Study Guidelines
Master of Arts
Critical Urbanisms.
Preamble

The Prüfungskommission (Examination Commission) of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Basel approved the following study guidelines. These guidelines govern details of the programme content and requirements for the Master of Arts in Critical Urbanisms. The paragraphs in these guidelines refer to the Ordnung der Philosophisch-Historischen Fakultät der Universität Basel für das Masterstudium (Regulations of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Basel for Master’s Study) of 18 October 2012.

In case of contradictions of the study guidelines with the Ordnung der Philosophisch-Historischen Fakultät der Universität Basel für das Masterstudium (henceforth “Master-Ordnung”) or with the study plan for the Master of Arts in Critical Urbanisms, the Master-Ordnung or the study plan for the Master of Arts in Critical Urbanisms apply.

Please consult the relevant documents at https://philhist.unibas.ch/studium/.

1. Overview

1.1 Identity of the subject

In our rapidly changing and contested global environment, cities have become increasingly important, home to the majority of the planet’s inhabitants and sites for fundamental economic, social, political, ecological and cultural transformation. The master’s degree programme in Critical Urbanisms explores both the heterogeneity of urban life and the multiplicity of ways in which human beings seek to make sense of it. Interrogating perceived oppositions between global North and global South, centre and periphery, global and local, and city and countryside, the programme draws together critical and reflective approaches from the humanities, social sciences and design disciplines.

At its core stands an innovative pedagogical model: an interdisciplinary research studio, jointly taught by all members of the core master’s faculty, which integrates a wide variety of textual, social-scientific, and visual methods. In combination with a rich roster of associated coursework, the studio encourages students to develop theoretical and practical competencies, oriented toward both scholarly and public platforms, a combination essential to address the extraordinarily heterogeneous of urban life and the multiplicity of ways in which human beings seek to make sense of it. Interrogating perceived oppositions between global North and global South, centre and periphery, global and local, and city and countryside, the programme draws together critical and reflective approaches from the humanities, social sciences and design disciplines.

Two trademark elements of the programme are:

• Interdisciplinary research practice that combines social-scientific methods with attention to visual representation and spatial analysis. Drawing primarily from the disciplines of architecture and visual studies, geography, and anthropology, the programme’s interdisciplinary research studio provides students with a unique grounding in methods of research and representation;

• International learning experience, with the second semester of study and research at the University of Cape Town, supported by the University of Cape Town and University of Basel Professor of Urban Studies at the African Centre for Cities; or, for students whose circumstances prevent them from participating in the Cape Town semester, a course in anthropological fieldwork methods that will include a research trip to Africa (location varies) during the winter holidays (mid-January to mid-February).

The programme targets students from a wide range of fields in the humanities and the arts. It is likely to be of interest as well to academically qualified professionals from the fields of architecture, urban planning, and environmental management. It is geared toward University of Basel graduates, as well as to students hailing from other national and international institutions.

1.2 Requirements for admission

Please refer to study plan document, available online.

1.3 Language of instruction

The primary language of instruction is English. It is the students’ responsibility to ensure that they have the competency in English to express themselves orally and in writing in a nuanced manner. Students are invited to make use of the extensive selection of courses offered by the Language Centre of the University of Basel (at the students’ own expense) in order to develop their language skills further. For courses offered within the Urban Studies department, reading, writing, and class presentations will be in English unless special permission is given by instructor for assignments to be completed in German or French. Courses offered by other departments in the university may be conducted in German.

Students are strongly encouraged to pursue any language learning that would assist them in their particular areas of interest. Languages taught at the University of Basel may be found here: https://www.unibas.ch/en/Studies/Degree-Programs/Language-Center.html

1.4 Academic advising

Individual advising for students is a crucial component of the course. At the start of the programme, a faculty member or postdoctoral fellow in Urban Studies will be assigned to serve as the student’s advisor until students select an M.A. thesis advisor, at which point the thesis advisor will take primary responsibility for academic advising. At the beginning of the master’s programme, each student will meet with the advisor for a mandatory consultation.

At this stage students will prepare and organize the semester at the University of Cape Town (Cape Town track). Students whose circumstances prevent them from
spending a semester at the University of Cape Town can as an exception participate in the a year-long anthropology course which includes a month of field work in Africa (Anthropology track). Both options will include advising related, for example, to issues of personal safety as well as substantive preparation conducting fieldwork abroad.

Those students opting for the Cape Town track will be required to participate in an orientation in Basel, which will include briefings on security for the Cape Town context. This orientation and advising programme will include a preparatory orientation that includes reading and discussion at University of Basel as part of the advising for the master's in Critical Urbanisms at the start of the programme. In addition, in Cape Town, students will be required to attend and participate in the orientation programme for international students run by the University of Cape Town's International Academic Programmes Office.

Students opting for the Anthropology track will receive advising and preparatory guidance related to their fieldwork. Students will also receive financial advising and practical advice for studying in Basel and for financing the trip to Cape Town, including options for financial aid if needed. (For the Anthropology track, financial assistance is also provided.)

Based on a student's current academic interests and their previous experience and areas of study, faculty will advise on options and priorities that allow the student to achieve personal goals and balance deficits. There will also be a mandatory consultation with designated examiners before registering for the master's thesis and the master's exams. Ideal study progression plans for the Cape Town track and the Anthropology track can be found at the end of this document.

In addition, students can make appointments any time to speak with faculty members or postdoctoral fellows as well as staff at the Urban Studies office about issues mentioned above, problems regarding written papers, or other questions concerning their studies. Students are strongly advised to make regular use of this offer throughout their studies.

1.5 Financial aid

For updated information on tuition costs, living expenses, and financial aid, please refer to the Urban Studies website.

2. Learning Outcomes and Qualifications

2.1 General learning objectives

The Master of Arts in Critical Urbanisms is designed to create a cohort of competent researchers able to develop new forms of interdisciplinary research, both independently and in collaboration.

Through training in field work and in architectural and urban theory, students develop fluency in spatial, social, and visual research methods, and acquire relevant practical and theoretical knowledge of the social, economic, cultural, and political processes that make up cities and territories. The semester of study in Cape Town or, alternatively, the year-long field course offered by the University of Basel, gives students first-hand experience of researching urban conditions outside of Europe. Interdisciplinary proficiency and international experience will enable graduates of the programme to effectively interact with the broad range of actors and institutions that play a vital role in shaping the future of cities in a global context. Through this training in Critical Urbanisms, students will be equipped to:

- employ methods of research, analysis, and communication appropriate to a given context;
- comparatively analyse natural, historical, social, and health-related urban contexts;
- understand human and social actions in different urban settings, natural environments, and historical periods, and be attuned to the perspectives of those social actors.

2.2 Preparation for professional fields

The programme prepares students for careers in a wide range of national and international contexts. These include the following professional venues:

- local, regional, and national government planning offices;
- development organizations and other NGOs;
- institutions for cultural programming;
3.1 Distribution of credits

Column “Completing study programme, CP”
This column lists the minimum requirements for the successful completion of the study programme. Here you will find instructions for your studies regarding the credit points to be acquired within each module and the course formats to be completed. The bold number represents the sum of the individual requirements for a particular module, or for several modules. The required seminar paper credits are included in this tabulation.

Column “Modules”
A module is a combination of several courses in a learning unit; its internal coherence derives from the study objectives. Some modules include specific courses and assignments that must be completed by all students, while other modules allow students to select from a range of courses within a particular area of study.

Column “Eligible Course Formats”
This column lists the course formats that are eligible for each module.

3.2 Explanation of modules

This introductory module conveys the interdisciplinary and epistemological foundations for Critical Urbanisms in their historical context, and provides space to critically reflect on these. It promotes the ability to do independent research and evaluate publications and sources from and about global urban studies. Students acquire the ability to recognize the theoretical and methodological challenges in the production of knowledge related to urban studies, and to use these insights as a resource in their own scientific and practical applications. A total of 3 credit points must be obtained.

2. Module “Interdisciplinary Research Practice”

Teaching Format
The Interdisciplinary Research Practice module is built around a research studio. The research studio is co-taught by core and affiliated faculty from the humanities and social sciences. It puts different academic perspectives into dialogue in order to foster new forms of interdisciplinary learning.

Core faculty develop and ensure the continuity of a multi-year thematic research programme in collaboration with affiliated faculty, who shape the programme by teaching in concentrated blocks of time.

Collaborative Learning Space
Key to the studio’s format and to its focus on interdisciplinary learning is active student participation in the teaching process. To this end, the research studio takes place in a dedicated space that acts as a laboratory or think tank in which small teams of students hailing from different disciplinary backgrounds work together.

Research Methods
In addition to its focus on theoretical approaches derived from anthropology, history, art history and visual studies, geography, urban studies and architecture, the studio trains students in concrete methods of fieldwork, archival work, and mapping. A key component of the teaching process involves on-site learning, i.e. field trips and guided visits to archives. The former take the form of intensive short trips as part of the formal curriculum during the semester and longer periods of thesis-linked research work during semester breaks.

Organization
Students attend two studios, which are taught in the fall semester only. Bringing together different cohorts (the 2017 one with the 2018 one, and so on), the studio allows students at different stages in the master’s programme to collaborate with and learn from each other. Within a given semester, the research studio covers two full days of the week. Students can of
course come back during other times, to continue working on their projects. Three times per semester, the work of all student teams is reviewed during a full day of presentations. These presentations are moments of mutual engagement, in which core and affiliated faculty and all students (as well as invited critics) review the work of the research studio.

**Output**

In the two studios, students work on a range of different and complementary outputs, from essays to illustrated booklets, maps and diagrams, photographic projects, videos, and installations. At the end of the multi-year thematic research project, student projects will be assembled and edited/curated to be made public as a collective outcome of the research studio. This will take the form of a book or exhibition.

3. Module “Urbanisms from the South”

3a. University of Cape Town track (standard option)

Students on the Cape Town track study during semester 2 at the University of Cape Town. Their stay will be coordinated by the University of Cape Town and University of Basel Professor of Urban Studies. The semester includes a mandatory course on African Urbanisms that explores critical urbanisms through a global southern urban lens.

The course offered by the University of Cape Town and University of Basel Professor of Urban Studies will consist of 10 CP and an additional 5 CP for a seminar paper. The additional credit points obtained at UCT should be booked via learning contract into the module “Projects and Processes of Urbanization” (provided the thematic link is given) or counted as free credit points in the electives module. Please see the ideal study progression plan for the University of Cape Town track at the end of this document.

3b. University of Basel Anthropology track (option for students unable to spend the semester at University of Cape Town)

Students taking the Anthropology track will participate in a year-long methods-based field course offered by the chair of anthropology. This will involve a preparatory course (10 CP) in the fall term (semester 1) followed by a field trip during the January-February break, and, subsequently, a semester of follow-up research, analysis, and reporting during the spring semester seminar (5 CP). The specific topic and location of the field trip will change from one year to the next, but it will incorporate literature and methodologies from diverse disciplines, and will teach students standard anthropological methods for approaching different people and milieus, and for analysing daily social realities. Students will be asked to choose a specific field site and to develop a specific thematic field of inquiry that will constitute the topic of their research paper. Students’ research will be guided by experienced tutors.

The Anthropology chair will partly cover students’ travel expenses. Depending on the location of the field course, students may need to be proficient in French or another language. Please see the ideal study progression plan for the Anthropology track at the end of this document.

4. Module “Projects and Processes of Urbanization”

This module offers a range of disciplinary perspectives on issues of urbanization. Its aim is to provide students with specific disciplinary methods and approaches to the understanding of urbanization. It comprises teaching by the M.A. Critical Urbanisms faculty as well as selected courses offered at the University. Students on the Anthropology track have to write a seminar paper in this module.

4. Assessment of Student Work

The criteria for assessing student achievement are determined by disciplinary expectations and by the faculty teaching a given course. As assessment criteria will vary somewhat according to different disciplines and instructors, course instructors are responsible for clarifying expectations. General guidelines for student assessment are to be found in the Master-Ordnung.

The criteria of assessment described below apply specifically to courses offered by faculty in the Critical Urbanisms programme, consistent with its teaching objectives.

Seminars: Seminars involve weekly readings and group discussion. Students are typically required to give a presentation, and are assessed on the basis of:

- self-motivation;
- critical and creative engagement with the readings;
- ability and willingness to engage in thoughtful discussion with peers and instructors.

Seminar papers: Seminar papers are usually assessed according to:

- originality, accuracy, and thoroughness of research;
- strategic integration of research methods and literature from different disciplines;
- insightfulness, subtlety, clarity, and persuasiveness of arguments;
- effective use of visual and graphic evidence;
- attentiveness to diverse perspectives and positions;
- ability to collaborate with team-members (when relevant).

Studies: With some guidance from instructors, students will be expected to collaboratively:

- Identify a compelling object of rese-
5. Master’s Thesis and Examinations

5.1 Master’s thesis

The purpose of the master’s thesis is to prove the author’s ability to produce independent reflection and work—that is, develop a research question, justify the work procedure, present the findings in a stylistically adequate way and critically reflect on them. The master’s thesis identifies a research problem in an area of Urban Studies and, by engaging with the problem, develops knowledge that can answer theoretical and conceptual questions, or formulates answers to practical questions.

The prerequisites for beginning thesis work (including coursework and credit points) can be found in the Master-Ordnung. Students register for the master’s thesis at the Study and Examination Secretariat of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Prior to the application, at least one of the two seminar papers must be assessed and the second one must at least be submitted.

Skills and interests developed in the research studio may serve as the basis for a student’s individual thesis. While thesis work is independent and distinct from the work pursued in the research studio, it ideally builds upon the studio.

The topic and format of the master’s thesis is settled by the student and a faculty member from Critical Urbanisms serving as thesis advisor. The second advisor should ideally also be from the Critical Urbanisms team. Under special circumstances, a second advisor from outside Critical Urbanisms can serve as co-advisor if that person possesses the necessary qualifications and expertise, and if approved by the primary advisor. As a general rule, the master’s thesis consists of a written paper analysing relevant sources collected by the student (publications, archives, collections, or data). Students are encouraged—though not required—to engage in original research rather than drawing exclusively from library resources. As a general rule, the written thesis should be 80 pages in length.

Even though theses will be submitted in conventional text form, students are encouraged to supplement their written work with a practice-based and/or visual component, in order, firstly, to make their findings accessible to broader audiences than might otherwise be the case, and secondly, to address the programme’s orientation toward visual and spatial analysis. The thesis may be submitted in languages other than English upon approval of the student’s thesis advisors.

For the development and completion of the master’s thesis, students are permitted to take up to nine months.

The master’s thesis needs to be submitted on or before the due date with one copy each directly to the thesis advisor (main assessment) as well as to the second supervisor (second assessment). A third copy needs to be turned in at the executive office of the Critical Urbanisms programme. Within three weeks after the submission of the thesis, the supervisors must decide on the acceptance or rejection of the thesis and communicate the decision to the student and to the Study and Examination Secretariat at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Unless an explicit counter-statement is provided, the thesis is accepted.

5.2 Oral examinations

In two oral exams of 60 minutes each, it is assessed to what extent the candidate is competent to bring together different bodies of knowledge in the context of Critical Urbanisms and present them coherently. Examiners are chosen by the student from among eligible instructors who have taught in the programme. Prior to the exams and in collaboration with the examiners, students develop reading lists pertaining to two exam topics.

Exam 1: The student and examiner discuss the student’s thesis in conjunction with a related field of specialty, which will form the reading list for the exam.

Exam 2: The student and examiner agree on two further fields of specialization from the 4 modules, for which two reading lists are developed.

Exam topics may correspond to one or more of the following categories:

- A thematic or topical area of inquiry (e.g., migration, labour, infrastructures, etc...);
- A comparative approach to a particular
6. Elective Courses

The module of elective courses (20 CP) allows students to pursue an area of academic interest regardless of their study subject or programme. They are free to choose any courses to acquire the 20 credit points. Usually, the purpose of the elective courses is to gain general competencies (languages, technological skills, rhetoric, etc.), interdisciplinary learning (courses outside the study subject, interdisciplinary courses) and/or the further immersion into one’s own studies by taking additional courses in Critical Urbanisms, or the acquisition of a certificate. See the guidelines for the elective courses at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.³

The study programme courses are complemented by the elective courses. The students make use of them:
• to gain disciplinary competency which might be missing at the start of their studies;
• to enhance specific thematic and practical knowledge;
• to acquire language skills;
• to accomplish the study achievements required to be accepted as a PhD student in a specific study subject.

All courses from the curricula (BA and MA level) in all departments are eligible, as are activities in the university’s self-management and individual study achievements, the conditions of which are settled prior in a Learning Contract.

7. Further Resources and Contact Information

University of Cape Town: The second semester takes place at the University of Cape Town where the University of Cape Town and University of Basel Professor of Urban Studies is located in the African Centre for Cities (ACC). The African Centre for Cities (ACC) is a UCT Signature Theme that straddles three faculties at the University of Cape Town: Engineering and the Built Environment, Humanities, and Science. As a Signature Theme, ACC’s mandate since its establishment in 2007 has been to foster interdisciplinary urban research on vital issues and to find practical ways of connecting the university to “live” urban development challenges in the Cape Town city-region, the national context and the global South with special emphasis on sub-Saharan Africa.

The mission of ACC is to engage in collaborative research and develop imaginative policy discourses and practices to promote vibrant, just, and sustainable cities. The ACC operates as an interdisciplinary research and teaching programme across faculties at the University of Cape Town focused on critical scholarship and practice on the dynamics of unsustainable urbanisation in Africa and the global South. Students will have access to an array of courses and scholars based at University of Cape Town, one of the top Universities in South Africa and on the African continent.

Mobility: Besides Basel, other universities and universities of applied sciences in Switzerland offer relevant courses. Students who attend such courses are supported in the frame of the promotion of student mobility. The same applies to the Universities of the tri-national region Oberrhein (EUCOR: Strasbourg, Colmar, Mulhouse, Karlsruhe, Freiburg i.Br.). With the EUCOR student pass, students from Basel are permitted the same access and benefits as the students enrolled there.

Other resources: Students are strongly encouraged to become familiar with the diverse learning resources within the area of Basel, including research institutions, archives, and museums.

addresses
S AM Swiss Architecture Museum
Steinenberg 7
CH-4051 Basel
http://www.sam-basel.org/en

University of Basel, Languages Center
University of Basel
Language Center
Kornhausgasse 2
4051 Basel
https://www.unibas.ch/en/Studies/Degree-Programs/Language-Center.html

Centre for African Studies Basel
Rheinsprung 21
CH-4051 Basel
Tel.: +41 (0)61 207 34 82
zasb@unibas.ch
www.zasb.unibas.ch

³ Wegleitung für den Komplementären Bereich an der Phil.-Hist. Fakultät
Appendix: Study Progression Tables

University of Cape Town track
Ideal study progression plan for full-time students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Semester 1 (Basel)</th>
<th>Semester 2 (Cape Town)</th>
<th>Semester 3 (Basel)</th>
<th>Semester 4 (Basel)</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Urbanisms: Introduction</td>
<td>3 CP seminar (block course)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary Research Practice</td>
<td>10 CP research studio</td>
<td>5 CP written work (in connection with studio; group projects; learning contract)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 CP studio</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanisms from the South</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 Cp course + 5 CP seminar paper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects and Processes of Urbanization</td>
<td>2 CP (e.g. a lecture or seminar)</td>
<td>15 CP course at UCT in ACC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives</td>
<td>20 CP in any subject offered at University of Basel and/or University of Cape Town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA thesis</td>
<td></td>
<td>MA thesis: from end of term 2 to beginning/middle of term 4: 9 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA-Exam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>at end of semester 4</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>120</td>
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Additional resources:
- Basler Afrika Bibliographien
- Namibia Resource Centre and Southern Africa Library
- Kunstmuseum Basel St. Alban-Rheinweg 60 CH-4010 Basel http://www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/
- Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute Socinstrasse 57 CH-4051 Basel http://www.swisstph.ch
- Website of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Information and documents concerning MA studies, Study and Examination Secretariat, other institutes, etc.) http://philhist.unibas.ch
- Website of the University of Basel (Deadlines, etc. General information about studies à “Studium”/“Studies”) http://www.unibas.ch
- Online course directory http://vorlesungsverzeichnis.unibas.ch
- University IT Services (Universitätsrechenzentrum URZ; information about internet, email, access to network, etc.) http://www.urz.unibas.ch
### University of Basel Field Course track

Ideal study progression plan for full-time students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Semester 1 (Basel)</th>
<th>semester break</th>
<th>Semester 2 (Basel)</th>
<th>semester break</th>
<th>Semester 3 (Basel)</th>
<th>semester break</th>
<th>Semester 4 (Basel)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Urbanisms: Introduction</strong></td>
<td>3 CP seminar (block course)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interdisciplinary Research Practice</strong></td>
<td>10 CP studio; 5 CP written work (in connectio with studio; group projects; learning contract)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 CP studio</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Urbanisms from the South</strong></td>
<td>10 CP first semester of field course</td>
<td>field trip for year-long field course</td>
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<td>5 CP second semester of field course</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Projects and Processes of Urbanization</strong></td>
<td>2 CP (lecture or seminar)</td>
<td>15 CP from courses; 5 CP for seminar paper</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Electives</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 CP in any subject offered at the University of Basel</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MA thesis</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>MA thesis: from end of term 2 to beginning (middle of term 4; 9 months)</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MA-Exam</strong></td>
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<td>at end of semester 4</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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