



# 2026

## STUDENT HANDBOOK





A warm welcome to the GRÓ Gender Equality Studies and Training (GEST) programme. In this handbook you will find useful information for your stay in Iceland during the GEST postgraduate programme (30 ECTS).

*You must read this handbook carefully before you arrive in Iceland.*

Once in Iceland, we will refer you to the CANVAS website for each module accessed through UGLA, the university intranet, where supporting academic material for the programme is stored. It is important that you sign into CANVAS daily for information and updates. Furthermore, you will be provided with a university e-mail account for you to use during your semester in Iceland.

We hope your time in Iceland will be one of growth and learning!

The GEST Team

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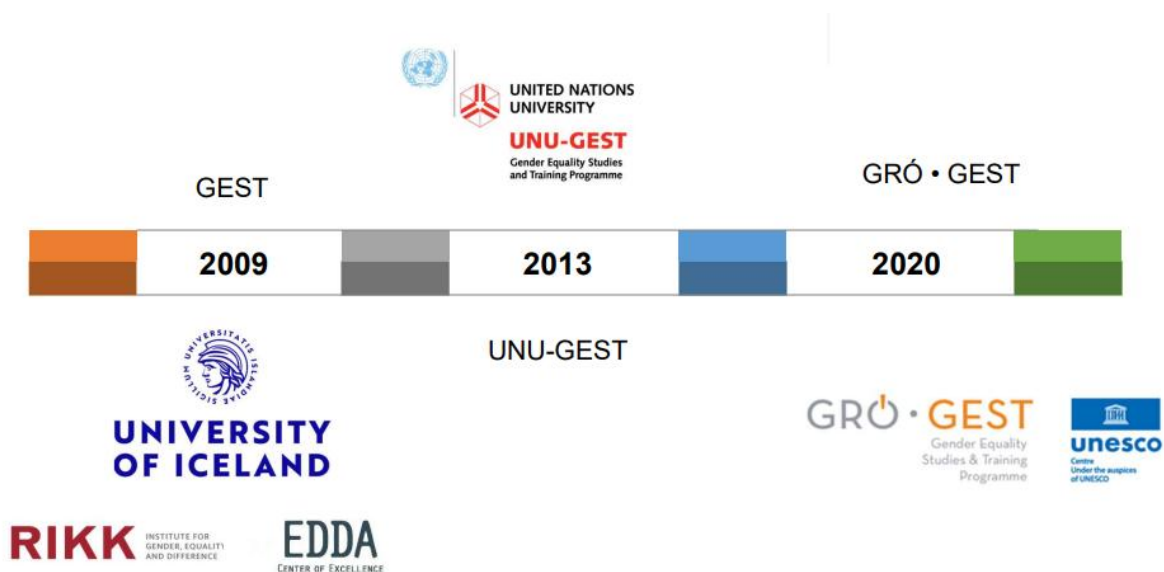
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## THE 2026 GRÓ GEST POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME:

### History

The Gender Equality Studies and Training programme (GEST) was established in January 2009 through an agreement between the University of Iceland and the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The GEST programme was piloted from 2009 to 2013, with the goal of becoming accredited as a part of the United Nations University. An independent evaluation of GEST was conducted in June 2012 as one of the key prerequisites for GEST joining the UNU network. The results showed that the goals, quality, and structure of the programme correlated with the requirements of the UNU network and following the successful evaluation, the three parties concluded a trilateral agreement in May 2013 between the University of Iceland, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland and the United Nations University (UNU).

In December 2019, after seven years of collaboration, the United Nations University and the GEST programme parted ways, with GEST joining the other three Icelandic former UNU programmes (Fisheries Training Programme, Geothermal Training Programme and Land Restoration Training Programme) in GRÓ - Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Societal Change. The four programmes and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognised the potential for collaboration based on their strong focus on capacity development and their global presence and GRÓ now operates under the auspices of UNESCO as a category 2 centre. The new partnership was signed on 16 December 2019 by the Icelandic Foreign Minister and the Director General of UNESCO.



### Aims and Objectives

GEST is part of GRÓ - International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change. GRÓ's mission is to strengthen individual, organisational and institutional capacities in low income, conflict and post-conflict countries and to deliver

development results in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This work is carried out through capacity development training programmes with a focus on four thematic areas:

**The Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (GEST)** which promotes gender equality, and social justice.

**The Fisheries Training Programme (FTP)** which promotes sustainable use and management of living aquatic resources.

**The Geothermal Training Programme (GTP)** promoting the utilisation and sustainable management of reliable, economically viable, and environmentally sound geothermal energy resources.

**The Land Restoration Training Programme (LRT)** which focuses on combatting land degradation, restoring degraded land and promoting sustainable land management.

The overall goal of the GEST programme is to educate and train participants in gender equality theories and methods and to strengthen their professional capacities for advancing and implementing gender sensitive projects in their home countries. The programme's curriculum covers both basic gender theory and key tools for practical project development, in addition to studies in security, migration and environment. It incorporates an interdisciplinary approach and encourages intellectual debates and the development of new methodological practices.

GRÓ GEST aims to enhance an understanding of the structures and mechanisms that need to be in place to promote gender equality in global and local contexts. The programme emphasises critical thinking skills and aims to equip fellows with the essential analytical tools for understanding gender equality and its impacts on social development and public policy.

The programme is based on principles of team-based learning, with an emphasis on transnational dialogue, cultural difference, and social diversity. Fellows and instructors are encouraged to develop a sense of how meaning is transformed when travelling from one culture to another.

The main objectives are to develop:

- The capacity to advance gender equality in low and middle income, conflict, and post-conflict societies.
- An understanding of the main issues in international gender equality studies, and how they intersect with ethnicity, sexuality, religion, race, and class.
- Skills in gender analysis and in dissemination of knowledge about gender equality methods.
- The capacity to engage in critical and transnational dialogue on gender equality issues.
- An ability to organize and manage projects focusing on gender equality.
- A sense of the individual's social and geographic location, and of how meanings of main concepts and practices are changed through transnational knowledge transfers and dialogues.



## How To Survive the GEST Programme and Iceland

1. Respect each other. Civility is tested in disagreement, and the deeper the disagreement, the greater the need for respect.
2. Attend all classes, practice good time management and respect deadlines.
3. Take good care of yourself, especially during the winter months, when the darkness and cold can have an impact on physical as well as mental health. Eat healthy, go for walks (especially during the daylight hours), go to the pool or the gym, and take vitamin D to make up for lost sunlight.
4. Don't rely on AI tools to do your work for you. It counts as plagiarism.
5. Check CANVAS and your university email daily. That is how GEST shares with you all the information you need in Iceland.
6. Download the Klapp app and use it to get around the city by bus.
7. If you have any questions, start by looking for the answer in this handbook. You are quite likely to find the answer in here.
8. Respect office hours!

## Office Hours

The offices of the GEST team are located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor in the university building called Gimli, in offices #323-325 and 309. If you have any questions, you can always write an email to [gest@hi.is](mailto:gest@hi.is). If you need to speak with any GEST staff member, set an appointment with them through email or visit the office during their office hours. GEST office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays between 14:30 and 15:00, *someone* will be available then. You are NOT expected to drop by without an appointment outside these hours.

## Integrity and Conduct

The GRÓ GEST academic programme is an intensive blend of classroom hours, study trips and visits, and collaborative work on assignments. Fellows typically spend a great deal of time together and come to depend on one another for support, guidance, and assistance, especially given the new and sometimes challenging environment. Each cohort of GRÓ GEST fellows therefore grows into a closely knit community that provides mutual support to its members.

GRÓ GEST wishes to remind all fellows, instructors, supervisors, and associated staff that they are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that positively contributes to an environment of respect, civility, diversity, and inclusiveness. We place strong emphasis on reflecting the values we stand by—both inside and outside the academic setting—and consider fellows, instructors, and supervisors to be our best ambassadors.

GRÓ GEST has adopted a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment and abuse, hate speech, racism, drug use, and soliciting prostitution. The programme is fully committed to enforcing this policy. Any fellow found in violation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate expulsion from the academic programme, with forfeiture of scholarship rights. Equivalent corrective or remedial action will be taken towards offending instructors, supervisors, contractors, or vendors, as appropriate.

The GRÓ GEST Programme adheres to the [Rules of Procedure on the Response to Gender-related and Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Violence](#) (University Council, 1 March 2018) and the [Rules of Procedure on the Response to Bullying and Other Types of Violence](#) (University Council, 2 November 2017).

## TEACHING AND ATTENDANCE

### Organization

In 2026, the GRÓ GEST Programme will consist of six modules of 3 - 6 ECTS credits each.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the programme, GEST and the University of Iceland will award an official post-graduate micro-credential from the University of Iceland to successful fellows. The certificate yields 30 ECTS, which corresponds to half a year's work at a post-graduate level.

In the spring term of 2026, the following modules compose the GEST programme.

Modules	Module Coordinator
Theories and Concepts of Gender (3 ECTS)	Thomas Brorsen Smidt
Project Development Tools (6 ECTS)	Thomas Brorsen Smidt
Gender, Violence and Security (5 ECTS)	Giti Chandra
Gender, Labour and Migration (5 ECTS)	Thomas Brorsen Smidt
Gender, Environment and Climate Change (5 ECTS)	Irma Erlingsdóttir
Final Assignment (6 ECTS)	Margrét Ann Thors

Information about locations and classroom numbers is announced in the final syllabus and weekly overview for the 2026 spring term.

### Access to study material: UGLA and CANVAS

Upon your arrival to Iceland, you will receive a kennitala (Icelandic ID number). This allows you to request a student login and password from the Service Desk at the University Centre (at Háskólatorg, right beside the bookstore). The login provides access to the internet within the university area and in student housing.

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<sup>1</sup> European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, ECTS, which are the credit points earned for each module. This standardized credit system is intended to ensure appropriate workload between university courses.



The student login provides access to UGLA (the Owl), the University of Iceland's intranet. On UGLA, students can monitor the progress of their studies and access a variety of information regarding their academic life such as daily news, university calendar and upcoming events, as well as information on courses. Access to UGLA is here: <https://ugla.hi.is/>

Please watch this short [introduction video](#) to UGLA to get familiar with it.

The [UTS \(=Division of Information Technology\) Youtube Channel](#) contains several more helpful videos and you can find an elaborate UGLA handbook after you logged in, [here](#).

CANVAS is the main online teaching platform for GEST where all course material can be accessed, projects and papers are submitted, etc. You can access CANVAS via UGLA or go to <https://CANVAS.hi.is> and use the same login and password as for UGLA.

It is important to familiarise yourself with UGLA and CANVAS as you will use them every day. In case you have any questions, consult with other fellows or other students in the student housing before reaching out to the UGLA IT service.

## Orientation

At the start of the programme, a three-day orientation is scheduled for all participants in the GEST programme. The purpose of the orientation week is for fellows to get to know one another and make them familiar with their new academic working environment, the ins and outs of everyday life in Reykjavik, and what is expected of them during the five-month programme. This will be done through some fun and light get-acquainted activities in person, as well as more focused teamwork exercises aimed at strengthening in-group cooperation. Moreover, time will be dedicated to review rules and expectations in relation to integrity and conduct, standards of academic excellence, and the work ethic that is expected of you during your stay.

## Team-Based Learning

Team-based Learning (TBL) is a structured form of small-group learning that emphasizes student preparation out of class and application of knowledge in class. Throughout the GEST micro-credential programme, group work is carried out in groups of four to five people and these groups *remain the same throughout the semester*. According to the work of Michaelsen et al (2009) on team-based learning, *"only when students work together over time can their groups become cohesive enough to evolve into self-managed and truly effective learning teams"* (3). This means that while GEST fellows may initially struggle to overcome in-group challenges, persistent structure eventually teaches individual fellows to use their strengths to contribute to a strong and organized group dynamic that can produce consistent quality work.

The groups for 2026 will be assigned during the Orientation module in the beginning of the semester.

If module coordinators assess group work or class participation in their module, it will be done according to the following criteria:

Grade	Quality of participation/involvement
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0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Absent (or present but disruptive).</li> </ul>
1-2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present, not disruptive but inattentive or uninvolved.</li> <li>▪ Freeriding off other people's work.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates no or very cursory familiarity with assigned topic.</li> </ul>
3-4.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Does not evince completion or significant digestion of assigned topic.</li> <li>▪ Members involved only sporadically in discussion and do not attempt to involve group members.</li> <li>▪ When called upon, offers only straightforward information without elaboration, analysis, or constructive engagement with peers.</li> <li>▪ Derails conversation with unrelated or unhelpful commentary.</li> </ul>
5-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrates good preparation for class; is familiar with the topic and has thought through implications of some ideas found in reading.</li> <li>▪ Offers some interpretation and analysis of the reading (more than just facts).</li> </ul>
7.5-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evinces excellent preparation of assigned topic.</li> <li>▪ Offers analysis, evaluation and synthesis of ideas.</li> <li>▪ Group members evince leadership while also giving space: Keep analyses focused, builds on previous discussion to nuance debate, responds thoughtfully to group members and other students in a way that contributes to cooperative atmosphere; members bring independent experiences to enhance transnational understandings.</li> </ul>

## Attendance Policy

Fellows are required to attend all scheduled classes, workshops, and programme activities in person. Attendance is an essential part of the learning process and a condition for successful completion of the programme.

To ensure fairness and accountability, random attendance checks will be conducted throughout the semester. A GEST staff member will enter the classroom at an unannounced time and take a photograph showing who is present. This process is brief, non-disruptive, and used solely for internal verification purposes.

Fellows must communicate proactively about any absence to Senior Programme Manager Thomas Brorsen Smidt on [tbs@hi.is](mailto:tbs@hi.is).

## Absence Due to Illness

Illness refers to a medical condition that genuinely prevents participation in class. Common colds or minor symptoms do not justify absence. Fellows who are mildly unwell are expected to attend class while taking precautions such as wearing a mask, which is available from the programme office.

Each fellow may take one sick day per module without a medical certificate. However, every sick day must be reported to the Programme Manager by email before class begins. If notification is not received before class, the absence will be considered unexplained.

From the second sick day in the same module, a doctor's certificate must be submitted by email to the Programme Manager no later than two working days after the missed class. The certificate must specify the dates covered and confirm that attendance was not advisable. E.g. if class is missed on a Tuesday, the doctor's certificate must arrive no later than 3 pm on the following Thursday. If class is missed on a Friday, the doctor's certificate must arrive no later than 3 pm on the following Tuesday.

If more than one sick day in a row is necessitated, an e-mail regarding the absence must be sent before 9 am on every day the fellow needs to be absent.

Online or remote participation is not an option. The programme is based on in-person learning, teamwork, and class discussions that cannot be replaced by online attendance.

### Unexplained Absence

An unexplained absence is any absence that is not reported before class, lacks appropriate medical documentation, or is not accepted as illness under the conditions above.

Each unexplained absence results in a reduction of one full grade step in that module. If a fellow arrives late to class during a random attendance check, the absence will be recorded as unexplained. Late arrival during a random attendance check cannot be appealed under any circumstances. After a second unexplained absence during the semester, the fellow will be placed on a one-month attendance probation and required to meet with the Programme Director. Continued absences may lead to further disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from the programme.

If a fellow's final grade in any module falls below 5 because of absences or other academic reasons, the module is considered failed. According to the Scholarship Agreement article 4, failure of any course will result in termination of the scholarship, cancellation of housing, and immediate return arrangements.

### Weather Warnings and Severe Conditions

In Iceland, the Meteorological Office or national news outlets occasionally issue orange or red weather warnings, and the Rector of the University of Iceland may encourage instructors to move classes online. Fellows should note that such announcements apply broadly to the University community but do not automatically apply to the GRÓ GEST Programme.

Because all GRÓ GEST fellows reside within walking distance of campus and are not required to drive, cycle, or use public transport, they are expected to attend class regardless of weather conditions. Fellows must dress appropriately for the weather and may, insofar as possible, use the underground tunnels connecting parts of the University of Iceland campus.

Fellows should always assume that classes will take place in person unless they receive an explicit e-mail from GRÓ GEST staff (typically late in the evening or early in the morning) advising them

to remain indoors. Messages from other students or general University notifications do not override GEST's attendance expectations.

### Special Circumstances and Appeals

Documented special circumstances may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Fellows who believe an absence has been misclassified may appeal in writing to the Programme Manager within five working days of notification, attaching relevant documentation, such as a signed note from the present instructor.

### Professional Conduct and Communication

Fellows are responsible for timely, clear communication with the programme regarding attendance. All absences must be explained in written communication, via e-mail. Speaking with any staff member about illness or absence does not imply confidentiality when class participation is affected. Such matters are referred to the Programme Manager for decision. Personal matters that do not affect attendance may be discussed confidentially with gender focal points or other designated support staff.

### Late or missing written work

Late assignments will not be accepted and will not receive any credit. Deadlines on written assignments are immovable and absolute. You are responsible for planning ahead and making sure you do not miss deadlines.

## Module Descriptions

### Theories and Concepts of Gender

*Module coordinator: Dr Thomas Brorsen Smidt*  
*Email: [tbs@hi.is](mailto:tbs@hi.is)*

An understanding of the basic theories and concepts in international gender studies is a prerequisite for understanding all subsequent modules of the GEST Programme. As such, this module introduces established feminist theoretical traditions as well as more recent feminist conceptualizations relevant to global gender politics. Through a combination of readings, lectures and group assignments, fellows will consider theories in feminist epistemology, masculinity studies, queer theory, decolonial theory, and intersectionality theories as they relate to gender, race, class, religion, and sexuality. Fellows will be encouraged to think critically and about gender from global and transnational feminist theoretical perspectives.

### Project Development Tools

*Module coordinator: Dr Thomas Brorsen Smidt*  
*Email: [aga@hi.is](mailto:aga@hi.is)*

This module is designed to teach students some key practical skills for developing gender equality projects. Through a combination of lectures, exercises, group discussions, and assignments, students will learn about gender analysis and policy development, gender-responsive budgeting, as well as results-based management and the logical framework approach.

### Gender, Violence and Security

*Module coordinator: Dr. Giti Chandra*

*Email: [gc@hi.is](mailto:gc@hi.is)*

The aim of this module is to increase the fellows' ability to understand, discuss, and convey knowledge of gender dimensions of security, especially with regard to international legal obligations, UNSC resolutions, security sector reform and emergency operations, but also in the context of sexual harassment and violence at the workplace, policies, and legal structures. It examines, among other things, the concept of human security versus national security and the role of women in conflicts, peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as gender-based violence and sexual violence, both as a tactic of warfare as well as a presence in the everyday lives of women and non-binary gendered people. National Action Plans will be of special focus.

### Gender, Labour and Migration

*Module coordinator: Dr Thomas Brorsen Smidt*

*Email: [gc@hi.is](mailto:gc@hi.is)*

This module will introduce students to the concepts connected to various types of migration. Students will get a fuller view of migration as it intersects with labour and gender by looking at international agreements and treaties, national laws and policies, global and local responses to migration. The module will also cover global economic imbalances that lead to migration. How migration differentially impacts men and women will also be discussed in light of current theories, research, and agreements. The module will also cover how intersecting factors such as gender, racialization and sexuality impact processes of inclusion and exclusion of migrants in their receiving countries.

### Gender, Environment and Climate Change

*Module coordinator: Irma Erlingsdóttir*

*Email: [irma@hi.is](mailto:irma@hi.is)*

The purpose of this module is to examine the role of gender in the context of environment with a focus on climate change. This module will analyse the transformative potential of gender equality to advance environmental sustainability as well as resilience, vulnerability, mitigation, and adaptation to global environmental change. Furthermore, the module outlines the main international commitments regarding environment and climate change and suggests gender sensitive actions. Through the combination of readings, documentaries and lectures, fellows will understand the impact of climate change on gender, both in rural and urban environments as well as in different geographical contexts. The fellows will be equipped to provide examples of international commitments as well as possible everyday actions to enhance sustainable operations.

## The Final Assignment

Module coordinator: Margrét Ann Thors

Email: [mat34@hi.is](mailto:mat34@hi.is)

The final assignment is the most important part of the GRÓ GEST programme, and fellows work on it throughout their time in Iceland. In most cases, the final assignment takes the form of a project proposal that outlines a plan of action with all the necessary steps and activities needed to address and solve the problem. In special cases, when a fellow has an especially strong academic background, it may take the form of a research or research proposal. Fellows that have joined GRÓ GEST via ERASMUS may choose to write an essay based on existing data that will conclude during the fellow's stay in Iceland.

Fellows apply to the GRÓ GEST programme with their idea for a final assignment, and they are selected on the basis hereof. Therefore, it is not possible to change the topic of your final assignment after you have been selected to the GRÓ GEST programme.

Fellows work on their project for the duration of the programme under the supervision of expert supervisors. The purpose of the final project is for fellows to reflect on some of the theories, methods, and skills studied during the programme, to consider when these would be appropriate and to apply them in a practical or research context. At the end of the semester, the fellows present the design and findings of their assignments at an open seminar organized by GEST. Throughout the Module, fellows attend sessions on academic writing, reference systems for literature review and research, introduction to the university library, professional development, and how to deliver professional presentations.

### Role of the Fellow and Supervisor

Responsibilities of the Fellow	Responsibilities of the Supervisor
Take primary responsibility for all aspects of the project, including topic refinement, research, writing, and timely submission.	Provide academic guidance, feedback, and support in defining, structuring, and completing the Final Assignment. The Supervisor shall <b>not</b> discuss or approve major changes to the topic or type of assignment; any such requests must be referred to the Programme Manager.
Contact the Supervisor proactively to schedule meetings and ensure regular communication.	Respond promptly to communication from the Fellow and confirm meeting times; be reasonably available throughout the supervision period. The Supervisor is <b>not</b> expected to set up or chase meetings; if the Fellow fails to take initiative, the Supervisor should inform the Programme Manager.
Organise and attend all agreed meetings punctually and follow the agreed work plan.	Meet with the Fellow at least five to six times (including introductory and joint meetings) and help ensure that meetings are productive and structured. The Supervisor is <b>not</b> expected

	to deliver more meetings than agreed, though brief ad hoc check-ins are optional.
Submit drafts and revisions on schedule and respond to feedback constructively.	Review and comment on the outline and first draft of the final assignment <u>within one week</u> of receipt, providing constructive academic feedback. The Supervisor shall <b>not</b> write or analyse the assignment on behalf of the Fellow, but may suggest improvements, highlight gaps, or provide examples of good writing.
Engage critically with feedback and take initiative in improving structure, coherence, and argumentation.	Provide feedback that supports critical thinking and clarity of argument, ensuring that the work reflects the Fellow's own voice and perspective. The Supervisor is <b>not</b> expected to generate content or perform editing tasks such as formatting, compiling references, or producing figures.
Ensure that all work adheres to standards of referencing, academic integrity, and ethical conduct.	Remind the Fellow of standards regarding referencing, plagiarism, and research ethics, and raise concerns if ethical issues arise. The Supervisor shall <b>not</b> conduct data collection, secure ethics approvals, or handle administrative compliance on behalf of the Fellow.
Seek support at the University of Iceland Writing Centre if necessary to improve academic writing and structure.	Advise the Fellow on available academic resources and refer them to the Writing Centre if additional support is needed. The Supervisor is <b>not</b> expected to act as a counsellor or emotional caretaker; if emotional or psychological support seems needed, they should refer the Fellow to GEST or the Student Counselling Centre.
Keep the Supervisor informed of any difficulties affecting progress or deadlines.	Show understanding and flexibility where justified, and work with the Fellow to adjust the plan when unforeseen difficulties arise. The Supervisor cannot grant deadline extensions or alter programme rules; all such matters must be handled by GEST.
Prepare and submit the final version of the assignment by the official deadline.	Complete and submit the Assessment Sheet for Supervisors after the Fellow's final submission (Annex 2 of the Supervising Handbook). The Supervisor does <b>not</b> determine the final grade, which is decided by the GEST review committee.
Maintain professionalism, respect, and confidentiality in all supervisory communications.	Maintain professionalism, respect, and confidentiality in all supervisory matters. The Supervisor is <b>not</b> expected to be on call or provide immediate replies; timely responses within a week are sufficient. If communication or conduct breaks down, the Supervisor should contact Programme Manager. The Supervisor is <b>not</b> expected to advise on travel, visas, or general logistics, as these are handled by GEST.



## Communication and Meetings

Every supervision relationship brings together different cultural and educational backgrounds. Expectations about communication, initiative, and meeting styles can vary. Some fellows feel comfortable speaking up; some prefer to listen first. Some supervisors are more directive; others are facilitative. Clear, open, and honest communication about expectations from both sides is essential for a productive partnership.

You are responsible for setting up and keeping the supervision process on track. Before the semester starts, you must arrange one informal introductory conversation with your supervisor, one joint meeting that includes your nominating organisation, and at least four supervision meetings across the term. Meetings may be in person, by video, or by phone.

Use the first meeting to outline your ideas for the final assignment, ask for key readings and resources, and agree on how you will work together. By the end of that meeting, you and your supervisor should have a shared plan with approximate dates for drafts, feedback windows, and the remaining meetings. After that, the exact structure can adapt to your project and working style, but you should arrive prepared each time with questions, updates, and next steps.

If any issue affects your ability to meet deadlines or engage productively, raise it early with your supervisor. If concerns persist, contact Senior Programme Manager Thomas Brorsen Smidt (tbs@hi.is) for support.

Fellow's role	Timelines and deadlines	Supervisor's Role
<b>Organise Introductory meeting</b>	November–December	Review proposal and scope; set expectations.
<b>Organise joint meeting with nominating organisation (see details below)</b>	November–December	Discuss organisational support and submit a brief note.
<b>Outline submission</b>	<b>22 February (Deadline)</b>	Review outline; provide written feedback <u>within one week</u> .
<b>First full draft</b>	<b>6 April (Deadline)</b>	Provide detailed comments on structure, argument, and coherence <u>within one week</u> .
<b>Peer review</b>	<b>12 April</b>	None.
<b>Revision period</b>	April–May	Offer clarification and limited follow-up.
<b>Final submission</b>	<b>5 May (Deadline)</b>	Ensure submission; receive final version.

## Pre-Programme Meeting with Your Nominating Organisation

Before you arrive in Iceland, you must organise a joint online meeting between you, your supervisor, and a representative of your nominating organisation, such as your immediate

superior, manager, or director. The goal is to confirm that your organisation understands your proposed assignment and is prepared to support implementation, publication, or other forms of follow-up when you return.

During this meeting, your organisational representative should be ready to explain your project clearly, how it aligns with your organisation's goals, and what practical support you will need after the programme.

Immediately after the meeting, your supervisor is asked to complete a short online form to record impressions and note any concerns about institutional support, project feasibility, or motivation. If significant concerns arise about backing from your organisation, this may compromise your scholarship opportunity.

### The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Award

Each year, *up to* two graduating fellows within the GRÓ GEST programme will receive the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Award. The award is presented in two distinct categories. The first category is for applied projects or project documents, in which the fellow addresses and provides practical recommendations for an issue in relation to gender equality in their home country. The second category is for research or research proposals, which aim at contributing to the existing academic literature on a particular topic relating to gender equality or outlining a proposal for a future PhD project.

The award bears the name of Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, the former president of Iceland and the patron of the GEST Programme. She was both Iceland's and Europe's first female president and the world's first democratically elected female president. With a presidency of exactly sixteen years, she remains the longest-serving elected female head of state of any country. Women's rights, cultural diversity, the promotion of world peace, and transnational dialogues have been running themes in Vigdís Finnbogadóttir's work, as has her emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

GEST sets out the following criteria for assignments to be considered for the award: The assignment must show evidence of sophisticated gender analysis with appropriate academic references and be well structured and written. The assignment also must provide recommendations that address gender issues that are of concern in the fellow's home country.



*From the left: Vigdís Finnbogadóttir with GEST fellows Nadhiya Najab and Brenda Apeta, and Rector of the University of Iceland Dr. Jón Atli Benediktsson*

A panel of scholars from the University of Iceland reviews the final assignments of GEST fellows by the end of the semester, makes recommendations for the final grades for the final assignment and their presentation, and selects the candidate for the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Award.

## Plagiarism

GEST considers plagiarism a form of academic misconduct and does not allow any practice that involves taking and using another person's work and claiming it as one's own. It is the responsibility of students to ensure that all work submitted towards assessment and grading is the student's own, and that it includes proper referencing and citation using the accepted referencing system.

All students will be made aware of the unethical nature of plagiarism by Final Assignment module coordinator Margrét Ann Thors and will receive additional guidance and training in academic writing and referencing systems.

To detect plagiarism, including the unethical use of AI technologies, GEST uses the prevention system **Turnitin**, which compares students' papers against extensive databases of material.

If GEST find that there is evidence of plagiarism or cheating in an examination, it will alert the Head of Faculty, who will investigate the matter. They will summon the fellow for an interview, allowing them an opportunity to express their opinion, while making it clear that the Dean of the School of Humanities has the final say in the matter on behalf of the University.

If the fellow is found guilty of behaviour which goes against the Public Higher Education Institutions Act No. 85/2008, or regulations and rules based on the Act, the Dean of School may reprimand the student or suspend them from their studies, temporarily or for good, depending on the seriousness of the offence.

The student has the right to appeal the Dean's decision to the Board of Appeal for students' complaints, cf. Article 51 of Regulation no. 569/2009. Such an appeal defers the execution of the Dean's decision. See also Article 19 of the Public Higher Education Institutions Act.

## Ethical Use of AI Technologies

The GRÓ GEST Programme emphasises academic integrity, independent learning, and the development of analytical and reflective skills. The unethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools is considered a form of plagiarism and is subject to the same academic integrity rules as all other forms of academic misconduct.

As a general principle, fellows should never ask an AI tool to do something they would not ask their smartest friend to do. As such, it is acceptable to use AI to brainstorm, suggest structure, clarify unclear sentences, check grammar and spelling, or suggest improvements to phrasing. It is not acceptable to ask AI to rewrite sections, generate new arguments, or produce analyses on their behalf.

While GEST does not prohibit the use of AI technologies, recognising that such tools will form part of the academic and professional future, their use must be transparent, ethical, and critically informed. Fellows must remain aware that large language models such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude generate text based on statistical patterns rather than understanding. They can therefore never produce truly original content. In fact, they often produce false or misleading information, fabricate references, or erase the fellow's distinct analytical voice. Overreliance on AI also risks reproducing biases embedded in the human generated data on which these models are trained.

### Computational or LLM-Supported Methodology

Fellows may choose to use AI tools as part of their research or writing process. This is permitted within the GEST Programme provided that the use is transparent, ethically justified, and academically sound. Where relevant, fellows must include a brief account of this in their methodology section under the heading *Computational or LLM-Supported Methodology*.

This section should explain the rationale for using AI, specify the tools and platforms employed, and describe how they were used in the research process. Fellows should outline how AI outputs were reviewed, revised, or integrated and how human oversight was maintained. Ethical considerations, including confidentiality, bias, and intellectual accountability, must be addressed explicitly.

AI-generated text must never be presented as the fellow's own writing. All outputs should be critically reviewed, rewritten, and acknowledged where appropriate. The fellow remains fully responsible for the accuracy and integrity of their work.

### Grammarly

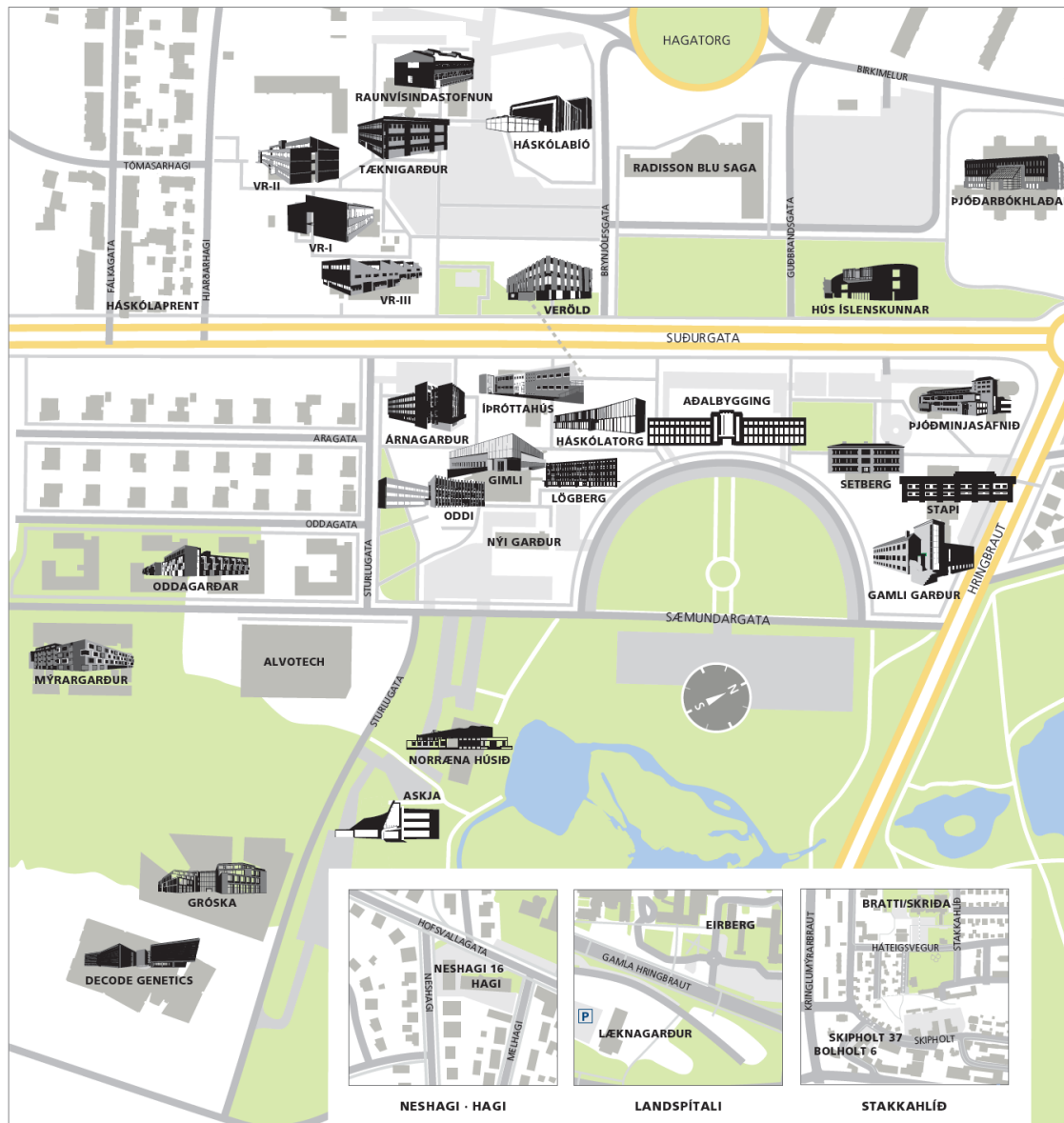
GRÓ GEST offers to reimburse its fellows for a 3-month subscription to the AI tool Grammarly, which can be immensely helpful in developing academic writing skills. If they wish to take advantage of this offer, they should pay for a 3-month subscription, download Grammarly, and then send the receipt and bank statement to operations manager Guðrún Eysteinsdóttir ([guðruney@hi.is](mailto:guðruney@hi.is)). GEST does not reimburse subscriptions to any other AI tools, nor does it reimburse anything other than a single 3-month subscription. This means GEST will not reimburse three separate 1-month subscriptions, nor will it reimburse 1/4 of a 12-month subscription.

As the deadline for the final assignment is in the first half of May each year, we recommend starting the 3-month Grammarly subscription in early to mid-February.

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND (UI)

The University of Iceland was established in 1911 and is the biggest university in Iceland. It pursues most academic disciplines and operates around 40 research institutes. The university is within a short distance of the city centre and has easy access to transport to most parts of the city. Currently, the number of students is about 15,000, with the number of international students steadily increasing. The student society organises several events which aim to enhance the university experience. For details about their programme see [www.student.is](http://www.student.is).

The GEST Programme office is housed in one of the newer buildings called Gimli, almost next door to the University Centre (Háskólatorg).



## **The National and University Library**

The [National and University Library of Iceland](#) provides students and faculties of University of Iceland with library services.

Library cards are free for UI students and students have priority in the library's reading facilities and small meeting rooms during exams. In addition, UI students get a 50% discount on various paid services at the library, such as interlibrary loans, etc.

The library's opening hours are:

### *Until 8 May:*

Monday to Thursday: 8:15-22:00

Friday: 8:15-19:00

Saturday: 10:00-17:00

Sunday: 11:00-17:00

### *From 9 May*

Monday to Friday: 9:00-17:00

Saturdays in May: 10.00-14.00

Sunday and Saturdays June-August: Closed

## **Icelandic Student Services (Félagsstofnun stúdenta – FS)**

The Icelandic Student Services is a service company for students at the University of Iceland. It operates student housing on campus, Student Career Centre, University Book Store, Student Cafes, preschools, and Háma (campus cafeteria). The FS head office is on the upper floor of Háskólatorg at Sæmundargata 4. The opening hours are Mondays-Thursdays 9:00-16:00, and Fridays 9:00-12:00. The phone number is +352 5700 700 and the e-mail address [fs@fs.is](mailto:fs@fs.is).

## **The University Book Store**

The University Book Store is located in Háskólatorg (University Centre) where educational materials and stationary are available.

## **University Service Desk and IT Help Desk**

The University's Service Desk and Computer Services Help Desk are both located in Háskólatorg, across from the Bookstore. The Service Desk is where student ID and access cards can be picked up and is a point of access for all general student services of the University, including student registry (certificates etc.), sports facilities (gym passes) and more. At the IT Help Desk students can receive assistance with internet connections and other computer related issues.

## **The University Sport Facilities**

The [University of Iceland Sport Facilities](#) at Sæmundargata is open to all students and staff for a low price. The gymnasium offers timetabled group lessons in the hall and equipment and facilities

for various cardiovascular exercises, CrossFit, bodybuilding, and powerlifting, in addition to a space for yoga and flexibility work. Groups can rent the hall for ball games etc. A sauna is in the basement of the gymnasium building.

Opening hours are Monday-Thursday 7:00-22:00, Friday's 07:00-20:00, and Saturday 8:00-18:00. The building is closed on Sundays and public holidays.

Gym passes provide access to all the sport facilities, including open sessions in the hall, fitness suite and sauna. You can purchase passes for ISK 12,000 at the service desk at Háskólatorg. The pass will be valid throughout your stay in Iceland.

### **Campus Cafeteria and Student Cafes**

There is a canteen and cafeteria on campus, [Háma](#), in Háskólatorg. Háma is open on weekdays, 8:00-17:00, and on Saturdays from 9:00-15:00. Háma provides food, beverages, and hot lunch. Your student card gives you a discount in Háma for the hot lunch as well as coffee. There are also smaller café's in some of the other buildings.

The [Student Cellar \(Stúdentakjallarinn\)](#), located in the cellar of Háskólatorg is a bar and a restaurant where students, and often staff as well, gather for social events such as concerts, movies or just to have food or drinks. The Student Cellar is open Monday to Wednesday from 11:00 to 23:00, Thursday - Saturday from 11:00 to 01:00, and Sunday from 16:00 to 23:00. The Kitchen is open until 21:30 every day.

### **Printing**

GEST encourages you to print as little as possible. Please consider the environment before printing any materials. If you absolutely need to print, you can do so at the University of Iceland in different places. Please find more information about how to go about printing [here](#). Scanning is free while printing requires the purchase of a print quota..



## PRACTICAL ISSUES ABOUT YOUR ARRIVAL IN ICELAND

GRÓ GEST will arrange for pick-up at the International Airport in Keflavik and transportation to Student Housing in Reykjavík, where incoming fellows will be met by a member of the GRÓ GEST staff. During the first weeks at GEST, fellows are required to finalize the residence permit process by visiting the Directorate of Immigration for fingerprinting, photographing and to declare their residence, and by undergoing a comprehensive health check required of all immigrants whether temporary or long-term. This process is organized and facilitated by GEST staff and fellows will be notified of exact times in advance or shortly after arrival.

Also, during your first days you will receive a student login and password to access the internet from your rooms as well as to access the “eduroam” network on campus. Please be aware that a few days may pass after your arrival before you can access wi-fi, either in Student housing or in classroom buildings.

Please bring your mobile phones with you. GEST will provide you with an Icelandic SIM card with a small amount of credit so you will be able to contact your family upon arrival. If, however, your phone only accepts e-sims, you will need to visit the phone company (during open hours) after arrival to exchange the physical sim card for an e-sim, which may delay your access to the internet via your phone.

After the initial small deposit, you will be responsible for all additional credit for your phone throughout the semester.

### Travelling to Iceland

GEST books your flights and sends you the e-ticket.

### Travel documents

Proof of citizenship is required for international travel. Be sure to bring all necessary documentation (e.g. passport, visa, transit permit, receipts, vaccination certificates, etc.) and keep it readily accessible. Also bring a printed copy of your e-ticket, and of your invitation letter from GEST and the University of Iceland. ***Never pack any of these important travel documents in your checked luggage***; they should all be in your carry-on bag, and the same, of course, applies to any money or bank cards you may be carrying, and your university documents.

### Visa and residence permit

The visa obtained in advance at the issuing embassy is a travel visa and is only valid for 90 days. This means that this visa allows you to travel through Schengen countries to enter Iceland within these 90 days. Once you get to Iceland, GEST will facilitate finalizing your application with the Directorate of Immigration for a residence permit. The residence permit is valid until June/July 2026 (the exact date will be in your decision letter from the DoI) and will allow you to travel through other Schengen countries on your way back home.

### Baggage

GEST provides airline tickets with one (1) piece of checked luggage. Baggage allowance and policies differ by airlines. It is important that you follow your airlines' baggage restrictions, including allowed maximum weight and dimensions. It is likely that you will need to travel using more than

one airline – please check the restrictions for *all* of the airlines you will be using. If you choose to bring additional luggage, you will need to cover the costs yourself at the airport, or in advance if possible.

Please put a tag on your bag(s) with your name and contact details. The destination address is: GRÓ GEST, University of Iceland, Saemundargata 10, 102 Reykjavík, Iceland. Tags are usually provided at the check-in desk at the airport. It is also a good idea to tape an index card or piece of paper with the same information, including also your home address, to the inside of your bag(s), in case the tag gets torn off. You should also make sure to keep your baggage receipt, which is a small sticker attached either to your boarding pass or passport when you check-in. This little receipt is very important in case your bag is lost. If your luggage gets lost while you are travelling, the airlines are usually responsible for delivering your bags to your residence once in Iceland. In the unlikely event that this happens, you will have to notify the information desk at the airport, by the baggage claim, before exiting the airport terminal.

### Travel to airport and costs en-route

As a GEST fellow, you are responsible for your travel to the airport. The GEST programme does not cover cost of meals during your travel. The fellowship's daily allowance will be calculated from the day you arrive in Iceland but not for any prior days of travel. We recommend that you have some funds available to at least be able to purchase food and drink during the journey.

### Check-in

Check-in times vary between airports, but it is generally recommended to be at the airport at least two and half hours before your departure. If you miss your flight your entire trip will be forfeit. **DO NOT BE LATE TO ARRIVE AT THE AIRPORT!** Usually, online check in is available, between 24 and 72 hours in advance of departure. **Please complete the online check-in if at all possible.**

Depending on your ticket you may be able to check in for more than one flight (for instance from Kampala to Doha *and* from Doha to Copenhagen, and even all the way to Keflavik airport in Iceland). It is good to consult with the staff at the check-in desk whether you can check your luggage in the whole way to Iceland, or if you need to pick up your baggage when you arrive at a connecting airport and check it in again for your next flight.

### Boarding

Boarding time is usually indicated on your boarding pass and on information screens at the airport. On the boarding pass and/or screen you will also see your gate number. Please note that airports do not all have boarding calls. While in transit, the time between flights can sometimes be short and some airlines require the passengers to be at the gate well in time. It is your responsibility to be by your gate in good time before boarding.

## What to bring?

### Clothes

You will arrive in Iceland in mid-winter and stay until late spring. The weather in Iceland is variable, and it is especially windy. Storms and blizzards are all part of the winter experience, while summers are surprisingly cold to most people. There is also, as you will probably find out the hard way, a grain of truth to the joke that it rains horizontally in Iceland. If possible, it is a good idea to pack good quality boots (sturdy with good grip), warm clothes (wool or fleece); coats or jackets

that are warm, wind- and rainproof, as well as sweaters, hats, scarves, woolly socks and gloves or mittens. All of these items can also be purchased in Iceland, but *if you already have them*, bring them. Otherwise you will have the opportunity to borrow or purchase them in Iceland.

We also recommend bringing swimwear. The swimming pools in Iceland are nice and warm and open year-round, and going for a swim is a very local thing to do. Bedding – including duvets, pillows, sheets, and covers, as well as a hand towel and a bath towel, will be provided by GEST.

### Food

We understand that you may want to bring some local food items with you, but this can be problematic both in transit and when arriving in Iceland as there are strict regulations about importation of certain food products. Be aware that any food you bring may be confiscated. Note that importing animal products to Iceland for personal consumption from non-EEA states is strictly regulated and restricted. Desiccated herbs and spices are usually permitted. For more information, please see the [website of the Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority](#).