

# FAQ M.Sc. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health

## Application and registration

### What are the requirements for an application?

For a successful application to the master's programme in Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health, you need to fulfil the following requirements:

- BSc or comparable degree in biology or closely related subject
- English language skills minimum level B2, proven by:
  - A completed bachelor's degree taught in English, or
    - a minimum one-year study or occupational stay in an English-speaking country within the last three years or
  - TOEFL test (score at least 72 points), or
  - IELTS test (score at least 5.0), or
  - proof of at least six years of English as a school subject.
- Motivation letter
  - Motivation letter in English language (400 to 600 words, 12 pt, 1.5 line spacing)
  - It should contain:
    - Explaining why you chose Frankfurt and Goethe University
    - key interests in programme topics and scientific fields
    - practical/professional experiences
    - which modules are you interested in?
    - career goals and study objectives
- The application is evaluated as follows:

The decision on the recommendation of acceptance is made on the basis of the marks of the bachelor's degree (51%) and the letter of motivation (49%). The resulting overall rating must be the mark 2,5 or better.
- Recommendation for international applicants: good working knowledge of German (approx. B1) for daily communication at the university (no certification needed).

### Is your Bachelor's degree certificate not yet available at the time of application?

You can apply for the master's degree programme although you did not yet finish your Bachelor's degree (see § 8 Para. 7 of the study regulations). However, the original or a certified copy of the certificate and the transcript must be submitted to the Master's Admission and International Admission group by post within the first semester at the latest. Otherwise, you will lose your entitlement to the study place. The documents must be sent directly to the Student Secretariat ([sli-master@uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:sli-master@uni-frankfurt.de)) by the students themselves.

### I have not studied biology before. What are the requirements for admission to the master's programme in Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health?

If you did not study biology, you can nevertheless be admitted to the Master's degree programme if the topic of your Bachelor's refers to a closely related subject area. The examination board decides whether your subject area is related to biology closely enough. Suppose your degree does not cover all subject-related requirements for successful completion of the master's degree programme. In that case, the examination board can link admission to the master's degree programme to the condition that you complete further modules from the bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences, which may amount to a maximum of 30 CP. These will be individually tailored to your previous course of study. As a basic knowledge, you must have at least the biological basic knowledge of the first two semesters (structure and function of organisms + biodiversity of animals and plants) and the knowledge from the

compulsory lectures in ecology, evolution and genetics. If the examination of your documents shows that you would need to study more than 30 CPs to catch up, you unfortunately cannot be admitted.

## Starting your studies

### What do I have to consider when I start my studies?

Soon after you start, you must submit the "Application for Admission to the Master's Examination", because the first module examination at the end of the first half of the semester counts for the master's grade. There is a form for this on the programme homepage (<https://www.bio.uni-frankfurt.de/92206487.pdf>). Please print it out, fill it in, sign it and hand it in at the examination office. You should also sign up for the mailing list of the master's degree programme ([https://dlist.server.uni-frankfurt.de/mailman/listinfo/msc\\_eco\\_evo](https://dlist.server.uni-frankfurt.de/mailman/listinfo/msc_eco_evo)) so that you receive emails with current information.

We recommend you to read the study regulations and familiarise yourself with the contents of the homepage of the Master's Programme!

## During your studies

### How do I choose compulsory elective modules?

One elective module is composed of a lecture, a seminar and a practical (total 15 CP). The lecture and the seminar form the theoretical part of the module and correspond to 5 CP, the practical covers 10 CP. To prepare the registration, please look at the homepage in order to know the topics of the elective modules available in a given semester and decide which is your first, second and third choice for each half of a semester term.

Places in compulsory modules are managed centrally via the QIS (see quick link "Registration for the master's modules" on the homepage) and cannot be obtained directly via the module leaders. The programme coordination allocates places to students according to rules established by the examination board.

It is also possible to attend only the theoretical part (lecture and seminar, 5 CP) of an elective module. These CPs can be used as part of the Optional Module (see below). In this case, you have to pass the exam of the theoretical part of the module but the mark is not relevant. In order to participate in a theoretical part of a module, you do not need to register in QIS but contact the module leader directly.

### What happens if I cannot participate in an exam?

According to the decision of the Senate of Goethe University, the following applies in the event of exam incapacity:

- Students must assert and substantiate the reasons for missing or discontinuing an exam (e.g., written exam, master's thesis, etc.) **within three working days** after the exam.
- To certify the inability to take the exam, you must use a **specific form**. A standard medical certificate (from/to) is not sufficient! (Link to the form: [https://www.uni-frankfurt.de/58377096/1\\_%C3%84S\\_Rahmenordnung\\_25\\_02\\_2015\\_zur\\_Ver%C3%B6ffentlichung\\_mit\\_Datum.pdf](https://www.uni-frankfurt.de/58377096/1_%C3%84S_Rahmenordnung_25_02_2015_zur_Ver%C3%B6ffentlichung_mit_Datum.pdf))
- It is important to ensure that the completed form regarding exam incapacity is **submitted** to your examination office **within three working days** (Saturday is considered a working day).
- If the form for exam incapacity is submitted later, the corresponding exam will be considered as not passed.

## Optional module (formerly Free Module)

The following options are available:

1. One or more modules with a total of 15 CP and a thematic relevance to the Biodiversity and

Ecosystem Health programme, offered outside of the Master's Programme Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health, i.e., in other master's programmes including at other departments of Goethe University or other foreign universities, e.g., as an ERASMUS exchange student (§ 9 Para. 4). For the execution and evaluation of these modules, the module descriptions of the respective programmes apply.

2. One or more practicals are to be completed unpaid outside of the Master's Programme BEH.

In both cases, **prior** approval is required for these study achievements.

### **How can I apply for the optional module(s)?**

**Before** conducting the module(s), you should submit an informal application for recognition of the module(s) as the Optional Module in the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health programme to the leader of the Optional Module.

### **How can I apply for optional modules, and how will they be recognised?**

After obtaining approval and completing the module(s), you should present the original certificate(s) of the module(s) to the leader of the Optional Module. You should write a request, in which you explain what you studied or which practical you did and how many CPs you would like to receive for this/these activities. For each activity, add a certificate proving that you successfully completed it. For practicals see below.

### **Will the grade (or grades) of these optional modules, if they are graded, be considered in the overall grade for the master's degree?**

No. However, upon request, the grade can be noted on your degree certificate without being counted for the final mark.

## **Practicals**

### **I want to undertake an external internship (e.g., a company or research internship) as the Optional Module. What should I consider?**

Before commencing a company or research internship, a project outline signed by the future supervisor must be submitted to the leader of the Optional Module. The supervisor has to hold a doctorate. The project outline should be 2-3 pages long, written by the student after consultation with the supervisor, and should provide sufficient and understandable information about the content of the planned activities. It should also be signed by you and your supervisor. After receiving approval from the chairman of the examination committee, you can begin your internship.

A research internship at an external research institution or an excursion of several days with a scientific focus is also possible within this framework.

### **How long should this internship last?**

The internship must be conducted full-time for at least seven weeks (including the report phase) if you wish to receive 15 CPs for it. If it is not as long, the number of CPs will be adjusted accordingly.

During a semester term with 14 or 15 weeks fulltime work, 30 CPs are obtained. Thereby, one week fulltime corresponds to approximately 2 CPs or two and a half week 5 CPs.

### **Where and with whom can I undertake this internship?**

The practical intership must be conducted outside the working groups involved in teaching for the

Master's programme Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health. It is not supposed to replace a module offered in this Master's Programme or to prolong research for a Master's thesis. The practical activities, however, must have a thematic relevance to the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health programme. The supervisor must hold a doctorate.

### How can this internship be recognised as the Optional Module?

You should write a report on the internship, including an introduction to the topic, methods, results, discussion, and references. The report should be at least 15 pages long. You should present this report to your supervisor as a requirement for receiving the certificate. Your supervising doctor must approve the report and provide a certificate stating your name, the duration, the content (title), and the location of the internship.

You submit an informal application for recognition of the internship as an Optional Module in the M.Sc. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health, addressed to the leader of the Optional Module, along with the approval obtained from the leader of the Optional Module before you started, the certificate from your supervisor, and the signed report. Send the complete application to the leader of the Optional Module of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health programme.

The leader of the module will decide on your application, and in case of doubt, the examination committee will be consulted. If approved, the examination office will be informed, and you will find an entry in your Transcript of Records after a certain processing time.

### Does it have to be a 15 CP internship, or can I combine smaller activities?

You can also combine several smaller internships or other courses.

### Will a company or research internship conducted as the Optional Module be graded?

No. You can either pass or fail this module.

## 1. External Master's Thesis

Students in the Master's Programme Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health are expected to prepare a Master's Thesis in a working group involved in the teaching in this same master, because they are prepared to do so by successful participation in the corresponding elective module. Only exceptionally, external master theses are allowed.

An **internal supervisor** is a professor or associate professor who substantially, repeatedly and independently teaches in the BEH curriculum (see study regulations § 20 Abs. 1).

### I want to write a master's thesis under the supervision of a professor or a qualified researcher who is not employed at Goethe University but works at a non-university research institution. What should I do?

If you would like to do research outside Goethe University, the easiest way to deal with formalities is the following: You look for an internal supervisor and explain him or her your plan. If the plan is good and the internal supervisor agrees, this internal supervisor should be the first supervisor of your thesis and your thesis is internal. As second supervisor, you can name a person outside the BEH curriculum, who is a professor or has qualifications similar to those of a professor.

## **The external supervisor insists to be the first supervisor. What should I do?**

Since the module "Research Project" is intended to prepare you for the master's thesis directly, it is necessary to obtain an approval for completing this module with an external supervisor before you start. Otherwise, it may not be recognised as a study achievement. For both modules ("Research Project" and the master's thesis), you need an internal (second) supervisor from the group of professors of the Master Programme (see study regulations § 20 Abs. 1) who is familiar with your topic. This internal supervisor will be one of the second supervisor of your master's thesis.

You should submit an informal application for conducting the "Research Project" module along with the expected title of the master thesis, signed by the future external supervisor and the internal supervisor. After approval by the programme director, you can initially complete the "Research Project" internship in the chosen external research group. The evaluation of the report for the module, which is part of the master's examination, will be conducted by the internal supervisor, who may base their assessment on the external supervisor's evaluation.

To gain approval for the external master's thesis, you should work with the external supervisor, involving the internal supervisor, to develop the research topic and write an exposé, which is a project description of approximately 3-5 pages. The exposé should demonstrate that you have engaged with the topic, are familiar with current literature, know how to cite in scientific papers, and can methodically outline your plans. Both supervisors should sign to confirm their agreement with your proposal.

You can develop this exposé during the six-week internship of the "Research Project". You should submit the exposé to the programme director, along with an application for approval of an external master thesis.

Approval for the external master thesis can be obtained quickly if the exposé meets both scientific and formal requirements.

## **Can I conduct the master's thesis at another university under the supervision of a professor there?**

No. Professors from other universities are not authorised to assign master's thesis topics, and the examination committee has decided that master's theses at other universities will not be approved. This does not affect (internal) master's theses that are issued under the leadership and guidance of authorised professors from our university and are intended to be carried out in cooperation with professors from other universities. In each case, the programme director decides on the admission to such master's theses.