



# Study and Examination Regulations for the Master of Science in Life Sciences Degree Programme at School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences HAFL (SPR MSCLS)<sup>1</sup>

*The University Board of Bern University of Applied Sciences,*

*pursuant to Article 33 paragraph 1 letter n of the Act of 19 June 2003 concerning Bern University of Applied Sciences (FaG)<sup>2</sup>, Article 56a and Article 62 of the Ordinance of 5 May 2004 concerning Bern University of Applied Sciences (FaV)<sup>3</sup>*

*has decided:*

## 1. Principles

Scope	<b>Art. 1</b> The 'Master of Science in Life Sciences' is jointly offered by Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH), the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO), the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW) and the Zürcher Fachhochschule (ZFH). These study and examination regulations govern admission to, study at and graduation from BFH-HAFL.
Specialisations	<b>Art. 2</b> Within the 'Master of Science in Life Sciences' cooperation degree programme, BFH-HAFL offers the following specialisations: <i>a</i> Specialisation in Forest Science; <i>b</i> Specialisation in Agricultural Science; <i>c</i> Specialisation in Food, Nutrition and Health.
Study plan	<b>Art. 3</b> For each specialisation, the respective study plan specifies the modules offered in the different module categories and the corresponding module types as well as the groups for the selection of the compulsory-elective modules.

## 2. Admission

Entry requirements	<b>Art. 4</b> <sup>1</sup> To be admitted onto the master's degree programme at BFH-HAFL, candidates must have a bachelor's degree from a Swiss higher education institution in one of the following degree disciplines with either an ECTS grade A or B or at least a grade 5 and be able to prove that they have at least six months of HAFL-approved work experience:  For the specialisation in Food, Nutrition and Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Food Science</li><li>- Food Technology</li><li>- Nutrition and Dietetics</li><li>- Oenology</li></ul>
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<sup>1</sup> This document is an English translation of the *Studien- und Prüfungsreglement für den Studiengang Master of Science in Life Sciences der Hochschule für Agrar-, Forst und Lebensmittelwissenschaften HAFL (SPR MSCLS)* dated 1 August 2018. This translation is for information purposes only and is not legally binding. For legal purposes the German version should be referred to.

<sup>2</sup> BSG 435.411.

<sup>3</sup> BSG 436.811.

For the specialisation in Forest Science

- Forest Science
- Forestry
- Wood Engineering
- Environmental Engineering
- Landscape Architecture
- Nature Management
- Agriculture
- Geography

For the specialisation in Agricultural Science

- Agriculture
- Oenology
- Environmental Engineering
- Nature Management
- Landscape Architecture
- Forest Science
- Geography

<sup>2</sup> Candidates who fulfil the following entry requirements are also admitted to the BFH-HAFL master's degree programme:

- a* a bachelor's degree from a Swiss higher education institution with either an ECTS grade C or lower or a final grade below 5 in a discipline listed in paragraph 1  
or  
a bachelor's degree from a Swiss higher education institution in a discipline other than those listed in paragraph 1 and sufficient knowledge related to the discipline of this degree programme  
or  
an equivalent previous education undertaken abroad, although the equivalence of this previous education will be judged by the respective Head of Specialisation and the BFH-HAFL Head of Teaching and
- b* have passed the aptitude assessment in accordance with article 5 and
- c* can provide evidence that they have at least six months of BFH-HAFL-approved work experience.

<sup>3</sup> Candidates with insufficient work experience must complete a work placement recognised by BFH-HAFL before beginning their studies. Once at least half of this is completed, they can be admitted on the condition that the placement is completed by the end of the first year of study.

<sup>4</sup> Applicants must submit the following documents when registering:

- a* statement of personal motivation,
- b* curriculum vitae,
- c* copy of identity card or passport,
- d* copy of academic degree diplomas),
- e* copy of academic transcript(s) of records,
- f* copy of references/certifications of work experience,
- g* copy of upper-secondary education (university entrance) certificate,
- h* copy of confirmation of terminated matriculation (if the applicant was already matriculated at another higher education institution),



- i* certified translation of all documents issued in a language other than German, French, Italian or English,
- j* passport-sized photograph.

#### Assessment of aptitude

**Art. 5** <sup>1</sup> The aptitude assessment consists of a structured interview lasting 45 to 60 minutes assessed with a numerical grade. The following criteria are used to assess candidates' aptitude:

- a* conceptual skills,
- b* analytical and 'joined-up' thinking,
- c* subject-related skills,
- d* motivation.

<sup>2</sup> The BFH-HAFL Management Board issues guidelines at the request of the Head of Teaching.

<sup>3</sup> A minimum grade of 5 is required to pass the aptitude assessment. This result is valid for five years.

<sup>4</sup> An aptitude assessment is considered to have been partially passed when assessed with a sufficient grade below 5, i.e. with a grade between 4.0 and 4.9. Admission is subject to conditions which must be fulfilled in accordance with the Individual Study Agreement at the latest by the end of the master's programme.

<sup>5</sup> If the aptitude assessment is not passed, admission is refused. The assessment may be re-taken as part of a new application process. If this second attempt is also unsuccessful, admission is not possible until ten years have passed.

### 3. Degree programme

#### 3.1 Modules

#### Modules

**Art. 6** <sup>1</sup> The degree programme is modular.

<sup>2</sup> A module is a teaching-and-learning unit limited in content and time.

<sup>3</sup> Performance in a module is assessed by means of competency assessments. Enrolment on a module includes registration for the competency assessments of that module. The competency assessment must be taken at the specified time.

<sup>4</sup> If the module is passed, the ECTS credits allocated to the module are awarded. No ECTS credits are awarded for a failed module.

#### Module categories

**Art. 7** <sup>1</sup> The degree programme consists of the following module categories:

- a* core-competence modules;
- b* cluster-specific modules;
- c* specialisation modules;
- d* thesis (1 module).



<sup>2</sup> The study plans specify the minimum number of ECTS credits to be obtained for each module category.

#### Module types

**Art. 8** <sup>1</sup> A distinction is made between the following module types:  
*a* compulsory modules,  
*b* compulsory-elective modules,  
*c* optional modules.

<sup>2</sup> Compulsory modules are modules which must be taken and passed to graduate in a specific specialisation.

<sup>3</sup> Compulsory-elective modules are modules which must be selected from a module group. If a selected compulsory-elective module is not passed, it can be replaced by another compulsory-elective module within the group.

<sup>4</sup> Optional modules are modules which may be selected from an extended group of modules. A distinction is made between optional modules that are recognised for graduation from the degree programme and optional modules which cannot be recognised.

#### Module description

**Art. 9** There is a description for each module providing at least information about:

- a* entry requirements,
- b* competencies to be achieved,,
- c* module content,
- d* teaching and learning methods,
- e* competency assessment,
- f* number of ECTS credits,
- g* teaching language,
- h* module coordinator.

#### Attendance requirement

**Art. 10** <sup>1</sup> The module description may stipulate an attendance requirement for individual teaching events if attendance at such events is necessary for meeting the degree and learning objectives.

<sup>2</sup> Admission to the competency assessment may be made dependent on compliance with the attendance requirement.

<sup>3</sup> If attendance requirements are stipulated, the module coordinator may establish a rule requiring compensation for the missed content with a similar workload.

<sup>4</sup> Further details are regulated by the Management Board at the request of the Head of Teaching in the Regulations Governing Absence.

### 3.2 ECTS system

#### ECTS calculation

**Art. 11** <sup>1</sup> The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is generally used.

<sup>2</sup> An ECTS credit corresponds to an average student workload of 30 hours.

<sup>3</sup> The student workload is composed of

- a* contact time,
- b* guided self-study,
- c* independent self-study and
- d* competency assessment.

Validity of ECTS credits

**Art. 12** ECTS credits obtained at and recognised by BFH-HAFL are generally valid indefinitely. Subject to the approval of the Head of Teaching, the Head of the Degree Programme may declare ECTS credits previously acquired or recognised invalid if the competencies evidenced in this way are no longer relevant to the studies.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.3 Progression and completion

Programme duration and number of ECTS credits per semester

**Art. 13** <sup>1</sup> The full-time programme lasts three semesters (including thesis), which corresponds to 90 ECTS credits. If the degree is taken part-time, the programme duration is extended accordingly.

<sup>2</sup> Each semester, modules of at least twelve ECTS credits must be taken. Fewer ECTS credits may also be taken in the case of serious reasons pursuant to Article 24, paragraph 3. Exceptions of this kind must be decided by the Head of Degree Programme and are subject to approval by the Head of Teaching.<sup>5</sup>

Individual Study Agreement

**Art. 14** <sup>1</sup> The compulsory modules to be completed are defined in the study plan and are binding. Compulsory-elective and optional modules are selected from the study plan before the start of studies after consultation with the Head of Specialisation or a person authorised by him/her. After this consultation, an individual plan for the studies is drawn up, which is documented in writing in the Individual Study Agreement before the start of the studies.

<sup>2</sup> In exceptional and justified cases, it is possible to deviate from the prescribed compulsory modules, the conditions for the completion of the various module categories and the defined groups for the selection of the compulsory-elective modules. Such deviations must be approved by the Head of Teaching at the beginning of the programme at the joint request of the Head of Specialisation and the student and recorded in writing in the Individual Study Agreement.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The scheduling of individual modules and the selection of compulsory-elective and optional modules in the Individual Study Agreement can be amended by students before the start of each semester. The time periods are determined by the Head of Teaching.

Accreditation of prior learning

**Art. 15** <sup>1</sup> Subject to approval by the Head of Teaching, equivalent academic achievements and qualifications from professional practice or certified continuing education are recognised after an equivalency assessment by the Head of Degree Programme. Applications for such

<sup>4</sup> Version pursuant to University Board resolution of 15 April 2019, in force since 1 May 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Version pursuant to University Board resolution of 15 April 2019, in force since 1 May 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Version pursuant to University Board resolution of 15 April 2019, in force since 1 May 2019.

accreditation of prior learning must be submitted before the start of studies.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A maximum of 30 ECTS credits from modules taken at another higher education institution during the degree programme may be recognised. Applications for recognition must be submitted before taking the modules. The Head of Degree Programme decides on recognition.

#### Master's thesis

**Art. 16**<sup>1</sup> The master's programme is completed with a thesis, which is part of the specialisation. Students choose a topic from a selection given for their specialisation. They can also submit their own topic suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> The thesis is a module in the form of independent work to the amount of 30 ECTS credits. The thesis must be undertaken individually.

<sup>3</sup> During the preparation of their thesis, students are supervised by a lecturer or by a research associate with a doctorate or master's degree and at least three years of research experience (principal advisor).

<sup>4</sup> After completing the thesis, the student must take an oral examination on the topic addressed in the thesis and its related subject areas.

<sup>5</sup> The oral examination is conducted by the principal advisor with the participation of an expert. Experts are selected by the Head of Teaching at the request of the principal advisor and participate in an advisory capacity.

<sup>6</sup> The grade for the oral examination comprises part of the assessment of the thesis.

<sup>7</sup> The thesis is assessed by the principal advisor and reviewed by a second specialist. Specialists are the experts selected for the oral examination or members of the mid-level academic staff or lecturers with scientific qualifications in the relevant subject area.

<sup>8</sup> At the request of the Head of Teaching, the Management Board issues 'Guidelines for Master's Theses' which regulate further details.

#### Graduation and degree title

**Art. 17**<sup>1</sup> The master's degree is awarded to students who have:

- a* passed all the compulsory modules of their specialisation and obtained at least 90 ECTS credits;
- b* obtained the minimum number of ECTS credits in each module category as specified in the curriculum;
- c* completed their thesis in their specialisation and received at least a grade 4;
- d* fulfilled any conditions pursuant to Article 5 paragraph 4.

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<sup>7</sup> Version pursuant to University Board resolution of 15 April 2019, in force since 1 May 2019.

- <sup>2</sup> On successful completion of the programme, the 'Master of Science' (MSc) academic degree is awarded. The degree title includes the degree programme and the selected specialisation, as follows:
- a* MSc BFH in Life Sciences with specialisation in Forest Science;
  - b* MSc BFH in Life Sciences with specialisation in Agricultural Science;
  - c* MSc BFH in Life Sciences with specialisation in Food, Nutrition and Health.

#### Graduation documents

**Art. 18** <sup>1</sup>In addition to their degree diploma, students receive a transcript of records, a grading table and a diploma supplement in the study language (English) on completion of the degree programme.

<sup>2</sup> The transcript of records shows the modules taken, the ECTS credits allocated to the modules, the grades achieved for each module and the final grade. The final grade is an average grade over the entire programme and is rounded to half grades. All the compulsory and compulsory-elective modules taken and the thesis are included in the calculation and weighted according to the ECTS credits allocated to the respective module.

<sup>3</sup> The grading table provides information on the percentage distribution of pass grades awarded in the degree programme over the previous three years.

<sup>4</sup> The diploma supplement describes the degree programme and complies with the requirements of the ECTS User's Guide.

#### Exclusion from studies

**Art. 19** Students who are no longer able to fulfil the conditions for graduation set out in Article 17 because they have exhausted the repetition possibilities or who have been absent for no reason from all competency assessments for a semester are excluded from studies.

### 4. Competency assessments

#### Competency assessments

**Art. 20** <sup>1</sup>Competency assessments are individual or group work and serve to test the competencies acquired in a module.

- <sup>2</sup> Competency assessments may take the following forms:
- a* written or oral examinations,
  - b* written coursework, exercises, case studies and reports,
  - c* project work and reports,
  - d* presentations.

<sup>3</sup> The module coordinators specify the form of competency assessments and their weighting for the module assessment in the module description. They ensure that students are informed in good time about when the competency assessments take place, what is to be achieved, which criteria are used to assess these achievements and which aids are permitted.

#### Responsibility for carrying out and grading competency assessments

**Art. 21** <sup>1</sup> The module coordinators are generally responsible for informing students about the competency assessments and for their



preparation, implementation, correction and grading. They may recruit additional staff to perform these tasks. The module coordinators are solely responsible for the final module grading.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the examining teacher, a second person must take part in oral examinations and make a written record. For this task, a person with the appropriate professional skills is assigned.

Public

**Art. 22** <sup>1</sup> Competency assessments are not generally public.

<sup>2</sup> The oral examination for the thesis is public.

Languages

**Art. 23** <sup>1</sup> Competency assessments must be taken in the teaching language of that module. This is usually English.

<sup>2</sup> Provided that no translation costs arise for BFH-HAFL and with the agreement of the module coordinator or the principal advisor and the student concerned, a competency assessment or thesis may be written in German, French, Italian or Spanish.

<sup>3</sup> Competency assessment tasks are provided only in English.

Late submission, absence and withdrawal

**Art. 24** <sup>1</sup> Any student who without serious reason fails to submit a competency assessment within the deadline, is absent from an appointment to deliver a competency assessment or withdraws during said competency assessment receives a grade 1 or 'failed'.

<sup>2</sup> Any student who is unable to submit or deliver a competency assessment due to a serious reason pursuant to paragraph 3 may postpone it upon request.

<sup>3</sup> Serious reasons include illness, accident, pregnancy, military service, civilian service, unavoidable obligation to provide care for close family members or the death of a close person. Illness and accident must be evidenced by a doctor's certificate and the Head of Teaching can demand that the student be examined by the BFH-HAFL doctor.

<sup>4</sup> Requests for postponement must be submitted to Student Administration before the date to be postponed or, in the event of unforeseen incapacitation, no later than the fifth day after the date. The Head of Teaching decides immediately whether to grant the postponement.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> If the request has been granted, the competency assessment must be taken at the latest in the following academic year. The module coordinator is responsible for determining the exact time and form. If the postponement concerns the thesis, the Head of Teaching will determine the new date after consulting the principal advisor.<sup>9</sup>

Dishonesty and disturbance

**Art. 25** <sup>1</sup> Competency assessments are to be carried out independently, without the illicit help of third parties and only with the

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<sup>8</sup> Version pursuant to University Board resolution of 15 April 2019, in force since 1 May 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Version pursuant to University Board resolution of 15 April 2019, in force since 1 May 2019.





aids permitted. In written work, all references must be cited. Research results must be truthfully reported.

<sup>2</sup> Any attempt to achieve a better grade for oneself or another by illicit means and any falsification of research results will lead to a grade 1 or 'failed' for that competency assessment.

<sup>3</sup> Further sanctions are regulated by the Guidelines Regarding the Handling of Plagiarism at Bern University of Applied Sciences and Article 82a of the Act Governing Bern University of Applied Sciences (FaV).

<sup>4</sup> The assessors record the incident and report it to the Head of Degree Programme. He or she hears the case and initiates the necessary legal actions.

<sup>5</sup> If the dishonesty is discovered only after the competency assessment has been graded, the Head of Teaching can retroactively award grade 1 or 'failed' for that competency assessment.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Serious disruption of a competency assessment (for example, noise, disruptive behaviour, other interruptions) will result in exclusion from the assessment room and grade 1 or 'failed'. The assessor will document the reasons.

#### Documentation

**Art. 26** <sup>1</sup> The module coordinator is responsible for the documentation of competency assessments.

<sup>2</sup> Documentation relating to competency assessments for specialisation modules must be kept until the end of the appeal period or, in case of appeal, until the legally binding conclusion of the appeal process.

<sup>3</sup> Documentation relating to competency assessments for core-competence modules and cluster-specific modules must be kept for four years after disclosure of results.

<sup>4</sup> The thesis must be kept for ten years after disclosure of results.

#### Grading system

**Art. 27** <sup>1</sup> The overall assessment of competency acquired during a module is given in the form of a numerical grade which is rounded to half grades from 1 to 6. Optional modules may also be graded with 'passed' or 'failed'.

<sup>2</sup> Individual grades indicate the following:

- 6.0 excellent
- 5.5 very good
- 5.0 good
- 4.5 satisfactory
- 4.0 sufficient

<sup>3</sup> Grades between 1 and 3.5 are insufficient

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<sup>10</sup> Version pursuant to University Board resolution of 15 April 2019, in force since 1 May 2019.

<sup>4</sup> A module is considered to have been passed when at least grade 4 or 'passed' has been achieved.

<sup>5</sup> The module coordinator can award grade 3.5 with the rating 'subsequent improvement possible'. The student is thus given the chance to reach grade 4.0 by means of additional work provided this work is graded as sufficient. The form of and deadline for the subsequent improvement is set by the module coordinator. The subsequent improvement must be undertaken within four weeks of the original grade being disclosed.

<sup>6</sup> Core-competence and cluster-specific modules graded 3.5 are always rated 'subsequent improvement possible'.

Disclosure of results: transcript of records

**Art. 28** <sup>1</sup> Grades for modules completed are disclosed in the form of a transcript of records (which is a legally binding document) by the Head of Teaching. The transcript of records provides at least information about the modules taken, the module grades and the ECTS credits acquired. It also contains instructions on how to appeal.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A module grade is usually disclosed in the transcript of records no later than 35 days after the deadline for submission of the last competency assessment for the module.

<sup>3</sup> Grades which appear in the transcript of records before the official disclosure are not binding.

Repetition of modules

**Art. 29** <sup>1</sup> Failed modules may be repeated once.

<sup>2</sup> Repetition of passed modules for the purpose of improving grades is not permitted.

<sup>3</sup> When a module is repeated, the original module grade in the transcript of records is replaced by the grade of the repetition. This is also the case if the grade for the repetition is worse than the original grade.

<sup>4</sup> Repetition involves re-taking the module and its competency assessment in the next academic year. If there are serious reasons for delaying repetition, the Head of Degree Programme may, upon application from the student and subject to the approval of the Head of Teaching, grant a later repetition.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> If the thesis is graded as insufficient, it can only be re-submitted with a new project definition. The student will have a different principal advisor.

## 5. Judicature

<sup>11</sup> Version pursuant to University Board resolution of 15 April 2019, in force since 1 May 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Version pursuant to University Board resolution of 15 April 2019, in force since 1 May 2019.



**Art. 30** The appeal procedure is governed by cantonal law.

## 6. Final clauses

Enactment

**Art. 31** These regulations come into effect on 1 August 2018.

Repeal of decrees

**Art. 32** The BFH Framework of Study Regulations (RSO) for the Master of Science in Life Sciences of 23 June 2008 and the Study and Examination Regulations for the Master of Science in Life Sciences Degree Programme at the Swiss College of Agriculture of 5 September 2011 are repealed.

Transitional provisions

**Art. 33** <sup>1</sup> Students who began their studies before the 2018/2019 autumn semester can complete their studies in accordance with the graduation requirements laid down in the Study and Examination Regulations for the Master of Science in Life Sciences Degree Programme at the Swiss College of Agriculture of 5 September 2011 (Articles 6 and 8).

<sup>2</sup> From the 2018/2019 autumn semester, the modules of the general basics and extended theoretical basics will no longer be offered in their current form. The Head of Degree Programme will provide a table ('Rules for Transition') showing which old modules are being replaced in terms of content by which new modules. New modules may not be taken if old modules with similar content have already been completed. Students who have not yet completed the old modules according to their Individual Study Agreement must complete the comparable new modules in order to graduate.

<sup>3</sup> Before the start of the 2018/2019 autumn semester, the Head of Specialisation will advise the students concerned. The Individual Study Agreement will be adjusted accordingly. If no agreement is reached on the amendment of the Individual Study Agreement, the Head of Degree Programme will decide, subject to the approval of the Head of Teaching.<sup>13</sup>

On behalf of the University Board of Bern University of Applied Sciences

Approved by the Education Department of Canton Bern

Bern, Date

Bern, Date

Bern University of Applied Sciences,  
University Board

Education Department of Canton Bern

Markus Ruprecht, President

Christine Häslér, Member of the Executive Council of Canton Bern

Amended pursuant to University Board resolution of 4 May 2010, in force since 12 May 2010.

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<sup>13</sup> Version pursuant to University Board resolution of 15 April 2019, in force since 1 May 2019.

