

Guide to the Master of Science (MSc) in International and Monetary Economics

1 Introduction

This guide explains and specifies the program regulations that have been ratified by the Institute of Economics of the University of Bern (VWI) and the Faculty of Business and Economics of the University of Basel (WWZ) for the specialized *Master of Science in International and Monetary Economics* (MIME). This Master's program is designed as a joint degree program, i.e. students can attend courses at both universities in accordance with the jointly defined curriculum, and at the end receive a diploma upon completion of their study program which is signed by both faculties.

This guide contains information about the skills that graduates will acquire and about the objectives, structure and organization of the study program. The individual courses, which make up the modules described here, are listed in the medium-term curriculum that is available separately. Although this guide is ratified by the two faculties, continuous review and adaptation of the medium-term curriculum are the responsibility of the inter-university Governing Board for the MIME program. From time to time, this committee will adapt the contents of the modules of the MIME program, where this seems appropriate in view of developments in the field of science, the job market or the staffing of the two organizations involved.

The MIME is a university-level study program lasting for three semesters. It has been designed so that the need for coordination between both lecturers and students, and the resources required, can be kept to a minimum. However, the partnership between the two organizations gives rise to considerable synergy effects, which can be harnessed in the interests of ensuring that this Master's program is of the highest international standard. The study program is taught entirely in English.

1.1 The topicality of monetary policy issues

In the light of the increasingly globalized world economy, international issues relating to monetary policy, and indeed macroeconomics in general, are becoming ever more important. This is particularly true of an open economy such as that in Switzerland, which earns a great deal of its income from exporting goods and services and from investments. However, it also applies to the EU area, which is becoming increasingly economically integrated (and is expanding), to developing economies and even to major established economies such as that of the USA, which are more affected by international developments now than in the past. Since this means that purely domestic economic aspects are becoming

less important, relatively speaking, it is essential for the well-being of many economies to train skilled experts who are familiar with the issues in the international economy. The recurring crises in financial markets, and their implications for economies in general, show how important the functioning of the monetary sector is for today's global economy. A sound understanding of monetary policy as well as of the financial markets and how they are regulated is therefore indispensable, and that is exactly what this Master's program aims to develop.

In-depth knowledge of these subjects is essential for careers with central banks¹, commercial banks, insurance companies, regulatory authorities (Swiss Federal Banking Commission, etc.) and other government agencies as well as international organizations (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, BIZ, OECD, WTO, etc.), or for business and economic reporting in the media. Even a successful academic career requires students to be introduced to the very latest in current research at an early stage. This is ensured by the high standard of this program and the fact that specialization takes place early on.

In view of this complex environment, the MIME offers training for a specific segment of both the Swiss and international job markets, namely in any field where it is useful or necessary to have extensive detailed knowledge of issues relating to macroeconomics, monetary theory and monetary policy under consideration of the international context. The main focus is on monetary economics and its links to international macroeconomics.

1.2 Similar programs at Swiss universities

A number of universities in Switzerland offer specialized programs in various fields of economics. However, the fields of international economics as well as monetary and currency theories and policies are not covered by any Swiss university. In German-speaking countries, only the University of Frankfurt am Main (Germany) offers a similar program.

The VWI and the WWZ are ideal partners to introduce the MIME program. Both have many years of experience of teaching and research on the subject of international economics and, especially, macroeconomics and monetary theory and policy, and they have built up an excellent national and international reputation in these fields. The two institutions also complement each other in terms of both staff and subject matter: their areas of research and approaches to it are sufficiently similar to allow useful and fruitful cooperation, so that the resulting synergies can be utilized to best effect in both teaching and research.

1.3 Added value

The MIME does not see itself as competing with the regular Master of Science in Business and Economics, which will continue to be offered in parallel at both universities. It should rather be regarded as a supplement for students who,

¹ It should be noted here that the market for central bank economists has now been opened up, so Swiss economists can now apply for positions with European central banks and vice versa.

after completing their Bachelor's degrees, want to study the above fields in greater depth and acquire more quantitative knowledge, and who are perhaps considering a doctorate. The added value of this program therefore lies in the fact that it trains qualified experts in a highly specialized field, namely monetary economics, experts who are increasingly in demand in Switzerland and across the world. All the same, students do also attend elective courses to ensure that general economic issues, too, are still discussed.

This program should be particularly attractive to foreign students and thus help to boost even further the reputation of both the institutions concerned. As a specialized Master's degree, the MIME should primarily attract students who specifically want to learn about international monetary economics with a view to working in central banks and similar institutions.

2 Organization

2.1 Management

There is a Governing Board responsible for the program, consisting of members nominated by both the faculties involved. External persons may also be members of the Governing Board. Appointment is for two years, with the option of being re-elected more than once. This committee is mainly responsible for admissions and the curriculum. It is made up of an equal number of representatives from both the faculties involved.

2.2 Secretariat

The Governing Board is supported in day-to-day business by a Secretariat. In addition to its coordinating role, the Secretariat will also be responsible for tasks related to marketing (Internet presence, publicity, recruitment, placements, etc.). Some of these tasks will be carried out by the Dean of Studies Offices of the two faculties involved.

2.3 Curriculum

The Governing Board regularly reviews the contents of the curriculum and the evaluations given by the students who have enrolled in the program. It will adapt the structure of the program if necessary and is also responsible for coordinating the courses between the two universities. It should be borne in mind that the majority of courses will come from the range already available at the two faculties, reducing the scope for coordination.

3 Admission and enrollment

3.1 Admission

The following criteria represent two alternative qualifications that are sufficient (*but not essential*) for admission to the MIME program with no further conditions:

(1) Evidence of a Bachelor's degree in the field of Economics with at least 180 ECTS from a Swiss university-level institution, and a final grade of at least 5.0

in the major area (not rounded).² Foreign degrees and degrees based on different grading systems will be treated on an equivalent basis.

(2) Evidence of a Bachelor's degree in a discipline related to Economic Studies (content, methodology) with at least 180 ECTS from a Swiss university-level institution, and a final grade of at least 5.0 (not rounded), and a test result for the GMAT test in the highest category (i.e. a result only achieved by the top 20% of candidates).

Since the program is taught in English, students must also have adequate knowledge of the English language. For this reason, in addition to the two alternative qualifications listed above, evidence of knowledge of English to Level B2 of the European Language Portfolio is also required. This evidence must be provided before commencing study. The following constitute acceptable evidence:³

- Cambridge First Certificate,
- TOEFL test with a minimum score of 520 (paper-based testing) or 190 (computer-based testing),
- a Bachelor's degree from an English-speaking university.

Other applicants may be only accepted on the recommendation of the Governing Board. This very rarely used opportunity may be used for applicants with e.g. longtime professional experience in a central bank or similar qualifications.

3.2 Enrollment

Students are enrolled as Master's students at the university to which they apply for admission. The Governing Board handles admissions on behalf of the Enrollment Office [*Immatrikulation*] of the university to which students have applied for admission.

Students must attend the entire introduction module at the university at which they are enrolled for the Master's program.

4 Program objectives

In view of the potential fields of employment described above, the skills that need to be acquired are clear. At the end of their studies, graduates of the MIME program should

- understand the role of the central banks and bank supervisory authorities in macroeconomic stability, especially with regard to their international connections,
- understand the role of the central banks, bank supervisory and regulatory authorities and private investors (commercial banks, institutional investors, etc.) in international money markets,

² Grading scale: 6.0 to 1.0; 4.0=satisfactory.

³ At the University of Bern, a grade of at least 4.5 in English at the Swiss Matura level is also accepted.

- have the ability to make or assess decisions on monetary policy according to the best scientific criteria,
- be familiar with the historical background to international economic developments,
- be familiar with different approaches and trends in monetary policy and the regulation of financial markets,
- be able to consider and comment on current economic issues.

Specific career opportunities for graduates of the program may be found, for example, in the following areas:

- macroeconomic analysis in central or commercial banks,
- official bodies (e.g. tax or finance authorities),
- financial market supervision,
- reporting for the media,
- expert working groups for political committees or international organizations,
- academia.

5 Program structure

5.1 Overview

The specialized Master in International Monetary Economics program is worth 90 credit points under the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) with a standard period of study of three semesters. With part-time study, the Master's program will, accordingly, take longer.

The curriculum encompasses introduction, core and areas of specialization courses, and a Master's thesis (see description below). The focus is not only on teaching in-depth analytical theoretical understanding of international and macroeconomic issues, but also on developing the ability to use such knowledge to find solutions to practical problems.

The examinations for each course will be held in accordance with the examination system at the institution teaching that particular course.

5.2 Introduction module: Advanced Topics in Economics

The complete introduction module is worth 18 ECTS. The aim is to bring all the students up to the same standard. It therefore has a broad base and includes the basic elements of studying Economics at Master's level (microeconomics, macroeconomics and econometrics). The courses in this module are offered in parallel at both universities within the framework of their normal Master's program. Apart from choosing at which location they will attend the individual courses, students have no freedom to choose the content of this module.

5.3 Core module: Core Areas in Monetary Economics

Students have to obtain 24 ECTS in the core module. This comprises those courses which make this program a specialized Master's program. They cover the key themes of the program in terms of content. This should ensure that the

program objectives listed in Section 4 of this document can be achieved. The module also includes a seminar as part of which the students write and present a seminar paper (6 ECTS). The seminar is conducted by members of the faculties involved, but may also include experts with professional experience and potential employers for the graduates. The courses in this module are typically only offered at one of the two universities, so the students have to commute between them. The module includes a minimal amount of freedom of choice. The exact content of the module is determined by the Governing Board.

5.4 Specialization module: Areas of Specialization in International and/or Monetary Economics

Students can obtain 18 ECTS in the specialization module. In this module, they can choose from a wide selection of Master's courses at the two faculties involved that are suitable for further specialization in the intended Master's program. This module can also include courses from other faculties. In the specialization module, it is upon special request also possible to take courses that are not held in English. The aim of the specialization module is to give students the opportunity to build up a personal profile according to their interests or the career they hope to pursue. However, the Governing Board ensures that the content is to some extent related to the specialized focus of the MIME. The Governing Board puts together a list of courses in the medium-term curriculum that can be attended as part of the specialization module.

Courses in the core module can also be recognized for the specialization module if the student has already obtained the necessary number of points in the core module.

5.5 Master's thesis

The Master's thesis is worth 30 credit points. It therefore requires 900 hours of work, which equates to 20 weeks of full-time work. It can only be started after the introduction module has been successfully completed and at the end of the second semester. Because of the scope of the Master's thesis, very high standards are set for its originality and for the intensity of the research required. It is supervised by at least one full-time member of one of the two faculties. The supervisor sets a subject in consultation with the student.

If the Master's thesis is not accepted, it can be repeated once, with a new subject being set. If the thesis is rejected once again, the student is disqualified from the program.

6 Doctoral study programs

The Master's program forms a natural progression to doctoral study. The standard of the Master's program is designed so that, even during the Master's program, the students are given the skills to conduct research work largely independently. Graduates of the MIME program will be treated in the same way

when applying for regular doctoral programs at the two faculties involved as graduates from the non-specialized study programs at each faculty.