**National Research University Higher School of Economics**

**Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs**

**Master’s Programme “International Relations in Eurasia”**

Approved by Academic Supervisor

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**GUIDELINES**

**For Master’s Thesis Preparation**

1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1. These Guidelines describe requirements and procedures for preparation of Master’s Thesis, interaction between students and their supervisors, reviewers and programme academic supervisors while writing their Master’s Thesis,

1.2. The main purpose of a Master’s Thesis consists in acquiring knowledge and skills required for conducting research (more broadly, finding and analysing information) and presenting its results.

In the course of working on their Master’s Thesis, students are expected to develop the following competencies:

***а) Universal Competencies****:*

- ***General Academic Competencies:***

1. Ability to analyse socially significant issues and processes; ability to utilize methodology of the humanities, social and economic sciences for various professional and social activities;
2. Ability to utilize basic and professional knowledge in the field of philology, history, economics, sociology and cultural studies for educational and professional activities;
3. Ability to handle data and extract it from different sources to address professional and social issues;
4. Ability to gain knowledge by means of modern education and information technologies.

- ***Action Competencies:***

1. Knowledge of cognitive principles; ability to express one’s mental output accurately and convincingly, both orally and in writing;
2. Ability to use a computer, software and network resources and databases for social, educational and professional purposes;
3. Knowledge of one Eastern and one Western language sufficient to browse and analyse foreign sources of information.

- ***Personal, Social and Cultural Competencies***

1. Pursuit of personal improvement and continuing professional development;
2. Ability to be flexible and adapt to different circumstances, to show creativity, initiative and determination to achieve professional goals
3. Ability to utilize knowledge and understanding of modern human concerns, global and Russian cultural values; mastering intercultural dialogue

*Administrative matters:*

1.3. A Master’s Thesis must contain 13,000 – 20,000 words (Times New Roman, 14 pt; 1,5 spaced; 2 cm top and bottom margins, 3 cm left margin, 1 cm right margin).

1.4. Master’s Thesis have to contain any new findings discovered by the student in the course of independent research. However, their preparation, structure, formatting, language and style must conform to common academic standards. In particular, journalistic or fiction writing style and language are not acceptable.

1.5. Topics of Master’s Thesis are to be proposed by students and discussed with their supervisors. Each student must submit a request to LMS to have the topic of their Master’s Thesis which approved by the Programme Academic Supervisor; Topics must be narrow enough and define the issue under study. Their wording must clearly delineate the scope (research problems to be studied or resolved), and encourage students to look into primary sources, research and process the information closely, rather than stick to secondary sources (published compilations) and superficial overview.

2. MASTER’S THESIS PREPARATION SEQUENCE

2.1. Any research is aimed at generating new reproducible findings and ensuring their subsequent application. Master’s Thesis prepare students for independent research, and they are written in the following stages:

- initial preparation for search and analysis;

- search, analysis and generation of results in the form of some piece of knowledge;

- writing a text describing academic (research) findings.

2.2. In order to produce a Master’s Thesis of sufficient quality, a certain sequence of operations must be followed at each of the above-mentioned stages.

2.3. **The first stage** comprises the following sequence of tasks:

1) Define (choose and discuss with the Academic Supervisor) the topic of the Master’s Thesis;

2) Define the conceptual background and narrow focus of study (research) (see Appendix 1), i.e. delineate the scope of the Master’s Thesis and nature of data that is of primary relevance for the purposes of the Master’s Thesis;

3) Make up a preliminary list of sources and scholarly literature, i.e. determine where to search for the required information (see Appendix 2);

4) Develop a preliminary plan for studying the sources and literature, i.e. determine in what sequence and to what extent they are to be studied.

2.4. **The second stage**, along with studying sources and scholarly literature, elaborating and expanding the bibliography, comprises the following sequence of tasks:

1) Justify the relevance of the topic (its significance in the given context), thus, refining the scope of the Master’s Thesis and specifying its scientific potential by explaining how further research of this topic can be useful (see Appendix 3

2) Define the goal of the Master’s Thesis (i.e. of the educational/research process: what the student is going to find out, discover, determine, refine, evaluate or understand through reviewing the sources and scholarly literature on the topic) and its objectives (intermediate results of the educational process, or specific steps taken to reach the overall goal of the Master’s Thesis) (see Appendix 4);

3) Determine the structure and content of the Master’s Thesis (names of chapters and sections) (see Appendix 5).

2.5. **During the third stage**, students continue researching, processing and analysing data (looking for answers to the questions implied by the objectives of the Master’s Thesis), and write the text to describe the outcome of the Master’s Thesis (obtained through analysis). Students may write separate chapters or sections once the corresponding material is ready, or write the whole text, once the search and analysis of information is complete.

3. REQUIREMENTS TO TEXT AND FORMATTING OF MASTER’S THESIS

3.1. Each Master’s Thesis must have a title page (see Appendix 2), table of contents, introduction, chapters divided into sections, conclusion and bibliography.

3.2. Introduction must present information in the following sequence:

- Relevance of the topic;

- Conceptual background and narrow focus;

- Scholarly literature on the topic of the Master’s Thesis;

- Goals and objectives of the Master’s Thesis;

- Sources on the topic of the Master’s Thesis;

- Strategies and methodology for researching (studying) the sources.

3.3. If the student is planning to produce some new findings, the last but one point of the introduction must explain the originality of the Master’s Thesis (introduction of new sources used for analysis; new research strategies and methodology; originality of the results), and the last point must list arguments to be defended.

3.4. If a certain time period is specified in the topic, the rationale behind its selection must also be explained after bibliographic overview. Time periods are usually chosen so that their start and end points coincide with some process.

3.5. The conclusion is determined by objectives defined in the introduction; namely, it must provide answers to the questions implied by these objectives.

3.6.List of sources and scholarly literature usedis entitled “Bibliography”, divided into two sections – “Sources” and “Literature” - and placed after theconclusion. It must contain at least 6-7 items for Year 1 students, and at least 12-15 items for Year 2 and Year 3 students. Including sources and literature in foreign languages is mandatory for Year 3 students, recommended for Year 2 students and non-mandatory for Year 1 students. Bibliography items must be numbered consecutively, regardless of the number of sections (see Appendix 2).

*Sources* (data related to conceptual background of the Master’s Thesis) include materials (texts, artefacts, etc.) whose examination may produce new findings. *Literature* refers to academic publications (books, articles, reports, etc.) or manuscripts devoted to findings obtained up to this point.

3.7. All items mentioned in the bibliography must be referenced to in the text of the Master’s Thesis. As an academic text, the Master’s Thesis must have both a duly presented bibliography and references indicating the source or publication and specific pages where the given quote or piece of information is contained. References must be formatted as footnotes and numbered consecutively. Sample reference formatting is provided in Appendix 8.

4. INTERACTION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND THEIR ACADEMIC SUPERVISORS AND REVIEWERS

4.1. All tasks performed in the course of writing a Master’s Thesis must be controlled and corrected by the Academic Supervisor. Otherwise, students might develop inadequate skills that would prevent them from producing a Master’s Thesis of sufficient quality.

Main tasks requiring control and correction by the Academic Supervisor include the following:

- deciding on the topic of the Master’s Thesis;

- determining the conceptual background and narrow focus of study (research);

- compiling a reference list (determining required sources and scholarly literature);

- explaining the relevance of the topic;

- defining goals and objectives of the Master’s Thesis;

- determining the structure, chapters and sections of the Master’s Thesis;

- choosing research strategies and methodology;

- identifying arguments to be defended (i.e. those that would be stated in the conclusion).

- preparing a presentation for the defence.

In addition, students must submit provisional and final drafts of the introduction, conclusion, chapters and sections for review to their Academic Supervisor.

4.1. The Academic Supervisor must monitor the student’s observance of a schedule for preparation of a Master’s Thesis put forth by the department. If the student deviates from the schedule, the Academic Supervisor may notify the department administration, the student’s final grade (see Clause 6.2) may be lowered, and the student may be requested to appear before the Curriculum Development Board.

4.2. The Academic Supervisor must check the Master’s Thesis for plagiarism and have the student correct it as needed. If plagiarism is discovered at the stage when its elimination is technically infeasible, the Academic Supervisor must point it out in their review of the Master’s Thesis.

4.3. Apart from examining the content and formatting of the Master’s Thesis, the Academic Supervisor must also check grammar, syntax and style of the text and have the student correct any major errors when needed. If the student refuses to correct such errors in the content, grammar, syntax or style of the text and/or fails to submit intermediate results and preliminary draft of the Master’s Thesis for review, the Academic Supervisor may deem it ineligible for defence.

4.4. The finished Master’s Thesis must be submitted to the Academic Supervisor at least two weeks before the defence and to a reviewer assigned by the department, at least one week before the defence.

5. MASTER’S THESIS DEFENSE

5.1. Students must be notified of the time and location (classroom) of the Master’s Thesis defence, and provided with a list of student groups scheduled for the defence, at least one week in advance. Students must submit Master’s Thesis to the Board in a bound copy.

5.2. Each student has 20 minutes for the defence presentation. Presentations must contain the following information: relevance, conceptual background, narrow focus and goal of the Master’s Thesis, and key arguments to be defended. Main points should be mirrored in a PowerPoint presentation.

5.3. After the presentation, the reviewer and Supervisor repeat their reviews of the Master’s Thesis (or reviews are read by the Board’s Secretary if either of the two are not present), and the student has 5 minutes to answer questions and comments made by the Board members.

5.5. Once the defence is over, the Board holds a closed-door discussion, and then invites students back to the classroom where the final grades are announced by the Chair of the Board.

GRADING PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA

6.1. Master’s Thesis are graded on a 10-point grading scale. The final grade is composed of grades on a 10-point grading scale given by the Academic Supervisor, Reviewer and the Board independently

6.2. The final grade may be lowered if the student violates the schedule for presenting intermediate results as follows:

- by 1 point, if the student fails to submit the conceptual background and narrow focus of the research (study), duly formatted bibliography and preliminary plan for studying the sources and scholarly literature to the Academic Supervisor for review before the end of Module 2 (December 25) of the current academic year;

- by 1 point, if the student fails to submit explanation of the relevance of the topic, goals and objectives of the Master’s Thesis to the Academic Supervisor for review before February 15;

- by 1 point, if the student fails to submit at least one chapter of the Master’s Thesis to the Academic Supervisor for review before April 1.

6.3. If during the defence the student fails to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the content of the submitted Master’s Thesis, he/she may be failed.

6.4. If plagiarism and incorrect referencing (disguised paraphrasing) the student may be failed.

**Appendix 1**

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**Sample Wordings**

**for Conceptual Background and Narrow Focus of the Research (Study)**

**in Master’s Thesis**

Conceptual background of a research or study refers to “process or phenomenon generating the issue selected for studying”, or “variety of connections, relationships and properties that objectively exist in theory and in practice and serve as a source of information required by the researcher”. The narrow focus of a research or study is “within the conceptual background”, or “connections and relationships under study that establish research limits within the given conceptual background”. For dissertations, it is very important to delineate a narrow field of research and avoid venturing into other fields that require different research tools, skills and knowledge. Students writing Master’s Thesis should also practice this ability. Defining a *conceptual background* allows students to clearly understand the limits of their field of research, research tools that they intend to use, as well as the *nature* of phenomena, processes, connections or relationships that generate the issue under study. Defining a *narrow focus* allows students to highlight the perspective taken on the selected topic and specify what data is to be researched in different sources and scholarly literature and eventually analysed.

In other words, *conceptual background* of a research or study is a sort of standardized generalization, not limited to a specific place, time or circumstances (in particular, ethnic environment), while *narrow focus* provides application of conceptual background to a specific time, place or circumstances. For instance, a research in the field of the history of international relations and foreign policy may have international relations and factors that affect them as a conceptual background, while the narrow focus may be limited to relations between particular countries during a particular period, specific trends in such relations or foreign policy of these countries, etc.

**Appendix 2**

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**Sample Bibliography**

**for Master’s Thesis**

Bibliography of a Master’s Thesis or thesis may be subdivided into sections and subsections, but its items should be numbered consecutively (that way, the total number of items is clear, and ordinal numbers can be used in references inside the text). If bibliography includes sources, they must be grouped in a separate section that can be further subdivided and should precede all other sections.

**Bibliography**

1. **Sources[[1]](#footnote-1)**
2. United Nations General Assembly, Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New International Order. [URL:-](file:///C:\Users\sperlova\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\8LDK5XDY\-)

[URL:-](file:///C:\Users\sperlova\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\8LDK5XDY\-) <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/52/plenary/a52-153.htm> (retrieved 21.02.2018)

1. Ministry of Commerce of People’s Republic of China, Statistical Bulletin of China’s Outward Foreign Direct Investment, 2010. [URL:-](file:///C:\Users\sperlova\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\8LDK5XDY\-)

URL:- <https://dataspace.princeton.edu/jspui/handle/88435/dsp01pk02c9875> (retrieved 23.02.2018)

**II. Literature**

1. Gao Z. An In‐depth Examination of China's Advertising Regulation System // Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics. – 2007. – Vol. 19, Issue: 3. – pp. 307-323.
2. Pecotich A., Shultz C.J. Handbook of Markets and Economies: East Asia, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand // New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006.
3. Richet-Cooper D. CCTV, 1.2 billion viewers strong // INA Global, 2011. URL: <http://www.inaglobal.fr/en/television/article/cctv-12-billion-viewers-strong#intertitre-3> (reference date: 03.02.2018)

**Appendix 3**

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**Sample Referencing for a Master’s Thesis**

References formatted as footnotes must provide full details of the edition only upon its first mention. Subsequent references may omit certain details and provide corresponding contractions instead. Examples of permitted contractions are listed below (information about the publisher is omitted here, which is permitted under existing conventions):

*1. Graham A.C.* Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science. – Hong Kong; L., 1978.

*2. Seidel A.K.* Le Fils du Ciel et le Maitre Céleste: note a propos des “Registres” // Transactions of the Internationale Conference of Orientalists in Japan. – Tokyo, 1979. – No 24.

According to the current official standards, dashes between different parts of a description can be omitted.

**1. First reference to a scholarly work immediately follows a reference to another work by the same author:**

*1. Idem.* Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science. Hong Kong; L., 1978.

*2. Idem.* Le Fils du Ciel et le Maitre Céleste: note a propos des “Registres” // Transactions of the Internationale Conference of Orientalists in Japan. Tokyo, 1979. No 24.

**2. Repeat reference to a scholarly work immediately follows a reference to another work by the same author:**

*1. Idem.* Later Mohist Logic… P. 105.

*2. Idem.* Le Fils du Ciel et le Maitre Céleste… P. 45.

**3. Repeat reference to a scholarly work, when only this work by this author was mentioned in the text:**

*1. Graham A.C.* Op. cit. P. 104.

2*. Seidel A.K.* Op. cit. P. 76-78.

**4. Repeat reference to a scholarly work, when references to other works by the same author were already mentioned in the text:**

*1. Graham A.C.* Later Mohist… P. 104.

*2. Seidel A.K.* Le Fils du Ciel et le Maitre Céleste… P. 76-78.

**5. Repeat reference to a scholarly work that was cited when first mentioned:**

*1. Graham A.C.* Op. cit. P. 104.

*2. Seidel A.K.* Op. cit. P. 76-78.

**6. Reference immediately following another reference to the same work but a different page:**

*1.* Ibid. P. 24.

*2.* Ibid. P. 57.

*3.* Ibid. P. 37-38.

*4.* Ibid. P. 104.

*5.* Ibid. P. 76-78.

**7. Reference immediately following another reference to the same work on the same page:**

*1.* Ibidem.

*2.* Ibidem.

*3.* Ibidem.

*4.* Ibidem.

*5.* Ibidem.

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)