



2026

INSTRUCTOR HANDBOOK



WELCOME!

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.

This handbook is intended to prepare our instructors for their stay in Iceland. As a minimum, you should read the segment on Teaching and Assessment, which contains the most vital information.

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

The GEST Team

Table of Contents

THE 2026 GRÓ GEST POSTGRADUATE MICRO-CREDENTIAL PROGRAMME:	6
HISTORY	6
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	6
INTEGRITY AND CONDUCT	8
TEACHING	9
Organisation	9
Orientation	10
Common Classroom Challenges	10
Expectations of Instructors.....	11
Managing Fellow Expectations.....	11
Creating a Positive and Structured Learning Environment	12
Team-Based Learning	12
ASSIGNMENTS	13
Group Assignments	13
Ideas for Group Assignments	14
Written Assignments	14
Ideas for Written Assignments	15
ASSESSMENT	15
Assessment Rubric for Group Assignment	16
Assessment Rubric for Written assignment	17
AI TECHNOLOGIES	17
Deterring Unethical AI Use.....	18
Risks and Tell-Tale Signs	18
Example of Written Assignment.....	19
ATTENDANCE.....	20
Absence Due to Illness	20
Unexplained Absence	21
Weather Warnings and Severe Conditions	21
Special Circumstances and Appeals	21
Professional Conduct and Communication	22
Late or missing written work.....	22
MODULE DESCRIPTIONS.....	22

Theories and Concepts of Gender	22
Project Development Tools	22
Gender, Violence and Security	22
Gender, Labour and Migration	23
Gender, Environment and Climate Change	23
The Final Assignment	23
The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Award	24
GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND (UI)	26
The University Book Store	26
University Service Desk and IT Help Desk	26
Campus Cafeteria and Student Cafes	26
PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR INSTRUCTORS	27
Flights and Taxi from the Airport	27
Accommodation and Sustenance	27
Salaries	28
STAYING IN REYKJAVIK	29
General Business Hours	29
Finances	29
Getting Around	29
Já	29
Transportation	29
Shopping	30
Groceries	30
Alcohol	31
Swimming Pools	31
GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ICELAND	33
History- The Republic of Iceland	33
About Reykjavik	34
Official Language	34
Research	35
Religion	35
Climate	35
Food	36

Water..... 36

Energy..... 36

Economy..... 37

Time..... 37

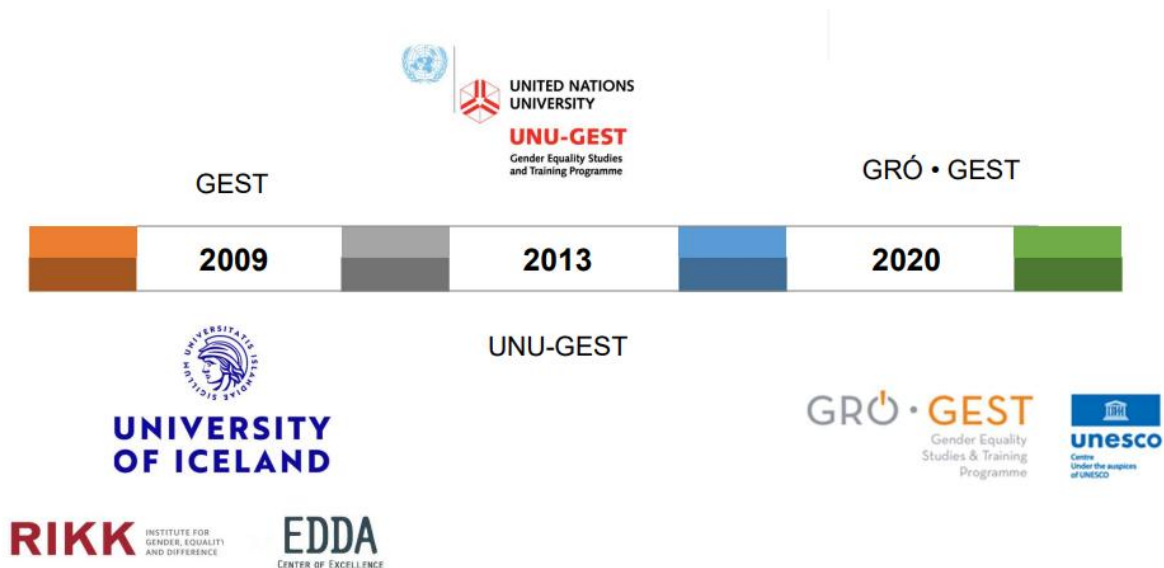
MORE USEFUL LINKS 38

THE 2026 GRÓ GEST POSTGRADUATE MICRO-CREDENTIAL 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.

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.

All reports of misconduct will be investigated promptly and impartially, with every effort to maintain confidentiality. Both the complainant and the accused will be informed of the outcome of the investigation. If GRÓ GEST finds that its policy has been violated, it will take appropriate action to ensure accountability and prevent recurrence.

For further guidance, please refer to [The Rules of Procedure on the Response to Gender-Related and Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Violence.](#)

TEACHING

Organisation

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

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 will be provided by your main GRÓ GEST contact.

The teaching at GEST is organized in modules, running weekdays in the mornings and afternoons. To obtain a postgraduate micro-credential, fellows must successfully complete six modules, equalling a total of 30 ECTS.

Teaching is from **09:15-11.30** and again from **12.15-14.30**, Monday to Friday. Teaching sessions may include lectures, group work, discussions, workshops, creative work, or other activities the instructor feels are appropriate. If instructors plan on using movie screenings in teaching, we kindly ask that these are assigned outside class hours (like readings) and that class time is used on active engagement.

The programme requires fellows to be well prepared for each class. Fellows are expected to actively participate in class discussions and engage in the activities planned for the programme. Non-compliance with this requirement may result in failure to pass modules and consequently not receiving credentials at the end of the semester.

¹ 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.

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.

The GRÓ GEST programme is a dynamic and engaging academic environment that brings together fellows from very diverse backgrounds. While this diversity enriches the learning experience, it also presents unique challenges in classroom management.

Common Classroom Challenges

Teaching in the GEST Programme brings many rewarding experiences, particularly through the rich global perspectives and lived knowledge that fellows bring to the classroom. At the same time, the diversity of backgrounds, communication styles, and expectations means that instructors need to be attentive to group dynamics, participation patterns, and learning needs. The challenges outlined below are common features of a highly engaged international learning environment. Being aware of them in advance can help instructors respond with confidence, maintain an inclusive and respectful classroom atmosphere, and ensure that the planned course content is delivered effectively.

- Fellows are often highly engaged and eager to contribute, which is positive but requires structured facilitation to maintain balance.
- Some participants may dominate discussions, making it difficult for others to speak.
- Silencing dynamics may occur, where certain voices are unintentionally or intentionally overshadowed.
- Classroom conversations may drift off-topic, especially when drawing heavily on personal experience.
- Confidence levels vary, and some fellows may hesitate to speak due to language, cultural norms, or personality.
- Discussions can involve sensitive or emotionally intense topics, requiring careful and empathetic facilitation.

- Time can be difficult to manage if open discussion is not guided effectively.
- The need to balance inclusive participation with covering the planned material within the available teaching hours.
- Fellows may come from varied academic and professional backgrounds, which means different levels of familiarity with theory, writing conventions, and critical reflection.
- Some participants may be less comfortable or experienced using digital platforms, shared documents, or online learning resources.
- Expectations for assignments, assessment standards, and classroom responsibilities may not be uniform and sometimes need to be clarified.

As an instructor, you are responsible for striking a balance: creating space for diverse voices while ensuring that the planned material is covered.

Expectations of Instructors

Instructors at GEST have the flexibility to teach in a way that aligns with their pedagogical approach. However, this flexibility comes with the expectation that you will manage the classroom effectively and finish the teaching content as planned. To achieve this, instructors must share a detailed teaching plan with the module coordinator at the very latest 14 days before their teaching begins. This plan should outline the structure of the session, including any scheduled discussions, lectures, group work, or other activities. It should also contain a list of readings as well as instructions for written assignments.

Instructors must share a detailed teaching plan with the module coordinator at the very latest 14 days before their teaching begins

If appropriate, consider including a brief period of unstructured discussion at the beginning of the session to allow fellows to express their initial thoughts and ideas. This can help channel their energy and prepare them for more structured learning. However, it is essential to follow this with a clear transition into your planned teaching activities. You are encouraged to maintain control over classroom discussions when necessary, ensuring that conversations remain focused and time efficient.

Managing Fellow Expectations

Students should not expect uniformity in teaching methods across the GEST programme. Each instructor brings their own expertise, style, and approach to the classroom, and we emphasize the value of this diversity. Fellows are informed in advance that teaching styles may differ from one

session to the next, and they are encouraged to adapt to varying pedagogical methods. Nonetheless, instructors are welcome to provide students with an overview of how the session will unfold at the beginning of class. For example, you may outline the structure of the day, including when discussions, lectures, or interactive components will occur.

If you find that classroom discussions are dominated by a few voices, do not hesitate to step in. Simple techniques, such as redirecting questions to quieter participants or setting time limits on contributions, can help maintain balance. While it is important to acknowledge and value fellows' inputs, your primary responsibility is to deliver the teaching content effectively.

Creating a Positive and Structured Learning Environment

To foster a productive classroom environment, consider the following:

- Prepare fellows by setting clear expectations for participation at the start of the session. Explain how discussions will be managed and emphasize the importance of allowing all voices to be heard.
- Incorporate structured opportunities for discussion, such as small group work or timed question-and-answer periods, to prevent open discussions from becoming unmanageable.
- Be clear about time management throughout the session. If discussions begin to derail or extend beyond the planned timeframe, firmly redirect the conversation to ensure the teaching material is covered.
- Remain flexible and open to the organic flow of classroom engagement, while always maintaining control over the session's objectives.

The GRÓ GEST programme recognizes and appreciates the diverse expertise of its instructors. By balancing flexibility in teaching with structured classroom management, you will create an inclusive and impactful learning experience for our fellows. Your ability to deliver content effectively while engaging in a wide range of perspectives is central to the success of the programme. Should you need any further support in preparing for your sessions, the GEST team is available to assist.

Team-Based Learning

The GRÓ GEST learning philosophy is based on a Team-Based Learning (TBL) approach, tailored to the programme's unique transnational context. This method is continuously evolving. As an instructor, it is important to be aware of the following:

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 programme, any group work is carried out in groups of four to five people assigned at the beginning of the programme and **these groups must 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.

Instructors are encouraged to set clear expectations for group work and support fellows in navigating interpersonal challenges within their assigned teams. If conflicts arise, instructors may act as facilitators, guiding the fellows to resolve disputes constructively rather than circumventing difficulties by changing group composition. Developing the ability to communicate effectively, compromise, and collaborate despite differences is integral to the TBL process and aligns with the programme's goal of fostering leadership, teamwork, and conflict resolution skills.

“Only when students work together over time can their groups become cohesive enough to evolve into self-managed and truly effective learning teams” - Michaelsen et al. (2009)

In TBL, it is essential that all group members actively participate and engage in their assigned tasks. Fellows are encouraged to recognize their diverse skills and perspectives as assets that enrich team performance. Over time, this process not only enhances the quality of group work but also prepares fellows for professional settings where teamwork and collaboration are critical to achieving shared goals.

Instructors should remain mindful that group cohesion is a gradual process. While they may observe tension or uneven contributions, these challenges are an expected part of learning and growth. By maintaining consistent group structures and fostering a supportive learning environment, fellows are provided the opportunity to develop essential skills for navigating group dynamics, ultimately contributing to the success of both their academic and professional journeys.

ASSIGNMENTS

As part of their teaching, all instructors are expected to assign and evaluate **at least one** assignment during their module. This may take the form of either:

1. An in-class group assignment, or
2. A short written assignment.

The GRÓ GEST Programme is flexible regarding assignment design, and instructors are welcome to use methods that align with their pedagogical approach. The purpose of these assignments is to support analytical, reflective, and practice-based learning throughout the programme in a manageable format.

Group Assignments

Group assignments must be completed in class and assessed by the instructor outside class. Even when work is completed in groups, grades are always assigned to fellows individually.

Group assignments should be structured in a way that allows instructors to observe participation, communication, and understanding during the activity.

Ideas for Group Assignments

Key Concept Poster Dialogue - Groups create a virtual poster on a PowerPoint that explains a core concept and illustrates it with one real example from their own context, then present briefly to the class.

Mini Case Study Interpretation - Groups analyse a short scenario provided in class, identify relevant concepts, and propose possible interpretations or responses.

Debate Circles - Groups prepare arguments for or against a debate statement from the module and present their position with one anticipated counterargument.

Policy or Programme Redesign Sprint - Groups review a policy, law, or project description and propose one concrete modification to strengthen its gender responsiveness.

Author / Theorist Roundtable Role Play - Each group represents a different author from the readings and participates in a facilitated discussion from that author's perspective.

Visual / Media Comparison Discussion - Groups analyse images or short media clips shown in class and generate one insight about representation, power, or gender norms.

Value Line Reflection - Students position themselves along an agree–disagree continuum on a provocative statement, then discuss their reasoning in small groups.

Concept-to-Context Mapping - Groups map how a central concept from the module appears at household, community, and societal levels in their own contexts.

Practice-to-Principles Analysis - Groups reflect on a concrete experience from their professional or community setting and extract one general principle linked to course themes.

All instructors are expected to assign and evaluate at least one assignment during their module

Written Assignments

If instructors choose to assign a written assignment, it should be short, focused, and suitable for completion during the module. Written assignments should be:

- No more than 1–1.5 pages (approximately 400–600 words).
- Formulated by the instructor and submitted in advance to the module coordinator for alignment with programme expectations.

- Deter unethical AI use (see segment on AI below or [click here for an example](#))
- Submitted electronically by the fellows, according to a deadline provided by the instructor. The module coordinator will set up the assignment on CANVAS.

Ideas for Written Assignments

Think Piece – Students synthesize key themes from the module and articulate their own analytical perspective in a short reflective text.

Concept-to-Context Application Note – Students apply one core concept from the module to a real example from their own work, national context, or a current social issue.

Dialogue Between Texts – Students write a short imagined conversation between two authors from the readings to highlight points of agreement and tension.

Micro-Ethnographic Observation – Students conduct a brief observation in a public or work setting and analyse visible gender dynamics in relation to course concepts.

Policy Critique Brief – Students select a relevant law, policy, or institutional practice and produce a short analysis of its gendered impacts.

Visual / Media Analysis – Students analyse an image, poster, advertisement, or artwork for its representations of gender, labour, or power relations.

Key Concept Mapping – Students define three key terms in their own words and show how they are connected, including a brief example for each.

Positionality Reflection – Students reflect on how their own background and social position shape their understanding of the module themes.

Debate Position Note – Students prepare a one-page argument for or against a provided debate statement, including one anticipated counterargument.

Knowledge Translation Plan – Students outline how they would convey one key idea from the module to colleagues, community members, or policymakers in their home context.

ASSESSMENT

After evaluating the assignment, instructors send the grade list to the Programme Manager: Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt (tbs@hi.is).

If preferred, grading of written assignments can be carried out by the GRÓ GEST Programme. In such cases, instructors should confirm this arrangement with the module coordinator prior to assigning the work.

Grades of 9–10 are reserved for work that is truly exceptional. They are not to be considered the norm or standard practice.

Assessment Rubric for Group Assignment

Grade	Description of Individual Contribution, Understanding, and Collaboration
0	Did not show up / Did not participate. No contribution to preparation, discussion, or group output.
1–2.5	The fellow contributed minimally or not at all. They showed little understanding of the task or key concepts. Their input may have been unclear, inaccurate, or off-topic. They may have relied entirely on others to complete the work or remained disengaged in discussion. Communication was limited, passive, or absent.
3–4.5	The fellow participated only partially or unevenly. They demonstrated a surface-level or incomplete understanding of the concepts. Contribution to discussion or task may have been limited, unclear, or overly dependent on the group. Collaboration occurred but without initiative or consistency. Their role in the final output was present but not well-developed.
5–6.5	The fellow made a satisfactory and reliable contribution. They demonstrated a basic understanding of the concept(s) and helped the group meet the task requirements. Their communication was generally clear. They participated in discussion and shared responsibility for the group's output, though depth of insight or initiative may have been limited.
7–8.5	The fellow contributed actively and thoughtfully. They demonstrated solid understanding of key concepts and applied them meaningfully to the task. They engaged constructively in group discussion, helped coordinate or clarify ideas, and contributed clearly to the final output. Their communication supported group cohesion and clarity.
9–10 (rare)	The fellow contributed exceptionally. They demonstrated strong insight into the concepts and connected them thoughtfully to real contexts or examples. They helped foster collaborative dialogue, integrated diverse views, and strengthened the group's reasoning. Contributions were clear, analytical, and enhanced the shared output. Communication was confident, respectful, and engaged. Result reflects excellent preparation, intellectual initiative, and teamwork.

Grades of 9–10 are reserved for work that is truly exceptional. They are not to be considered the norm or standard practice.

Assessment Rubric for Written assignment

Grade	Quality of Writing / Analysis
0	Did not submit.
1–2.5	The assignment does not address the set topic or questions. Arguments are unclear or missing, and there is little or no structure. Key concepts are used incorrectly or not defined. No meaningful use of literature, evidence, or examples. The writing lacks coherence and may be difficult to follow.
3–4.5	The assignment mentions the topic but does not clearly develop the main ideas. The analysis is superficial and may rely on description rather than critical engagement. Key questions may only be partially answered. Structure is weak, and the use of literature is minimal or not well integrated. Time/word limit may or may not have been respected.
5–6.5	A satisfactory assignment. The main argument is generally clear, and the main points of the topic are addressed. There is adequate structure and use of relevant literature, though analysis may lack depth. The writing is understandable, and references are mostly appropriate. Word limit/timeframe respected.
7–8.5	Very good to strong assignment. The central argument is clear, well-developed, and supported with appropriate academic sources. Analysis is insightful, and key concepts are applied accurately. The structure is coherent, and the writing is clear and focused. Citations and references follow an appropriate academic style. Word limit is respected.
9–10 (rare)	A truly excellent written assignment. The argument is exceptionally clear, sophisticated, and well-supported. There is a high level of critical engagement. The writing is in the fellow's own unique voice, as well as cohesive, and compelling. The assignment demonstrates strong independent thinking and depth of insight. The structure is precise, references are accurate, and the word limit is followed exactly.

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.

Deterring Unethical AI Use

When assigning short reading reflections, it is important to design the task in a way that naturally favours genuine engagement over generic or AI-generated responses. A helpful approach is to ensure that the assignment prompts require something AI tools cannot easily produce. This can be done very simply. When giving the task, clearly state that the fellow must refer to one *specific* page, sentence, or paragraph from the reading. This encourages slow, close reading and cannot be completed without having the text in hand. You may also ask fellows to include one brief connection to their own professional or lived context; even a single sentence of authentic personal relevance prevents generic synthesis.

You can also tell fellows that they will be asked to give a short, informal verbal explanation of their written reflection in class. This is not an additional assignment, but simply part of the discussion. Because they know they will speak to their peers, fellows are more likely to produce work that reflects their own thinking. Finally, include in the assignment prompt that the reflection should end with a one-sentence statement beginning with either "I am still unsure about..." or "One idea I want to take with me is...". This invites a genuine moment of intellectual self-reflection that AI cannot convincingly fake.

These small adjustments require no extra marking or preparation. They simply make it easier for fellows to work honestly and harder for AI-generated text to substitute for their own intellectual engagement.

Risks and Tell-Tale Signs

Instructors should be aware of the risks associated with AI use and be attentive to signs of unacknowledged or excessive reliance on such tools. Common indicators include:

- overly organised or mechanical structure (for example, text dominated by bullet points or rigidly formatted sections);
- stylistic inconsistencies compared with the fellow's earlier work;
- very frequent use of em dashes;
- generic or overly polished phrasing; and
- references that cannot be verified or lead to non-existent sources.

Apart from cases of unverifiable references, these features do not in themselves prove unethical conduct but should prompt discussion and clarification.

Example of Written Assignment

Below is an example of how one might formulate a written assignment that deters unethical AI use.

Think Piece

Please write a think piece of approximately one page (450–700 words) that draws together key insights from Mukul Mangalik’s teaching module on Gender and Labour Histories. You may respond to one of the prompts below:

- 1. How have gendered perspectives challenged or reconfigured dominant narratives within labour history in South Asia?*
- 2. Drawing on the Ramaswami and Joshi readings, how do constructions of masculinity shape proletarian experiences, humour, and identity in contexts of industrial precarity?*
- 3. What structural and symbolic exclusions mark women’s labour in the informal sector, and how do resistance and collectivity emerge within such exclusions?*

Your think piece should foreground your own analytical voice rather than summarizing the material.

Engage closely with at least two of the assigned readings, and refer to one specific passage from each (include page or section numbers). Alongside your engagement with the texts, include one concrete example from your own professional, national, or community context that helps clarify or illuminate your argument. This example should be written in the first person (e.g., “In my work with...”, “In my community...”) and should be presented as part of your analysis, not as an anecdote added at the end.

This is not a research paper. No outside sources are required. The goal is to explore ideas, test arguments, and think through some of the questions raised in the module in your own terms. At the very end of the assignment, include one sentence that responds to the following: What was the most difficult idea for me to think through while writing this, and why?

In the next class session, you may be asked to briefly explain your argument in a 1–2 minute small-group conversation (no notes). This helps ensure that the piece reflects your own thought process and interpretive work.

Grading will consider the clarity and originality of your argument, the depth of your engagement with the assigned texts, the accuracy and relevance of the concepts you use, the coherence and readability of your writing, and the extent to which you reflect critically on your own position and context.

ATTENDANCE

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.

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.

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. Instructors and 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

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: tbs@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

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

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

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: mgu@hi.is

The final assignment is an important part of the GRÓ GEST micro-credential programme. The 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.

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



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

Benediktsson

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.

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.

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

A map of campus can be found [here](#).

The University Book Store

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

University Service Desk and IT Help Desk

The University's Service Desk and Computer Services Help Desk are both located in Háskólatorg. 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 and faculty can receive assistance with internet connections and other computer related issues.

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 14:00 to 23:00. The Kitchen is open until 21:30 every day.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR INSTRUCTORS

GRÓ GEST instructors are the heart of our academic programme. Therefore, we strive to offer instructors the best conditions we can. However, instructors should know that GRÓ GEST is primarily funded by the Icelandic Government through its development cooperation budget, which consists of taxpayer funds. As such, GEST is accountable for using these funds responsibly and efficiently. Below we outline the costs covered by GRÓ GEST for its instructors in addition to practical information associated with each item.

Flights and Taxi from the Airport

GRÓ GEST will book one round-trip, economy-class flight to and from the international airport closest to your residence. Transportation to and from Keflavík International Airport will be arranged upon your arrival and departure. Flights will generally be scheduled to arrive the day before your teaching begins and depart the day after it ends.

If your travel originates from or continues to a location that is not your home and is unrelated to GRÓ GEST, flights may still be arranged from/to an alternative location, provided the cost remains reasonable. However, significant cost differences will not be covered. Once flight tickets are issued, any modifications such as seat selection, upgrades, or other changes are at your own expense. Any additional travel arrangements, including those within Iceland, are your responsibility, although GRÓ GEST can recommend local travel agencies.

GEST provides airline tickets with one (1) piece of checked luggage. Baggage allowance and policies differ by airlines. Travellers are expected to check and adhere to the allowances of the airlines with which they travel. If you choose to bring additional luggage, you will need to cover the costs yourself.

Proof of citizenship is required for international travel from outside the Schengen area. Instructors are responsible for applying for their own VISA. GEST will provide an invitation letter at the instructor's request. 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; these should all be in your carry-on bag.

Accommodation and Sustenance

GRÓ GEST will arrange accommodations at the University of Iceland Saga Rooms, located on campus and within a short walking distance from the teaching facilities, for any stay where they are available. These rooms are newly renovated and include access to a shared kitchen. Your stay will begin with check-in the day before your instruction starts and end with check-out the day after it concludes.

For lecturers staying at Saga, two meal tickets per day will be provided for breakfast and lunch at the university cafeteria, Háma, which opens at 8 AM on weekdays. If Saga rooms are unavailable,

alternative accommodation at a 3-star hotel or guesthouse will be booked within a reasonable distance from campus. In such cases, if breakfast is included at the hotel, you will receive one meal ticket for Háma per full teaching day. Should you choose to decline the accommodations provided and arrange your own accommodation, the cost equivalent of what GRÓ GEST would have paid for accommodation will be added to your lecturer's fee after your stay. Unused meal tickets should be returned to a GRÓ GEST staff member before your departure to avoid waste.

Salaries

GRÓ GEST pays its international instructors EUR 200 per teaching session, which includes preparation. Each teaching day is divided into two sessions, from 09.15-11.30 and from 12.15-14.30. Most international GEST instructors teach 4 days and are paid 1.600 EUR before taxes for their time in Iceland.

According to Icelandic law, all payments for work performed in Iceland are subject to Icelandic income tax, which is typically around 34–34.5% but may vary slightly each year. The University of Iceland is legally required to withhold this income tax and pay it on behalf of guest lecturers.

Teaching salaries are paid via wire transfer or direct deposit to the lecturers' bank accounts after the teaching period concludes. The amount transferred will equal the gross salary for the sessions taught, minus the income tax withheld.

Please note that banks handling wire transfers may deduct service fees, and currency exchange rates applied by banks may differ, often favoring the bank. GRÓ GEST and the University of Iceland are not responsible for covering these additional costs or supplementing teaching salaries to account for them.

STAYING IN REYKJAVIK

General Business Hours

The opening hours of most businesses are from 9:00 until 17:00.

Shopping hours are generally from 9:00, 10:00, or 11:00 until 17:00 or 18:00 during the week (Monday to Friday). On Saturdays, many shops are open only for a few hours from 10:00 or 11:00. Most shops are closed on Sundays except for grocery stores and larger malls.

Banking hours are from approximately 9:00 or 10:00 to 16:00, Monday to Friday only, and banks are closed both Saturdays and Sundays.

Finances

The unit of currency used in Iceland is the Króna or “crown,” abbreviated ISK or kr. Most shops and businesses accept major credit- and debit cards so it is not generally necessary or even advisable to carry cash. Debit and credit cards are commonly used in Iceland even for small transactions. The major credit cards used in Iceland are VISA and Eurocard/Mastercard but Diners and American Express are also accepted by some businesses in Iceland. It is best to exchange any cash money you bring into ISK *in* Iceland, and re-exchange any surplus before you leave, as foreign banks may not deal in ISK. You can exchange your money at the bank at the airport on arrival and departure and in all major banks.

On campus, there is an ATM in Háskólatorg.

Getting Around

Já

Já is a telephone directory of businesses and individuals in Iceland. The online directory, www.ja.is also offers links to websites and on-map locations and is therefore a very useful resource. There is also a já app available in most phone-app-stores. Fun fact: Já, in Icelandic, pronounced “yow” (rhymes with “cow”), means yes.

Transportation

When it comes to public transportation, Reykjavík has a bus system (called Strætó in Icelandic) with regular services to and from all of the city’s major neighbourhoods and attractions as well as neighbouring towns. The bus system also offers travel outside the area, albeit less frequently and for a higher price.

Strætó lists all routes and schedules online at www.bus.is or www.straeto.is. All purchase of tickets is done through The Klapp at <https://www.klappid.is/en> or via the KLAPP app, except when travelling out of town, in which case tickets are purchased on board the bus. It is also possible to pay for a single fare on at least some busses in town using a card or smartphone.

Other transportation

Iceland does not have Uber, Bolt, Lyft or similar services, and taxis are quite expensive in Iceland. Hreyfill (phone: 588 5522) and BSR (phone: 561 0000) can be called for shorter rides when needed. Both companies also offer free smart phone apps to order fares.

Companies such as [Hopp](#) and [Zolo](#) operate electric scooters which can be rented using smartphone apps after you enter your debit card information. This may at times be convenient for shorter rides, but costs will quickly build up. Like driving, scooters should *never* be used while under any influence, which can impair your ability to operate a vehicle and should also never be used in slippery conditions.

For bus tours outside of the city, see either the services offered by [straeto](#) or [www.bsi.is](#), the central bus station. Domestic flights are offered by [Icelandair](#) and [Norlandair](#). There are several car rentals in Reykjavik for those who wish to rent a car for exploring Iceland. Please make sure that your driver's license is valid for driving in Iceland if you are interested in renting a car.

In case you plan to travel around Iceland by yourself it is very important to check [safetravel.is](#), [vedur.is](#), and [road.is](#). These websites publish travel warnings as well as information about road conditions and weather. Make sure to always check them before leaving Reykjavik.

Shopping

There are several shopping malls in the Reykjavik area: Kringlan, Smáralind, and Holtagarðar are the largest. None is within easy walking distance from campus, but all are readily accessible by bus. There are also many outlet stores in the **Skeifan** area, a 15-minute bus ride from the student housing. The outlet store Regatta in Grandi is great for outdoor clothing.

In the downtown area, **Laugavegur** and its surroundings, which is about a 20-minute walk from the University campus, you can find boutiques, designer labels, arts and crafts galleries as well as pharmacies and grocery stores, and many cafes and restaurants.

There are lots of second-hand stores downtown with a nice and cheap variety of clothes: [Hertex](#), [Red Cross Store](#), [Fatamarkaðurinn](#), [Flóamarkaður Konukots](#), and more. [Verzlanahöllin](#) and [Hringekjan](#) are a kind of consignment stores that often have very good quality items at a good price.

Every Saturday and Sunday throughout the year, from 11:00-17:00, Reykjavik's flea market [Kolaportið](#) is located at Tryggvagata down by the harbour. There you can get a variety of second-hand clothes, books, and some local food at a lower price.

Groceries

For groceries, prices differ considerably between stores. There is a small convenience store, [Krambúðin](#), on campus, which is much more expensive than supermarkets found in the city. As it's close



by and open late and on weekends it can be convenient if you urgently need something.

The most popular and inexpensive supermarkets are [Bónus](#), [Nettó](#), and [Krónan](#), but you may need to find specialty stores for spices and food items from home. Stores that sell a variety of Asian, Middle Eastern as well as African products are Mai Thai on Laugavegur, Vietnam Market on Suðurlandsbraut, Dai Phat Supermarket on Faxafen, Istanbul Market on Grensásvegur, and AfroZone Ehf on Lóuhólar.



Closest supermarkets and grocery stores to the student housing:

- **Krónan** at Hallveigarstígur 1, 101 Reykjavík.
- **Bónus** at Laugavegur 59, 101 Reykjavík.
- **Krónan, Nettó and Bónus** at Grandi – Fiskislóð, 101 Reykjavík.
- **Krambúðin convenience store** at Eggertsgata 24 on campus (see above). It is considerably more expensive than Bónus or Krónan and has little fresh food, but it is the nearest shop.
- [Melabúðin](#) at Hagamelur 39. A very cosy local grocery store next to the neighbourhood swimming pool, but rather expensive.

Alcohol

Wine, liquor and beer can ONLY be bought at the state liquor outlets called [VÍNBUÐIN](#). Store locations and opening hours can be found on their website.

Swimming Pools

The swimming pools in Iceland are wonderful and you can swim outdoors even during the winter. This is because the pools, like the houses, are heated with geothermal water. Do pack your swimming suits as it is wonderful to float in the warm water and see the snowflakes drift above you. In Iceland, people survive the darkness and cold of the winters by going to the pool every day. So, we highly recommend that you do the same!

There are different [geothermal swimming pools](#) (sundlaugar). The swimming pools are most often outdoors and usually have hot pots, steam-bath and sauna as well.



The closest swimming pools to the University are:

Vesturbæjarlaug at Hofsvallagata. The opening hours are Mon-Fri: 6:30 -22:00, Sat-Sun: 9:00-22:00.

Sundhöllin at Barónsstígur 45a. Sundhöllin is the oldest swimming pool in Reykjavík, originally built in the 1930s but with a recent renovation and outdoor pool addition. The opening hours are Mon-Fri 6:30-22:00 and Sat-Sun 8:00-22:00.

Laugardalslaug at Sundlaugarvegur 30. The opening hours are Mon-Fri 6:30-22:00 and Sat-Sun 8:00-22:00.

If you plan to visit the swimming pools more than four times, consider purchasing a 10-visit card for a more cost-effective option. For longer stays, a 20-visit card provides the best value.

More information on swimming pools in Iceland: <https://reykjavik.is/en/swimming-pools>. It can be very fun to try out more rural swimming pools if you travel outside Reykjavik.

Also, check out the [Thermal Pool Rules](#). It is very important to shower without swim suit and properly before entering the pool.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ICELAND

Iceland is located in the North Atlantic Ocean and is the second-largest island in Europe, covering approximately 103,000 km². Situated on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, Iceland is geologically and volcanically active, with its volcanism shaping the landscape through diverse features such as volcanoes, glaciers, glacial rivers, and expansive sand fields. Frequent volcanic activity causes rapid changes to Iceland's landscape.

A notable eruption occurred in Eyjafjallajökull in 2010, garnering international attention for disrupting air traffic across Northern Europe. Despite its global impact, this eruption had little effect on life in Reykjavik due to its remote location. Other significant events include the creation of the island of Surtsey in 1963 and a 1973 eruption on the island of Heimaey, where lava flow affected the town of Vestmannaeyjar. More recently, the Reykjanes peninsula rift system has been active, experiencing ten separate eruptions between 2021 and 2024. These eruptions have generally been short-lived and have not disrupted air traffic.

About 75% of Iceland's landmass is situated over 200 meters above sea level, consisting mainly of high plateaus and mountains. Hvannadalshnúkur, the island's highest peak, rises to 2,110 meters. Glaciers, including Vatnajökull—the largest glacier in Europe—cover approximately 11,200 km², while arable land suitable for agriculture amounts to just 1,400 km². The central highlands are uninhabited, with Iceland's population concentrated along the coast.

As of January 2024, Iceland's population was 393,726. The greater Reykjavik area is home to 239,733 people, representing about 61% of the nation's population.

History- The Republic of Iceland

Iceland was settled primarily by Nordic people around 874 AD. By approximately 930 AD, the settlers established one of the world's earliest republican governments. This period, known as the Old Commonwealth Age, is richly depicted in the Icelandic Sagas and lasted until 1262, when Iceland lost its independence. It became a colony of Norway and later of Denmark. Iceland regained independence from Denmark in 1918, and in 1944, it formally established the present republic.

Iceland operates under a written constitution and has a parliamentary form of government. The president, elected by direct popular vote for a four-year term with no term limit, has a largely ceremonial role. Most executive power lies with the Government, which is led by a prime minister and a cabinet of ministers. Alþingi, Iceland's parliament, is a legislative body with 63 members elected from six districts for four-year terms through popular vote. Ministers in the cabinet are typically members of Alþingi; if they are not elected representatives, they do not have voting rights in parliament.

As of December 2024, a new government coalition is being formed following parliamentary elections on November 30, 2024. The current cabinet includes nine ministers and one prime minister. Cabinets remain in power until the next general election or until a new government is formed.

According to Iceland's constitution, ratified in 1944, the government is divided into three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. Alþingi represents the legislative branch, where laws are created and amended. The executive branch, comprising ministries, directorates, and government agencies, enforces these laws. Judicial authority is vested in the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, and the district courts.

About Reykjavik



Reykjavík is a dynamic small capital, with a large number of restaurants, cafés, pubs, bookstores and puffin-shops. Reykjavik held the prestigious title of “European City of Culture” in the year 2000; a welcome recognition of the energetic and colourful cultural life of the capital. It has the best of both worlds: the qualities of a modern, forward-looking society are complemented by a close connection to beautiful and unspoiled nature in the city's vicinity.

The population of the city is around 240,000 including its suburbs and nearby municipalities. Reykjavik is spread across a peninsula with a panoramic view of the mountains and the Atlantic Ocean on almost all sides. In the spring, you can sit by the harbour at almost midnight and watch the sun dip slightly below the horizon before it makes its way up again.

For practical information and events in Reykjavik, see visitreykjavik.is. Grapevine.is also offers a useful overview of news and events in Reykjavik. For those who are news thirsty, [RÚV English](http://RÚV.English) offers a local news service in English by The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service.

Official Language

Icelandic is the native tongue of Iceland. It belongs, along with Norwegian and Faeroese, to the West Scandinavian branch of the North Germanic family of languages. Morphologically it has remained the most conservative of the Scandinavian languages, retaining, for example, three genders and a full system of case endings for nouns and adjectives. It is the same language that was spoken by the original Norse settlers from western Norway in the ninth and tenth centuries with, of course, the addition of modern vocabulary. Most Icelanders, particularly those of the younger generations speak good English, and visitors can easily ask for directions and assistance in English.

Research

The Icelandic system of research and development is a multilevel system with a dispersed decision-making structure. It has a number of fully-fledged research institutions, essential funds and a strong force of well-trained scientists, and covers all major fields in science and technology. Icelandic scientists face a challenging task of maintaining the quality and range of research activities. Concentration of research in key areas is important in order to optimize resources. Science and technology have been divided at an institutional level, reflecting a particular historical development and institutional division of labour.

Religion

58,6% of all Icelanders officially belong to the state supported [Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland](#). The National Church operates many churches in Reykjavík. However, it has been estimated that only 2% of Icelanders attend church services on a regular basis.

There is a small community of Muslims in Iceland with 2 mosques operating in Reykjavík. Information is best found via Facebook.

The main [Catholic Church](#) is located near campus, information on parish life and services is found on the website.

Some other religious groups in Reykjavík are:

[The Ásatrú Fellowship](#) – Old Icelandic polytheistic paganism often referred to as Heathenry.

[Fíladelfía Pentecostal Church](#)

[The Russian Orthodox Church in Iceland](#)

[The Free Lutheran Church of Reykjavík](#)

A steadily growing number of Icelanders do not identify as religious and are not registered to any church or other religious associations.

Climate

Iceland enjoys a much milder climate than its name and location adjacent to the Arctic Circle would imply. A branch of the Gulf Stream flows along the southern and the western coast which greatly moderates the climate. However, this brings mild Atlantic air in contact with colder Arctic air resulting in a climate that is marked by frequent changes in weather and storminess. Furthermore, this leads to more rainfall in the southern and western part than in the northern part of the island. The summer tourist season is from late May to early September. During the first half of this period the sun stays above the horizon for almost 24 hours and the interplay of light and shadows on mountains, lava fields and glaciers yield an ever-changing landscape. However, even during the middle of summer the sky is frequently cloudy or overcast and the sunshine does not warm the air much. Hence, during daytime the air is usually cool (“refreshing” is the local euphemism) and cold during night times.

Food

Icelandic cuisine has a long history. Important parts of Icelandic cuisine are lamb, dairy, and fish, due to Iceland's proximity to the ocean. Popular foods in Iceland include skyr (similar to yoghurt), hangikjöt (smoked lamb), kleinur, laufabrauð and bollur (baked goods). Points of pride are the quality of the lamb meat and seafood.

Other local ingredients that form part of the Icelandic chef's store include seabirds and waterfowl (including their eggs), salmon and trout, crowberry, blueberry, rhubarb, Iceland moss, wild mushrooms, wild thyme, lovage, angelica and dried seaweed as well as a wide array of dairy products.

Animal products dominate Icelandic cuisine. Popular taste has developed, however, to become closer to the European norm, and consumption of vegetables has greatly increased in recent decades while consumption of fish has diminished. Fresh lamb meat remains very popular. In recent years, the variety of available vegan products (and restaurant meals) has increased significantly.

In the capital, Reykjavik, you can find many diverse restaurants and fast food chains that serve everything from Icelandic cuisine, to American and Italian cuisine, as well as Middle Eastern cuisine.

Water

The water from the tap in Iceland is very drinkable. The warm and hot water sometimes smells like rotten eggs which is because of the sulfur coming from the ground due to volcanic activity. This is nothing to worry about. If you want to drink hot water or have some tea, just heat up the cold water with the kettle as the water otherwise can have this unpleasant taste.

We recommend that you use a refillable bottle as the cold tap water in Iceland has very good quality and it's environmentally friendly. One trick is to always let the cold water run for some seconds before you fill your glass or bottle to get the sulfur smell out.

Energy

Situated on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, Iceland is a hot spot of volcanic and geothermal activity. Thirty post-glacial volcanoes have erupted in the past two centuries, and natural hot water supplies much of the population with cheap, pollution-free heating. Geothermal heating of houses began around 1930, and today all of Reykjavik is heated by the Reykjavik Energy district heating system. Throughout Iceland, about 90% of the population now enjoy geothermal heating (not all parts of the country have utilizable hot water resources). The hot water that comes running from the faucets in houses in Reykjavik comes from Nesjavallavirkjun and can be up to 80°C so people should be very careful when using it. Rivers are, moreover, harnessed to



provide inexpensive hydroelectric power. The electrical current is 220 volts, 50 Hz. Electricity in Iceland uses the Europlug/Schuko-Plug (CEE types), which has two round prongs, or three for earth.

Economy

The economy is heavily dependent upon fisheries, which are the nation's major resource, and almost 60% of all exports are made up of seafood products. Yet only a small proportion of the workforce is active in this sector (5% in fishing, 6.2% in fish processing), and over 50% of the workforce is employed in services, public and other. Tourism has become another very important part of the economy.

Iceland is a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the European Economic Area (EEA).

Time

Local time in Iceland is Greenwich Mean Time/Universal Coordinated Time (GMT/UTC) all year round. This is one hour later than Central European Time during winter, but two hours later in the summertime.

MORE USEFUL LINKS

[Practical information](#) by the University of Iceland about the University, accommodations, and living in Iceland.

University of Iceland [Guide for International Students \(a few years old but mostly relevant\)](#)

[Multicultural Information Center](#)

[What's on](#) in Reykjavík

Annex: Rules of Procedure on the Response to Gender-related and Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Violence of the University of Iceland

Rules of Procedure on the Response to Gender-related and Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Violence.

Revised rules of procedure approved by the University Council 1 March 2018

Article 1 Objective

Gender-related and sexual harassment and gender-related and sexual violence (hereafter referred to as offences), committed by a staff member or student at the University of Iceland (UI), are strictly forbidden. Such behaviour is neither tolerated in relations between staff and students, relations between staff members, relations between students nor relations between UI staff members or students with individuals who are not considered staff members or students at UI, provided that the relations take place in connection with UI operations.

The objective of these rules of procedure is to ensure that resources are in place should a party, as defined in paragraph 1, consider herself/himself as a victim of such an offence.

Article 2 Concepts

The term **gender-based harassment** refers to behaviour that is related to the gender of the person subjected to it, is unwelcome, and has the purpose or effect of violating the target's dignity and creating circumstances that are threatening, hostile, humiliating, or offensive. The harassment may be physical, verbal or symbolic. A single incident may be deemed gender-related harassment.

The term **sexual harassment** refers to any kind of unwelcome sexual behaviour which has the purpose or effect of violating the target's dignity, particularly if such behaviour leads to threatening, hostile, humiliating, or offensive circumstances. Such behaviour may be verbal, symbolic and/or physical. A single incident may be deemed sexual harassment.

The term **gender-based violence** refers to violence committed on the basis of a person's gender which leads to or may lead to physical, sexual, or psychological harm or distress for the victim, as well as a threat thereof, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, both in private life and public field.

The term **sexual violence** refers to an offence against an individual's sexual freedom which is declared punishable in Chapter XXII of the General Penal Code.

The term **staff members** refers to any and all individuals employed at the University of Iceland, whether they are permanent or temporary employees, sessional teachers, or work for the University as contractors or subcontractors.

The term **parties to the case** refers to those said to have committed an offence and those said to have been the target(s) of the offence.

Article 3 Professional Council

The University Council appoints a **Professional Council** which role is to process cases relating to the aforementioned offences committed by staff members or students of the University of

Iceland. The Professional Council shall be appointed for a three-year term. The appointed chair shall be an individual who has professional knowledge and experience in handling cases of this nature and is not an employee at UI. In addition to the chair, one member nominated by the UI Division of Human Resources and one member nominated by the UI Student Counselling and Career Centre shall be appointed. The University Council shall also appoint three members as alternates, in accordance with the same rules.

Care must be taken to ensure that nominations comply with the provisions of Article 15 of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, no. 10/2008.

The role of the Professional Council is to receive and investigate complaints and reports regarding offences committed by staff members or students of UI, provide supervisors of the academic or work units of the parties to the case with an observation on these complaints and notices, and propose reforms as applicable. The Professional Council shall furthermore advise UI authorities on preventative measures that might be taken against such offences. The Professional Council shall take into account the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act, no. 37/1993, particularly concerning the right to be heard, duty to investigate, equal treatment of parties, and prompt handling, as applicable. The Professional Council shall establish further guidelines for their work practices.

A representative from the Division of Human Resources and the UI equality officer work with the Professional Council.

Article 4 Complaints

Anyone wishing to submit a complaint regarding an offence committed against them, either currently ongoing or in the past, by a staff member or student at the University of Iceland or anyone wishing to report an offence which they have reasoned suspicion or knowledge shall contact one of the [three members of the Professional Council](#) or the [UI equality officer](#).

UI staff members may also contact their immediate superior. If this individual is the one deemed to have committed the offence, the staff member may turn to the superior's superior. Students may also contact their faculty dean or, depending on circumstances, their school dean.

Anyone receiving such a complaint or report shall immediately refer the matter to the Professional Council for processing.

Article 5 Processing of cases and the observation of the Professional Council

Upon receiving a complaint or report of an offence, the Professional Council shall summon the accused to a meeting to examine his/her position regarding the complaint or report. If a report is submitted by an individual other than the assumed victim of the offence, the Council summons the assumed victim to a meeting to examine their position on the report. Following the interviews with the parties to the case, the Council determines whether the case shall be formally processed. The Professional Council shall have unrestricted access to pertinent files in the University and faculty archives.

If the Professional Council decides to formally process a case, it shall notify the supervisors of the academic or work units of the parties to the case, as needed. The supervisors shall, having consulted with the Professional Council, take any necessary measures concerning the academic

or work arrangements of the parties to the case. Efforts shall be made to reach an agreement regarding work arrangements whilst the matter is under review. The complainant or assumed victim of the offence may not be transferred to another position because of gender-based or sexual harassment or violence without having requested this her/himself.

The Professional Council shall thoroughly investigate the matter, e.g. by interviewing the parties involved and, as appropriate, their co-workers or other individuals who may be able to shed light on the case. The Professional Council shall offer the assumed victim of the offence professional assistance from a psychologist, social worker or other therapist with specialist knowledge of the offences involved. Should the person in question wish to report the matter to the police, the Professional Council shall assist in this as far as possible.

After the investigation is concluded, the Professional Council shall issue an observation outlining its conclusions to the parties involved, as well as to the supervisors of their academic or work units. Should the Professional Council deem that an offence has been committed, it shall submit a proposal to the supervisor of the relevant academic or work unit concerning the appropriate response. The supervisor shall then determine the most appropriate course of action, in consultation with the Division of Human Resources or the Student Counselling and Career Centre. The final decision in such cases shall be taken in accordance with the law and UI regulations.

Article 6 Confidentiality

Unless the law dictates otherwise, the Professional Council and others involved are required to treat individual cases as confidential.

Article 7 Statistical information

The Professional Council shall record and maintain statistical information on cases it receives. This information shall be published annually.

Article 8 Entry into force

These Rules of procedure, established based on Article 2 of the Regulation for the University of Iceland, no. 569/2009, and in accordance with the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, no. 10/2008, and the Regulation on bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and violence at the workplace, no. 1009/2015, shall enter into force upon being approved by the University Council.