

Part 4. Master's thesis

General information on the Master's thesis

1. The Master's thesis is a compulsory part of the Master's Programme in Comparative Social Research which allows to demonstrate the skills and knowledge obtained during the study.
2. The study plan is designed so that the thesis submission falls on Module 4 of the 2nd year of study. The precise deadlines are listed in the Table 1.
3. The submission and defense of the Master's thesis have a combined value of 24 ECTS.
4. The Master's thesis should include **comparative sociological methodology**. The Master's thesis should contain clear notes of AI usage of any kind: it is not prohibited to use **AI tools**, but every time when it is used, students need to add footnotes explaining why they were used and what they added to the paper. Usage of AI tools for literature review preparation should be plainly and argumentatively explained: what exactly student obtained in comparison with the traditional literature analysis. Students should confirm/deny the usage of AI tools in the LMS system according to the HSE rules and regulations.
5. Students must attend the Master's thesis Research seminars, where they will get a regular feedback on their progress from the instructor and their peers.

Format of the Master's thesis

1. Master's thesis may be prepared as a **classical academic thesis**. In this case, student should be sole author of the Master's thesis (no co-authors are allowed) and should follow the requirements provided in this document.
2. Master's thesis may be prepared as an **article for the peer-reviewed journal**. In this case, student need to provide the title of the journal and its web-link in introduction of the paper. If such paper was written with some co-authors, the impact of the student should be clearly mentioned in introduction as well.
3. In both cases, the quality of the text and analysis should satisfy the standards of the advanced draft or "ready for submission" stage of an academic paper for a peer-reviewed journal.
4. Master's thesis already submitted to the peer-reviewed journal and representing a publishable quality in the eyes of the supervisor will be granted a bonus grade. A letter from the journal's editor or manager must document this.

Topic and supervisor choice

1. The main supervisor of student's Master's thesis should be an HSE staff member with a scientific title (e.g. PhD, candidate of sciences, Dr.).
2. Upon the Academic Council approval, the thesis co-supervisor can be an employee of an external organisation as long as he/she has a scientific title (e.g. PhD, candidate of sciences, Dr.) and either of the following:
 - € practical experience in the topical field of the Master's thesis for at least 3 years
 - € experience in supervising of scientific research.
3. The student must attend Research seminars and offer some research topics. Based on the received feedback and own search, the student chooses his or her topic and supervisor.
4. The student submits a printed and filled in Application form for Master's thesis topic and supervisor (Appendix 1) to the Programme's manager before the set deadline (Table 1). 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 Master's Programme manager in case he or she is participating in the student mobility at the time the form is to be submitted.
5. Upon the approval of the chosen topic by the Academic Council of the Master's Programme, the Programme manager issues an order on the topic and supervisor for each student. A certain date will be announced by the manager.
6. The Academic Council may recommend that the student makes changes to the topic. The student may file a claim for topic or supervisor change (Appendix 2 and 3) before the set deadline (Table 1).

External reviewer

1. The student must choose one external reviewer of his or her thesis. This person should satisfy to the same requirements as the thesis supervisor but cannot work at the same department as the latter. This person can be an associate of an external organisation/other university.
2. The student should directly contact to the potential reviewer and confirm that this reviewer is ready to give a feedback according to a review's template (Appendix 4) and before the deadline.
3. If the student is not able to arrange the external reviewer, he or she should inform the Programme's Academic Supervisor, so that the Academic Council of the Programme will offer some candidatures.

Master's thesis supervision and interaction

1. Students contact to their potential supervisors by themselves, kindly and respectfully ask for the potential supervision, then proactively arrange cooperation and inform chosen supervisors on all the deadlines, requirements and other important details.
2. The student and the supervisor agree on the time schedule for thesis completion (the dates are presented in the Table 1). According to HSE regulations the main elements are:
 - € Submission of Synopsis (Master's thesis project proposal) to the Master's thesis supervisor (structure is in Appendix 6) and receiving a feedback on the prepared materials. Synopsis describes the relevance and structure of the work plan and lists the main references for future work and the expected result.
 - € Pre-defence is conducted as a presentation of a Master's thesis and uploading of the prepared thesis in the actual form at the date of pre-defence.
 - € Submission of the first draft and feedback on it by the supervisor.
 - € Students provide to the Study office names and job titles of the academic supervisor and the external reviewer.
 - € Final text submission of the Master's thesis to the Programme's manager and into LMS.
 - € "Anti-plagiat" text check-up.
 - € Receiving a feedback and grading by the thesis supervisor and the external reviewer (Appendix 4).
 - € Master's thesis defence.

Master's thesis content and structure

The Master's thesis for the CSR Master's Programme must meet the following characteristics:

1. General requirements:
 - € Master's thesis will be prepared within the CSR Master's Programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences, so it must have vivid comparative and sociological aspects in the topic and the content.
 - € Master's thesis may be a single independent research or the continuation of the Term paper. In the last case, Master's thesis still should have a substantial empirical and novel part.
 - € Master's thesis should be written in academic English. All Russian words in the text and in the reference list should be translated in English.
 - € Master's thesis should be submitted in one single electronic data file.
 - € Master's thesis must include substantial original content (empirical, theoretical or methodological) produced by the student. A profound empirical part as core of the thesis.
 - € Master's thesis written in a "classical" academic format must be between 18 000 and 22 000 words long (including title page, references, footnotes, tables and graphs). Appendices are not included in this length.). Master's thesis written for the concrete journal should match the journal's requirements. Its title and web-link should be mentioned in introduction as well as the impact of the student if he or she had co-authors.
 - € Master's thesis must be of the highest scientific standards of ethics and research (adequately and accurately citing all relevant sources, containing no plagiarism and no hidden AI usage).
2. Master's thesis structure (or according to the journal's requirements):
 - € Title Page (Appendix 5)
 - € Abstract
 - € Table of Contents

- ∄ List of Abbreviations (if included)
- ∄ Introduction
- ∄ Main Body:
 - theoretical chapter
 - methodological chapter (if included)
 - empirical chapter
- ∄ Conclusion
- ∄ Discussion (if included)
- ∄ Acknowledgements (if included)
- ∄ References
- ∄ Appendices and Annexes (if included).

Grading, re-examination and appeal

1. The grading is done at the closed concluding session at the end of each Defense day; the grades are an average of the individual grades of Commission members. Only the final grade is publicly announced. The Commission takes into consideration reviews by a supervisor and an external reviewer (including grades proposed).
2. The student must submit a hard copy and an electronic file of the completed Master's thesis to the Master's Programme manager and into LMS. The report from the "Anti-plagiat" should be attached.
3. All the documents have to be submitted within the established time line (Table 1).
4. Master's thesis supervisor and the external reviewer assess the final version of the thesis on a ten-point scale and give a more detailed feedback according to a review's template (Appendix 4).
5. To pre-defend and defend the Master's thesis in front of the Defence Committee, the student should prepare a presentation and present it following the requirements and timing which will be sent to students. After that Committee will ask questions. Before presentation the student uploads the prepared text of the Master's thesis and the presentation before the set deadline.
6. The grades of the Defence Committee for pre-defending and defending the Master's thesis will be calculated as averages of all Committee members.
7. If the grades of the three grading parties (the Defence Committee, the Master's thesis supervisor and the External reviewer) differ by 2 points or more, the Defence Committee holds the right to define the final grade according to the Committee's own assessment.
8. If the pre-defence of the Master's thesis is graded less than 4 on a ten-point scale, the student will have an opportunity to have two retakes. Rescheduling the second retake or repeated study is not permitted for the Thesis Preparation curriculum element. All retakes must be completed by the end of the final academic year and before the start of the FSC. If after the retakes the mark do not exceed 4 points, the student will not be allowed to defend the Master's thesis.
9. In the case where the Master's 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 not earlier than 10 months from the date of expulsion. The retake of pre-defence could be passed no more than 2 times. The Master's thesis topic can be modified upon consultation of the Master's thesis supervisor and Programme's Academic Supervisor.
10. The student may contest the grade for the Master's thesis following the general appeal procedures. The student has the right to file an appeal in the form of a personal written reasoned statement to the secretary of the appeals commission no later than the next working day after the announcement of the results.
11. Master's thesis defence will be video recorded. If a student has a complaint about the compliance to the procedures set by the HSE regulation (not the Master's Programme regulation, i.e. this text), then the official Appeal procedure based on video recording and other evidence may be used. However, the Appeal deals only with procedural failures and does not lead to the revision of the grading per se.
12. The Turn-it-in anti-plagiarism report is the mandatory requirement for admission to defense of Master's theses. The report, prepared by the Programme's Manager after the text of Master's thesis is uploaded to LMS, initiates a special procedure:
 - ∄ The Master's thesis supervisor is provided a copy of the Turn-it-in report for all the relevant

students by the Programme's 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 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 Defence Committee makes a decision on grading taking into account the supervisor's judgment. Extreme borrowing may be punished by a failure at the defence.
- ⊘ 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.
- ⊘ If during a paper preparation a student uses algorithms for automatic content generation (chat GPT and others AI tools), the student is obliged to accompany the task with a special section "Description of the application of a generative model" with a description of the application goals, the name of a specific generative model, the address of its website on the Internet (or description of another source of the model), and the method of its application.

Formatting of the Master's thesis

Master's thesis formatting should conform precisely to that of the targeted journal. The following general recommendations are superseded by the targeted journal's requirements.

Text format

1. Main text: Times New Roman 14, width alignment, single-spaced with spacing between each entry and the next one.
2. Margins: Left, right – 3 cm. Bottom, top – 2 cm.
3. Headings of sections (Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations, Introduction, Conclusion, References, Appendices, and Annexes): Times New Roman 16, bold, aligned left, not numbered.
4. Headings of chapters (Theoretical Part, Methodological Part, Empirical Part): Times New Roman 16, bold, aligned left, numbered (1, 2, etc.). These chapters may have substantial titles instead of "Theoretical" etc.
5. Headings of sub-chapters and sub-sub-chapters: Times new Roman 14, bold, aligned left, numbered (1.1, 1.1.1, 1.2, etc.).
6. 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. Block quotations: Times New Roman 11, single-spaced, justified, each line indented left.
8. Footnotes: Times New Roman 11, single-spaced, width alignment, no first line indentation.
9. Page numbering:
 - ⊘ All the pages of the file should be counted.
 - ⊘ Page numbers start from the Table of Contents (page 2) and end with the Bibliography.
 - ⊘ Appear at the bottom of the page, centered.
10. References:
 - ⊘ Entries should be categorized and alphabetized.
 - ⊘ Times New Roman 14, width alignment, single-spaced with spacing between each entry and the next one.
 - ⊘ No first line indentation, no numbering, no bullet points.
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 Appendices 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

1. Reference list includes not less than 30 sources.
2. APA (American Psychological Association) citation style:
<http://www.apastyle.org/manual/index.aspx>
3. Citations in Text – *one or two authors/author*:
 - ⊄ 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.
4. Citations in Text – *more than two authors*:
 - ⊄ In-text citations are placed within sentences and paragraphs.
 - ⊄ All last names occur in the text when reference is made first.
 - ⊄ In subsequent citations the first author’s name occurs followed by “et al.”
 - ⊄ Name of the author or the date might be part of the statement, in this case only missing information is given in parentheses.
5. 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.
6. Reference List:
 - ⊄ Bibliography includes only references cited in the text.
 - ⊄ All references cited must be included in the bibliography.
 - ⊄ References should in alphabetical order by authors’ last names.
 - ⊄ No first line indentation, no numbering, no bullet points.

Appendix 6. Structure of Master's thesis research proposal (Synopsis)

- ⌘ Title page with the topic of research (Appendix 5).
- ⌘ 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's thesis research.
- ⌘ Literature review on the proposed research problem. Includes literature and sources of different types both in Russian and English. Includes not less than 30 sources. The aim of this part is to analyse 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.