



Master of Advanced Studies in Humanitarian Action (MAS)

Credits	60 credits ECTS
Dates	<p>Option 1: 1 September 2025 -31 October 2026 (14 consecutive months)</p> <p>The MAS starts in September with a first residential term (from September to December 2023), then it continues online (from January to October 2024). Note: This option is the only one applying to students who have a scholarship or students who want to finish their MAS in 14 months.</p> <p>Option 2: flexible option, up to 38 months</p> <p>With this option, students have the flexibility to start the Executive Master with the core course (term one), or with any of the other courses part of the programme. Students have up to 38 months to complete the 60 credits ECTS necessary for the MAS. Possible combinations can be found here. The detailed study plan is to be discussed with the MAS Course Director.</p>
Format	<p>Blended – residential course in Geneva (September-December), the rest is online</p> <p><i>This programme requires full time investment during the DAS (at least 4 days per week in class), whereas the online courses will require 25 hours of dedicated work (asynchronous self-study activities and synchronous live sessions) per week. We recommend that participants allow at least 50% of their time for the online courses and adapt their professional activity accordingly.</i></p>
Language	English
Fees	Option 1: CHF 15'000 (20% discount for partner organisations such as ICRC and MSF) Option 2: CHF 17'000
Course director	Dr Valérie Gorin

Course overview

Short description

The Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) programme has been developed in response to the growing need to understand, question and reform today's humanitarian system, in collaboration with our partner organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). The programme offers evidence-based, cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural education in the field of humanitarian action. This blended postgraduate course combines theoretical, practical and managerial skills in a unique adult-learning environment, to empower humanitarian professionals with reflective and critical analysis for a more effective humanitarian response. The coursework will focus on deconstructing the humanitarian system, learning about its normative frameworks, as well as reflecting about the interactions and power dynamics among humanitarian actors. It will provide expertise in assessing methods, tools and approaches used to provide assistance to affected populations in different humanitarian contexts (armed conflicts, disasters, urban settings and migration).

Learning outcomes of the course

At the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Understand the evolution of the humanitarian system, governance and stakeholders
- Demonstrate knowledge of core humanitarian values, principles, codes and frameworks
- Engage with major debates and critiques in the humanitarian sector, including localisation and decolonisation of aid
- Critically assess humanitarian contexts and complex emergencies (armed conflicts, disasters, urbanization, climate change and migration)
- Assess, monitor and evaluate humanitarian projects
- Demonstrate key management, leadership and accountability skills
- Develop relevant skillsets and competencies for the humanitarian sector, including global health, gender-based and sexual violence, advocacy, negotiation, protection, finance and management

Workload

Around 1500 hours of work for the whole Master, including:

- App. 400 hours of face-to-face teaching (lectures, group work, round tables, debates, visits)
- App. 750 hours of self-study time (e-learning modules, readings, assignments, videos, quizzes, etc.)
- App. 350 hours for the MAS dissertation

Option 1: Structure of the MAS (14-month consecutive learning)

Diploma of Advanced Studies (DAS) in Humanitarian Action

Term 1: September-December 2025

(25 credits ECTS)

The Diploma of Advanced Studies (DAS) aims to offer professionals a strong understanding of contemporary humanitarian challenges through a comprehensive overview of conceptual and operational issues in past and present humanitarian crises. It is structured in five modules:

- Module 1: Humanitarianisms: Historical, moral and political foundations of aid
- Module 2: Legal and policy frameworks relevant to humanitarian action
- Module 3: Transforming the humanitarian system through localisation
- Module 4: Humanitarian projection: Sectoral responses to crisis
- Module 5: The Humanitarians: relationships and interactions in the aid system

Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) Quality Management of Humanitarian Projects

OR

Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) Accountability to Affected People

Term 2: January-March 2026

(10 credits ECTS)

MAS students must select one of these two options:

- 1) The CAS Quality Management of Humanitarian Projects addresses the essential components that guarantee the qualitative management of adapted projects and cohesive teams. It integrates fundamental principles such as inclusion, do no harm, accountability or participation into processes, methods and tools of project cycle management and people management.
- 2) The CAS Accountability to Affected People aims to enhance Accountability within the humanitarian sector. The programme delves into the components and conceptual underpinnings of AAP, providing insights into its application in diverse contexts. Participants will be prepared to more effectively uphold the principle of accountability in their respective fields. They will be introduced to existing modalities and organizational practices related to accountability and will critically assess the promises and limitations of these approaches.

Executive Short Courses (ESC)

Terms 3 and 4: April-September 2026

(2 credits ECTS for each course)

A series of short elective courses focus on key approaches and evaluative tools of humanitarian contexts. Students can select five courses to develop specific skills and learn about good practices. All courses take place online during two to five weeks each.

	The final list of elective courses will be communicated to students upon registration, but includes spheres of intervention such as negotiation, advocacy, protection, global health, innovations, cash programming, sexual and gender-based violence.
Final dissertation <i>Term 4, to be handed by October 2026</i> (15 credits ECTS)	Throughout the DAS, MAS students will engage in a series of workshops designed to develop information-gathering and processing, critical thinking, analytical writing and networking skills. These workshops will help participants to write the MAS dissertation. The overall aim of the MAS dissertation is to stimulate a critical and original reflection on issues linked to humanitarian action through. The submission deadline for the MAS dissertation is October 31, 2026.

Option 2: Structure of the MAS (flexible option – up 38 months)	
<i>Please note that any of the following courses is an entry point to start the MAS</i>	
Fall 2025	DAS in Humanitarian Action (25 credits ECTS)
2026, 2027 or 2028	<p>The flexible option offers the choice between two different Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS). MAS students can choose between the two CAS (10 credits ECTS). Both CAS are delivered online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAS Quality Management of Humanitarian Projects • CAS Accountability to Affected Populations
2026, 2027 or 2028	<p>Flexible MAS students earn extra credits from a series of executive short courses. Students can select up to five courses (2 credits ECTS each) to develop specific skills and learn about good practices. Courses take place during two to five weeks each, throughout the year. Some courses might have residential sessions.</p> <p>The final list of elective courses will be communicated to students upon registration, but includes spheres of intervention such as negotiation, advocacy, protection, global health, innovations, cash programming, sexual and gender-based violence.</p>

Final dissertation

(15 credits ECTS)

Throughout the DAS, MAS students will engage in a series of workshops designed to develop information-gathering and processing, critical thinking, analytical writing and networking skills. These workshops will help participants to write the MAS dissertation. The overall aim of the MAS dissertation is to stimulate a critical and original reflection on issues linked to humanitarian action through. The dissertation has to be submitted in the last year of the MAS curriculum.

Audience

- Entry and mid-level professionals in the humanitarian, development or social sector looking to increase their competencies as well as reflect and capitalise on their experiences
- Professionals from other sectors (health, military and peace-keeping, private sector, social services) who wish to develop their understanding of the humanitarian sector for a potential career change
- Graduate students with relevant volunteer or intern experience, looking to undertake a postgraduate course with a view to entering the humanitarian sector