

# **Examination Regulations Governing the Master's Degree Programme in Biophysics**

**14 March 2013**

Pursuant to Section 59 of Law No. 1556 relating to Saarland University (Saarland University Act) of 23 June 2004 (Official Gazette of Saarland, p. 1782) and based on the Framework Examination Regulations for Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programmes at Saarland University of 12 May 2010 (Official Bulletin of the Institutions of Higher Education in Saarland, p. 208), Faculty 7 (Natural Science and Technology II – Physics and Mechatronics) at Saarland University hereby and with the consent of the University Senate and the University Board issues the following examination regulations for the Master's degree programme in Biophysics.

## **I General provisions**

- 1 Scope; organizational responsibility
- 2 General information
- 3 Standard period of study
- 4 Modularization and ECTS credits
- 5 Structure of the Master's programme and student workload
- 6 Examination Board and Examination Office
- 7 Examiners (thesis examiners); Supervisors, Observers
- 8 Language of examination
- 9 Assessments and examinations
- 10 Progress checks
- 11 Grading of academic assessments and examinations and information on grading scheme
- 12 Withdrawal from an examination; Failure to attend; Deception; Contravention of regulations
- 13 Recognition of previous periods of study and of credits from earlier coursework, assessments and examinations
- 14 Studying part-time
- 15 Nullification of assessments or examinations
- 16 Inspection of records
- 17 Appeal procedure

## **II The Master's degree programme – Admission, academic assessment and graduation**

- 18 Admission to the Master's programme
- 19 Registering as a candidate for examination and assessment in the Master's programme
- 20 Registering for the Master's thesis phase
- 21 The Master's thesis: topic, procedure, duration, presentation and layout of thesis, thesis assessment, pass/fail
- 22 Successfully completing the Master's programme and overall grade
- 23 Repeating assessments and examinations and/or the Master's thesis
- 24 The Master's examination certificate
- 25 Master's degree qualification and the formal graduation certificate
- 26 Diploma supplement and transcript of records

## **III Final provision**

- 27 Commencement

## **I General provisions**

### **Section 1**

#### **Scope; organizational responsibility**

These examination regulations govern the examinations for the Master's degree programme in Biophysics at Saarland University. The organization of the curriculum, teaching and examinations in this programme is the responsibility of Faculty 7 (Faculty of Natural Science and Technology II – Physics and Mechatronics) at Saarland University.

### **Section 2**

#### **General information**

(1) Faculty 7 (Natural Science and Technology II – Physics and Mechatronics) at Saarland University shall confer a Master of Science degree (M.Sc.) on students who have successfully completed the programme in accordance with the assessment and examination procedures set out in these examination regulations.

(2) The goal of the Master's degree programme is to impart to students the methods and techniques used in scientific research as well as a deeper understanding of the principles of the subject and a more detailed knowledge of key research results in the field of biophysics. The Master's programme in Biophysics is a more research-oriented postgraduate degree programme.

(3) Students on the Master's degree programme can study full-time or part-time (cf. Section 14). Part-time study is permitted in all semesters except the semester in which the Master's thesis project is completed.

(4) All regulations apply equally to full-time and part-time study.

(5) Students may only participate in examinations and assessments and may only undertake the Master's thesis project if they are properly enrolled in the Master's programme. In exceptional cases and where reasonable grounds exist, a student may apply to the Examination Board for exemption from this requirement. The application may be submitted irrespective of the applicant's enrolment status.

### **Section 3**

#### **Standard period of study**

(1) The standard period of full-time study for the Master's degree programme is four semesters, which includes the time taken to complete the final academic assessment phase.

(2) The standard period of part-time study for the Master's degree programme is eight semesters, which includes the time taken to complete the final academic assessment phase. Normally, students should study full-time in the semester in which the Master's thesis is written unless they were studying part-time in the previous semester. Exceptions may be granted where reasonable grounds exist. If a student studies part-time for only certain periods of the degree programme (cf. Section 14), the standard period of study for part-time study will be shortened

proportionately. If students complete some of their Master's degree programme in part-time study, this will be taken into account when calculating the standard period of study. The final result will be rounded up to the next whole semester.

(3) Semesters in which a student was granted leave of absence from the programme shall not be added to the standard period of study.

(4) The Examination Board shall, on request, take account of statutory periods of maternity leave, periods of parental leave or compassionate leave (particularly caring for a child under the age of 18 or supporting family members with care needs), as well as the special needs of students with disabilities.

(5) The study regulations shall state the semester by which each module or module element should be completed in order to stay within the standard period of study.

#### **Section 4 Modularization and ECTS credits**

(1) Modularization is understood to mean pooling subject matter on particular topics to create separate academic units ('modules') that are taught over a specified period of time. Students earn ECTS credits (often referred to in Germany as 'credit points' and abbreviated as 'CP') by successfully completing modules. A module typically comprises several courses (module elements) of related content that are taught in a single semester or in two consecutive semesters and that conclude with academic assessments or examinations (usually a single end-of-module examination). The outcome of these assessments or examinations are the basis on which credits are awarded. The credits that can be earned for a module composed of several module elements are calculated as the sum of the credits from the individual component module elements.

(2) The successful completion of a programme module is documented by recording the ECTS credits awarded. Student workload is calculated on the basis that one ECTS credit is awarded for 30 hours of study. This base value shall be specified when documenting a student's academic achievements.

(3) Each module and module element shall be listed in the study regulations together with the corresponding number of credit hours per week and/or the overall time requirements (expressed in hours) and the student workload (expressed in credits). Information shall also be provided about the type of assessment or examination associated with each module element and whether the award of credits for the module is dependent on students successfully completing assessments/examinations for one or more of the component module elements. Information shall also be provided about how frequently each module element is offered (every semester, every summer semester, etc.). If a module element is offered as a mandatory course at a different frequency to that specified above, this shall be noted accordingly and a reference semester or reference year specified that denotes the start of the cycle.

(4) Credits can only be acquired if the student workload is at least equal to one ECTS credit and the student has successfully completed a graded or ungraded assessment or examination for that module or module element.

(5) The relevant Examinations Office shall keep an academic record for each student that shall be updated at the end of each semester by recording the number of credits earned by that student through academic assessment and examination. Credits for coursework, assessments or examinations that were awarded elsewhere and that are deemed transferable (e.g. when a student transfers from another university, or that a student earned from a distance-learning or study-abroad programme) shall also be included in the academic record.

## **Section 5 Structure of the Master's programme and student workload**

(1) A total of 120 ECTS credits are required to complete the Master's degree programme in Biophysics. Of that total, 30 credits are awarded for the Master's thesis.

(2) The study regulations shall ensure that the student workload is distributed evenly over the course of the degree programme so that students can earn approximately 60 credits in each year of the programme.

(3) The type and scope of the curricular requirements shall be such that students can graduate from the Master's programme within the standard period of study.

(4) The assessments and examinations that students are required to complete take place throughout the Master's degree programme. The Master's degree programme concludes with the Master's thesis project.

## **Section 6 Examination Board and Examination Office**

(1) In order to meet its obligations pursuant to Section 23(1) of the Saarland University Act, the Faculty of Natural Science and Technology II at Saarland University shall establish an Examination Board that shall manage the academic assessments and examinations in the Master's degree programme. The Examination Board shall receive organizational support from the Examinations Office of the Faculty of Natural Science and Technology II.

(2) The Examination Board shall comprise:

1. three representatives from the group of professorial staff in the field of physics
2. one representative from the group of mid-level academic staff in the field of physics, and
3. a representative, who shall have limited voting rights, from the group of students on the Master's programme in Biophysics.

The member from the group of students shall only have an advisory vote on the Examination Board if questions regarding the grading of the final assessment phase of the Master's degree arise, unless said member is appropriately qualified.

Each member of the Examination Board shall have a deputy who represents them in their absence. The members of the Examination Board, as defined in items 1 to 3 above, and their deputies shall be elected for a term of two years by the Faculty Council after being nominated by the relevant member groups within the faculty. Members may be re-elected at the end of their term. If a member or deputy member of the Board withdraws before the end of their term, a replacement shall be selected for the remainder of the term. Deputy members and replacement members may be re-elected at the end of their term.

(3) The Examination Board shall appoint a Chair and Deputy Chair from the members of the Board specified in items 1 and 2 of Paragraph 2 above.

(4) The Examination Board is responsible for monitoring compliance with the provisions of the examination regulations for the Master's degree programme. The Examination Board may delegate the duties assigned to it, either generally or in specific individual cases, to the Chair of the Examination Board.

(5) The Examination Board shall be quorate when its members have been duly notified and a majority of voting members is present. Decisions of the Board shall be made by a simple majority of the voting members in attendance. In the event of a tie, the Chair shall have the casting vote.

(6) The members and deputy members of the Examination Board are obliged to maintain confidentiality in accordance with Section 17(2) of the Fundamental Principles and Rules Governing Saarland University (*Grundordnung der Universität des Saarlandes*).

(7) The Examination Board shall

1. decide on (i) applications to register for student assessments and examinations over the course of the degree programme and (ii) applications to register for the final assessment phase of the Master's degree programme (Master's thesis)
2. decide on requests for exemption from registration requirements
3. decide on whether to accept academic assessments or examinations in a form other than that normally prescribed
4. appoint the examiner (thesis examiner) and the second examiner and the supervisor for the Master's thesis
5. decide on requests to extend the completion period for the Master's thesis
6. decide on requests regarding the language used for the Master's thesis, written examinations and oral examinations
7. decide on requests to shorten or extend the deadline for retaking an assessment or examination
8. consult with the relevant members from the group of professorial staff (item 1 of Section 13(1), Saarland University Act) with respect to recognizing previous periods of study and credits from previous coursework, assessments and examinations in a previous Master's programme, and whether or not such previous periods of study should be taken into account when determining the standard period of study.
9. appoint, if necessary, a third thesis examiner for the Master's thesis
10. determine the grade to be awarded for the Master's thesis
11. (i) decide on whether to annul the results of academic assessments or examinations and to terminate the assessment or examination procedure, (ii) review decisions regarding the grading of academic assessments or examinations if these have been influenced by student deception, and (iii) review decisions to exclude a student from an academic assessment or examination
12. decide on any subsequent amendment of academic grades and on whether to nullify a candidate's attempt to graduate from the Master's degree programme
13. comment on proposals from Faculty 7 to amend the module catalogue associated with these study regulations
14. decide on requests for statutory periods of maternity leave, for periods of parental leave or for compassionate leave (particularly caring for a child under the age of 18 or supporting family members with care needs)
15. decide on objections raised by a candidate with regard to the grading of end-of-module assessments or examinations or in-module tests.

(8) The duties set out in items 1 to 10 and 14 and 15 of Paragraph 7 above shall be carried out on behalf of the Examination Board by the Chair of the Board. If a decision previously made by the Chair is contested either by a candidate or by a member of the Examination Board, the decision shall be taken by the Examination Board.

## **Section 7**

### **Examiners (thesis examiners); Supervisors, Observers**

(1) The Examination Board may appoint examiners (thesis examiners) from the group of professorial staff (item 1 of Section 13(1) of the Saarland University Act), emeritus or retired professors, honorary professors, senior academics qualified to professorial level, heads of independent junior research groups and independent professors on special contracts. After consultation with professors in the relevant subject area, the Examination Board may in special cases also appoint examiners from the group of mid-level research/teaching staff as defined in Section 37(1) of the Saarland University Act, lecturers with specialist teaching duties, part-time contract teaching staff who teach in the relevant subject area, professors from other universities, and other qualified and experienced professionals working in the relevant field. The Examination Board may also appoint former members of Faculty 7 who left the faculty no more than five years ago and who no longer work at Saarland University. Honorary professors, senior academics qualified to professorial level, heads of independent junior research groups, professors on special contracts who no longer have teaching duties and temporary professors (as defined in Section 36(7) of the Saarland University Act) who have taught for more than two semesters, may, with their consent, be appointed to the Examination Board during a period of two years after leaving the faculty.

(2) Supervisors of Master's thesis projects may be examiners (as defined above) or, if so agreed with professors in the relevant subject area, mid-level research/teaching staff (as defined in Section 37(1) of the Saarland University Act), lecturers with specialist teaching duties, part-time contract teaching staff who teach in the relevant subject area, professors from other universities, and other qualified and experienced professionals working in the relevant field. Former members of Faculty 7 who left the faculty no more than five years ago and who no longer work at Saarland University may also be appointed as supervisors. Honorary professors, senior academics qualified to professorial level, professors on special contracts who no longer have teaching duties and temporary professors (as defined in Section 36(7) of the Saarland University Act) who have taught for more than two semesters, may, with their consent, be appointed to the Examination Board during a period of two years after leaving the faculty.

(3) The examiners who conduct the assessments or examinations associated with specific modules or module elements are the members of academic staff who teach those modules or module elements.

(4) The observer at an oral examination shall be a member of the university who has an academic qualification relevant to the subject matter of the examination.

## **Section 8 Language of examination**

The languages of assessment or examination are German and English. In certain cases, the Examination Board may allow another language to be used if specifically requested by the candidate and if so agreed with the examiner or thesis examiner.

## **Section 9 Assessments and examinations**

(1) At least 50% of the academic assessments and examinations taken (measured in terms of credits) should be graded.

(2) A module contains one or more graded or ungraded assessments or examinations. The assessment or examination associated with a module shall be initially held no later than the beginning of the following semester. The purpose of such student assessments is to demonstrate whether students have met the learning objectives for a particular module, whether they have an understanding of the key aspects of the relevant subject matter and methodologies, and whether they are able to apply the knowledge and skills acquired. A student who successfully completes a module or module element shall be awarded an ungraded 'pass' or a grade determined in accordance with the grading system set out in Section 11. The study regulations shall state whether a module or module element is graded.

(3) Student assessments are oral or written examinations, which may be spread across a number of dates. Written academic assessments include written examinations and written assignments. Oral academic assessments include individual or group testing and oral presentations. Before students conduct a laboratory experiment, they will typically be given an initial oral test by the lab demonstrator (lab instructor) to assess their level of knowledge. Students are required to keep an experimental log that presents the experimental results in a clear and understandable manner. The experimental data is subsequently analysed in terms of the theoretical principles underpinning the experiment. The relevant lab demonstrator checks the written experimental logs and associated analyses and issues a certificate of completion to students who have completed the experiment successfully. Written assessments are conducted every six months to give students sufficient time to prepare. The precise dates on which examinations are to be held are specified by the Examination Board and announced at the beginning of each semester. If a combination of academic assessments is used, students shall be notified of the weighting of the respective parts. Students shall be notified at least three weeks in advance about the dates of academic assessments or examinations.

(4) In-module tests comprise one or more ungraded knowledge tests that are taken by students during the semester in which the module is taught. Students who successfully complete the in-module tests have demonstrated that they have achieved the minimum learning outcomes required in preparation for the end-of-module examination. An in-module test may be in written form (e.g. solving exercises or problems or compiling experimental logs) or may be conducted orally. In-module tests are the responsibility of an examiner, but may be administered by a person delegated by the examiner. The results of the in-module tests shall be documented.

(5) Students who successfully complete all of the required assessments and/or examinations associated with a module or module element shall earn the corresponding number of ECTS credits. The number of credits earned, the grade

awarded (in the case of graded assessments/examinations) and the name of the module and, where applicable, the module elements shall be documented on the course certificate and entered into the student's academic record, which forms part of the student's transcript of records.

(6) If failure to pass an end-of-module examination/assessment at the final attempt ('final retake') would lead to the student irrevocably failing the module, the examination/assessment shall be conducted by two examiners. In such cases, the candidate may submit a request to the Examination Board for an examiner to be replaced by another examiner in the same subject area.

(7) Written examinations shall be invigilated by an examiner or by an authorized person for whom the examiner is responsible. Written examinations should last at least 60 minutes and not more than 180 minutes. Written examinations shall be graded within four weeks.

(8) Student assessments in seminars may be conducted as oral assessments (e.g. student presentations) and/or written assessments (e.g. written assignments, extended essays). The assessments are graded by an examiner, who is usually the seminar instructor. The amount of time that students have to complete a seminar assignment will be announced at the beginning of the module or module element. A written assignment shall be graded within six weeks.

(9) Individual or group oral examinations shall last at least 15 minutes but not more than 30 minutes per candidate. Oral examinations shall be conducted by two examiners or by one examiner and an observer who is familiar with the subject matter of the examination. The examiner shall consult with the observer before deciding on whether the candidate has passed and the grade to be awarded. The main topics addressed in an oral examination and the examiner's evaluation shall be recorded in writing and the report signed by the examiner and the observer. Grades shall be determined in accordance with the grading scheme set out in Section 11(1) and 11(2). The grade attained shall be communicated to the candidate immediately after the oral examination.

(10) If a candidate submits a medical certificate issued by a physician that states that due to a prolonged or permanent health impairment he or she is not able to take an assessment or examination, either in part or in full, in the prescribed form, the Examination Board may permit the candidate to demonstrate in some other form the same level of academic knowledge or competence required by the assessment or examination.

(11) The Examination Board shall, on request, take account of statutory periods of maternity leave, periods of parental leave or compassionate leave (particularly caring for a child under the age of 18 or supporting family members with care needs), as well as the special needs of students with disabilities.

(12) If an objection is raised with respect to the grading of an academic assessment or examination, the Examination Board shall reach a decision after consultation with the relevant examiner.



## **Section 10**

### **Progress checks**

(1) A student studying full-time for a Master's degree programme with a standard period of study of four semesters shall fulfil the following minimum academic progress requirements:

1. after one semester, a total of at least 9 credits
2. after two semesters, a total of at least 30 credits
3. after four semesters, a total of at least 60 credits.

Credits earned from a module element where the parent module extends over more than one semester shall be deemed to have been earned in the semester in which the student successfully completed the assessment for that particular module element, even though the parent module has not yet been completed in its entirety.

(2) For students studying part-time, the time frames set out in Paragraph 1 above shall be extended as follows:

1. for one or two semesters of part-time study, an extension of one semester
2. for three or four semesters of part-time study, an extension of two semesters
3. for five or six semesters of part-time study, an extension of three semesters.

(3) If a student does not achieve the expected minimum academic progress by the end of a semester, they shall be notified in writing that they are at risk of failing to meet the academic requirements for the programme. The student shall be offered a study counselling interview.

(4) If for two consecutive semesters and in the absence of reasons beyond the student's control a student fails to achieve the minimum academic progress required at the end of the respective semesters, or if a student on the Master's programme has failed to earn 90 credits after studying full-time for six semesters, they shall lose the right to be examined and therefore to graduate from the Master's programme. If this situation arises, the Examination Board shall notify the student in writing and shall include information on the candidate's right of appeal. Before any final decision is made by the Examination Board, the student shall be granted a two-week period in which the student has the opportunity to make representations about this matter to the Board.

(5) In exceptional cases and where reasonable grounds exist, the Examination Board may agree to extend the time frames set out in Paragraph 1 by up to one semester.

## **Section 11**

### **Grading of academic assessments and examinations and information on grading scheme**

(1) If a student assessment or examination is to be graded, the following grading system shall be used:

- 1 = 'Very good' – outstanding performance
- 2 = 'Good' – student performance significantly better than average
- 3 = 'Satisfactory' – student performance meets average requirements
- 4 = 'Sufficient' – student performance that despite its shortcomings still meets the minimum requirements
- 5 = 'Fail' – Failure to meet the minimum requirements due to significant shortcomings in student performance.

(2) To provide a more differentiated scale with which to grade individual assessments or examinations, intermediate grades may be awarded by raising or lowering the grade by 0.3 accordingly; the grades 0.7, 4.3, 4.7 and 5.3 are excluded from the scale.

(3) The grade is supplemented by an ECTS grading that provides a means of assessing a student's achievements in relative terms and that is also included in the diploma supplement. The ECTS grading scale uses a statistical scheme to classify the performance of an individual student relative to the performance of other students. Students who have passed the minimum requirements are classified as follows:

A = the top 10%  
B = the next 25%  
C = the next 30%  
D = the next 25%  
E = the next 10%.

This approach shall be used if the size of the reference cohort is large enough to enable reliable statements to be made about the percentage distributions. Pragmatic solutions will need to be found if reference cohorts are too small.

(4) If the overall assessment of a module is based on several separate graded assessments or examinations from the component module elements, the final grade for the module shall be calculated as follows: Each grade from a component assessment or examination is multiplied with the credits awarded for that module element and the results added together. The value so obtained is then divided by the total number of credits awarded for the individual component module elements. If necessary, the result shall be rounded down to the next (intermediate) grade on the scale and expressed to one decimal place. (Note: in the German grading system, the lower the numerical value, the better the grade.) Ungraded (pass/fail) module elements are not included in the calculation of the final grade awarded for a module.

(5) If the individual examiners award different grades for an assessment or examination or for a Master's thesis, the final grade shall be calculated as the arithmetic mean of the proposed grades. If necessary, this mean value shall be rounded down to the next (intermediate) grade on the scale and expressed to one decimal place. (Note: in the German grading system, the lower the numerical value, the better the grade.)

(6) An assessment or examination associated with a module or module element is deemed to have been completed successfully if the candidate is awarded a 'pass' grade or, when numerical grading is applied, the candidate achieves at least the grade 'sufficient'.

(7) A candidate shall be deemed to have graduated from the Master's programme if they have achieved at least a passing grade in all of the required assessments and examinations and the Master's thesis.

(8) A candidate who has failed or is deemed to have failed to graduate from the Master's degree programme shall be notified in writing by the Chair of the Examination Board; the letter of notification shall include information on the candidate's right of appeal and on whether and to what extent the candidate can retake assessments or examinations with a view to graduating from the programme.

## **Section 12**

### **Withdrawal from an examination; Failure to attend; Deception; Contravention of regulations**

(1) If a candidate who is registered for an academic assessment or examination withdraws from the assessment or examination without reasonable grounds, the student shall be deemed to have failed the assessment or examination.

(2) If a candidate fails to attend a written or oral examination on the set date without good cause, the candidate shall be awarded a fail grade. The same applies if a written assessment is not completed within the stipulated period.

(3) If there are credible reasons why a candidate withdrew from or failed to attend an assessment or examination, these reasons shall be submitted immediately and in writing to the Examination Board. If the candidate was ill, the candidate is required to present a medical certificate issued by a physician. If the same candidate presents a medical certificate on repeated occasions, the Chair of the Examination Board may demand a medical certificate issued by a public medical officer. If a candidate withdraws from or fails to attend an academic assessment or examination because a child cared for by the candidate was ill, the child's illness shall be treated as if the candidate was ill. The candidate shall demonstrate that it was necessary for them to care for the ill child by providing a medical certificate issued by a physician in accordance with Article 45 of Book V of the German Social Welfare Code (SGB V). If the reasons given for withdrawal or non-attendance are accepted, the candidate may re-apply to register for the assessment or examination.

(4) If a candidate attempts to register for an assessment or examination by deception, or if the Examination Board erroneously assumed that essential requirements for registration had been satisfied, the Examination Board may decide to nullify the results of previous assessments or examinations and may stop the assessment or examination procedure. Before any such decision is made, the candidate shall have the opportunity to be heard. The candidate shall be notified in writing about any decision and the letter of notification shall include information on the candidate's right of appeal.

(5) If a candidate attempts to influence the result of an assessment or examination by deception or by the use of unauthorized aids, the candidate shall receive a fail grade for that assessment or examination. If plagiarism has been demonstrated, the relevant module element shall be repeated. The Examination Board shall notify the student of its decision in writing. A fail grade shall also be awarded to any candidate whose behaviour prevents the orderly conduct of an examination and who is excluded from the examination after receiving prior warning from the examiner or from a person authorized by the examiner in accordance with Section 9(7). The candidate may ask the Examination Board to reappraise any such decision made pursuant to Paragraphs 1 and 2 above within a period of one month of the decision being made. If the Examination Board upholds the decision, the candidate shall receive a fail grade for that assessment or examination and shall be notified immediately in writing. The letter of notification shall include the reasons for the decision and information on the candidate's right of appeal. If the Examination Board does not uphold the decision, the relevant assessment or examination shall be deemed not to have occurred and the Chair of the Examination Board shall instruct the relevant examiner to recall the candidate for assessment or examination.

### **Section 13**

#### **Recognition of previous periods of study and of credits for earlier coursework, assessments and examinations**

(1) Previous periods of study and credits earned for earlier coursework, assessments and examinations ('prior learning') in the same subject areas at universities in Germany shall be recognized without requiring equivalence to be verified. Furthermore, the candidate may request recognition of other assessments or examinations previously completed at another university as part of a Master's programme. Recognition of prior learning will be granted provided equivalence has been verified. Prior learning shall be recognized provided that, when compared with the Master's degree programme in Biophysics at Saarland University, there is no significant difference in the time required for completion or in the assessments or examinations used with respect to the content, scope and academic requirements of the modules taken. Credits from academic assessments and examinations that were used to obtain the preceding Bachelor's degree cannot also be used to meet the degree requirements of the Master's programme.

(2) When recognizing prior learning at foreign universities, the equivalency agreements approved by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK – *Kultusministerkonferenz*) and the German Rectors' Conference (HRK – *Hochschulrektorenkonferenz*) shall be taken into account, as shall any agreements existing between Saarland University and its partner universities.

(3) Paragraphs 1 and 2 apply analogously to prior learning in state-accredited distance learning programmes.

(4) The candidate is responsible for providing the documentation required for the recognition of prior learning. Students have a legal right to have prior learning recognized if the requirements set out in Paragraphs 1 to 3 above have been met.

(5) If earlier academic coursework has been accepted for which ECTS credits were not originally awarded, the appropriate equivalent number of credits shall be determined and then entered into the student's academic record.

### **Section 14**

#### **Studying part-time**

(1) Students and prospective students may be enrolled at the university as part-time students if they are only able to study for at least 50% and no more than 60% of their available working hours due to employment obligations, pregnancy, maternity leave, caring for one or more children or adolescents, supporting family members with care needs, or for some other important reason. If the volume of academic work undertaken by a part-time student in one semester exceeds 60% of the academic credit associated with full-time study, that semester shall be treated as if the student were studying full-time. In individual cases in which the volume of work completed by a student only marginally exceeds the limit for part-time study, the student may apply to offset the excess volume against, for example, a reduced workload in the latter part of the same academic year. More detailed provisions are set out in the Regulations Governing Student Enrolment at Saarland University.

(2) Applications for part-time study shall be submitted to the Examination Board two weeks before the enrolment or re-registration deadline for the relevant semester.

Once the Examination Board has granted consent, the student shall apply to the Admissions Office for enrolment or re-registration and shall submit a supplementary application for part-time study.

(3) Except in exceptional cases and where reasonable grounds exist, students shall complete their Master's thesis as a full-time student.

(4) Part-time study does not create any legal entitlement to the provision of special programme content or a modified curriculum.

(5) No liability shall be accepted and no responsibility borne for any effects that part-time study may have on areas for which the faculties are not responsible, or that it may have on courses offered by external institutions. Students are obliged to contact the appropriate bodies in good time to ensure that they have the relevant information.

(6) A student that remains as a part-time student may be required to attend a study counselling interview every two semesters with the counselling or advisory service responsible for the relevant programme or subject.

(7) The volume of academic work undertaken by a student in a particular semester shall be calculated on the basis of all of the modules taken by the student in that semester, irrespective of whether a pass or fail grade was attained.

### **Section 15** **Nullification of assessments or examinations**

(1) If a candidate is found to have cheated in an assessment or examination and if this fact only becomes apparent after the examination certificate has been issued, the Examination Board may retroactively amend the grade awarded for those assessments or examinations in which the graduate was found to have cheated and may assign a fail grade either for the entire assessment or examination, or for some part thereof.

(2) If the registration requirements for an assessment or examination were not met but there was no intentional misrepresentation on the part of the candidate and if this fact only becomes apparent after the assessment or examination has been completed, this defect shall be deemed to have been remedied by the fact that the candidate successfully completed the assessment or examination. If a candidate intentionally used wrongful means to gain registration for an assessment or examination, the Examination Board shall decide on any penalties.

(3) Before the Examination Board makes any decision pursuant to Paragraph 1 or Paragraph 2.2 above, the candidate shall have one month in which to make representations about this matter.

(4) The candidate shall be notified in writing about any decisions made pursuant to Paragraph 1 or Paragraph 2.2 above. The letter of notification shall include the reasons for the decision and information on the candidate's right of appeal. Decisions pursuant to Paragraph 1 or Paragraph 2.2 above are subject to a period of limitation of five years from the date of the certificate.

(5) The incorrect formal graduation certificate and the incorrect examination certificate shall be revoked.

## **Section 16 Inspection of records**

After an assessment or examination has been completed, candidates shall, on request, be granted the opportunity to inspect their written work, the examiners' reports and examination records. Inspection applications shall be submitted to the Examination Board no later than one month after the results of the assessment or examination have been announced. The place, date and time of the inspection appointment shall be determined by the Examination Board.

## **Section 17 Appeal procedure**

Objections raised with respect to decisions made by the Chair of the Examination Board shall be decided by the Examination Board. If objections are raised about the grading of individual examinations or assessments, the decision of the Board shall be based on representations to be obtained from those examiners who were responsible for awarding the grade.

## **II The Master's degree programme – Admission, academic assessment and graduation**

### **Section 18 Admission to the Master's programme**

(1) Applicants to the Master's degree programme are required to have a first degree (undergraduate degree) from a university. Admission to the Master's programme is granted to particularly suitable applicants. Students seeking admission to the consecutive Master's degree programme in Biophysics shall:

1. have a Bachelor's degree or equivalent university qualification whose main curricular focus was on biophysics, biology, physics or a subject related to biophysics from a university in Germany or in a country that is a signatory to the Bologna Accord.
2. demonstrate particular academic aptitude for the Master's programme. Typically, an applicant's suitability for the Master's programme is demonstrated by a first degree with an overall grade of at least 2.5 on the German academic grading scale, or by means of an aptitude test conducted by a professor designated by the Examination Board who works in one of the departments involved in the Master's programme in biophysics, whereby, in this case, significant weight is still given to the overall grade achieved by the candidate in their Bachelor's degree.

(2) Applicants who do not yet have their Bachelor's degree examination certificate may apply for provisional admission to the Master's programme provided that by the start of the Master's programme they have successfully completed all of the examination and assessment requirements for the Bachelor's programme. In such cases, the Bachelor's degree examination certificate shall be submitted no later than three months after the applicant was provisionally admitted to the Master's programme.

(3) If the requirements set out in Paragraph 1 above are met, the curricular content of the applicant's first degree will be checked. Applicant's seeking admission to the Master's programme are required to have an understanding of nonlinear dynamics, thermodynamics and statistical physics, cellular and molecular biology, genetics, and a basic knowledge of biochemistry. The Master's degree programme in Biophysics offers ancillary courses that enable students to attain competency in subject areas not covered in their Bachelor's degree. These courses can be taken at the same time as other programme modules or during an additional semester. During their Bachelor's degree, applicants should have earned at least 20 credits for lecture courses and for exercise and problem-solving classes in each of the fields of physics and biology. At least 20 credits should have been earned for laboratory courses.

(4) If the requirements of Paragraph 3 are not met, the student may be provisionally admitted to the relevant Master's degree programme on the condition that, within a year, the student acquires the missing curricular content in a supplementary study programme. The procedure to be followed in such cases shall be determined in consultation with a departmental representative who is authorized to conduct examinations; the proposed procedure shall be recorded in writing. The proposed supplementary study programme shall be confirmed by the Examination Board.

(5) An applicant shall not be admitted to the Master's programme if the formal requirements have not been met.

(6) All admissions to the Master's programme shall be decided by the Examination Board. If there is some doubt regarding an application for admission, the relevant departmental representatives shall be consulted.

(7) The Examination Board shall inform the applicant in writing about whether the application has been rejected or accepted. If relevant, the applicant shall also be notified of any conditions attached to a provisional admission as defined in Paragraph 2 or Paragraph 4 above. The letter of admission will specify which module the applicant has to take in the field of theoretical biophysics.

## **Section 19**

### **Registering as a candidate for examination and assessment in the Master's programme**

(1) The first time a student registers for examination or assessment in a particular module or module element they also register as a candidate for examination and assessment in the Master's programme. This application to register for an end-of-module examination or assessment shall be submitted in writing to the Examination Office of the Faculty of Natural Science and Technology II (*Prüfungssekretariat*). The application shall be submitted together with:

1. Proof of proper enrolment in the relevant Master's programme
2. Proof that the requirements set out in Section 18(3) have been met
3. Academic transcript documents
4. Positive notification from the Examination Board with respect to Section 18(7)
5. A declaration whether the student has previously irrevocably failed to graduate from a Master's degree programme, a single-tier integrated degree programme (*Magister* or *Diplom*) or other Master's level degree programme in biophysics or comparable academic discipline at another state-maintained or church-maintained higher education institution, or whether a final decision regarding an irrevocable fail is currently pending.

6. Where necessary, proof that supplementary programme-specific admission requirements, as set out in Section 18(3) above, have been met. If these requirements have not been met, the student may be provisionally registered for assessment or examination on the condition that the student acquires the missing curricular content in a supplementary study programme within the period specified in Section 18(4).

(2) If proof was not presented that the requirements in Section 18(1) or 18(4) have been met, registration for assessment or examination is provisional.

(3) Registration for all other modules occurs when the student provides proof that all registration requirements have been met.

(4) Before registering for a module assessment or examination, students shall demonstrate that they have successfully completed the exam registration requirements specified in the study regulations.

(5) A student may only take an end-of-module assessment or examination if they have formally registered with the Examination Office within the relevant registration period. The type and duration of the assessment or examination associated with a module or module element shall be announced at the beginning of the relevant module or module element.

(6) Decisions regarding the registration of candidates for academic assessments or examinations are made by the Chair of the Examination Board. If there is some doubt regarding an application for registration, the decision shall be made by the Examination Board after consultation with the relevant departmental representatives. If an application to register for an assessment or examination is rejected, the applicant shall be notified in writing. The letter of notification shall include information on the candidate's right of appeal.

(7) An application to register for assessment or examination may only be rejected if:

1. the required documents have not been submitted in their entirety or
2. the requirements set out in item 6 of Paragraph 1, or in Paragraph 3 or in Section 18(1) or 18(3) have not been met (subject to the provisions in sentence 2, item 6, Paragraph 1 and in Section 18(2) and 18(4)) or
3. the candidate has lost their right of assessment or examination for the relevant module or for the programme as a whole (cf. Section 23(1)) or has irrevocably failed one of the assessments or examinations listed in item 5 of Paragraph 1.

## **Section 20**

### **Registering for the Master's thesis**

(1) Students may register for the Master's thesis phase provided that they have completed all of the core programme requirements. To demonstrate that these requirements have been met, students shall submit:

1. proof of proper enrolment in the Master's degree programme in Biophysics
2. proof that they have completed all of the assessments and examinations defined in the relevant study regulations
3. proof that they have acquired at least 70 credits and that the prerequisites specified in Section 7 of the study regulations have been met.



(2) Applications to register for the Master's thesis phase shall be submitted to the Examination Board together with supporting documentation demonstrating proper completion of all necessary programme requirements.

(3) The provisions of sentence 2, item 6 of Section 19(1) and Section 19(7) above shall apply analogously when the Examination Board considers whether to approve or reject applications to register for the Master's thesis phase.

### **Section 21**

#### **The Master's thesis: topic, procedure, duration, presentation and layout of thesis, thesis assessment, pass/fail**

(1) The Master's thesis is a piece of independent academic work that should demonstrate that the candidate is (i) capable of addressing a specific problem in the field within a specified time frame through application of appropriate scientific methodologies, and (ii) is able to present the results appropriately.

(2) The Examination Board shall appoint a primary thesis examiner, a secondary thesis examiner and the thesis supervisor. Typically, the primary thesis examiner also acts as the supervisor.

(3) The candidate shall be notified of the topic of the Master's thesis within five weeks of the candidate registering for the Master's thesis phase. The candidate shall have the opportunity, but is not obliged, to make proposals for the topic to be addressed in the Master's thesis.

(4) The date on which the topic of the Master's thesis was announced (i.e. the start of the thesis completion period) and the thesis topic shall be documented.

(5) The student workload for the entire Master's thesis project, including the Master's research colloquium, is 30 ECTS credits, which corresponds to a completion period of 6 months. The thesis topic and the problems to be addressed shall be such that the thesis can be completed within the allotted time. In exceptional cases and where reasonable grounds exist, a candidate may apply to the Examination Board for an extension to the completion period. An extension of four weeks is generally regarded as reasonable. An extension of the thesis completion period shall not alter the number of ECTS credits awarded.

(6) Within five weeks of receiving notification of the thesis topic, the candidate may, after consultation and on one occasion only, decline the topic of the thesis. In this case, the candidate will not be deemed to have failed the thesis project. A new topic for the Master's thesis shall be issued within a period of five weeks after declining the first topic.

(7) If a candidate is prevented from working on the Master's thesis for a period of more than one week because of illness or some other cause beyond the candidate's control, the thesis submission deadline shall be extended accordingly. The candidate shall notify the Examinations Office immediately and provide supporting documentation, e.g. in the event of illness, the candidate shall provide a medical certificate issued by a physician. The Examination Board shall, on request, take account of statutory periods of maternity leave, periods of parental leave or compassionate leave (particularly caring for a child under the age of 18 or supporting family members with care needs), as well as the special needs of students with disabilities.

(8) If a student does not meet the thesis completion deadline, a fail grade shall be awarded for the Master's thesis. Repeat attempts shall be subject to the requirements set out in Section 23(2).

(9) Candidates shall submit three printed copies and one electronic copy of the Master's thesis to the Examinations Office. The thesis shall be paginated and shall be produced using a common word-processing system or program. The copies to be submitted shall be printed and either stapled or bound. The candidate shall ensure that all copies submitted are legible. The candidate shall give written assurance that the electronic version is identical in content to the printed version of the Master's thesis.

(10) A candidate who submits a Master's thesis shall also submit a written declaration of original authorship stating that the thesis is their own original work and that no source materials or aids other than those indicated were used. Any parts of the thesis that draw on the wording or substance of other works shall be clearly marked as borrowings and the sources shall be acknowledged correctly. The candidate shall also state whether drawings, sketches, diagrams and photographic and graphic images are the candidate's own work, or were produced in accordance with the candidate's instructions, or are the work of others.

(11) The date of submission of the Master's thesis shall be documented.

(12) The Master's thesis phase concludes with a research colloquium lasting 30 minutes. One of the colloquium examiners shall be the primary thesis examiner. The colloquium shall be held no later than six weeks after the candidate submits the printed version of the Master's thesis. The date of examination shall be recorded as the date on which the printed version of the Master's thesis was submitted.

(13) The Master's thesis shall be assessed by the examiner who provided the thesis topic and by the secondary thesis examiner appointed by the Examination Board. Both examiners shall hand in their written reports no later than two months after the thesis was submitted for examination; each report shall propose a thesis grade in accordance with the specifications in Section 11(1) and 11(2). If the proposed grades differ from one another, the grade for the Master's thesis shall be calculated in accordance with the provisions of Section 11(5). However, if the proposed grades differ by more than 2.0 or if only one of the thesis examiners awards a fail grade, the Examination Board shall appoint a third thesis examiner to assess the Master's thesis. Once the report from the third examiner has been received, the Examination Board shall, contrary to the provisions of Section 11(5), decide on the grade to be awarded for the Master's thesis based on the three reports received.

(14) The candidate shall be notified immediately about the result of the thesis examination including the grade awarded.

## **Section 22**

### **Successfully completing the Master's programme and overall grade**

(1) A candidate is deemed to have successfully completed the final assessment phase of the Master's degree programme if the candidate has

1. successfully completed all of the assessments and examinations stipulated in the study regulations

2. earned the required number of 90 ECTS credits (excluding those awarded for the Master's thesis) from the required compulsory modules, mandatory elective modules and elective modules as specified in the study regulations
3. has successfully completed the Master's thesis project.

(2) A candidate shall be deemed to have failed to graduate from the Master's degree programme if they have failed one or more of the required assessments or examinations or have failed the Master's thesis project, including all permissible retake attempts ('irrevocable fail').

(3) The final overall grade awarded for the Master's degree qualification is calculated from the grades achieved for the assessments and examinations specified in the applicable study regulations and from the grade achieved in the Master's thesis project.

(4) The final overall grade is calculated by (i) multiplying the grade attained for each end-of-module examination with the number of credits associated with the respective module or the sum of the credits associated with the respective module elements and (ii) multiplying the grade attained for the Master's thesis with the number of credits associated with the thesis project and then adding the results. The value so obtained is then divided by the sum of the credits associated with the respective modules and the Master's thesis. This result shall be rounded down to the next (intermediate) grade on the scale and expressed to one decimal place. (Note: in the German grading system, the lower the numerical value, the better the grade.) Ungraded (pass/fail) modules are not included in the calculation of the final overall grade.

(5) The final overall grade that appears on the degree certificate and on the formal graduation certificate shall be classified as follows:

up to 1.5:	Very good
1.5–2.5:	Good
2.5–3.5:	Satisfactory
3.5–4.0:	Sufficient.

(6) A candidate who has failed to graduate from the Master's degree programme or who has lost their right of assessment or examination shall be notified in writing by the Chair of the Examination Board; the letter of notification shall include information on the candidate's right of appeal.

(7) If a candidate who has completed all the stipulated programme requirements has acquired more than the minimum number of required credits, they may, in accordance with study regulations, be permitted to select a subset of the assessments of examinations for inclusion in the calculation of the final overall grade.

### **Section 23**

#### **Repeating assessments and examinations and/or the Master's thesis**

(1) An assessment or examination that was awarded a fail grade may be repeated twice (cf. the provisions in Paragraph 4 below governing the *Freiversuch* option – an examination, which, if failed, is treated as if it had not been taken). The second repeat attempt at the assessment or examination may also be conducted as an oral examination. If a candidate does not achieve a passing grade in either of the two repeat assessments or examinations, the candidate shall lose the right to graduate from that degree programme.

(2) If a candidate is awarded a fail grade for the Master's thesis project, the candidate may have one further attempt at passing the Master's thesis requirement (but note provisions in Paragraph 4 below governing the *Freiversuch* option). The candidate shall receive a new thesis topic within three months of failing the first Master's thesis. A candidate may decline the proposed thesis topic in accordance with Section 21(6) but only if this option was not used the first time the candidate attempted the Master's thesis. A third attempt at passing the Master's thesis requirement is not permitted; failed attempts at other universities will be taken into account.

(3) The Examination Board may extend the deadline in Paragraph 2 if so requested by the candidate before the deadline expires, provided that the candidate can demonstrate that the extension is necessary for reasons beyond the candidate's control (e.g. by presenting a medical certificate issued by a physician). The Examination Board shall, on request, take account of statutory periods of maternal leave, periods of parental leave and family care obligations (particularly caring for a child under the age of 18 or supporting family members with care needs), as well as the special needs of students with disabilities.

(4) If a student fails an assessment or examination at the first scheduled attempt (i.e. within the period specified in the study regulations), the assessment or examination will be treated as if it had not been taken (*Freiversuch*).

(5) If a student successfully completes an assessment or examination (excluding the Master's thesis) within the period mentioned in Paragraph 4, the student may request to retake the assessment or examination within a period of one year with a view to achieving a better grade. The student will be awarded the higher of the two grades. In all other cases, assessments or examinations that have been awarded a passing grade cannot be retaken for the purpose of achieving a better grade.

#### **Section 24** **The Master's examination certificate**

(1) Students will receive a Master's examination certificate in German or, if requested, in English within two months of successfully completing the final assessment phase of the Master's degree programme. The examination certificate contains the overall grade classification, with the calculated overall numerical grade in parentheses, and contains the subject and grade of the Master's thesis.

(2) The examination certificate will be signed by the Chair of the Examination Board. The certificate also bears the date of the final assessment or examination and the date on which it was signed.

#### **Section 25** **Master's degree qualification and the formal graduation certificate**

(1) The formal graduation certificate shall be issued to graduates within two months of successfully completing the Master's degree programme. The formal graduation certificate shall be signed by the Chair of the Examination Board and by the Dean of Faculty 7 and shall bear the faculty's seal. The certificate shall bear the date of the final assessment or examination and the date on which it was signed.

(2) The formal Master's graduation certificate is issued in German, but may be issued in English on request. The formal graduation certificate confers upon the holder the academic degree 'Master of Science' (M.Sc.).

**Section 26**  
**Diploma supplement and transcript of records**

When graduates are awarded their degree certificates, they will also receive a diploma supplement and a transcript of their academic records.

**III Final provision**

**Section 27**  
**Commencement**

These regulations shall come into force on the day after they are announced in the Official Bulletin of the Institutions of Higher Education in Saarland (*Dienstblatt der Hochschulen des Saarlandes*).

Saarbrücken, xx.xx.xxxx

President of Saarland University  
(Univ.-Prof. Dr. Volker Linneweber)