



## **STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR JOINT MASTER'S PROGRAMS**

According to § 51 (2) UG 2002 joint study programs are regular study programs that are based on agreements by one or several Austrian universities, operators of applied studies degree programs at Fachhochschulen, privately owned universities or colleges of education together with foreign, accredited post-secondary educational institutions that are jointly implemented in the form of joint, double or multiple degree programs. These agreements must include information on which achievements the respective students have to perform at the participating institutions.

The Senate at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna decided on generally valid structural frameworks for Bachelor's and Master's programs, the so-called model curricula. Its provisions also have to be applied for the conception of joint study programs in accordance with the Senate's resolution of November 17, 2010. Supplementary to that, this structural framework for future joint Master's study programs was developed.

### **1) Admission**

The minimum legal requirements for the admission are determined in § 64 (5) UG 2002. The qualitative admission requirements are indicated in the curricula. At BOKU these are reviewed in the course of the admission procedure if BOKU is the home university and admission is not approved by a consortium. Admission according to model curricula shall also be applied for joint study programs.

The admission at the home university has to be accepted at the host university. This has to be regulated in the contract. Admissions that are approved by a consortium have to be accepted. Consortium admissions are to be aimed for.

According to § 64 (6) UG 2002 allocating quotes for study programs that are solely offered in a foreign language is possible. The responsibility rests with the Vice Rector for Teaching and International Affairs.

### **2) Structure**

The amount of compulsory courses, electives and free elective courses is regulated in the model curriculum and has to be determined in the curriculum. A Master's program comprises a total of 120 ECTS.

In order to obtain a joint degree, at least two universities must be studied at. A BOKU degree can only be issued if the student was enrolled at BOKU and has successfully completed at least 40 ECTS. Of these 40 ECTS, 10 ECTS may be completed by co-supervision of the Master's thesis. A co-supervision may be determined in the consortium contract and in the curriculum. When there is no co-supervision, the 40 ECTS still have to be completed at BOKU in order to award a joint degree.

It is recommended that the joint study programs that are executed together with international partners are structured in such a way that allows students to change universities at the beginning / end of a semester. The mobility process has to be illustrated (graphic) in the curriculum.

The modularization of study programs is generally recommended. Thereby the smallest module unit should preferably comprise six ECTS points.

The language of instruction has to be determined in the curriculum. Language skills (proficiency in the language of instruction) should be at least B2 (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) and have to be proven. In addition, the consortium may determine further language-related admission requirements. These have to be recorded in the curriculum and the cooperation contract.

Study programs at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna have to correspond to the "3 Pillar Principle". The three pillars must be illustrated in the curriculum. For joint study programs percentages do not have to be determined. If BOKU is the home university (no consortium admission), during the admission process and based on the learning outcomes it is reviewed whether the previous study program complies with the three pillar principle.

A compulsory practical experience is not absolutely required.

In order to successfully complete university courses (including the defense), the examination requirements of the university that organizes this course have to be applied.

### **3) Master's Thesis**

In general, at BOKU the provision of § 30 of the University Matriculation Law statutory provisions apply. The scope of the Master's thesis has to be determined in the consortium contract (30 ECTS at BOKU).

Furthermore, the following requirements must be determined in the consortium contract:

- a) Language of the Master's thesis (BOKU's recommendation: English for Master's programs in English)
- b) Language of the defense (BOKU's recommendation: English for Master's programs in English)
- c) Co-supervision: At BOKU the co-supervision of the Master's thesis is recommended for students who have studied at BOKU for one semester but do not write their thesis at BOKU in order to prove at least 40 ECTS needed for a BOKU degree.
- d) The co-supervisor should be involved in the defense (at least via Skype or video conferencing).
- e) A Master's seminar is not obligatory but recommended for students who write their Master's thesis at BOKU.

### **4) Graduation**

According to the model curriculum, a defense has to be successfully completed in order to receive a degree at BOKU. The consortium contract has to determine which final examinations have to be held in which place.

The defense has to be completed in the language of instruction (German or English) even if the Master's thesis was composed in another language.

According to current regulations, a chairperson and two additional university professors must be present for a defense at BOKU. University-specific rules apply at the partner universities. It is recommended to involve the co-supervisor in the defense.

Skyping or video conferencing is admissible if the members of the commission are visible. This means that telephoning is not sufficient.

A commission member from the partner university is not required. If a commission member of the partner university is desired, this has to be determined in the consortium contract.

For joint degree programs it is recommended that the degree is issued at the home university. Details have to be determined in the contract. The curriculum has to be completed accordingly. For a graduation at BOKU the assessment key is as follows:

- Master's thesis 70%
- Defense 30%

The respective partner university's regulations regarding graduation apply at each partner university.

Graduates of a joint Master's program that was carried out with international partners shall receive the academic title "Master of Science" or "Master of Science in ..." (shortened to "MSc" or M.Sc.).

If additional certificates are drawn up that state all partners and their logos, these are without any legal value. They are signed by the Vice Rector for Teaching and International Affairs.

### **Closing Remarks**

Every new joint study program must pass the process (pre-conception, planning, approval, etc.) that was decided by the Senate of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna.