



الجامعة العربية المفتوحة  
Arab Open University

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## **The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws At the Arab Open University**

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**Approved by the University Council No. 63,**

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>Article (1): Title</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Article (2): Definitions</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Article (3): Admission</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Article (4): Study Plans and Tracks</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Article (5): The Academic Year, Period of Study, and Study Load</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Article (6): Withdrawal from Courses c</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Article (7): Deferral of Studies</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Article (8): Dropouts</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Article (9): Equivalency of Courses</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Article (10): Tutorials</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Article (11): Course Assessment</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Article (12): Examinations</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Article (13): Objections to Results and Modification Thereof</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Article (14): Cheating and Causing Disorder in Exams</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Article (15): Marks, Cumulative Average and Grades</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Article (16): Repeating Courses</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Article (17): Warning and Dismissal</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Article (18): The Dissertation Track</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Article (19): The Comprehensive Exam Track</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Article (20): Transfer</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Article (21): Master's Award</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Article (22): General Provisions</b>	<b>14</b>

### **Article (1): Title**

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

### **Article (2): Definitions**

The following words and expressions shall have the meanings specified hereunder unless the context indicates otherwise:

University	The Arab Open University (AOU)
President	The University President
Vice President for Academic Affairs	The University’s Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA)
Dean	The Dean of an Academic Programme
Deanship:	The Deanship of the Academic Programme which offers the Bachelor Degree
Programme	Academic Major Accredited for Bachelor Award
Headquarters	The AOU Headquarters
Branch	An AOU Branch
Rector	The Rector of an AOU branch
Staff member	An appointed Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, or Lecturer
General Course Coordinator (GCC)	A staff member in charge of coordinating the requirements of a course in all AOU branches
Branch Programme Coordinator (PC)	A staff member in charge of supervising the operation of a Programme in an AOU branch.
Branch Course Coordinator (BCC)	A staff member in charge of coordinating the requirements of a course in an AOU branch
Academic Committee	A permanent committee formed by the University Council for academic issues
Central Examinations Committee(CEC)	The Central Examination Committee at the University’s Headquarters
Faculty Examination Committee(FEC)	The Faculty Examination Committee in a Deanship
Branch Examination Committee(BEC)	The Examination Committee at an AOU branch.

<b>Arab Open University</b>	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 3

### **Article (3): Admission**

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

- a. Obtained a bachelor degree or an equivalent degree in accordance with local accreditation requirements.
- b. Fulfilled any other conditions determined by the respective deanships or the competent authorities of the country in which the Branch is located.
- c. Should not have been dismissed, for academic reasons, from the programme to which he/she is applying.

### **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 as per the recommendations of the Faculty Councils concerned and the recommendation of the Academic Committee.

- A. The respective study plans shall determine the courses and special academic requirements, pertinent to the academic programme concerned, 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 in fulfilment of local accreditation requirements.

Preparing study plans is done through two tracks:

- The first track is **dissertation**

The study plan shall include several courses and the writing of a dissertation which must be given not less than 6 credit hours as stipulated in the programme's adopted study plan.

- The second track is **comprehensive exam**

The study plan shall include a number of courses followed by a comprehensive exam after a student passes these courses and obtains the required number of credit hours as per the given principles and instructions.

### **Article (5): The Academic Year, Period of Study, and Study Load**

- A. The beginning of the academic year, semesters, and the period of exams shall be specified according to the academic calendar approved by the University Council.
- B. The minimum study load of a student's study load shall be (3) three credit hours, and the maximum number shall be according to the relevant study plan.

Arab Open University	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 4

C. The maximum period of study shall be (8) semesters (4 years). This does not include the summer semester.

#### **Article (6): Withdrawal from Courses**

A. A student may file an application to drop a course during the semester. This should be done not later than one week before the beginning of the final exams according to the academic calendar. In this case, a (W) symbol [Withdrawn] shall be entered onto his/her course record according to the procedures followed in cases of withdrawal.

B. The branch may apply its fee-reclaim system in accordance with the following table:

	<b>withdrawal</b>	<b>% of student reimbursed fees</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Before study commencement and during drop and add period</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>After drop and add period</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>After week 3</b>	<b>0% (No reimbursement)</b>

#### **Article (7): Deferral of Studies**

A. A student may apply for deferring his/her studies during a period that should not exceed two weeks following the start of a semester. The deferral period must not exceed two consecutive or separate semesters.

B. The deferral period shall not be considered as part of the maximum period allowed for earning the Master's Degree.

#### **Article (8): Dropouts**

A. If a student fails to register in a certain semester within the dropout periods announced by the University, he shall be considered a dropout.

B. Such students may submit a force majeure excuse to the Branch Rector during a specified period within the dropped out semester. If the Rector approves his/her excuse, he/ she shall be considered deferred instead of dropped out. The period shall be counted as part of the allowed deferral period subject to the provisions of Article (5), section c of this bylaw.

C. A dropout can apply later for a new admission. If his/ her application is accepted, the credit hours accredited to him/her in his/her previous registration number shall be counted, in accordance with the study plan of the programme in which he/she is accepted.

<b>Arab Open University</b>	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 5

### **Article (9): Equivalency of Courses**

A student may apply for equivalency of his/her study plan courses which he/she had completed before joining AOU in another higher education institution recognized by the AOU Branch country where he is studying. This is done in accordance with the following conditions:

- a) That his/her grade in each course is not less than 3 points on a scale of 4 points or an equivalent grade.
- b) That he/she earned the above grade not earlier than five years back.
- c) That the credit hours accepted for equivalency do not comprise more than one third of the programme's assigned credit hours.
- d) It is possible to accept the equivalency of not more than 9 credit hours from courses that the student had received from another master's degree provided they are equal in terms of content and standard to the new programme's courses.
- e) The courses that are accepted as equivalent are entered onto the student's academic record together with their figures and credit hours represented by the letter 'T' which means 'equivalent'.
- f) The credit hours of equivalent courses shall not be counted in the student's semester or cumulative averages. However, its hours are counted within the student's achieved hours.

### **Article (10): 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 (11): Course Assessment**

A. Course assessment is divided into two parts:

1. **Continuous assessment** comprising TMAs (Tutor Marked Assignments) and MTAs (Mid-term Assessments).
2. **Final examination**

B. Not less than 30% and not more than 70% shall be allotted to each of the two assessment components (continuous assessment and the final examination), as determined by the

Arab Open University	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 6

Deanships according to the nature of specialization in each programme, so that the final mark will come to a total of 100%.

- C. In response to the requirements of the 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 paragraph 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 in which the assignment is offered.
- C. TMAs and MTAs shall be marked by members of staff appointed by the University.
- D. Students should submit their TMAs on the deadline/date apportioned to the course by the Course Calendar.
- E. Special-needs students whose health situation has a negative effect on their performance in TMAs and other continuous assessment tasks, should present proof to this effect to the Branch Programme Coordinator who shall refer their case to the Branch Rector to take a proper decision.
- F. A Zero 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 days after the TMA submission deadline. In such cases the applicant can be given a grace period of up to seven days or till the end of the special circumstances, such as sickness, travel, etc.
- G. Each TMA shall be marked and students are shown the Tutor's remarks and the mark is entered onto the Student Information System (SIS) not later than two weeks after the TMA submission deadline.
- H. The Branch Course Coordinator (BCC) reviews random samples of marked TMAs of each section to ascertain 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 director shall send samples of TMAs and tests to the General Course Coordinator (GCC) to be audited and followed up.

### **2. Final Examination**

Article 12 below deals with all matters related to the final examination.

Arab Open University	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 7

## Article (12): Examinations

- A. Final Examinations are prepared by HQ, and branches should receive them not later than a week before Exams begin.
- 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. Special-needs students shall present their cases within at least one week before the exam or project submission due date to the Branch respective authorities to take the proper action in terms of 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 examination papers are marked in the Branches by staff members and under the supervision of the BCC.
- E. A student who is absent from the Final Examinations shall earn a (0-zero) mark unless he/she submits a *force majeure* excuse within one week after the Final Examinations convening date. In case the excuse was accepted, letter (I) – symbol for Incomplete – shall be entered onto his/her academic record if he/she had not failed in the continuous assessment.
- F. 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).

Arab Open University	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 8



## Article (13): Objections to Results and Modification Thereof

### First: Formation of Appeals and Re-Appeals Committees

#### A. Branch Appeals' Committee (BAC):

For Each Academic Programme a respective Branch Appeal Committee shall be formed comprising:

- Respective Branch Programme Coordinator /Chairman.
- Two Academic Staff Members including the BCC or GCC.

#### B. Branch Re-Appeal Committee (BRC)

For each Academic Programme a specialized Branch Re-Appeal Committee shall be formed comprising:

- Assistant Director for Academic Affairs (Chairman)
- Two members of the teaching staff of the respective course that were not members of the respective appeal committee.

### Second: Duties and Procedures of the Appeals Committee and the Re-Appeals Committee

- A student may request that his/her final grade in any course be reviewed within seven calendar days from the date of posting the approved course results through the online appeals system, upon completing the relevant procedures as set by the university.
- The Branch Appeal Committee (BAC) shall study the student's objection, verify absence of error in adding or entering of the student's marks in the course, as well as the absence of unmarked questions. The student should be informed of the committee's recommendations which will then be forwarded to the Central Examination Committee to be endorsed within the second week following the declaration of results.
- The student may object the Committee's decision and re-appeal through the Branch Rector to the competent Re-Appeal Committee within the third week after the declaration of results.
- The Branch Re-Appeal (BRC) Committee shall study the student's appeal to make sure that there is no material error. The student shall be informed of the committee's recommendations within the fourth week after the declaration of results. The ruling is then submitted to the Central Examination Committee (CEC) for approval and endorsement.
- The BAC and BRC may consult with the Respective General Course Coordinator (GCC) or the Deanship of the programme if deemed necessary.
- If either of the two committees rules that the student's mark ought to be altered, the Rector shall convey the recommendations to the VPAA within the fifth week after the declaration of results, and the VPAA shall ask the Central Examination Committee for a final approval and endorsement.

Arab Open University	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 9

- g) The VPAA brings to the attention of CEC members all the appeal and re-appeal cases that he had received from AOU Branches for their approval and endorsement.
- h) Following the approval of the CEC, the student's mark is altered by the authorized persons as required provided that the changes are recorded in the student's file.
- 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 noted above in sections A and C.
- J) The student's result should be confirmed as final and irrevocable one semester after its adoption. In this case it shall not be altered at all.

### **Article (14): 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 (15): Marks, Cumulative Average and Grades**

#### **First: Marks**

- A. The final marks of various courses are registered in the student's record in letter grades.
- B. Letter grades are then transformed into points as in the following table:

<b>LETTER GRADE</b>	A	B+	B	C+	C	D	F
<b>WEIGHT</b>	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2	1.5	0

- C. 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%.

#### **Second: The Cumulative Average**

- A. 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.
- B. The cumulative average, however, is computed by dividing the overall points of the completed courses by the obtained credit hours.

Arab Open University	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 10

### **Third: Grades**

Grades are computed according to the corresponding cumulative average as noted in the following table:

<b><u>Cumulative Average</u></b>	Below 3.00	(3.00-3.19)	(3.20-3.59)	(3.60-4.00)
<b><u>Grade</u></b>	Fail	Good	Very Good	Excellent

### **Article (16): Repeating Courses**

- A. A student may repeat a course in his/her study plan in order to raise his/her cumulative average to the required limit if his/her mark in it is lower than B. The credit hours of the course are computed only once, together with the new grade earned.
- B. A student who fails to pass a compulsory course must repeat this course in a following semester. The grade, which he/she had earned for the repeat, is entered onto his/her record. If he/she, however, fails, the course's credit hours are deleted from his/her cumulative average and the average of the semester in which he 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. If he, however, fails, the course's credit hours are deleted from his/her cumulative average and the average of the semester in which he failed shall not be amended.

### **Article (17): Warning and Dismissal**

- A. A warning shall be issued to a student whose cumulative 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.

### **Article (18): The Dissertation Track**

- A. An application to start working of the dissertation can be submitted by the student after he/she had successfully completed 75% of the course's credit hours, provided that his/her cumulative average has not fallen below three points (3.00).
- B. The Deanship concerned issues a recommendation for the appointment of dissertation supervisors, for the title of the dissertation and for its outline.

Arab Open University	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 11

- C. The Master 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 appointment does not conflict with local accreditation conditions.
- D. A *Viva Voce* committee is formed only after the student had completed all other requirements of the programme, provided that his/her cumulative average is not below three points (3:00).
- E. The *Viva Voce* committee shall consist of:
1. The student’s supervisor;
  2. A staff member from the Deanship;
  3. A Ph.D. holder from a country other than that where the Branch is located, provided that his/her specialization is closely related to the topic of the dissertation, or in line with local accreditation conditions.
- F. The result of the *viva voce* shall be either:
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 shall have passed.
  4. If a student fails to pass the *Viva Voce*, he shall be given a second chance.  
If he fails again, he/she shall be expelled from the programme.
- G. The result of the *Viva Voce* is entered onto the student’s record as either (fail) or (pass).
- H. A student who had been expelled from a certain programme may apply for admission to a new programme, subject to the provisions of paragraph “C” of Article 17 of the present bylaws.

### **Article (19): The Comprehensive Exam Track**

- A. The exam shall be of a comprehensive nature and seeks to assess the student's ability to synthesize the different basic and developed concepts he/she had acquired from the different courses in a manner that reflects the application of acquired knowledge in resolving scientific and applied problems.
- B. The competent Deanship shall undertake the task of forming the Comprehensive Exam Committee, subject to specific instructions issued by the University Council, of naming at least 3 members of the programme concerned. The formed committee shall prepare the comprehensive exam, determine its date, and submit its result.
- C. A student is allowed to take the comprehensive exam only after he/she had successfully passed all of the course’s credit hours, provided that his/her cumulative average has not fallen below three points (3.00).

Arab Open University	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 12

D. Should the student fail the comprehensive exam, he/she may have only one more re-sit session to be held in the next immediate scheduled date according to the approved University calendar, provided that the new date falls within the maximum period allowed for obtaining the Master's degree. If the student fails the exam, he/she will be dismissed from the programme.

E. The student's result in the comprehensive exam shall be entered in his/her transcript as either (Pass) or (Fail).

F. A student who had been expelled from a certain programme may apply for admission to a new programme, subject to the provisions of paragraph "C" of Article 17 of the present bylaws.

### **Article (20): Transfer**

#### **Transfer is two types:**

##### **A. Transfer between programmes:**

If a student meets the admission conditions of another programme, he/she shall be allowed to transfer to this programme. This may take place only after he/she completes the first enrolled semester and according to the timetable assigned by the University Administration, in which case 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 in their old grades.

The articles of the Student Transfer Bylaws shall be implemented in issues not mentioned above.

### **Article (21): Master's Award**

The Master degree shall be awarded following completion of graduation requirement. These are:

1. Completing all graduation requirements according to the approved study plan for the Master degree award in the respective programme.
2. Acquiring a cumulative average of not less than three points on a scale of four.

Arab Open University	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 13

3. Not having exceeded the maximum limit of the period assigned to the Master's award.
4. Passing the Comprehensive Exam, or the Viva Voce as the case determines.
5. Meeting any other requirement noted in the student's study plan.

**Article (22): General Provisions**

- A. The present bylaws shall abrogate all previous bylaws concerning the requirements of awarding the Master degree at the Arab Open University.
- B. The Vice Presidents, Deans, Branch Rectors 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.

Arab Open University	Title/Subject: <b>The Master Degree Award Requirements Bylaws</b>		
Updated and Approved by: <b>UC#63</b>	Date: 11 July 2018	Version: 6.0	Page 14