

The Master's Degree Award Requirements Bylaws at the Arab Open University

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Article 1: Title

The present bylaws shall be named: “The Master’s Degree Award Requirements Bylaws at the Arab Open University.”

Article 2: Definitions

Unless the context indicates otherwise, the following words and expressions shall have the meanings specified hereunder:

University / AOU	The Arab Open University
President	The University President
VPAA&SR	The Vice President of academic affairs and scientific research
Dean	The Dean of an academic programme
Deanship	The Deanship of an academic program that offers a Bachelor's degree
Director/Rector	The Director of an Arab Open University branch or campus
Branch	An Arab Open University branch or campus
Headquarters / HQ	The Arab Open University headquarters
Programme	An academic major accredited for a Bachelor's award
Faculty Member	A professor, associate or assistant professor, or lecturer appointed at an AOU branch or HQ
GCC	General Course Coordinator: a faculty member responsible for coordinating course requirements across all branches

PC / Local Dean	Branch Programme Coordinator: a faculty member responsible for administering the implementation of a programme at a branch
BCC	Branch Course Coordinator: a faculty member responsible for coordinating course requirements at a branch
Academic Committee	A permanent committee formed by the University Council
CEC	The Central Examination Committee at the University's headquarters
FEC	The Faculty Examination Committee in a Deanship
BEC	The Examination Committee at a branch

Article 3: Admission

To be admitted to any Master's programme, an applicant should have fulfilled the following conditions:

- A) Obtained a Bachelor's degree or an equivalent degree in accordance with local accreditation requirements.
- A) Fulfilled any other conditions determined by the respective Deanships or the competent authorities of the country in which the Branch is located.
- B) Should not have been dismissed, for academic reasons, from the programme to which he/she is applying.
- C) A prospective student may appeal against an admission decision or file a complaint against an admission process.

Article 4: Study Plans and Tracks

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

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- A) The respective study plans shall determine the courses and special academic requirements, pertinent to the academic programme concerned, in order to obtain the required degree.
- B) Study plans are drawn up based on the credit-hour system.
- C) The minimum requirement to obtain a Master's degree is 33 credit hours. The University may raise this lower limit if it is to fulfill local accreditation requirements.

Preparing study plans is done through two tracks:

- 1) **Dissertation:** in addition to attending several courses, a 6 credit hours (at least) dissertation must also be written, as stipulated in the programme's adopted study plan.
- 2) **Comprehensive Exam:** once the student passes the courses in their study plan and obtains the required number of credit hours, a comprehensive exam will be held.

Article 5: The Academic Year, Period of Study, and Study Load

- A) The beginning of the academic year, semesters, and examination period shall be specified in the academic calendar that is approved by the University Council.
- B) The minimum study load is three (3) credit hours, and the maximum shall be determined based on the study plan.
- C) Excluding the summer semester, the minimum period of study shall be 3 semesters, and the maximum shall be eight (8) semesters (up to 4 years).

Article 6: Withdrawal from Courses

- A) A student may file an application to drop a course during the semester so long as it is done not later than one week before the beginning of the final examination period specified in the academic calendar. In case of withdrawal, the procedure is to add a 'W' onto his/her course record.
- B) The branch may apply its fee-reclaim system as follows:

Withdrawal	% of Student Reimbursed Fees
Before study commencement; during the drop and add period	100% from the registered courses fees only
After drop and add period	70% from the registered courses fees only
Week 2	70%
Week 3	50%
After week 3	No reimbursement

Article 7: Deferral of Studies

- A) A student may apply for deferring his/her studies during the first two weeks of a semester start. The deferral period must not exceed two consecutive or separate semesters.
- B) The deferral period shall not be considered part of the maximum period allowed for earning a Master's degree.

Article 8: Dropouts

- A) If a student fails to register in a semester during the dropout period announced by the University, they shall be considered a dropout.
- B) The dropped out student may submit a force majeure excuse to the Branch Director during the dropped out semester. If the Director approves the excuse, the student shall be considered deferred instead. The period shall be counted as part of the allowed deferral period subject to Article 5, Clause C herein.
- C) A dropout can apply for a new admission. If accepted, previously acquired credit hours in their previous registration number shall be accredited to them in accordance with the study plan of their new programme.

Article 9: Withdrawal from the University

- A) A student is considered withdrawn when he/she personally fills an application of withdrawal from the University.

Article 10: Equivalency of Courses

A student may apply for equivalency of courses passed prior to joining AOU at a different higher education institute that is recognized by the country branch the student is studying in. The conditions for equivalency are as follows:

- A) The student's grade in each course is not less than 3.00 out of 4.00 (or an equivalent grade).
- B) The earned grade subject to equivalency was obtained less than 5 years back.
- C) The maximum number of credit hours that can be accepted in equivalency is 9 credit hours, so long as they are earned in a very similar programme with similar content and standards.
- D) The courses accepted as equivalents are entered as 'T' onto the student's academic record alongside their figures and credit hours.
- E) Equivalent courses credit hours shall be counted in the student's achieved hours, but not in the semester or cumulative averages.

Article 11: Tutorials

Tutorials are arranged according to the University's adopted schedules, and in line with the requirements of validating the programme locally and internationally.

Article 12: Course Assessment

- A) Course assessment is divided into two parts:
 - 1) Continuous assessment comprising TMAs (Tutor Marked Assignments) and MTAs (Midterm Assessments).
 - 2) Final examination.

- B) As determined by the Deanships and based on the nature of specialization in each programme, not less than 30% and not more than 70% shall be allotted to each of the two assessment components, making the total final mark 100%.
- C) In response to the requirements of local accreditation authorities at the University branches, a certain Deanship may determine the weighted parts of its assessment and the distribution of grades assigned to each part in line with Clause B of this Article. The Deanship may also adjust the weights of the parts of continuous assessment as necessitated by the academic and practical requirements of a course.

1) Continuous Assessment:

- A. The concerned Deanship is in charge of preparing TMAs and MTAs for all courses pursuant to the principles and procedures approved by the University Council.
- B. Each Deanship is responsible for providing the branches with all TMAs required for all courses by the second week of each semester the courses are part of.
- C. TMAs and MTAs shall be marked by members of staff appointed by the University.
- D. Students shall submit their TMAs on the deadline specified in the Course Calendar.
- E. Disabled/Special-requirements students whose health situation has a negative effect on their performance in TMAs and other continuous assessment tasks, should present proof to the Branch Programme Coordinator who shall refer their case to the branch Rector for decision making.
- F. If a student chooses to deter the timely submission of the TMA, he/she will be subject to **AOU's TMA Late Submission Policy**.
- G. A 0 mark shall be given to every student who fails to submit his/her TMA on the specified date and time, unless he/she submits a force majeure excuse not later than seven (7) days after the TMA submission

- deadline. In such cases, a grace period is provided up to seven days or until the end of the special circumstances (travel, sickness, etc).
- H. Students are shown the tutor's remarks, and the TMA's mark is entered onto the Student Information System (SIS) not later than two weeks after the TMA submission deadline.
 - I. The Branch Course Coordinator (BCC) reviews random samples of marked TMAs of each section to confirm that they are in line with the directions provided by the Deanship, and to check the type of remarks written by the tutor provided that this is documented by the branch. Moreover, the branch Rector shall send samples of TMAs and tests to the General Course Coordinator (GCC) to be audited and followed up.
 - J. Each course's MTA shall be held concurrently for all study groups each semester. The respective Deanship may unify the content and timing of examinations across all branches. MTAs shall be held under the supervision of the BCC.
 - K. Should a student fail to attend the MTA, he/she will be given a zero (0) mark unless a force majeure excuse (extenuating circumstances) is submitted within 7 calendar days of the MTA date, and in accordance with ***AOU's Extenuating Circumstances Policy***.
 - L. If the excuse is found valid, the student may attend an alternative MTA at the date assigned in the academic calendar.
 - M. The MTA is marked by the course tutor. The BCC reviews samples answer booklets from each study to verify the marking process as well the distribution and compilation of marks.
 - N. The MTA mark is entered by the course tutor onto the SIS under the supervision of the BCC.
 - O. MTA results should be announced no later than 10 days following the MTA date.
 - P. A student may appeal his/her MTA mark in accordance with Article 10 herein, or according to the appeals procedure determined by the University. He/she will be notified of the appeal's result within one (1) week.

- Q. The student's marks in continuous assessments (MTAs and TMAs) for each course are entered onto the SIS progressively. Due to this progressively aggregate nature, any modified mark will be entered prior to final exams by at least one (1) week.
- R. Students MTA papers are stored for (1) semester as a reference, if necessary.

2) Final Examination: Article 13 below discusses this in depth.

Article 13: Examinations

- A) Final examinations are prepared by HQ, and branches receive them not later than a week before final exams period begins.
- B) Final examinations are held concurrently in AOU branches at the date set in the University calendar and detailed by the schedule prepared by the Admission, Registration, and Examination (ARE) Department at AOU HQ in coordination with the Exams Departments in University branches.
- C) Students with disabilities or special requirements shall present their cases to the Branch respective authorities within at least one week before the exam or project submission due dates. Response to the cases include providing special support facilities and equipment, or extending the examination period. In cases of emergency, students may be allowed to present their cases at least three days before the exams or projects submission dates.
- D) The student will be notified with the decision by the Students Affairs Office within a maximum of one week (7 calendar days) from the date of receiving the appeal application.
- E) The examination papers are marked in the Branches by staff members and under the supervision of the Branch Course Coordinator and the Programme Coordinator (PC).
- F) A student who is absent from Final examinations shall earn a 0 mark unless he/she submits a force majeure excuse within one week after the Final examinations convening date. In case the excuse was accepted, 'I' shall be

entered onto his/her academic record if he/she had not failed in the continuous assessment.

- G) The student can then sit for the next time the course is examined in full coordination between the respective sides; Deanship, Branch and Admission, Registration, and Examination Department (ARE).

Article 14: Appeals

1- Formation of Appeals and Re-Appeals Committees:

- A- **Branch Appeals Committee (BAC):** for each academic programme, a respective BAC shall be formed comprising the respective branch programme coordinator and two academic staff members including the BCC or General Course Coordinator (GCC), if possible.
- B- **Branch Re-Appeal Committee (BRC):** for each academic programme, a specialized BRC shall be formed comprising the Assistant Director/Rector for Academic Affairs and two members of the teaching staff of the respective course whom were not members of the BAC.

2- Duties and Procedures of the BAC and BRC:

- A. A student may submit an appeal within seven (7) calendar days from the date of posting the approved course results or receiving the decision subject of the appeal through the online appeals system, and upon completing the relevant procedures as set by the University.
- B. The BAC shall carefully study the student's appeal, review any supporting evidence and submit its recommendation to the Assistant Director/Rector for Academic Affairs
- For appeals against course grades, the Branch Appeal Committee shall study the student appeal and verify the absence of any error in computation of results or in entering student's course marks in the SIS, as well as the absence of any unmarked questions.

The student should be informed of the committee's recommendation(s), which will then be forwarded to the Central Examination Committee (CEC) to be endorsed within two weeks (14 calendar days) of submitting the appeal.

C- The student may object to the committee's decision and re-appeal through the Branch Rector to the competent Branch Re-appeal Committee (BRC) within one week of being notified of the outcome of the appeal and the committee recommendation.

D- The Branch Re-Appeal Committee shall carefully consider and review the student's appeal to ensure absence of administrative errors and to rule out any procedural irregularity.

The student should be informed of the committee's recommendation(s) within two weeks (14 calendar days) of submitting the re-appeal.

The BRC recommendations will be forwarded to the Central Examination Committee (CEC) to be endorsed.

E- The BAC and BRC may consult with the respective General Course Coordinator or Academic Programme Deanship, or the relevant department if necessary.

F- If any of the committees (BAC) or (BRC) recommends change of the student appeal grade than the respective branch rectors shall submit the recommendation to the VPAA & SR to be submitted at the CEC.

G- The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research submits to the Central Examination Committee all the appeal and re-appeal cases that he had received from the University Branches for final approval and endorsement.

H- Following the approval of the CEC, the student's mark is updated by the authorized persons as required, provided that the changes are recorded in the student's permanent record.

I- The student's right to appeal or re-appeal concerning his/her case shall be waived if he/she did not abide by the deadlines.

- J- The student's result should be confirmed as final and irrevocable one (1) semester after its adoption. No changes can occur from this point onward.

Article 15: Cheating and Causing Disorder in Exams

The University invokes 'The Students Conduct Bylaws' and punitive actions regarding the definition of cheating cases, causing disorder, how these are dealt with, and the proper punishment implemented. They are carried out in accordance with the procedures adopted and the special committees formed for this purpose.

Article 16: Marks, Cumulative Average and Grades

A) Marks:

- 1) The final marks of various courses are registered in the student's record in letter grades.
- 2) Pursuant to University Council approved standards, letter grades are assigned according to the heuristic constant grading system, and have the following ranges:

Letter Grade	F	D	C	C+	B	B+	A
Marks%	≤ 50	50-59	60-69	70 -74	75 - 79	80 -85	86 -100

- 3) Obtaining a C+ is considered the minimum requirement for passing a course provided that the student should obtain in both continuous assessment and the final exam not less than 60% and that the overall mark of the course should not be below 70%.
- 4) The concerned Deanship may alter the aforementioned ranges as it sees fit based on the nature of the course.

B) The Cumulative Average:

- 1) The overall points of each course shall be the result of multiplying the credit hours of the course by the weight of the letter grade obtained.
- 2) The cumulative average, however, is computed by dividing the overall points of the completed courses by the obtained credit hours.

C) Grades:

- Computed according to the corresponding cumulative average as follows:

Cumulative Average	Below 2.0	2.5-2.99	3.0-3.66	3.67-4.0
Grade	Fail	Good	Very Good	Excellent

Article 17: Repeating Courses

- A) A student may repeat a course in their study plan in order to raise the cumulative average to the required limit if the course mark is lower than B. The course credit hours are only computed once alongside the newly earned grade.
- B) A student who fails to pass a compulsory course must repeat it in a following semester. However, if he/she fails, the course's credit hours are deleted from the cumulative average and the average of the semester in which he/she failed shall not be amended.
- C) A student who fails an elective course may repeat the same course or take any other elective in order to meet the requirements of the validated programme's study plan. The new grade of the repeated exam is entered onto his/her semester and cumulative averages. However, if he/she fails, the course's credit hours are deleted from the cumulative average and the average of the semester in which he/she failed shall not be amended.

Article 18: Warning and Dismissal

- A) A warning shall be issued to a student, whose cumulative average is below 2.67 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 from.

Article 19: The Dissertation Track

- A) Provided that the cumulative average has not fallen below 3.0, after the completion of 15-16 credit hours of required courses, the student can submit an application to start working on the dissertation.
- B) The concerned Deanship issues a recommendation for the appointment of dissertation supervisors, the dissertation title, and the dissertation outline.
- C) The Master's student's supervisor must be a Professor or an Associate Professor. In special circumstances determined by the Deanship, an Assistant Professor can be appointed if such an appointment does not conflict with local accreditation conditions.
- D) A Viva Voce Committee is formed only after the student had completed all other programme requirements, provided that his/her cumulative average is not below 3.0.
- E) The Viva Voce committee shall consist of:
 - 1) The student's supervisor.
 - 2) A staff member from the Deanship.
 - 3) An external examiner Ph.D. holder from outside the University in the country branch, provided that his/her specialization is closely related to the topic of the dissertation, or it is required by local accreditation.
- F) The result of the Viva Voce shall be:
 - 1) Pass – Dissertation is accepted.

- 2) Fail – Dissertation is rejected.
- 3) Referred – the student is asked to amend the dissertation within a period of not later than four months. If the committee accepts the amendment, he/she shall have passed.
- 4) If a student fails to pass the Viva Voce, he/she shall be given a second chance. If he/she fails again then he/she shall be expelled from the programme.
- G) The result of the Viva Voce is entered onto the student's record as either a Fail or a Pass.
- H) A student expelled from a certain programme may apply to a new programme, subject to the provisions of Article 18, Clause C herein.

Article 20: The Comprehensive Exam Track

- A. The exam shall be of a comprehensive nature. It seeks to assess the student's ability to synthesize different concepts from the different courses in a manner that reflects the application of acquired knowledge in resolving scientific and applied problems.
- B. The competent Deanship shall undertake the task of forming the Comprehensive Exam Committee, which consists of at least 3 members that are part of the programme, subject to specific instructions issued by the University Council. The formed committee shall prepare the comprehensive exam, determine its date, and submit its results.
- C. A student is allowed to take the comprehensive exam only after he/she had successfully passed all of the courses, provided that the cumulative average has not fallen below 3.0.
- D. Should the student fail the comprehensive exam, they may have only one more re-sit session to be held in the next scheduled date in the University calendar, provided that the new date falls within the maximum period allowed for obtaining a Master's degree—Article 5, Clause C for reference. If the student fails the exam, he/she will be dismissed from the programme.

- E. The student's result in the comprehensive exam shall be entered in his/her transcript as either a Fail or a Pass.
- F. A student expelled from a certain programme may apply to a new programme, subject to the provisions of Article 18, Clause C herein.

Article 21: Transfer

A) Transfer between Programmes:

If a student meets another programme's admission conditions, he/she shall be allowed to transfer to said programme. According to the timetable assigned by the University Administration, this may take place only after completion of the first enrolled semester. The courses shared by the two programmes and passed by the student shall be credited to him/her, provided that they are part of the requirements of the new programme.

B) Transfer between Branches:

Subject to the requirements of local accreditation, a student may be allowed to transfer from one AOU branch to another provided that this takes place at the beginning of a semester and in line with the periods and procedures determined by the University's administration. If approved, the courses accredited to him/her in the first branch shall be entered onto his/her transcript.

Note: The provisions of The Student Transfer Bylaws at the Arab Open University shall be implemented in issues not mentioned above.

Article 22: Master's Award

The Master's degree shall be awarded following the completion of graduation requirements. They are:

- A) Successfully completing all courses required for graduation in the approved Master's degree study plan in the respective programme.
- B) Acquiring a cumulative average of not less than three points 3.0 out of 4.0.

- C) Not having exceeded the maximum period allowed for obtaining a Master's degree, as specified in Article 5, Clause C of this bylaw.
- D) Passing either the Comprehensive Exam or the Viva Voce, based on the track.
- E) Meeting any other requirement noted in the student's study plan.

Article 23: General Provisions

- A) The current bylaws herein shall override any previous bylaws relating to or having the same title or subject matter.
- B) The Vice Presidents, Deans, Branch Directors and Directors of Admissions, Registration and Examination, shall be responsible for implementing the provisions of the current bylaws.
- C) The University Council shall deal with issues not covered in the present Bylaws.