to and including the writing of the first chapter. The seminar group assists in defining a topic, formulating an appropriate research question, creating a research plan, and setting a clear timeline. Additionally, students practice reporting the initial results of their research in the form of a sample chapter.

There are four *mandatory* meetings between January and March. The first meeting serves as an introduction to the thesis process and the thesis seminar group. During the next three meetings, students submit various assignments. These assignments are mandatory and must be submitted on time and meet all criteria to continue the thesis process. Peer review will be applied during the seminar, with students reading and providing feedback on each other's assignments under the guidance of the instructor.

The thesis seminar group serves as support for writing the thesis and complements the individual contact between the student and the thesis supervisor. Assignments 1, 2, and 3 (the mini-proposal, the thesis outline, and the sample chapter) are submitted to the supervisor after revision based on the feedback received during the seminars and discussed if necessary.

Meetings:

Meeting 1 (second/third week of January): procedure and thesis guidelines

During this introductory session, the thesis procedure, assessment criteria, and study guide are discussed. There is an opportunity to ask questions about the thesis process and present ideas for a topic to the thesis coordinator and fellow students.

Preparation: read the thesis guidelines

Meeting 2 (second week of February): mini-proposal

This meeting focuses on narrowing down a suitable topic for the thesis and progressing towards the thesis outline. Prior to the seminar, students submit **assignment 1**, the "mini-proposal," via Brightspace. This assignment involves positioning the thesis topic within Middle Eastern Studies and existing literature, formulating preliminary research questions, and mapping out literature and source material. *Peer review* will be applied during the seminar. After the seminar, students incorporate the feedback and submit the mini-proposal to the supervisor (deadline: February 15). Upon receiving feedback from the supervisor, this is further developed into a complete thesis outline.

Preparation: Submit the mini-proposal via Brightspace (deadline: 48 hours before the meeting).

Meeting 3 (fourth week of February) full thesis proposal

Students submit **assignment 2**, the full thesis proposal, via Brightspace. A peer review group schedule will be posted on Brightspace. Before the seminar, students read the assignments of

fellow students in their group and provide written feedback during the meeting. During the meeting, students give peer-review feedback on the submitted outlines. After the seminar, students submit a revised version of the outline to the supervisor based on the received feedback (deadline: March 1). The supervisor approves the outline and provides any additional (written) feedback.

Preparation:

- Prepare and submit the first complete version of the full proposal via Brightspace (deadline: 48 hours before the meeting).
- Provide written feedback on the outlines of fellow students.

Meeting 4 (fourth week of March): Sample Chapter

The final meeting of the thesis seminar focuses on peer review of a complete chapter. It is preferable to select a core chapter from the thesis (not the introduction or conclusion) where the researched material is presented. Students should submit a chapter in advance via Brightspace for discussion during the seminar. Prior to the seminar, the chapter is read and reviewed by a fellow student.

Preparation:

- Submit a complete sample chapter (deadline: 48 hours before the meeting).
- Provide written feedback on a fellow student's sample chapter.

Appendix 4. Marking tools

university of groningen / faculty of arts

Assessment form Master's thesis Middle Eastern Studies
(online forms OntheGo)

Date:	
Name student:	
Student number:	
Thesis title:	
Programme:	Master Middle Eastern Studies
Course code:	LXX998M20
Name supervisor:	
Name second assessor:	

Formal criteria

	Yes	**No**
Thesis meets formal criteria (see manual 6c):		
Explanation (if necessary):		

Assessment Matrix

Insufficient (I): < 5,5
Sufficient (Su): 5,5-6,5
Satisfactory (Sa): 6,5-7,5
Good (G): 7,5-8,5
Excellent (E): 8,5-10,0

1. Content (quality research)

Insufficient/Sufficient/Satisfactory/Good/Excellent

	I	S	S	G	E
Research question; introduction, formulation relevance and explanation					
Information: completeness, accuracy, relevance, depth					
Analysis and argumentation: (theoretic and/or empiric) justification, persuasiveness					
Research results and conclusions: clarity, relevance					
Methodology: mastery of research skills; use of literature and sources					
Originality and creativity					
Critical reflection					
Explanation:					

2. Form (quality of reporting)

Insufficient/Sufficient/Satisfactory/Good/Excellent

	I	S	S	G	E
Structure: chapters, sections, and paragraphs					
References: footnotes and bibliography					
Language: clarity, correctness, style					
Design					
Explanation:					

3. Process

Insufficient/Sufficient/Satisfactory/Good/Excellent

	I	S	S	G	E
Planning					
Independence, handling of feedback					
Commitment					
Explanation:					

4. Final assessment

Final grade:
Explanation final assessment supervisor: