How to Complete the Global History MA

This is a collection of FAQs regarding registering and writing your MA thesis and completing your studies in the Global History MA program.

Please read this guide carefully before planning the final stretch of your master's.

In case of further questions please contact us via globalhistory@fu-berlin.de.

Schedule

MA Thesis

Retaking (Failed) Examinations

Obtaining Your Degree

Transcript of Records

Schedule

- When should I start thinking about my thesis?

Ideally, you will have started thinking about possible topics for your MA thesis by the end of the third semester and have also started getting in touch with potential supervisors. We advise you to use the papers you write throughout your studies as stepping stones for potential thesis topics, i.e. to find a focus within your studies in a field, period, region, ...

- When do I attend the Colloquium?

The MA Colloquium Global History is offered during the summer and winter terms. Ideally, you take the colloquium parallel to writing your thesis to benefit most from it, as it involves you presenting and discussing your schedule and the preliminary findings of your thesis.

- How do I find a topic for my thesis?

Think about which topic interests you most. Which class did you enjoy in particular, what paper ignited your interest the most, who did you feel most comfortable taking classes and discussing your paper with? Could the topic of a paper be extended and turned into a MA thesis? It is entirely acceptable to arrive at very specific thesis ideas on your own and discuss these with a supervisor, just as much as it is to only come up with a hunch or gut feeling that, following a discussion with your supervisor, can be turned into a solid topic and research question for your MA thesis. Theoretically, every topic is possible, as long as you find an eligible supervisor for your idea.

It is of course possible to develop a topic independent of any class you have taken. Also, you can approach a supervisor you would prefer without having taken a class with them.

After finding a primary and secondary supervisor, you must register your thesis by submitting an application in which you state the topic you have agreed upon with your supervisor.

- How do I find a supervisor for my thesis?

Approach a lecturer eligible to supervise your thesis (generally professors, see two questions below for more details). In case you develop a topic, but do not know who might be best suited to supervise this topic, contact the program coordinator via globalhistory@fu-berlin.de for help.
Why do I need a second supervisor?
In order to guarantee an impartial and fair evaluation of your thesis, regulations require a second opinion and grade on your thesis. You are free to choose who you prefer as your second supervisor.

Who is eligible to be my first and second supervisor?
Both supervisors must be eligible to supervise (prüfungsberechtigt) your thesis. Generally, Hochschullehrer/innen are eligible. This category includes professors, honorary professors, and visiting and outside lecturers. Therefore, research associates are not eligible to supervise your thesis, despite being authorised to teach classes. Please always make sure that the two professors you choose to supervise your thesis are actually eligible to do so. If you specify a lecturer who is not eligible to supervise your thesis in your application, the examination office must reject your application and you will have to look anew. Therefore, please make sure of eligibility to supervise beforehand.

When and where do I register my MA thesis and submit my topic application?
You can register your MA thesis any time during the office hours of the examination office or by mail. All necessary documents can be found online.

What is required to register an MA thesis?
Requirements for the registration of an MA thesis include:
1. Proof of enrolment at the Free University Berlin as per the examination regulations,
2. Successful completion of Modules 1 and 2, and 60LP in total,
3. The signatures of both eligible supervisors indicating their readiness to evaluate the MA thesis.

How much time do I have to work on my thesis?
You will have 22 weeks’ time allotted to work on your MA thesis. The submission date for your MA thesis cannot be extended.

When does the allotted time begin?
The time allotted to write the MA thesis begins with the date the examination board approves your MA thesis topic. It takes about four weeks to process the application. However, you should be ready to begin writing at the time of application. (You can submit your MA thesis no earlier than 6 weeks after having been notified of approval by the examination board.)

Master's Thesis
The master’s thesis should demonstrate that the student is able to independently work upon a specific topic in the field of global history at an advanced research level, and present, document, and analyse relevant findings.

How long (how comprehensive) should the MA thesis be?
The MA thesis should be ca. 70 pages in length (with 300 words per page).

What should I do if I notice that I do not make progress on my topic?
Your topic can be changed once within the first 4 weeks, without it counting against you. However, if you prepare the topic well and discuss it thoroughly with your supervisor, this is highly unlikely.

- Where and in which way do I submit my MA thesis?

The MA thesis must be submitted to the examination office of the ‘Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften’ Department during their office hours before the 22 weeks have expired. If the MA thesis is sent per mail, the package must be postmarked by that date.

You must provide three bound copies as well as one read-only electronic version saved on a storage device (for example, a PDF saved on a USB stick or CD). Upon submission, you must state in writing that your thesis was independently written and that you have not made use of any unnamed sources or aid. This statement must be included in the bound MA thesis as the last page.

- How long does it take for my thesis to be graded?

The Prüfungsbüro then forwards the MA thesis to your supervisors. You of course have the option to, after submission to the Prüfungsbüro, personally deliver it to your supervisors. The supervisors then have 4 weeks to evaluate the MA thesis, as stipulated by the Prüfungsbüro.

- What happens if the supervisors suggest differing grades for the MA thesis?

As per the general study and examination guidelines of the Free University Berlin (FUMitteilungen 32/2013 from 22 Aug. 2013), the arithmetic average will then be taken as the grade.

- What happens if the MA thesis does not receive a satisfactory mark?

Your MA thesis must meet the ‘satisfactory’ (4,0) mark to be considered passing. Constant and intensive contact with your supervisor in the preparation and writing stages helps prevent an unsatisfactory mark! The MA thesis can be made up once.

Reevaluation and Reexamination

An examination is deemed satisfactory if the grade is at least a 4,0; if not, the examination may be retaken once. Marks of 4,0 or better may not be made-up.

Earning your Degree

- How is the MA thesis weighted for the final grade?

The MA thesis is weighted as 30 credits of your final grade.

- How do I complete my MA?

Your diploma certificate can be obtained by applying for completion of your university degree (Studienabschluss). To do so, you must present proof of having completed 120 approved credit points. All course and examination points should be documented completely in SLCM (formerly Campus Management). Processing takes ca. 4 weeks, and the documents will thereafter be sent to you via mail. The application for degree completion is available online and must be submitted latest within 4 weeks after having received the last of your final grades.
MA Degree

Students will receive an examination certificate as well as an MA diploma certificate. Additionally, they will receive a Diploma Supplement, which includes a description of their studies, as well as an explanation of the academic and professional qualifications that the student has gained upon completion of their degree. Furthermore, a transcript with descriptions of the individual modules and their constitutive parts will be included. Upon request, English versions of the diploma certificate and diploma supplemental material as well as the transcript information can be made.

- Whom can I contact if I have further questions?

  For further inquiries concerning your MA thesis, please contact either the Prüfungsbüro for the Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften department, or the Global History MA program at globalhistory@fu-berlin.de.