

FAQ M.Sc. Language Science and Technology

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This compilation of Frequently Asked Questions describes the most important sources of information, concepts and rules and regulations pertaining to this program. The details can be found in the „Studien- und Prüfungsordnung“ (Rules and Regulations), which is also available in English translation.

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1) The most important sources of information about the program

- a) our web pages <http://www.coli.uni-saarland.de/>, in particular the pages under „Information for Students“, where you will also find course schedules with course descriptions of the present and past semesters.
- b) The „Studien- und Prüfungsordnung“ – i.e. the rules and regulations (R&R) of this program, which is an official, legally binding document. There's also an English translation. Both are available as PDF on our web pages.
- c) The „Modulhandbuch“ – or handbook of modules (courses). This is a compilation of very detailed course descriptions, mostly about the core courses. The course descriptions of the M.Sc. courses are in English. Also available as PDF.

Abbreviations: SPO „Studien- und Prüfungsordnung“
PO „Prüfungsordnung“ -- Examination Regulations (the more important part of the SPO)

2) The program requirements/credit points

The program consists of a number of courses in the various areas plus the Master's thesis. Each course comes with a certain number of credit points (CP) that determines the weight of the course. The M.Sc. program consists of altogether 120 CP where

- a) 75 CP come from courses of various categories in various areas, at least 68 of which must be **graded** (thus you can determine at most 7 CP of course work to be **ungraded!** – within certain limits);
- b) 12 CP come from the Master Seminar, **ungraded**;
- c) 30 CP come from the Master's Thesis; **graded**;
- d) 3 CP come from presenting the results of the Master's thesis in a colloquium talk, **graded**.

The program offers 4 specializations:

- a) Computational Linguistics
- b) Language Technology
- c) Computational Psycholinguistics
- d) Phonetics and Speech Technology

There's also a general version called „No specialization“. The details are regulated in the R&R. More readable versions can be found under „Study Programs“. There you will find a „List of Requirements“ for each specialization (including „No specialization“), followed by a sample schedule of the specialization in question suggesting an efficient organization of your studies. (Available as PDF.) You need not commit yourself to a specialization until it's time for your Master's diploma. Of course, if you are set on a certain specialization, some planning ahead regarding the choice of courses may be required.

Even though the detailed requirements should be looked up in the Study Programs just mentioned, I'd like to emphasize a few important points:

- a) everyone – no matter what specialization – must complete the course „Foundations of Language Science and Technology“ (9 CP);
- b) everyone has to complete at least one seminar with a seminar presentation and paper (7 CP);
- c) everyone has to take one oral exam of 15-30 minutes duration, preferably in a seminar. (There are no extra credit points for this oral exam, but its outcome should be reflected in the overall grade of the course in which the oral exam is taken.)

3) Course requirements/course certificates („Scheine“)/grades

In each course you take you must do something for its successful completion. These requirements depend on the category of the course. Typically, in a lecture you will have to take a written exam, whereas in a seminar you will usually give a seminar talk and/or write a paper. The course requirements of each course are stated in its course description (see Course Schedules). Upon successful completion of the course requirements you will receive a course certificate („Schein“) stating the grade and the CP for that course, among other things. The department retains a copy for your file. Passing grades range from 1 („excellent“) to 4 („adequate“), with increments of ± 0.3 in between.

4) Standard duration of studies for the M.Sc. program

The standard duration of studies for the M.Sc. program is 4 semesters. Within this period the program can – and should – be completed. (See sample schedules.) If you take a lot longer, this may affect your eligibility for student loans. (Inquire with the student office – „Studierendensekretariat“.)

5) Standard time slot for a course

This number indicates the semester at which a course should have been completed. The standard time slot for the Foundations course, for instance, is the 1st semester, i.e. this course should be taken in the first semester, and with seminars the standard time slot is the 3rd semester, meaning that seminars should be taken within the first 3 semesters of the program. A course requirement successfully completed within this period may be retaken in order to improve one's grade. The better result counts. The standard time slot for a course is stated in its course description under „Stellung im Studienplan“ in the departmental course bulletin („Kommentiertes Vorlesungsverzeichnis“).

6) Registration for course requirements

You must register for the course requirements of your courses – as a rule electronically in a data bank <http://www.coli.uni-saarland.de/sg/anmeldung/> listing all the courses offered that semester, indicating the deadline for registration for each course. This deadline should also be announced by the instructor in the course description as well as in class. If you fail to register in time you will not be allowed to take part in the course requirements, e.g. the written exam. On the other hand, if you are registered for the course requirements, you must take part. A no show means you failed the requirements. Before the deadline you may register and unregister (withdraw) any number of times. We recommend an early registration. – To be able to register for a course requirement, you must be known to the data bank. This is done once, at the beginning of your studies, at the office of examinations (Building C 72, Room 1.10 – presently Frau Kröner).

7) Retaking course requirements (make-up exams)

You may take part in the course requirements 3 times as a maximum, e.g. the regular exam and 2 repetitions in case you failed earlier. At the latest after the third attempt you must have passed the course with at least the grade 4. Exams that have been passed can be retaken once, but only if passed within the standard time slot for that course (s. under 5). For every repetition of an exam you will have to register separately. You can only take part in a repetition of an exam if you were registered for the original exam (even if you didn't show up). Repetitions of exams may be scheduled within the same semester of the original exam (or shortly thereafter), or you may have to wait until the course is offered again. It is completely up to the instructor(s) of the course how to handle such repetitions. Be sure to find out about this at the beginning of the course.

8) Progress evaluation

The R&R for the program demand that your progress of studies be evaluated at specified intervals. This means you must have successfully completed a certain number of CPs after a certain semester. Failing that you will receive a written warning that reaching the goal of your studies is jeopardized.

The minimum number of points for full time students are:

- a) after 1 semester at least 9 CP
- b) after 2 semesters at least 30 CP
- c) after 4 semesters at least 60 CP

If you fail to meet these minimum requirements 2 times in a row you cannot continue with the program. The same happens if you haven't completed at least 90 CP after 6 semesters. The details are in the R&R, § 11 (PO).

9) The Master Seminar

This is an individual study course, scheduled for the 3rd semester, that you do with your advisor(s) with the purpose of preparing your Master's thesis. I.e. by the time you start this seminar, you should have thought about a possible topic and the advisors/evaluators of your Master's thesis. The advisors/evaluators – usually two – are members of the department faculty or a related institution, one of whom must be a professor of the department. As with any other seminar you must **register** for the Master Seminar.

The organization of the Master seminar is up to your advisors/evaluators. The seminar carries 12 CP and is **ungraded**. It must result in a „thesis prospectus“, i.e. an outline of your Master’s thesis, preferably including a division into chapters and a bibliography. The length of this paper should be 6-10 pages. As with any other seminar paper you have 12 weeks to write it, starting with the end of the semester in which you do the seminar. The finished product should be handed in to your advisors, who will read it and report to the examination office whether you “passed”.

10) The Master’s Thesis

This is usually the last requirement in the Master’s program. The topic is assigned by a member of the department faculty or a related institution. The thesis is evaluated by 2 advisors/evaluators („Gutachter“) one of whom is the person assigning the topic. One of the evaluators must be a professor of the department. After registering the thesis with the examination office, indicating the topic and the two evaluators, you have 6 months to write the thesis, with a possible extension of 3 months. The thesis is worth 30 CP and must, upon or during its completion, be presented in a colloquium (3 CP). After handing in the completed thesis to the examination office (4 copies), the evaluators have 2 months to review and grade it. Details are in § 22 of the R&R (PO).

11) Colloquium on Master’s Thesis

You must present the main points of your thesis research in a colloquium talk to your advisors/evaluators. (You may invite other interested people.) The talk should be about 30 minutes with time for discussion. It is graded and carries 3 CP.

It is your responsibility to organize this talk (date, time and room) in consultation with your advisors. As a rule the colloquium talk should be held after completion of the thesis. Under certain circumstances it could be scheduled at an earlier date. This should also be discussed with your advisors.

12) Immatriculation until Completion of Master’s Thesis

You must be immatriculated in the M.Sc. program until you have handed in your thesis, even if you do not live here any longer. The semesters run from October 1 to March 31 (Winter) and April 1 to September 30 (Summer).