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1 THE AMRS THESIS MANUAL

The 30-ECTS thesis is the pièce de la résistance of the research master Ancient Medieval and Renaissance Studies. It trains students to become independent researchers who can develop their own research project in a chosen field of expertise. Ideally it draws fully on the set of skills, approaches and knowledge gained in the compulsory and elective courses of the program. With the thesis, the student shows her/himself to be a competent researcher in the field of AMRS.

The RMA thesis is a scholarly text in which the student is expected to contribute, on the basis of independent research, to a debate within his or her discipline. The central research question should be clearly formulated at the beginning and its relevance to scholarly discussions within the discipline set out. The body of the text should show how the researcher (student) went about trying to answer this question, why (s)he proceeded in this way, and what her/his findings were. The thesis demonstrates a full command of the topic and the debates in the field. It shows evidence of original and independent thought but also of systematic, broad-ranging and thorough research in the field using appropriate methods. It shows insight and powers of analysis which fully reflect the complexity of the topic. It demonstrates an engagement with and critical approach to the scholarly debate. The argumentation is thorough, the examples are precise and relevant, and the selection and synthesis of secondary literature are polished. The handling of bibliography and footnoting is up to professional standards and the style is precise, correct, and highly readable.

The conclusion should contain an analysis of the findings in the light of the original question and explain the broader implications of the conclusions.

The thesis should be written in correct and clear English; it will normally be around 30,000 words long and may be no longer than 40,000 words (including notes and bibliography). Students are encouraged (but not required) to attend a series of Thesis Labs in preparation of writing their thesis.

This thesis manual helps you to plan your thesis from the very start of your studies.

- The section ‘Thesis Project’ outlines a basic time schedule for your work on the thesis in blocks 3 and 4 of the second year, highlighting the interaction with your thesis supervisor.
- The ‘Thesis Lab’ section describes the intervision environment we create to help you finish your project on time.
- The ‘Evaluation Form RMA Thesis’ form together with the ‘Detailed grade discription’ describe the procedure and standards for the grading of your thesis.
- The Graduation section contains all the dates and deadlines relevant to your timely graduation.
- Finally, you will find at the end of this document the ‘Plagiarism rules awareness statement’, which you are required to sign and hand in to your advisor prior to or together with your finished thesis.
2 THE THESIS PROJECT

In Blocks 3 and 4 you will spend a total of 800 hours on your thesis project. The end result will be an RMA Ancient Medieval and Renaissance thesis of approximately **30,000 to 40,000 words**, written in **English**.

As for the substantial requirements, the ‘**Detailed grade discription**’ below specifies exactly what is expected from you. We advise you to discuss this Rubric with your supervisor at the beginning of the thesis project. Doing so will secure the alignment of your expectations regarding the thesis project with those of your supervisor.

The **deadline for submission** of the final thesis is **FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 2022**.

The successful and timely completion of your thesis project depends on your own **independent management** of the project and *a* good working relation with your **thesis supervisor**. To help you manage the project and shape the relationship with your supervisor, the overview below describes the various phases of the thesis project.

At the end of the second term, there will be an introductory meeting to discuss the thesis process. During this meeting you will receive information to help you get started with your thesis. To prepare for this meeting, you are asked to share your ideas for potential thesis topics with possible supervisors in advance, and to bring two topics, including a research question, to class. Please have a look at online inventories of relevant primary sources in advance. During the workshop we will give you feedback on your ideas, so that you will conclude this session with a clearer idea of your thesis.

**Project schedule** (Note that your supervisor is a very experienced teacher and researcher who may suggest to organize parts of the project differently. Together you will decide how to proceed with the project.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block 2</th>
<th>week 1-3</th>
<th>week 4-6</th>
<th>week 5-9</th>
<th>week 10-12</th>
<th>week 13-15</th>
<th>week 16-18</th>
<th>week 19-20</th>
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To meet the final deadline it is crucial to choose a topic and a supervisor before the start of Block 3. To that end we are organizing the RMA Thesis meeting, which will help you formulate a research question.

Towards the end of Block 2 you inform the RMA Coordinator about your topic and your supervisor. The coordinator will then enroll you in one of the thesis labs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block 3-4</th>
<th>week 1-3</th>
<th>week 4-6</th>
<th>week 5-9</th>
<th>week 10-12</th>
<th>week 13-15</th>
<th>week 16-18</th>
<th>week 19-20</th>
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In the first three weeks of Block 3 you write the first draft of the introduction of your thesis. The introduction is one of the most important elements of your thesis and often needs to be revised several times. The introduction needs to contain all of the following elements:
- Research question (explicitly formulated as such and preferably including sub-questions)
- An overview of relevant historiography
- A brief sketch of the historical background
- An explanation of the methodology you will use
- An overview of relevant theories you will use
- An explanation of the type of primary sources you will use and how these have been selected
- A remark on the (academic and social) relevance of your research project
In addition to this you decide, together with your supervisor on the planning of your thesis project, notably the time you will take to collect and analyze your data, and the submission of draft chapters.

This is the most challenging phase of the thesis project. You have your work laid out for you and you will now spend your time collecting and analyzing data.

You meet at least three times with your supervisor who gives feedback on your intermediate products and every time explicitly evaluates your progress. Together you determine which sources still need to be processed and you review your initial time schedule.

By now you have completed your data collection and analysis, even though you may have to revisit some sources to resolve particular problems (identified by you or your supervisor).

Your work in these weeks consists of the writing of a full draft of your thesis, based on the texts of progress reports. Together with your supervisor you schedule the writing of draft chapters (and the conclusion) over a five-week-period (week 13-17).

At the beginning of week 18 you hand in your draft thesis. While the supervisor is reading, you complete your footnotes and bibliography, you prepare tables, graphs, and illustrations, and you work on the layout for the final submission.

At the end of week 18 you receive your supervisor’s feedback. Together you determine which revisions you will make.

This week is spent on the revision of your thesis, as agreed with your supervisor. You submit the final version to the first and second reader in week 20.
3 THE THESIS LAB

Professional scholars always seek the advice and support of their colleagues, asking them to read drafts, or simply to bounce ideas off. Students will experience this crucial interaction in the Thesis Lab, a series of seminar-style meetings in small groups of fellow students, directed by one of our department’s graduate students.

Purpose. The thesis lab aims to support students while writing their thesis, by offering a friendly, informal environment in which to discuss the progress of the thesis project. It aims to:

- Stimulate exchange and intervision among students;
- Provide feedback and advice on general issues;
- Help students plan ahead (although completion of the thesis on time remains the student’s sole responsibility).

Participants. The thesis lab is guided by a PhD student or Postdoc from within the faculty of humanities. (S)he convenes the lab meetings and helps to structure the discussion among students. The facilitator may offer advice or share his/her experiences but is not involved in the supervision of the theses.

Preparation. All participants report on their ongoing project in short progress reports. These reports contain:

- Intermediate products of the research project. This may entail: 1) An abstract of this part of the thesis (ca. 300 words); the aim is to inform the other students and teachers briefly on the essence, not to give all the details; or 2) a section of the thesis on which advise is desirable.
- A brief description of any concerns the student has (i.e. one or more question or issues students are struggling with, rising from the work that has been done);
- A comparison of the work done so far with the schedule set with the supervisor;

The documents are important to have something to discuss and give concrete feedback on but they should not prove a hurdle to participation. If you are struggling all the more reason to send something so we can discuss it even if it’s not complete.

Deadline for the submission of your progress report. Students send their progress reports one day before the lab meeting. If you want your fellow students to read a longer text you are well advised to distribute it several days in advance.

Schedule. The Thesis Labs will meet every approximately three weeks throughout blocks 3 and 4.

Credits. The Thesis Lab is a no-credit course. You are expected to come well prepared to each meeting.

Sessions. A typical lab meeting lasts about two hours. Everybody comes prepared, which means having read all the progress reports and any additional texts. At the start of the meeting, the facilitator will propose an order of proceeding. Throughout the meeting the facilitator will make sure there is ample room for everybody to contribute to the discussion.
**Practical matters.** During the sessions you can choose how you present the text you sent. This presentation should be very short (think elevator pitch, max. 5 minutes, preferably less). The commentators can also choose whether to use ppt or not. This format may be adjusted during the run of this thesis lab as sometimes ppt can prove a hindrance to open discussion so we will see what suits everyone best.

**The teacher.** The phd student or postdoc leading the sessions is not your official supervisor. Any advice they give will be more general than that given by your actual supervisors and in general the idea is that these sessions provide a venue for peer review rather than expert comments.

**Provisional schedule of meetings** (to be finalized by the lecturer of the thesis lab, who will also organize a room and will inform you about this)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting#</th>
<th>Part of the thesis</th>
<th>Hand in texts:</th>
<th>To be discussed in thesis lab on:</th>
<th>Decide on which student(s) is going to read which texts (linking students)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Research question (incl. relation to academic literature) and thesis plan</td>
<td>Last week of blok 2</td>
<td>Blok 3/week 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Blok 3/week 3</td>
<td>Blok 3/week 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Blok 3/week 7</td>
<td>Blok 3/week 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>Blok 3/week 10</td>
<td>Blok 4/week 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Blok 4/week 4</td>
<td>Blok 4/week 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Blok 4/week 6/7</td>
<td>Blok 4/week 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 RMA Thesis evaluation form

Faculty of Humanities

RMA Thesis evaluation form

The RMA thesis supervisor acts as the first evaluator and is responsible for the communication between evaluators, the completion and filing of evaluation forms, the registration of the final grade in Osiris, and for informing the student of both the final grade and its substantiation by the evaluators.

The RMA thesis evaluation process consists of four stages:

(1) The first and second evaluator assess the thesis independently of one another; each fills out an evaluation form and determines a provisional grade.

(2) The first and second evaluator determine the final grade jointly on the initiative of the first evaluator within 10 working days of receipt of the thesis by the first evaluator. In certain circumstances a third evaluator may be consulted (see third evaluator form), in which case the final grade will be determined within 20 working days of receipt by the first evaluator; the student should be informed of this fact by the first evaluator. Should the first or second evaluator revise her/his provisional grade after consultation with other evaluator(s), he/she must change the relevant points on her/his evaluation form and – for the second evaluator - send the revised evaluation form to the first evaluator. The first evaluator will remove ‘Provisional grade’ from the forms submitted by the first and second evaluators and replace it with ‘Final grade’.

(3) The first evaluator informs the student of the final grade and its substantiation by:

- Sending an email with the grade and substantiation and/or;
- Organising a final meeting in which the grade and substantiation are discussed and/or;
- Sending the student the final grade form.

(4) The first evaluator registers the final grade in Osiris and files the evaluation forms of the first, second, and (possibly) third evaluator.
**Evaluation Form RMA Thesis**

**Student Information**

Name: 
Student number: 
Degree programme: 
ECTS: 
Title of thesis: 
Date submitted: 

**Supervisor/1\textsuperscript{st} Evaluator Information**

Name: 
Department: 

**2\textsuperscript{nd} Evaluator Information** (not involved in supervising the student)

Name: 
Department: 

**Evaluation by:**  
☐ Supervisor  ☐ 2\textsuperscript{nd} Evaluator

Provisional grade: 
Final grade (jointly determined by supervisor and 2\textsuperscript{nd} evaluator): 
Date: 

**Formal Preconditions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preconditions</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct use of language</td>
<td>☐ met  ☐ not met</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(sentence structure, spelling,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>punctuation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of contents and summary</td>
<td>☐ met  ☐ not met</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notation and list of sources in accordance with formal rules in the field  | ☐ met  
| ☐ not met  

Design and layout in accordance with degree programme guidelines  | ☐ met  
| ☐ not met  

The extent of the thesis is in accordance with the program guidelines (see program book)  | ☐ met  
| ☐ not met  

*Note: If one of these formal preconditions has not been met, the supervisor may decide not to evaluate the content of the thesis. The student will be given one opportunity to make corrections. The standards for meeting/not meeting the preconditions are determined by the degree programme (e.g. number of language mistakes tolerated).*

**EVALUATION OF THE CONTENT**

The evaluator first gives an assessment of each of the nine categories below, and then uses the “Substantiation” section to support the proposed grade by commenting on relevant strong and weak points of the thesis.

Categories 1 to 10 must all be assessed pass when handing out a passing or higher grade (category 10 only if applicable).

| 1. RESEARCH QUESTION | ☐ fail  
| ☐ pass  
| 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & ACADEMIC RELEVANCE | ☐ fail  
| ☐ pass  
| 3. METHOD | ☐ fail  
| ☐ pass  
| 4. ANALYSIS | ☐ fail  
| ☐ pass  
| 5. CONCLUSION | ☐ fail  
| ☐ pass  
| 6. USE & CITATION OF SOURCES | ☐ fail  
| ☐ pass  
| 7. STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT | ☐ fail  
| ☐ pass  
| 8. COMPOSITION & STYLE | ☐ fail  
| ☐ pass  
| 9. INITIATIVE (to be filled in by the supervisor) | ☐ fail  
| ☐ pass  
| 10. DEFENSE (IF APPLICABLE) | ☐ fail  
| ☐ pass  

10
SUBSTANTIATION

Please substantiate your proposed grade by commenting on relevant strong and weak points of the thesis, in particular those that address the first six assessment categories listed above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBSTANTIATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Research question)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Theoretical framework &amp; academic relevance)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Method)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Conclusion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Use &amp; citation of sources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Structure of the argument)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Composition &amp; style)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Initiative)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Defense)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Additional remarks)</td>
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</table>
Note: In commenting on the quality with which the student has demonstrated her/his academic abilities, please consider answering one or more of the following questions:

1. Research question: Is the research question developed according to the applicable academic standard in the research field? Was the research question formulated clearly? Were the sub-topics logically derived from the main topic? Was the research topic sufficiently focused, and was the reasoning behind this focus explained in the paper? Is it made sufficiently clear how the research contributes to the field in an original way?

2. Theoretical framework & academic relevance: Is the academic relevance of the research clearly stated? Are the sources relevant, representative and of sufficient academic quality? Does the research position itself critically/ in relation to the existing sources? Are the chosen theories and/or analytical concepts pertinent to the research question? Are the main concepts/terms clearly defined?

3. Accountability to the method: Are the research methods used adequate to address the research question? Are they used in the correct manner? Is the reflection on the chosen research and analysis method adequate? Is the method used to collect data described and justified in detail? Are the central concepts/terms clearly defined?

4. Results/Analysis: Are the results described clearly and systematically? Does the analysis correspond to the described method? Is there a sound balance between description and analysis? Is the knowledge of the field sufficient and used adequately?

5. Conclusion: Does the conclusion answer the main question? Is the conclusion more than just a summary? Does the student reflect critically on her/his own approach? Is there sufficient cross-referencing between the student’s own (empirical) research results and the literature/theory? Does the student convincingly demonstrate the innovative character of the research, its impact on the research field and the resulting suggestions for further research?

6. Use & citation of sources: Is the choice of source material (primary and secondary) appropriate and of sufficient quality? Is there a sufficient distinction in the analysis of primary and secondary sources? Is the distinction between own analysis and work of others clearly indicated? Is the citation of sources adequate and accurate? Are citations used correctly?

7. Structure of the argument: is the information presented in a professional and logical way? Is there a clear division into chapters and paragraphs? Is the argumentation clear and coherent? Are the paragraphs and sections coherent and sufficiently limited in scope? Is the reflection on the structure and form of presentation of sufficient quality?

8. Composition and style: Is the thesis written in an appealing and understandable manner? Is terminology used adequately and accurately? Is the English grammatically and stylistically correct?

9. Initiative: Is the development of the student in becoming an independent researcher of sufficient quality? Is there a sufficiently independent way of thinking? Has the student carefully utilised the feedback provided? Did the student respect agreements and deadlines? Did the student need much help during the process? If so, on which points (e.g. formulating a research question, familiarisation with the literature, structure of the argument, composition, language)?

10. Defense (if applicable)
5 Detailed grade description

**Deficient (5):**

The thesis does not have a central research question. It shows poor knowledge of the scholarly context and little evidence of independent thought. The research is superficial, unsystematic, and shows little effort. The argument lacks structure and the writing is vague or incorrect (the expression is poor at best, incoherent at worst.) It makes inadequate use of primary and secondary sources, and/or does not use or produce relevant data. The presentation does not meet professional standards.

**Pass (6)**

A 6 is awarded to a thesis that meets (but does not reach beyond) the accepted standards in the field in terms of soundness of methods and argumentation.

The thesis has a central question and provides an answer. The presentation of sources meets professional standards and the argument shows knowledge of the academic context. The thesis shows evidence of independent research in the relevant field, using appropriate methods. At the same time, its grasp of the issues involved does not reach beyond the basic requirements of the field. The writing does not exceed the basic requirements of correctness and clarity.

**Good (7)**

A 7 is awarded to a thesis that meets these standards and also makes available interesting and original results that merit attention (for instance in the form of being cited in scientific publications).

The thesis formulates and attempts to answer a central research question in a satisfactory way. It demonstrates a good basic understanding of the topic and of its complexities. It shows a good knowledge of the relevant academic context. It demonstrates solid coverage of the relevant data and of secondary and primary sources, using appropriate methods. The presentation and discussion of the data and sources is generally professional. The language is correct and the main points are made explicitly and in a structured way. However, the analysis may be derivative and lacking in discrimination. It exhibits some problems of relevance and structure. The evidence presented does not fully support conclusions, and it lacks detail and nuance. Expression may exhibit some deficiencies. It shows little evidence of independent thought or of critical reflection on methods and theories.

**Very good (8):**

An 8 can be awarded to a thesis that makes a contribution to the field that in principle merits publication, though not necessarily in the form of an independent publication (this presupposes sufficient originality, and soundness of the research carried out).
The thesis formulates a research question clearly and provides a convincing answer to it. It demonstrates a sound understanding of the topic and the issues involved in it. It shows a broad understanding of the academic context. It demonstrates extensive independent research, using appropriate methods. It is coherently structured and argued. The conclusions are supported by detailed evidence. It is well expressed. The analyses are more solid than original. There is limited evidence of critical reflection on methods and theories.

**Excellent (9):**

A 9 can be awarded to a thesis that makes a contribution to the field that is so original and convincing that it merits being brought to the attention of the international forum as part of a contribution in an A-level journal, and/or immediately qualifies the student for being admitted to further study at the PhD level.

The central question is very clearly formulated. It is very clearly situated in the relevant scholarly discussions and the writer shows an above average level of familiarity with the relevant scholarly context. It addresses all aspects of the topic and demonstrates careful and systematic research on appropriately selected sources or independently gathered data. It demonstrates critical reflection on methods and theories. It shows evidence of independent thought, knowledge of the field, and high-level insight and powers of analysis.

The argument is balanced, well structured and effectively expressed, with specific, detailed and accurate use of evidence. It is scrupulous in its citation of primary and secondary sources and its adherence to bibliographic conventions.

**Outstanding (10):**

A 10 can be awarded a thesis that makes a highly original and important contribution to the field and qualifies for acceptance in an international A-level journal.

The question is innovative and sharply formulated. It is shown to have considerable relevance to the scholarly discussions in the field. The thesis demonstrates a full command of the topic and the debates in the field. It shows evidence of original and independent thought but also of systematic, broad-ranging and thorough research in the field using appropriate methods. It shows exceptional insight and powers of analysis which fully reflect the complexity of the topic. It demonstrates an engagement with and critical approach to the scholarly debate. The argumentation is thorough, the examples are always precise and relevant, and the selection and synthesis of secondary literature are polished. The handling of bibliography and footnoting is up to professional standard and the style is precise, correct, and highly readable.
6 GRADUATION

DISCLAIMER: The formal examination rules are laid down in the OER of the RMA Ancient Medieval and Renaissance Studies (https://students.uu.nl/en/hum/history-ma/practical-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/education-and-examination-regulations)

Thesis deadline. Utrecht University urges students (and their supervisors) to see to the completion and grading of the RMA Thesis by the end of the second semester. In order for your supervisor and a second (and possibly third) reader to grade the thesis before this date, you have to hand in your thesis no later than Friday, June 17, 2022.

Extension of the thesis deadline. In order to graduate in the current academic year, you have to have fulfilled all your requirements by August 31, 2022. This means that you can continue to work on your thesis in July and August—without supervision!—if (and only if) your adviser agrees with this. Moreover, to ensure timely grading, the final version must be submitted no later than Friday, August 19, 2022. Since there is no advising during the summer holiday between teaching periods 4 and 1, you have to make explicit arrangements with your thesis advisor about the submission date.

What if you miss the deadline? If you have not fulfilled all requirements for the diploma by August 31, 2022, you will need to register again as a student for the new academic year (2022-2023) - and pay the tuition fees for the new year (Part of which may be reimbursed later depending on the duration of your registration). You will receive your diploma at a later date than October 2022, and you will not be eligible for a cum laude graduation.

Grading your thesis. The thesis will be evaluated by your supervisor and a second reader. The grade awarded for a thesis will be motivated by a written evaluation form covering the aspects stated in the assessment form. The thesis supervisor registers the grade in Osiris.

What happens if the final version of the thesis is rejected? If the supervisor and the second reader agree the final version of the master’s thesis does not deserve a grade of 6 or higher, the student has failed this particular part of the master’s programme. If the grade is at least 4, the student will be given the opportunity to revise his/her thesis, using the comments provided by the first and second reader. This revised version must be handed in within a month after having received grade and feedback. If the grade accorded after the first reading is lower than 4, or if the grade of the revised thesis is lower than 6, the student will have to repeat the module and start from scratch with a different topic.

Plagiarism statement. Don’t forget to include an abstract and sign the plagiarism rules awareness statement (see appendix ) before you hand in your thesis.

Thesis Online. Once your thesis has been graded, you need to upload it to the university’s thesis archive. You find instructions here: https://students.uu.nl/gw/uploaden-digitaal-scriptiearchief.

Exam date. The date of examination will be the last day of the month in which, according to the results as registered in Osiris, you have fulfilled the requirements of the examinations programme. This means that your exam will be dated August 31, 2022 if the last results (including the thesis) have been registered in August. If your last grade is registered in July, the exam will be registered on July 31, 2022.
Graduation ceremony. If you fulfilled all requirements for the diploma by 31 August 2022, you will receive your diploma during a graduation ceremony in October 2022 in the Academy Building in Utrecht. You will receive an official invitation with the exact time and details a few weeks in advance.

If you have any questions about the graduation ceremony, please enquire at the Examensecretariaat Geesteswetenschappen (examensecretariaat.gw@uu.nl)

Graduation ceremony for international students. For (international) students who must leave the Netherlands before 1 September 2022 (and only for this group) an additional ceremony will be held in late August 2022. If this applies to you, please inform the Education Office (ows.gw@uu.nl) that you need to take part in this ceremony. Please note that in order to qualify for this ceremony, your final grades need to be registered in Osiris before 31 July 2022. In most cases, this means you will need to have your thesis ready for submission to your supervisor by the end of June.