

Master's Award Requirements Bylaws at the Arab Open University

Article (1)

These bylaws shall be called "the Master's Award Requirements Bylaws at the Arab Open University", and shall be in force as of the date of their approval by the University Council.

Article (2)

The following words and expressions, wherever they occur in this document, shall have the meanings specified hereunder unless the context indicates otherwise:

University	The Arab Open University (AOU)
President	The University President
Vice President	The Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dean	The Dean of the academic programme concerned
Deanship:	The Deanship of the academic programme which offers the Master's programme
Programme	The academic specialization recognized for awarding the Master's Degree
Headquarters	The AOU Headquarters
Branch	The AOU Branch concerned
Branch Director	Director of the Arab Open University in one of the Branch countries.
Faculty Member	The Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Or Lecturer appointed at AOU HQ or at any Branch thereof.
General Course Coordinator (GCC)	Faculty member responsible for coordinating the course requirements in all branches.
Branch Programme Coordinator (PC)	Faculty member responsible for supervising the Programme implementation at the Branch.
Branch Course Coordinator (BCC)	Faculty member responsible for coordinating course requirements at the Branch.
Academic Committee	A permanent Committee formed by the University Council
Central Examinations Committee(CEC)	The Central Examination Committee at the University Headquarters
Faculty Examination Committee(FEC)	The Faculty Examination Committee in the relevant deanship
Branch Examination Committee(BEC)	Examination Committee at the branch level.

Article (3) Admission

An applicant to the Master's programmes should meet the following:

- A.** Should have a Bachelor's from the Arab Open University, or its equivalent from a recognized university according to the conditions specified by the competent deanships and in accordance with the accreditation requirements.
- B.** Should not have been dismissed, for academic reasons, from the programme to which he/she is applying.
- C.** Should meet any other requirements required by the faculties concerned.

Article (4) Study Plans

The University Council shall approve the study plans leading to the earning of a Master's Degree in the academic programmes offered by the University as per the recommendations of the Faculty Councils concerned and the recommendation of the Academic Committee.

Article (5)

- A.** The study plans shall be designed according to the credit hour system.
- B.** The study plans shall specify the admissions and graduation requirements relevant to the academic programme concerned.

Article (6)

- A.** The minimum number of hours to obtain a master's degree is 33 credit hours.
- B.** A student who fails to complete the credit hours required for the programme to which he /she was admitted may be awarded a Post-graduate Diploma provided that he/she had completed successfully at least two thirds of the credit hours according to the conditions set in the study plan approved for that programme.
- C.** A student may register some courses outside his/her study plan but the credit hours of these courses shall not count towards his/her graduation requirements and shall not be calculated in the student's semester or cumulative averages.

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Article (7)

Attendance of Tutorials

Tutorials are set according to arrangements approved by the AOU for this purpose, and according to the requirements of international or local accreditation of the concerned academic programme.

Article (8)

Assessment

Not less than 30% and not more than 70% shall be allotted to each of the two assessment components (continuous assessment and the final examination), as determined by the Deanships according to the nature of specialization in each programme, so that the final mark will come to a total of 100%.

Article (9)

Semester Tasks

- A. The concerned Deanship shall prepare TMAs and other semester-based assessment types required for the courses offered by the said deanship, in accordance with the criteria and the procedures approved by the AOU University Council.
- B. Academic staff members and lecturers appointed in the Branches and Study Centres shall mark these semester-based assessment types under the supervision of the Branch Director and the specialized academic staff members in the said Branch/ Centre.
- C. Each Deanship shall provide the Branches with all TMAs required for all its courses at the beginning of every semester in which the course in question is offered. The TMAs should reach the Branches not later than the second study week.
- D. Each student must submit his/her TMA according to the date specified in the Course Calendar.
- E. Special-Needs Students whose health conditions either prevent or adversely affect their ability to do their TMAs and other requirements of continuous assessment, must provide proof of their case to the Programme Coordinator (PC) in their Branch who shall submit all such cases to the Branch Director who will in turn submit it to the Branch Examination Committee (BEC) to take the proper decision.
- F. A student who does not submit his/her TMA by the specified date shall be given a zero unless he/she provides an acceptable excuse, in which case he/she can be given a grace period of seven days after the said due date.

- G. Each TMA shall be marked and students ought to be shown their tutor's remarks. Subsequently, their marks are entered into the SIS system no later than two weeks from the TMA submission date.
- H. Branch Course Coordinator (BCC) then revises random samples of the marked TMAs for each section to ascertain compliance with the guidelines issued by the Deanship and to check the quality of the remarks written on them. Each time such revision is undertaken, it must be documented. Subsequently, the BCC sends samples of TMAs and exam papers to the General Courses Coordinator (GCC) to be examined and followed up.
- I. A student may file a request for a review of his/her TMA mark within a one week after the TMA is returned. In such cases, the tutor and the Branch Course Coordinator (BCC) must study the case to determine whether or not there is any unmarked answer, or any error in calculating the marks or in recording them. The student should be informed of the result within one week following the requested submission date.
- J. No mark given to a student for any TMA shall be amended except following a written request by the Branch Programme Coordinator (BPC) in which he/she should explain the reasons that led to this request. The approval of Branch Director must also be obtained. The alteration process should not exceed one week following the return of the TMA to the student.

Article (10)

Examinations

- A. Final exams are held at the same time in AOU Branches as specified in the AOU Academic Calendar following coordination between the Deanships and the Branches concerned.
- B. All Final exams are prepared at HQ and are then delivered to the branches one week before the start of the final exams.
- C. Final exam scripts are marked by course specialists under the supervision of the concerned Branch Director.
- D. Special-needs Students shall present their cases to the Branch Examination Committee through the concerned PC to be studied and dealt with by providing necessary tools and equipment or by extending the final exam time limit. Such students must submit their application three weeks prior to the date of the said exam or the TMA\ project \ thesis submission date.
- E. The student who fails to attend the final examinations shall be given a (0-zero) mark unless he/she submits a force majeure excuse within three days of the exam's date. In case the excuse was found valid, a letter (I) – Incomplete – shall be entered into the student's academic record, provided that he/she has not failed in the Continuous Assessment. An (I) student shall

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be permitted to re-sit for the exam in the second week of the following semester. However, the course hours will not be incorporated into his/her semester and cumulative averages. Should the student fail to re-sit the exam on its first subsequent session, the letter (I) shall be replaced with (F) – Fail – in his academic record.

Article (11)

Grade Appeals and Amendment

- A. Students may request revision of their final mark in any course no later than a week after the announcement of certified results of the concerned course. They may do so after paying a prescribed fee.
- B. The Branch Examination Committee (BEC) shall study each student's grade amendment claim to ascertain that no material error occurred in calculating the marks that the student obtained in the course concerned, in recording these marks, or whether there were unmarked answers in the student's answer booklet. The student must be informed of the BEC decision no later than one week following the date of his/her grade amendment claim. The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) must also be informed of the same decision.
- C. Students may also object to the BEC decision by submitting a new grade amendment claim to the Faculty Examination Committee (FEC) via the Branch Director no later than one week after the date of the said decision.
- D. The Faculty Examination Committee (FEC) shall study the student's grade amendment claim to ascertain that no material error exists. The student shall then be informed of the FEC decision via the Branch Director no later than one week after the date of the FEC decision. The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) must also be informed of the same decision.
- E. Endorsement of a grade amendment for any course shall be made by the Central Examination Committee (CEC) upon a recommendation by the concerned FEC.
- F. The student's result in any course shall be considered final following the elapse of one semester. No amendment of such result shall be allowed.

Article (12)

Plagiarism in Exams and TMAs

- A. Any student who commits any act of plagiarism is dealt with in accordance with the Student Conduct Bylaws and the AOU's disciplinary procedures in place.
- B. The following acts constitute cases of cheating and plagiarism:
- Verbatim copying of printed Internet material including tables and graphics, and submitting them as part of TMAs and Dissertations without proper academic acknowledgement and documentation.
 - Copying other students' notes or reports.
 - Submitting paid or unpaid material prepared for the student by individuals or firms.
 - Using or attempting to use prohibited materials or tools in examinations.

Article (13)

Final Marks of Courses

- A. The final grade for each course shall be calculated and logged in letter grades and points as follows:

Letter Grade	Points
A	4
B+	3.5
B	3.0
C+	2.5
C	2.0
D	1.5
F	0.0

- B. The minimum grade for passing a course is (C+), provided that the student's continuous assessment and final examination mark are not less than 60%; and that the total mark for the course is not less than 70/100.
- C. A registered student who does not meet the assessment requirements designated in a course's study plan shall be given 'I' (Incomplete), and shall have to sit for the examination in the second week of the following semester.

Article (14) Cumulative Average

Cumulative point averages and corresponding performance estimates are shown in the table below:

Cumulative Point Average	Performance
3.67- 4.0	Excellent
3.0 - 3.66	Very Good
2.50 - 2.99	Good
Less than 2.5	Weak

Article (15) Repeating Courses

- A.** A student may repeat any course in the study plan in order to raise his/her cumulative average to the required level if his/her grade in that course is less than (B); in this case the new grade will replace the former.
- B.** If a student repeats a course, the credit hours of that course shall be counted only once when calculating the student's total hours for graduation.
- C.** If a student fails an elective course and takes another elective course to meet the requirements of his study plan, the new course shall be considered equivalent to the elective course he/she failed.

Article (16) Duration of Study and Study Load

The beginning of the academic year, semesters, and the period of exams shall be specified according to the academic calendar approved by the University Council.

Article (17)

- A.** The minimum study load for a student shall be (3) credit hours, and the maximum shall be determined by the study plan of the concerned programme.
- B.** The maximum period of study shall be (8) semesters.

Article (18) Equivalency of Courses

The council of the concerned Deanship may equate courses, within the post-graduate programmes, which the student had completed in other recognized academic institutions according to the following conditions:

- A.** The student's grade in each of these courses should not be less than three points on a four-point scale or its equivalent.
- B.** The courses have not been studied more than 5 years prior to equivalency.
- C.** Courses receiving equivalency should not exceed one third of the total credit hours of the programme, and the grades earned in these courses do not count in calculating the student's semester average or his/her cumulative average.
- D.** A maximum of not more than 9 credits hours, studied within the programme of a previously attained MA degree, or its equivalent, may be granted equivalency.

Article (19) Postponement of Study

- A.** A student may file an application to postpone his/her study within two weeks from the beginning of the semester, and the period of postponement should not exceed two consecutive or interrupted semesters.
- B.** The period of postponement shall not be considered as part of the maximum period allowed for earning the Master's Degree.

Article (20) Dropping Courses

A student may file an application to drop a course during the semester, up to one week before the beginning of final exams according to the academic calendar. In this case the student shall receive a (W) symbol [Withdrawn] according to the procedures followed in cases of withdrawal.

Article (21) Withdrawal

A. If a student fails to register in one semester and he/she does not apply for postponement, he/she shall be considered withdrawn from study unless he/she presents an acceptable excuse no later than the end of that semester. Then the period of withdrawal shall be considered as part of the postponement period allowed.

B. A withdrawn student may re-apply for admission, and in case he/she was re-admitted the credit hours he/she has completed successfully at the University shall be accounted for, according to the study plan of the programme in which he was admitted.

Article (22) Warning and Dismissal

A. A warning shall be issued to a student whose cumulative average is less than 3 points (B) at the end of any semester excluding the summer semester.

B. A student shall be dismissed from the University if he/she receives **three** warnings in **three** consecutive semesters.

C. A student who has been dismissed from the University for academic reasons related to his/her cumulative average may re-apply to any of the University programmes except the one from which he/she was dismissed.

Article (23) Programme Tracks

The study plan of the programme shall be prepared in two tracks:

1. Thesis Track: In this track, the study plan shall consist of a number of courses and a thesis, which carries a minimum of (6) credit hours, as stated in the approved study plan of the said programme.

2. The Comprehensive Exam Track: In this track, the study plan shall consist of courses followed by a comprehensive exam taken after completing these courses successfully and earning the required cumulative average according to the rules and regulations.

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Article (24) **The Thesis Track**

- A.** To be eligible to writing a thesis, a student shall file an application in the concerned Deanship after completing 75% of the credit hours of the required courses successfully, provided that his/her cumulative average in these courses is not less than (3.00) points.
- B.** The competent Faculty Council shall make a recommendation to appointing the supervisors and approving the title of the thesis and its proposal.
- C.** The supervisor should hold the rank of Full Professor or Associate Professor. In special cases approved by the Deanship, he/she might be an Assistant Professor, or as consistent with local accreditation requirements in the Branch country.
- D.** A thesis examination committee can only be formed after the student has fulfilled all other programme requirements with a minimum cumulative average of (3.00) points.
- E.** After the thesis is completed; a committee shall be formed of:
1. Student's Supervisor
 2. A faculty member from the Programme
 3. A member form outside the University (As an external examiner) holding a PhD degree in a specialization that is very relevant to the thesis topic, or as consistent with local accreditation requirements in the branch country.
- F.** The result of the viva voce should be one of the following categories:
1. Pass: thesis approved
 2. Fail: thesis rejected
 3. Modification of Thesis: The student should make the required changes within (4) four months from the date of the viva voce, and the student passes if the committee approves the thesis after the changes.

An academic programme may adopt the policy of verbal rating of the thesis as (Pass/Excellent), and shall be recorded in the student's diploma without being considered in calculating his/her cumulative average.

- G.** If the result of the viva voce is "Fail", a student shall be given a last chance to re-submit the thesis, and if he fails again he shall be dismissed from the programme, subject to the provisions in Article (6), paragraph (b) and Article (22), paragraph (c) of the present bylaws.

Article (25)
The Comprehensive Exam Track

- A.** The exam shall be of a comprehensive nature and seeks to assess the student's ability to synthesize the different basic and developed concepts he/she had acquired from the different courses in a manner that reflects the application of acquired knowledge in resolving scientific and applied problems.
- B.** According to specific guidelines issued by the University Council, the competent Deanship shall undertake the task of forming a three-member comprehensive exam committee, in minimum, from faculty members in the programme. The said committee shall prepare the comprehensive exam, set the exam date and turn in the results.

Article (26)

- A.** The student shall sit for the comprehensive exam after completing all the requirements successfully, provided that his/her cumulative average is not less than (3.00) points.
- B.** Should the student fail the comprehensive exam, he/she may have only one more re-sit session to be held in the next immediate scheduled date according to the approved University calendar, provided that the new date falls within the maximum period allowed for obtaining the Master's degree. If the student fails the exam, he/she will be dismissed from the programme, subject to the provisions in Article (6), paragraph (b) hereof.
- C.** The student's result in the comprehensive exam shall be entered in his/her transcript as either (Pass) or (Fail).

Article (27)
Awarding the Master's Degree

A Master's degree shall be awarded after completing the following graduation requirements:

- A.** Passing all the courses required for graduation according to the study plan approved for the Master's degree in the academic programme concerned.
- B.** Earning a cumulative average of not less than (3.00) points from the four-points scale.
- C.** Not to exceed the maximum time limit as stipulated in paragraph (b) of Article (17) hereof.
- D.** Passing the comprehensive exam, or the viva voce as required.

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E. Any other requirements stated in the study plan of the programme.

Article (28)
Transfer between Programmes

A student may transfer from the academic programme he/she is registered in to another programme if he/she meets the admission requirements of the programme he/she wishes to join. This occurs at the beginning of the semester following his/her admission. The student shall earn credit for the previous courses he/she completed successfully as long as these courses are consistent with the requirements of the new programme.

Article (29)
Transfer between Branches

Taking into account the requirements of local accreditation, a student may transfer from one University branch to another provided that the transfer takes place at the beginning of the semester. The courses he/she has completed successfully will be counted as earned credit.

Article (30)
General Provisions

A. The present bylaws shall abrogate all previous bylaws governing the requirements for awarding the MA degree at the University.

B. The University Council shall decide on all cases not covered by the present bylaws, and shall resolve any conflicts arising from their implementation.

C. Deans, Branch Directors, and Director of Admissions and Registration shall be responsible for implementing the provisions of these bylaws.

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