

Examiner's Guide for the course RESA4221 – Spring 2023

Introduction

The course [RESA4221 What the Qur'an Says: Translation, Interpretation and Society](#) is an MA-level course that studies modern Qur'anic hermeneutics and explores relationships between interpretation, translation and socio-ethical questions. The course is taught together with a corresponding BA-level course, RESA3221.

In order to be admitted to the exam, students must complete two mandatory assignments, one written individual assignment and one oral group presentation. For each assignment, the students must choose between one of three topics that have been discussed in the seminars and that are reflected in the [course literature](#). The teaching this semester has been structured around the six following topics:

- Religious pluralism and salvation
- Recitation, ritual and aesthetics
- Oppression and liberation
- Environmental and economic ethics
- Blasphemy and the sacred
- Homosexuality and gender relations

In addition to the assigned course literature, the MA-level students are to prepare an elective literature list of approximately 250 pages total (either one whole book or a list of chapter and/or articles).

The Exam

In the exam, the students are asked to develop the study they conducted for one of the two mandatory assignments, and use it as a starting point for writing their exam paper. They must choose between two questions and answer only one of them by writing an essay of between 3000 and 4000 words. In addition to the essay question, each assignment includes a few instructions which specify the minimum number of source texts they must include or similar. The two exam questions reflect the two skill-oriented learning goals of the course, namely that the students acquire:

- The ability to identify and discuss concrete examples of the interpretive implications of Qur'an translation

- The ability to discuss topics significant to political and socio-religious discourses in contemporary society with reference to relevant passages in the Qur'an

Assessment Criteria

As a case study based elective with an interdisciplinary profile, the course is an introduction to the Qur'an that touches upon questions in Qur'anic hermeneutics and translation. The students are not expected to master Qur'anic studies terminology or have a comprehensive overview of the field of contemporary Qur'an interpretation. As an MA-level course, the candidates are expected to compose an advanced discussion, and an ability to draw connections between what they have learned in this course and their previous studies. The students are expected to demonstrate the ability to discuss the role of the Qur'an in meeting with contemporary societies with a certain depth, and to pose critical questions to assumptions and one-sided views of the Qur'anic text. In the assessment, a higher level of knowledge and reflection is expected from the MA-level students than from the BA-level students. The general assessment criteria for both groups should be:

1. The ability to critical and independent reflection

To what extent does the candidate:

- demonstrate an ability to reflect independently and to actively engage the course literature in order to shed light on the subject?
- present different and even conflicting approaches and interpretations in a balanced, informed, and respectful manner?
- question claims, arguments and terms used?

2. An awareness of complexity and diversity

To what extent does the candidate:

- show awareness of the complexity of the interrelationships between the interpretation, translation and societal reception of the Qur'an?
- point to the diversity of interpretive strategies in contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics?
- highlight the semantic diversity of the Qur'anic text?
- demonstrate an ability to discuss the role of the Qur'an, in scholarship or/and in society in a nuanced and rich manner?

3. Clarity of argumentation

To what extent does the candidate:

- clearly distinguish between arguments and points of discussion that are the candidate's own and those that belong to scholars in the literature? When referencing, is it clear *what* exactly the candidate is referring to in the given text?
- create a coherent text, where the points raised and discussed are relevant and follow a clear line of thought?
- support claims and arguments posed through relevant citations to scholarly literature?

4. Presentation and formal requirements

To what extent does the candidate:

- fulfil the formal requirements described in the exam assignment instructions?
- master the genre of academic writing as a whole?
- write in a clearly understandable language?