

**Rules Governing Masters Studies
at the Reykjavík University School of Law**

**Chapter I
Masters degrees and application requirements**

**Article 1
Masters Degree in Law**

The Reykjavík University ("RU") School of Law confers the academic degree of Master of Legal Studies ("M.L.") following graduate studies of 120 ECTS credits ("credits") at the School with satisfactory results.

**Article 2
Qualification for admission to the legal profession**

A student who has completed an M.L. degree at the Reykjavík University School of Law and earned a minimum of 240 credits by completing legal subjects in the course of undergraduate and graduate studies shall be regarded as qualifying for admission to the legal profession within the meaning of point 4 of the first paragraph of Article 6 of Act No. 77/1998 on lawyers. This certification is equivalent to a professional degree in law in the understanding of statutory law.

**Article 3¹
Admission requirements**

Applicants for masters studies at the RU School of Law shall have completed a B.A. or B.Sc. degree, or passed a corresponding examination at an accredited university, with a minimum average grade of 6. The Admissions Committee of the School of Law shall evaluate applications and decide on admissions to masters studies. The Admissions Committee may establish rules of procedure concerning such evaluation.

- (a) In evaluating applications from students who have completed a B.A. degree from the RU School of Law, account will be taken of performance and progress of studies at the B.A. level, experience and other matters that provide evidence of an applicant's knowledge, skills and qualifications to engage in studies in law at the masters level. Applicants who have passed a B.A. examination at the RU School of Law with an average grade of 6.5 or higher are entitled to admission to masters studies (M.L. studies). Notwithstanding the above provisions, the Admissions Committee can reject an applicant who has been guilty of violating rules of study and examinations or the RU Code of Ethics in the course of B.A. studies. Account shall be taken of whether such violations are serious or repeated.
- b) The Academic Council may allow the admission of a student to M.L. studies for up to two terms if the student has completed a minimum of 165 credits at the B.A. level at the RU School of Law with an average grade of 6.5 or better. If a student is subsequently admitted to M.L. studies on the basis of subsection (a) any courses that the student has completed at the masters level pursuant to the provisions above shall be assessed as masters studies subject to the condition in the third paragraph of Article 19.

¹ [Subsections \(a\) and \(b\) of the third paragraph of Article 3 apply to students beginning B.A. studies at the RU School of Law in the spring term of 2013. Article 5 of the Rules on masters studies at the Reykjavik University School of Law, as current prior to the entry into effect of these Rules, shall apply to students who began their studies before that time.](#)

- (c) Applicants possessing a B.A. degree in law or a similar degree from other universities may apply for admission to M.L. studies at the RU School of Law. In evaluating such applications the Admissions Committee shall take special account of performance and progress of studies. The Committee may also take account of experience and other matters that provide evidence of an applicant's knowledge, skills and proficiency to engage in studies in law at the masters level. The Academic Council may decide that students admitted pursuant to this provision should meet requirements exceeding the requirements arising out of these Rules regarding the content of masters studies and student performance. These Rules may include completion of specific courses or assignments in the School's undergraduate programme without such courses counting toward the completion of masters studies. The Dean of the School shall decide on tuition fees for any additional courses that students may be required to complete at the undergraduate level.
- (d) Applicants possessing a B.A. or B.Sc. degree in fields other than law may be admitted to masters studies at the RU School of law. In evaluating such applications, the Admissions Committee shall have particular regard to the composition of the applicants' studies and their performance in individual components. The Committee may also take account of experience and other matters that provide evidence of an applicant's knowledge, skills and proficiency to engage in studies in law at the masters level. Applicants who are admitted shall complete the BA level course Methodology I: Sources of Law and interpretations of law, with an average grade of 6.0 or better as a part of their M.L. studies. They shall register for the course in the first autumn term after they begin their studies. For these applicants, an M.L. degree shall not lead to admission to the legal profession within the meaning of point 4 of the first paragraph of Article 6 of Act No. 77/1998 on lawyers and is not equivalent to a professional law degree in the understanding of statutory law.

The Dean of the School shall, in consultation with the Rector, decide on the number of students to be admitted to masters studies.

The deadlines for applications to M.L. studies and responses to applications shall be decided by the Dean of the School and advertised.

Chapter II

Studies, teaching and learning outcomes

Article 4

Composition of studies

Students shall themselves decide on the composition of their studies within the limits established in these Rules.

In the course of masters studies a student shall complete a minimum of 60 credits in legal subjects; however, up to 60 credits may be completed in other subjects at graduate level, as further provided in Article 18. Notwithstanding the above, students who are enrolled in masters studies on the basis of Article 3(c) of these Rules without having completed a B.A. degree in law, or a comparable degree, shall complete a minimum of 105 credits in legal subjects. Courses specified in the Course Catalogue for masters studies at the RU School of Law are legal subjects except as otherwise decided by a faculty meeting. Courses and

assignments completed in other schools of RU and other Icelandic or foreign academic institutions are not considered legal subjects in the above understanding except as otherwise decided by the Academic Affairs Council.

Students admitted to masters studies under the provisions of Article 3(d) may, subject to approval by the Academic Affairs Council, select a total of two undergraduate courses at the RU School of Law to replace courses at the masters level. The Academic Affairs Council may decide to limit this choice to only some subjects from the undergraduate curriculum. A minimum grade of 6.0 is required to pass examinations in undergraduate level subjects.

All students enrolled in masters studies are required to submit a masters thesis of 30 or 60 credits, as further provided in Articles 16 and 17 below.

Article 5

Learning outcomes

On completion of an M.L. examination, students shall possess knowledge, skills and proficiency in accordance with current criteria of higher education. On graduation students should possess a) knowledge of the law b) the ability to use the methods and working procedures of the law c) the capacity to use their knowledge and skills in work and/or further studies.

This entails the following:

a) Knowledge

Students shall:

- have added to their basic knowledge and acquired a deep general understanding of the comprehensive aspects of law and its academic subjects;
- have acquired specialist knowledge of selected fields;
- possess the methodological and substantive knowledge to argue their own resolutions of legal problems;
- have the ability to place the most recent knowledge in the context of current knowledge;
- possess a deep understanding of the social role of law and its links with other academic fields;
- understand the importance of observing ethical principles in all aspects of their work.

b) Skills

Students shall:

- command a critical mindset and the ability to employ critical thinking in their work;
- have the ability to use the methods and working procedures of the law;
- have the ability to use their knowledge and understanding to isolate, analyse and resolve legal problems;
- have the ability to integrate knowledge;
- command skills in gathering and analysing information, assessing its value and selecting the proper sources for use;
- be able to take a position with regard to legal issues and state this position in a clear and reasoned manner;
- be able to grasp and acquire knowledge in new fields;
- be able to read and understand legal research and its conclusions;
- be able to apply their knowledge, understanding and problem solving abilities in new and unfamiliar circumstances and in collaboration with other academic fields;
- be able to take an active part in discussions of legal issues.

c) Proficiency

Students shall:

- be able to use their knowledge and proficiency in legal work;
- have developed independent and organised working procedures and the proficiency to make independent professional decisions;
- be able to initiate projects, direct such projects and take responsibility for work performed by individuals and groups;
- be able to communicate legal information, ideas, issues and conclusions in writing and speech to experts and the general public, both in Icelandic and in other languages;
- be able to refresh their knowledge and proficiency and understand the need to do so;
- be capable of engaging in doctoral studies.

Article 6
Studies and teaching

The following principles apply to studies and teaching in M.L. studies:

- a) the organisation of courses and performance evaluation shall conform to the learning outcomes of degrees and courses;
- b) the studies, teaching and evaluation shall be oriented to assignments and research;
- c) the emphasis shall be on varied teaching methods and teaching in the form of discussions and assignments with student participation;
- d) the emphasis shall be on varied evaluation of learning outcomes and quality feedback to students;
- e) course materials and teaching shall be designed to provide students with a sound academic foundation and targeted training in its use. The emphasis will be on critical thinking and independent working procedures;
- f) training in the resolution of legal issues is a basic factor of the pedagogical approach of the School of Law. Students should receive training in applying legal methodology in connection with teaching in all courses on legal subjects;
- g) supervising teachers shall decide on performance evaluation. The evaluation shall reflect the focus of teaching in individual courses and be based on the resolution of problems that test students' knowledge and ability to use the methods and procedures of the law, see Article 5;
- h) Mid-term and final examinations can, at a maximum, correspond to 50% of the total evaluation in individual courses.²

In supplement of the above principles, reference is made to the School of Law criteria on teaching methods, which can be accessed on the School's website.

Article 7
Class hours and working hours

² [Subsection \(h\) will apply as of the start of the spring term of 2013.](#)

Normally, each course of 7.5 credits will be founded on 30-38 lectures, working and discussion periods.

The assumption is that 25-30 working hours (lectures, working and discussion periods, student preparation and assignment work) should underlie each credit of a course. Thus, 7.5 credits should be founded on 188-225 working hours.

Article 8

The OSCOLA citation standard

All theses and comparable assignments should use the "Oxford University Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities" (OSCOLA). Rules have been issued on an Icelandic adaptation of the standard and information relating to the standard is available on the RU library and information services website.

Chapter III

Study components

Article 9

Course offerings

The following study factors can earn students credits towards an M.L. degree: Courses, see Articles 12 and 13, internships, see Article 14, research projects, see Article 15, masters thesis, see Articles 16 and 17, and studies outside the School of Law, see Articles 18 and 19.

The Academic Affairs Council shall, prior to 20 October each year, submit a recommendation for the studies to be offered in the following two academic years. The Council shall prepare its proposals in consultation with the members of the faculty and student representatives. The Council should aim for an offering of a minimum of 10 courses to be offered each term. Courses shall be offered with a view to making available to students, during the course of their studies, a reasonable choice of varied courses in as many fields of law as feasible. Special emphasis shall be focused on offering students a good selection of courses in the fields of law provided for in Article 10.

The Dean of the School of Law shall, no later than 10 January each year, submit a schedule of courses for two years. The course schedule shall be published in a Course Catalogue containing course descriptions and information on learning outcomes, supervision, teaching, performance evaluation and other arrangements, to the extent possible.

The decision of the Dean of the School of Law on the courses to be taught in the following academic year shall be made available before 20 June each year. If there are difficulties in offering a course as a result of unforeseen circumstances, e.g. if the number of students is below the minimum, see the third paragraph of Article 12, the Dean of the School may decide to withdraw the course offering after the above deadline.

Article 10

Points of focus

Masters level studies at the RU School of Law shall focus in particular on offering courses in the following fields: (a) international law, (b) international business, (c) advocacy before the courts of law and (d) commercial law.

A masters degree may be designated as a degree in international law if a student has completed a minimum of 45 credits in courses approved by the Academic Affairs Council as a course in international law. In addition, such students should complete their M.L. thesis in international law. Internships or research assignments in international law may replace courses in that field subject to the decision of the Academic Affairs Council at any time. The Academic Affairs Council shall decide whether studies abroad fall within the field of international law. At the request of a student, such evaluation may take place before the start of studies, provided that the student supplies adequate information on the subject matter of the studies.

Article 11

Students' study plan

A student who has been admitted to masters studies shall, prior to 1 June of the year in which studies begin, submit a study plan for studies in the following two semester, a choice of courses and, as applicable, internship requests. Students' selections are binding, but students may modify their registration for courses in the first week of each term pursuant to the RU calendar.

Students shall select the subject of their masters thesis and obtain the approval of a supervisor before 10 June of the year in which the second year of studies begins.“

Article 12

Courses

Courses are supervised by a member of the permanent faculty as decided by the Dean of the School of Law. However, the Dean may entrust the supervision of courses to part-time instructors.

Seminars should normally be worth 7.5 credits. The Academic Affairs Council may permit another number of credits for courses.

Normally, there should be 10 students in each course. On the recommendation of a supervising teacher the Academic Affairs Council may permit a maximum number of students in courses. The supervising teacher shall specify what criteria will be used in the selection of students if the total number of applicants exceeds the maximum. Such criteria may include the time of application, the major field of the applicant, whether a student has completed certain courses and the stage that the student has reached in his or her studies.

Article 13

Summer courses and other special courses

The School may offer summer courses and other special courses that qualify for credits toward a masters degree. Such courses are not subject to the rules of this chapter. They may be held by the School of Law or in co-operation with other parties. Additional tuition fees may be charged for studies pursuant to this Article.

Article 14

Internships

The School of Law shall organise internships in partnership with outside organisations or business undertakings.

A student may apply to the Academic Affairs Council to complete up to 7.5 credits toward a masters degree by means of an approved internship. Normally, 7.5 credits should be equivalent to 150 working hours of attendance at a place of employment where the student is engaged in legal assignments which will demonstrably expand the student's knowledge of the law and ability to carry out legal assignments.

The Academic Affairs Council shall take the initiative in seeking partnership agreements with appropriate business undertakings or organisations. In the course of concluding such agreements, the Academic Affairs Council shall appoint a supervising teacher for interns in respect of each agreement, and the partner shall appoint a supervisor of the student's work within the organisation or business enterprise in question.

Decisions on whether to grant an internship to a student shall depend on performance, the stage of the student's education and the needs and wishes of the School's partners. The Academic Affairs Council shall establish further rules on the implementation of this provision, including rules on performance and progress of studies to be applied in assessing applications for internships.

At the end of an internship students shall submit a report on the internship. The supervisor shall confirm the report and return an evaluation of the student's performance. The supervising teacher shall then decide, on the basis of the confirmed work report and the testimony of the supervisor, whether the student completed the intended number of credits with satisfactory results.

A student's performance in an internship shall be recorded as pass/fail.

Internships shall be unpaid.

Article 15 **Research projects**

The Academic Affairs Council may accept a student's work on a specific research project under the guidance of a supervisor as the equivalent of an internship pursuant to the above. Such work may, for example, consist in participation in research conducted by the supervisor. The Academic Affairs Council shall evaluate the number of credits to be granted for the project.

The Academic Affairs Council may permit research projects of this kind even if the student in question has completed an internship.

Students' work on research projects shall be unpaid.

Article 16 **30-credit masters thesis**

All students shall write a masters thesis of at least 30 credits to be handed in at the end of the last term of studies.

Students are required to attend a course on essay writing at the start of the term in which work on the thesis begins. However, this does not apply if a student has attended such a course in connection with the writing of a B.A. thesis.

An M.L. thesis shall achieve the goals established by the student and accepted by the advisor before the start of work. The goals should be clearly laid down in the introduction to the thesis.

It should be clear from the approach taken in dealing with the subject that a 30-credit thesis is the result of no less than 750 hours of work.

The length of a 30-credit thesis shall be in the range of 25.000 to 30.000 words, as counted in a word processing programme.

Following the completion of an M.L. thesis, students should have acquired knowledge of careful working habits in the resolution of legal issues. This means that a student:

- is able to select a legal topic for research, delimit the topic and analyse it in a clear and concise manner;
- is able to account for the significance of the subject and the originality of the work;
- is able to use the methods of the law (one or more) and differentiate between different approaches;
- has the skills required to seek and collect the sources necessary to resolve complex legal problems in studies and in work;
- is able to find the relevant sources of law and secondary sources and other information, account for these sources and their interrelationship, evaluate them and choose between them based on their significance for the subject;
- is able to discuss legal subjects in an independent and academic manner;
- is able to account for opposing viewpoints, where applicable;
- is able to present a subject in an organised and logical manner;
- is able to draw conclusions and present them in clear understandable language;
- is able to use sources properly and employ legitimate working procedures when using the writings and conclusions of others;
- has gained a deep knowledge and sound understanding of a delimited subject;
- has command of legal terminology.

The Dean shall appoint an examiner, and the advisor and examiner shall jointly evaluate the student's thesis. If there is more than one advisor, they should jointly assess the thesis, in which case no examiner is required. The grade given by an examiner is equal in weight to the grade of the advisor. If they do not agree whether a student has achieved a minimum grade the Dean of the School shall entrust the grading to a third party who shall decide the student's grade. The person appointed for such purpose shall be experienced in academic work at the RU School of Law or the school of law of another university or have conducted research in law which constitutes similar experience.

M.L. theses shall be submitted to the office of the School of Law within the deadline specified on the School's website. Students are not permitted to withdraw a submitted thesis.

A grade should be awarded for an M.L. thesis in the same manner as for courses taken in the School of Law. Students who do not achieve a minimum grade may apply for permission to write another thesis. Another thesis refers to a new thesis written by a student for a different advisor. Students may apply for special permission from the Dean of the School of Law to undertake a subject that will permit them to make use of their previous research. In such cases

students will have to provide a special account of the new/changed approach and/or treatment of the subject. In processing such an request the Dean of the School of Law shall seek the opinion of the advisor in question.

A student's thesis will not be evaluated for credits or a grade until the second year of M.L. studies. By that time students should have completed a minimum of 52.5 credits at the masters level.

As regards work methods, the roles of students, advisors and examiners and other matters relating to the preparation of M.L. theses, reference is made to Rules on the preparation of M.L. theses approved by the School.

Article 17 **60-credit masters thesis**

Students in masters studies who have shown outstanding performance in their studies may, with the approval of the supervising teacher, apply to the Academic Council for permission to write a 60-credit masters thesis instead of a 30-credit thesis. The rules of Article 16 apply to such theses except as provided below.

It should be clear from the approach taken in dealing with the subject that the thesis is the result of no less than 1500 hours of work.

A 60-credit thesis shall be 50,000 to 60,000 words, as counted in a word processing programme.

In addition to the learning outcomes laid down in Article 16, a student shall:

- be able to select and analyse a subject which constitutes a definite and independent contribution in the field of law and, as applicable, other academic fields to which the subject pertains;
- test a theory as an answer to a research question;
- be able to use primary and secondary sources and other information to support or refute a theory proposed as a response to a research question.

If an application by a student to write a 60-credit masters thesis has been approved, the Dean of the School of Law will appoint a committee comprising the student's advisor and two specialists in the scholarly field covered by the thesis. The majority of the committee shall have completed a masters degree, comparable studies or a higher university degree. The committee shall assess the student's thesis and subject the student to an oral examination on the subject of the thesis in a public seminar. A grade should be awarded for the thesis in the same manner as for courses taken in the School of Law. If a student does not receive the minimum grade permission will not be granted to write another 60-credit thesis. Students may apply to write a 30-credit thesis on the same conditions as those laid down in the ninth paragraph of Article 16 and complete the remaining 30 credits by means of other study components.

Article 18

Studies outside the RU School of Law in the course of M.L. studies

A student may apply for permission to engage in the following studies at the masters level in the course of M.L. studies at the RU School of Law and have such studies evaluated as part of the masters studies:

- a. up to 60 ECTS credits of university studies in law or other subjects at a foreign university, e.g. within the framework of student exchange programmes in which the School or RU are participants. If a student completes studies with a degree, this can be evaluated at 15 credits at a maximum;
- b. up to 60 ECTS credits of studies in subjects other than law in another RU School;
- c. up to 60 ECTS credits of studies in law or other subjects at another Icelandic university.

However, in no case will students be permitted to complete more than a total of 60 credits under subsections (a) to (c) above. Students should seek the approval of the Academic Affairs Council for studies under this Article prior to starting studies.

Assessment of whether a student's performance under subsections (a) to (c) in the first paragraph was satisfactory shall be based on the requirements of the university where the studies took place. Students' performance in such studies shall be recorded as "transferred" with no grades expressed in numbers.

Article 19

Evaluation of earlier studies (transfer of credits)

Prior to beginning studies, students may apply for courses completed at the masters level at foreign or domestic universities to be evaluated for credits.

A maximum of 15 credits may be transferred on the basis of such courses. If warranted, a student seeking to qualify for entry into the legal profession may have courses in law assessed at the masters level up to a maximum of 30 credits. However, studies forming part of a degree already completed by a student cannot be evaluated at more than 15 credits.

Previous courses taken at the masters level cannot be evaluated as a part of masters studies in law if they were completed more than nine years before the student registered for masters studies in law.

The Academic Affairs Council shall decide whether and how earlier studies should be evaluated. In addition to the factors above, the Council may also take into account the nature of the studies in question and the results achieved.

Students' performance in studies provided for in this Article shall be recorded as "transferred" with no grades expressed in numbers.

Chapter IV

Progress of studies and evaluation

Article 20

Time of studies

Masters studies should at a minimum extend over four terms (spring and fall). It is assumed that students will normally complete 30 credits per term, or 60 credits per year, based on normal progress. Students should complete their masters studies no later than four years after they are begun.

Article 21

Total number of credits per term

Students may apply for registration in one course per term in excess of 30 credits, provided that this is necessary to complete masters studies in four terms, as provided in the first sentence of Article 20.

Article 22

Performance evaluation and grades

Performance evaluation and grading are subject to the RU Rules on examinations and grading.

In order to pass an examination in masters studies in law students must receive a minimum grade of 6.0 in all study components for which registered grades are given at the RU School of Law. This requirement applies also to any previous studies evaluated for a credit transfer as a part of masters studies, as appropriate.

In order to pass a course a student must receive a minimum grade of 6.0 for the final examination. If the final examination accounts for less than 20% of the final grade, a teacher is permitted to deviate from this provision.

The final grade for admission to the legal profession within the meaning of Article 2 of these Rules shall be calculated as a weighted average of all grades awarded for the study components of B.A. and M.L. studies.

Article 23

Re-enrolment

If a student does not meet the above minimum requirements regarding progress of studies, the student's rights to further studies at the School of Law shall lapse. However, a student may apply for re-enrolment in the School of Law. It is a condition for re-enrolment that the student's results in completed studies show unquestionable ability or unquestionable progress in studies, and that the average grade in the courses completed by the student at the M.L. level is 7.0 or better. If such permission is granted, the applicant student shall retain the courses completed with a grade of 7.0 or better. Permission for re-enrolment can only be granted once in the course of studies.

Article 24

Suspension of studies

Students may apply to the Academic Council for permission to suspend studies. The request shall be supported by adequate documentation showing sound reasons for the request. Reasons that may justify suspension of studies include childbirth or illness. Permission for suspension of studies may be granted conditionally. The maximum duration of the suspension is 1 year. The maximum time of study pursuant to these Rules will be extended for a time corresponding to the suspension of studies.

Article 25

Waivers

If the Academic Council has reached the conclusion that a waiver of the rules on progress of studies and suspension of studies pursuant to Articles 23 and 24 do not apply, a faculty meeting of the School of Law may, if warranted, grant further exemptions from those Rules. Such permission shall only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Article 26

Rules on studies and examinations

Examination materials are subject to rules established by the RU School of Law. Reference is made to the RU School of Law Rules of Study and Examinations as regards other matters.

Chapter V

Decisions and recourses for appeal

Article 27

Academic Affairs Council

The role of the Academic Affairs Council is to work with the Dean of the School of Law on the development of studies, including its organisation and quality, arrangements of studies, methods of teaching and evaluation pursuant to the constitutional structure of the School of law.

Article 28

Decisions and recourses for appeal

Except as otherwise provided in these Rules, the Dean of the School of Law has the power of final decision regarding the conduct of masters studies in law.

According to the constitutional structure of the School of Law and these Rules, the Admissions Committee is responsible for decisions on admission to masters studies, as provided in Article 3 of these Rules. Such decisions are final.

Decisions of the Academic Affairs Council relating to the rights and obligations of students can be appealed to the Dean of the School of Law, who has the power of final decision.

Where these Rules provide that the "School of Law" is empowered to decide, the reference is to a faculty meeting.

Students who have exhausted all recourses of appeal in the University can submit their case to the Appeals Committee on University Students' Complaints pursuant to Article 20 of Act No. 63/2006 on universities. The role of the appeals committee, pursuant to Rules no. 1152/2006, is to rule in matters where students at universities accredited by the Ministry of Education

have reason to believe that an infringement of their rights has taken place concerning: a) the conduct of examinations and assessment, including the presentation of examinations, grading procedure, the appointment of external examiners, the posting of grades; b) the assessment of study progress, including the right to sit repeat examinations; c) the processing of admission applications, including the assessment of studies completed at other educational establishments; d) expulsion from an educational establishment and other kinds of disciplinary action. The appeals committee does not rule in matters pertaining to a teacher's professional assessment (e.g. examinations).

Chapter VI Further provisions

Article 29 Tuition fees

The University Council will decide on tuition fees for masters studies.

Article 30 Rules of Reykjavík University

Where these Rules do not provide otherwise, the general rules of Reykjavík University apply, including the RU Code of Ethics, the rules on undergraduate studies in the School of Law and, as appropriate, other rules of the School of Law.

So so adopted at a faculty meeting of the RU School of Law held on 17 August 2012, 8th April 2013 and 16th December 2013.