

Master in Comparative Social Research

Master thesis

Requirements and Guidelines

1. General info on the Master thesis

- 1.1. The Master thesis is a compulsory part of The International Master in Comparative Social Research.
- 1.2. The study plan is designed so that the thesis submission falls on Module 4 during the 2nd year of study. The submission and defense of the thesis have a combined value of 24 ECTS.
- 1.3. Students must attend the MA thesis workshop (НИС) during Module 4 of the 2nd year, where they get regular feedback on their progress from the instructor and their peers.

2. Topic and supervisor choice

- 2.1. The main supervisor of student's MA thesis can, but not has to be an HSE staff member (from any department). The thesis supervisor can also be associated with an external organization as long as he/she has either of the following:
 - practical experience in the topical field of the MA thesis of no less than 3 years
 - experience in supervising
 - a scientific title (e.g. PhD, candidate of sciences, Dr.)

In the case of an external supervisor, the student has to be assigned a “curator“ from among the MA programme’s lecturers, who will evaluate and control the course of work on the MA thesis.

A student can also have a second supervisor outside of HSE (for example from the organization where he/she had his/her internship or underwent a study semester abroad).

- 2.2. The student must be the sole author of the thesis.
- 2.3. The student should attend a consultation with the program director during the 1st year of study, discussing possible research topics and thesis supervisors. The student then will choose his topic and his thesis supervisor and submit a printed and filled in Thesis Topic and Supervisor Application Form (Appendix 2) to the program manager on November 20th of the 2nd study year (2nd module). The form should indicate the thesis title in Russian and English. Both the student and the supervisor should sign the application form. The student can provide a scanned copy of the form to the MA program manager in case he or she is participating in the student mobility at the time the form is to be submitted.
- 2.4. Upon the approval of the chosen topic by the academic council of the Master’s program, the program manager issues an order on the topic and supervisor for each student. The Academic council may recommend that the student makes changes to the topic. The order is prepared in December of the 2nd study year (2nd module). The student may file a claim for topic or supervisor change (Appendix 3 and 4) no later than April 15th of the 2nd study year (4th module), but at least one month before the pre-defense of the thesis in the research seminar.
- 2.5. The student must also choose one external reviewer of his thesis. This person should apply to the same characteristics as the thesis supervisor, but cannot work at the same department as the latter. Anyway, this person can be an associate of an external organization/other university.

If the student is not able to arrange the external reviewer, the academic council of the programme will support with suggestions.

- 2.6. Students participating in a Double-Degree-Track with either Freie Universitaet Berlin or the Advanced School for Social Siences (EHESS) in Paris choose two supervisors – one from HSE (main supervisor) and one from the partner institution (external reviewer).

3. Thesis supervision and student interaction

The student and the supervisor agree on the time schedule for thesis completion. According to HSE regulations the main elements are:

- Thesis project proposal (which describes the relevance and structure of the work plan, a list of the main references for this work, expected result), which has to be submitted to the academic council by July 1st (end of 4th module of the 1st study year (see Appendix 1)).
- Project proposals will be reviewed by the MA thesis committee of the Program until the end of July, after which a proposal is either accepted or send back to the student for revisions according to the advice of the committee members.
- Submission of a first draft by the end of Module 3 of the 2nd academic year and feedback on it by the supervisor in 2 weeks after submission.
- Students provide to the Study office names and job titles of the academic supervisor and the external reviewer by May 1st
- Final text submission of the thesis to the supervisor and the external reviewer by the end of May; “Anti-plagiat” (or relevant English-language anti-plagiarism software) text check-up has to be attached to the thesis. Submission of the final paper into LMS system by May 23.
- Review and grading by the thesis supervisor and the external reviewer by June 4th.
- Thesis defense in June

4. Thesis content and structure

The thesis for the CSR Master’s program must meet the following characteristics:

4.1. General requirements

- The thesis has to be written in English.

4.2. Thesis contents

- The thesis must have between 18 and 22 thousand words (including all – references, footnotes, tables, graphics, etc.).
- Students participating in the Double-Degree-Track with 1) Freie University Berlin have to submit at least 22 thousand words, and with 2) EHESS Paris at least 25 thousand words.
- The thesis must be of the highest scientific standards of ethics and research (adequately and accurately citing all relevant sources, containing no plagiarism).

- The thesis must include substantial original content produced by the student, including an obligatory and profound empirical part as core of the thesis.

4.3. Thesis structure

1. Cover Page
2. Table of Contents
3. List of Abbreviations (if included)
4. Introduction
5. Main Body (components: chapters, sub-chapters, etc.)
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography
8. Appendices and Annexes (if included)

- MA thesis should be submitted in one single electronic data file

5. Grading, re-examination and appeal

The final grade is decided by the defense commission which takes into account the grades by the academic supervisor (20% weight) and by the external reviewer (30% weight) for the thesis text as well as the commission's grade for the MA thesis defense (50% weight).

- 5.1. The student must submit a hard copy and an electronic file of the completed thesis to the thesis supervisor, the external reviewer, the Master's program manager and to LMS. The report on plagiarism should be attached. All the documents have to be submitted within the established time line.
- 5.2. The thesis supervisor and the external reviewer assess the final version of the thesis on a ten-point scale and also give more detailed feedback according to a review template (Appendix 5) and the assessment criteria (Appendix 6).
- 5.3. The Master's thesis defense has the following elements:
 - max. 20 min – Student's presentation of the thesis research
 - max. 15 min – questions from Commission members and answers of Student
- 5.3. The final grade will be given by the defense committee, which will base its decision on the supervisor's grade, the external reviewer's grade and the grade for defending the thesis before the committee (which is defined by the average of all grades of the present committee members for the defense). However, if the grades of two or more of the three grading parties differ by 2 points or more, the defense

committee holds the right to define the final grade according to the committee's own assessment.

The evaluation of the MA thesis is orientated towards the following criteria:

- Adequacy of thesis topic and the contents of the research, both of which should lay clearly in the field of comparative sociology
 - Fittingness of title/topic of the thesis and the corresponding empirical analysis
 - Quality of the applied research design
 - Fulfillment of goals and objectives of the research project
 - Originality and novelty of the thesis
 - Quality of the argumentation and strength of the contribution to the topical field
 - Adherence to professional ethics and citation standards
 - Level of student's personal contribution to the development of the topic
 - Correctness of analytical technique(s) applied
 - Thesis formatting
- 5.5. In the case where the thesis is graded less than 4 on a ten-point scale the student will not get awarded ECTS points. The student is expected to resubmit the thesis in the next module.
- 5.6. The student may contest the grade for the thesis following the general appeal procedures of HSE. The student may file an appeal to the academic supervisor of the program within 3 working days upon receiving the grades with detailed grounds for appeal. The appeal committee of Faculty of Social Sciences will make a decision within 3 working days.

Master's Thesis Defense is video recorded. If a Student has a complaint about the compliance to the procedures set by the HSE regulation (not the Master's Program regulation, i.e. this text), then the official Appeal procedure based on video recording and other evidences may be used. However, the Appeal deals only with procedural failures (e.g. less than officially established 20 minutes provided for Student's presentation, etc.) and does not lead to the revision of the grading per se.

- 5.7. The Turn-it-in anti-plagiarism report is the mandatory requirement for admission to defense of Term Papers and Master's Theses. The report, prepared by the Program Manager after the text of Term Paper/ Master's Thesis is uploaded to LMS, initiates a special procedure:

- the Supervisor is provided a copy of the Turn-it-in report for all the relevant Students by the Program Manager (the Study Office). If the 20% threshold of borrowing is not exceeded, the Supervisor's review is done in the regular manner.
- if the 20% borrowing threshold is exceeded, then the Supervisor reviews the report together with the Term Paper/Master's Thesis text and determines if there are problems of plagiarism and/or excessive borrowing.
- if excessive borrowing (i.e. lack of independent analytical contribution of a Student to the development of the topic) is detected, the Supervisor reflects and comments on it in the Supervisor's Review. If borrowing is justifiable, then the Supervisor comments on it in the review and provides explanation. The Defense Commission makes a decision on grading taking into account the Supervisor's judgment. Extreme borrowing may be punished by a failure at the Defense.
- if plagiarism in the text is detected and confirmed, the Supervisor reflects and comments on it in the Supervisor's Review and informs the Study Office about the plagiarism. After that the Study Office initiates the formal procedure of the guilty Student's expulsion.

6. MA thesis storage

The Study Office of the Master's program stores copies of Master thesis for 3 years (either in the form of hard copies or electronic files).

7. Formatting of the MA thesis

Text format

7.1. Headings of sections

- Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations, Introduction, Conclusion, References, Appendices, and Annexes.
- Times New Roman 16, bold, aligned left, not numbered.
- Headings of chapters: Times New Roman 14, bold, aligned left, numbered (1, 2, etc.).

7.2. Headings of sub-chapters and sub-sub-chapters

- Times new Roman 12, bold, aligned left, numbered (1.1, 1.1.1, 1.2, etc.).

7.3. Paragraphs

- Each paragraph should be from 10 to 15 lines (on average). There should be no spacing between a paragraph and the following one.

7.4. Main text:

- Times new Roman 12, spaced 1.5

7.5. Block quotations

- Times New Roman 11, single-spaced, justified, each line indented left.

7.6. Footnotes

- Times New Roman 11, single-spaced, aligned left, no first line indentation.

7.7. Page numbers

- All the pages of the file should be counted and listed.

7.8. Margins

- Left, right – 3 cm.
- Bottom, top – 2,01cm.

7.9. Bibliography

- Entries should be categorized and alphabetized.
- Times New Roman 14, aligned left, single-spaced with spacing between each entry and the next one.
- No first line indentation, no numbering, no bullet points.

7.10. Page numbering

- Page numbers start from the Table of Contents (page 2) and end with the Bibliography.
- Appear at the bottom of the page, centered.

7.11. Page break between sections

- Page break between sections, e.g. between the Table of Contents and the List of Abbreviations (if included), between the List of Abbreviations, list of tables, list of figures and Introduction, between the Introduction and the Main Body, between the Main body and the Conclusion, between the Conclusion and the Bibliography, between the Bibliography and the Appendixes or Annexes (if included).
- Page break at the end of each chapter (i.e. start each chapter on a new page) is required.

Citations/ References

- 7.12. APA (American Psychological Association) citation regulations apply (<http://www.apastyle.org/manual/index.aspx>).
- 7.13. Citations in Text – one author / two authors
- In-text citations are placed within sentences and paragraphs.
 - All last names occur in the text.
 - Names are connected with “&” (Muller & Smith, 2014).
 - Names of the authors or the date might be part of the statement, in this case only missing information is given in parentheses.
- 7.14. Citations in Text – more than 2 authors
- In-text citations are placed within sentences and paragraphs.
 - All last names occur in the text when reference is made first.
 - Name of the author or the date might be part of the statement, in this case only missing information is given in parentheses.
 - In subsequent citations the first author’s name occurs followed by “et al.”
- 7.15. Internet references
- The same rules apply as for printed references.
 - Online references have to show the correct and full link and to be accompanied by the statement “last accessed” including date of accessing the reference.
- 7.16. Reference List
- Bibliography includes only references cited in the text.

- All references cited must be included in the bibliography.
- References should be in alphabetical order by authors' last names.

Appendix

Appendix 1

Typical structure of research proposal (Synopsis)

- Title page with the topic of research;
- Description of the research problem and formulation of the key research question or hypothesis (related to the topic on the title page), which both must lie in the field of comparative sociology.
- Contribution and relevance of the research problem/question; the need for conducting the master thesis research;
- Literature review on the proposed research problem: should include literature and sources of different types both in Russian and English. The literature review should include not less than 30 sources. The aim of this part is to analyze the scope of existing research of the problem and to outline where the existing research is deficient or inconclusive, so that your research fills a gap in the literature.
- Research tasks which are needed for achieving the aim of research (two or three major tasks, usually);
- Theoretical framework and methodological approaches of the research; do not simply list the approaches, show how they will help to fulfill your research tasks and achieve its aim;
- Research methods and sources of data/information; outline the analytical techniques and empirical models you will use.

- Roadmap: explain the structure of your work and the analytical steps you will take (brief overview of all parts);
- If applicable, give an overview of the information sources: their limitations, bias, scope;
- If applicable, specify the choice of time period and geographical scope of the research;
- If applicable, outline theoretical and practical value of the work; major conclusions for the thesis defense; specify the choice of cases for analysis.

Appendix 2 MA Thesis Topic and Supervisor Application Form

Академическому руководителю основной образовательной Программы магистратуры «Сравнительные социальные исследования» по направлению «Социология»/
To the Academic Supervisor of Master in Comparative Social Research

От студента курса группы/ from student, year of study and group number

ФИО/ name surname _____

ЗАЯВЛЕНИЕ/ APPLICATION

Прошу утвердить мне тему выпускной работы/ I submit for your approval the topic of my MA thesis. Тема на русском языке/ topic in Russian:

Тема на английском языке/ Topic in English:

(все слова в названии темы с большой буквы кроме артиклей и предлогов/ capitalize all words except for articles and prepositions)

и назначить научного руководителя/ Supervisor_____

(уч. степень, звание, Ф.И.О./degree and title, name) департамента/of the department

Согласие научного руководителя/Signature of the Supervisor

(подпись/signature)

Date

Подпись студента/Signature of the student

Appendix 3 MA Thesis supervisor change

Академическому руководителю основной образовательной Программы магистратуры «Сравнительные социальные исследования» по направлению «Социология»/
To the Academic Supervisor of Master in Comparative Social Research

От студента курса группы/from student, year of study and group number

ФИО/name surname_____

ЗАЯВЛЕНИЕ/ APPLICATION

Прошу изменить ранее назначенного научного руководителя выпускной работы на/ I would like to submit a request for MA thesis supervisor change

Согласие научного руководителя/Signature of the Supervisor

(подпись/signature)

Date

Подпись студента/Signature of the student

Предыдущий научный руководитель/ previous Supervisor _____ <i>(Подпись/Signature)</i> _____ <i>(ФИО/Name)</i> _____ <i>(Дата/Date)</i>	Новый научный руководитель/ New Supervisor _____ <i>(Подпись/Signature)</i> _____ <i>(ФИО/Name)</i> _____ <i>(Дата/Date)</i>
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Appendix 4 MA Thesis topic change

Академическому руководителю основной образовательной программы магистратуры «Сравнительные социальные исследования»
To the Academic Supervisor of Master in Comparative Social Research

От студента курса группы/from student, year of study and group number

ФИО/name surname _____

ЗАЯВЛЕНИЕ/ APPLICATION

Прошу утвердить мне измененную тему выпускной работы/ I submit for your approval the updated topic of my coursework

Тема на русском языке/ topic in Russian: _____

Тема на английском языке/Topic in English:

(все слова в названии темы с большой буквы кроме артиклей и предлогов/capitalize all words except for articles and prepositions)

Согласие научного руководителя/Signature of the Supervisor

(подпись/signature)

Date

Подпись студента/Signature of the student

Appendix 5 MA Thesis review template

Review
of a Master thesis by a student of the
HSE International Master Program “Comparative Social Research”

Review by

supervisor

external reviewer

Author of MA thesis:

Titel of MA thesis

		Evaluation (out of 10 points)
1.	Existence and validity of the research problem	
2.	Correctness and validity of the methodology (goal, objectives, assumptions, etc.)	
3.	Correct use of methods of data analysis	
4.	Breadth of included scientific literature and depth of its elaboration	
5.	Logic, sequence of presentation, clarity, precision of language	

6.	Meaningful interpretation of the results	
7.	Neatly presented text (including references, quotes, graphs, tables)	
8.	Disclosure of topics, complete collection of materials, the relationship of individual parts	
9.	Novelty and originality of the obtained results	

The absence of violations of academic standards: Yes No

In total: Recommended grade for MA thesis	
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Additional Comments

Strengths of the thesis

Weaknesses of the thesis

Review prepared by

(Name, position, date)

Appendix 6 MA Thesis assessment criteria

Research design

The student is capable of independently formulating a relevant research problem for a relatively complex research including research questions and a corresponding strategy.

Knowledge of relevant literature and grasp of theory

The student shows familiarity with, and understanding of, the relevant literature. He/she has incorporated recent developments in the field relevant to his/her research/design. He/she shows an ability to conduct a critical study and in-depth analysis of the relevant sections of the selected sources and, on the basis of broadening, integration and/or comparison of the various theories, concepts and models to develop his/her own ideas for the conceptualization and operationalization of the research question.

Structure of chapters and sections & Coherence and quality of argument

Structure of chapters and paragraphs is clear and subsequent. The quality of English and general presentation are of a standard for publication. His/her argument is structured, logical, to the point and linguistically correct, and the literature references have been incorporated according to a scientific standard used in the field in question. Arguments are substantial and coherent.

Originality

Novelty of research results is achieved (e.g. new interpretation of scientific theories, concepts, constructions, models, etc. is suggested; theory supplemented with new data independently collected, processed and analyzed by the student etc.

Discussion and development of empirical material

The student is capable of independently handling the instruments for data collection and analysis in a valid and reliable manner, resulting in a data set and corresponding analysis results, the validity of which he/she has ascertained and which enable him/her to answer the research questions.