



RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES

THESIS DEFENSE

The “Economics and Politics in Asia”
BA Double Degree Program

The “Economics, politics and business in Asia”
MA Double Degree Program

Approved by [Academic Council](#)

GENERAL INFORMATION

A thesis requires an oral defense and a written paper evaluated by an academic committee convened for that purpose. The word thesis here refers to a formal research investigation on an approved topic in the form of a written paper based on the Research Paper Guidelines (2020).

In a broad sense, the oral defense is an academic discussion where students present their research and defend the key arguments. The oral defense provides students with an opportunity to share their research results directly with the recognized experts who have been appointed as their examiners and also helps them establish stronger ties and networks across their field of study.

The main objectives of holding an oral defense are to:

- provide the student with an opportunity to defend their thesis and reply to criticism or challenges to their arguments while enabling examiners to clarify issues in the thesis;
- facilitate the examiners reaching agreement on an examination result;
- facilitate the examiners providing to the student an agreed, single, set of corrections or revisions required to be made before the award of the qualification can be made;

It is not the purpose of an oral defense to test the student's command of spoken English. However, the tone of the presentation must be professional and suitable for an academic discussion, the key points must be worded well, and word choices must be precise.

During the oral defense, the student demonstrates the following competencies:

- Collecting, analyzing, documenting, and reporting research concisely, logically, and ethically;
- Understanding the standards for legitimate interpretations of research data within the academic community;
- Using primary and secondary sources to discover information;
- Practicing the unique qualities of academic writing style (e.g., sentence conciseness, readability, clarity, accuracy, using direct order organization, objectivity);
- Planning a presentation with the audience in mind;
- Developing clear objectives for their presentation;
- Considering ways of grabbing the listener's attention, holding their interest, and concluding firmly;
- Using slides and other visual aids effectively;
- Delivering an enthusiastic and well-practiced presentation.

COMMITTEE

The Committee evaluates the oral defense. The Committee consists of at least three scholars with strong expertise in the topics presented by the student(s). The Committee members provide a professional assessment of both the written paper and its oral defense. The Head of the Committee acts as the moderator at the oral defense. The Head of the Committee has the following duties:

- Preside and see to it that all participants treat each other with respect and follow the highest standards of academic ethics;
- Clarify the procedure to all participants at the beginning of the oral defense;
- Determine an order of presentations, when students defend in a group;
- Determine an order of questions by the Committee members;
- Controlling the timing of presentations¹;
- Fill out the Oral defense evaluation sheet (see [Appendix 1](#)) at the end of the oral defense and the Committee deliberations².

PROCEDURE

The oral defense is open to the HSE university community.

The oral defense should be scheduled to allow a minimum of a week for all members of the Committee to review the papers, supervisor's reviews, and, if applicable, external reviews.

BA defense: The student will open the oral defense with a **presentation** of their findings (about 10 minutes), after which the members of the Committee will **question** them in an order determined by the Head of the Committee (up to 10 minutes).

MA defense: The student provides a 15-20-minute presentation, summarizing their research question, the results obtained, and the conclusions. After the presentation, the Committee asks the student questions (up to 20 minutes).

When the questioning is complete, the Committee starts **voting deliberation**. Individuals who are not members of the official Committee will be excluded from the pre-discussion and voting deliberation portions of the thesis defense.

The Committee members deliberate and cast their decision on the final grade based on the criteria outlined in [Appendix 2](#). In committees of 3 members, a unanimous vote should be achieved. In committees of 4 members, there can be one dissenting vote. In all disputable cases, the final decision is made by the Head of the Committee.

¹ This duty could be delegated to one of the Committee members or the Secretary of the Committee.

² This duty could be delegated to one of the Committee members or the Secretary of the Committee.

PART 1: Oral presentation

In a presentation, the student should cover the following aspects of their research:

- Provide general information about the research project on the first slide, including the title of the paper, author's name, and academic supervisor's name;
- Explain why the key research question is relevant to the field of study and/or society more broadly;
- Present the key research question(s) and argument(s);
- Present a summary of literature with the emphasis on the novelty of the research project;
- Identify the research design and explain major methodological and theoretical choices;
- Present the structure of the paper with summaries of all chapters;
- Present the main findings and conclusions.

MA defense: The presentation must clearly identify the original contributions to knowledge.

The oral presentation should be engaging, concise, and logical. The purpose and argument should be clear and well defined. Ideas should be logically arranged throughout the presentation. The key points should be worded well. The text on the slides must be error-free. It is highly recommended to prepare no more than ten slides and present no more than 4 or 5 points on each slide. Students are encouraged to use illustrations, charts, tables, graphs, and other visual aids to present their findings. The tone is professional and suitable for an academic presentation (see the [Guidelines for more information about appropriate language](#)).

PART 2: Questioning

After the oral presentation, each member of the Committee has an opportunity to ask at least two questions. All questions are recorded in the Oral defense evaluation sheet ([Appendix 1](#)) by the Head of the Committee or the Secretary of the Committee. Within three days after the defense, all evaluation sheets should be submitted to the Study office.³

Questions serve to verify whether the paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the topic and help to evaluate the communication skills and competences of the student.

Questions dealing with the substance, meaning, and usefulness of the research in the research paper are of the highest priority. Questions may also focus on the comments of the supervisor. Questions can also cover related topics (e.g., students could be asked to provide policy recommendations for Russia) or consider some current events that are relevant to the context of the research field (e.g., the current status of a territorial issue mentioned in the oral presentation or the written paper). Finally, questions can focus on the avenues for future research.

The questions will be based mainly on the thesis and presentation, but the student's grasp of related subjects may also be tested.

Students should have a copy of their research paper with them during the defense and may refer to any particular page or information, if they need to do so to answer a question.

³ In case of online defense (e.g. under the circumstances of COVID-19 outbreak) the scan copies of signed evaluation sheets can be sent to the Study office via e-mail by the Head or the Secretary of the Committee.

EVALUATION

The final grade consists of the evaluation of the written thesis and oral defense⁴ and is based on the following grading criteria:

Mark	Criteria
10 (exceptional)	<p>Paper & presentation: Extremely clear, focused, and well-developed argument. Impressive depth and breadth of knowledge of the subject matter. Demonstrated command of relevant concepts and theories. Some degree of originality or creative and independent thinking. Extremely thorough and effective research effort. Excellent presentation.</p> <p>Questioning: Extremely thorough answers that make impressively thoughtful use of theoretical frames and information from specific cases and examples. Very insightful, clear, and convincing answers.</p>
9 (excellent)	<p>Paper & presentation: The question is obvious but the argument is creative and original. Some minor errors and short comings. Other than that, an excellent work.</p>
8 (excellent)	<p>Paper & presentation: An excellent work with a "but." The question is obvious but the argument is somewhat creative. Relatively frequent minor errors and shortcomings.</p>
7 (very good)	<p>Paper & presentation: Very clear, focused & well-developed argument. Impressively thorough knowledge of the subject matter. Solid understanding of relevant concepts and theories. The thoroughness and effectiveness of the research effort are beyond standard expectations. Clearly better than average argumentation and writing.</p> <p>Questioning: Presentation gone well beyond providing the bare essentials by, for example, being extremely thorough, making direct reference to literature or providing good examples. Thoughtful, clear and convincing answers. Solidly above average.</p>
6 (good)	<p>Paper & presentation: Clear, focused & well-developed argument. Thorough knowledge of the subject matter. Solid understanding of relevant concepts theories. Average to better than average argumentation, research and writing.</p> <p>Questioning: Gone beyond providing the bare essentials by making good use of references to literature or examples. Clear and convincing answers.</p>
5 (satisfactory)	<p>Paper & presentation: Clear but underdeveloped argument. Competent level of knowledge of the subject matter. Satisfactory grasp of relevant concepts. Requirements of assignment fully satisfied. Satisfactory argumentation, research, and writing.</p> <p>Questioning: Expectations are met in that the essential components of competent answers to the questions are all there. The depth of understanding and quality of analysis is entirely acceptable but not impressive. Reasonably clear and convincing answers.</p>
4 (satisfactory)	<p>Paper & presentation: Signs of weakness in argumentation. Competent level of knowledge of the subject matter. Satisfactory grasp of relevant concepts. Requirements of research paper basically satisfied. While the argumentation,</p>

⁴ The final mark consists of 0,5*academic supervisor's mark + 0,5*oral defense mark.

	<p>research, and presentation are satisfactory, they are of below average quality.</p> <p>Questioning: Only the most obvious of expectations are met in that the essential components of answers to the questions are all there but the depth of understanding and quality of analysis is below average.</p>
3 (unsatisfactory)	<p>Paper & presentation: Lack of clarity or consistency in argumentation. Slightly better than minimal knowledge of subject matter and relevant concepts. Limited ability to use course material or research techniques to satisfy standard expectations. Requirements of assignment not fully satisfied. Less than satisfactory argumentation, research, and presentation.</p> <p>Fails to provide the essential components of a satisfactory answer, but manages to demonstrate a limited understanding of relevant course material.</p>
2 (unsatisfactory)	<p>Paper & presentation: Unclear or missing argument. Fails to demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter or use of research techniques. Fails to fulfill the requirements of the assignment. Unacceptable argumentation, research and/or presentation.</p> <p>Questioning: Fails to provide the essential components of a satisfactory answer, but manages to demonstrate a limited understanding of relevant course material.</p>
1 (unsatisfactory)	<p>Paper & presentation: Unclear or missing argument. Fails to demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter or use of research techniques. Fails to fulfill the requirements of the assignment. Unacceptable argumentation, research and/or presentation.</p> <p>Questioning: Fails to provide the components of a minimally satisfactory answer.</p>
0 (unsatisfactory)	Plagiarism

ACADEMIC ETHICS

The Committee must follow the conform to ethical standards of HSE. The Committee must inform the Faculty about cases of plagiarism, including the cases when the academic supervisor approved the oral defense. If the fact of plagiarism is confirmed, the student receives an unsatisfactory mark and is a subject to disciplinary sanctions.

APPEALING PROCEDURE

The appealing procedure follows the general regulations and standards of HSE.

ORAL THESIS DEFENSE EVALUATION SHEET

Student	
Thesis title	
Comments (optional)	
Questions	
Academic supervisor's mark	
Oral defense mark	
Final mark (0,5*(Academic supervisor's mark) + 0,5*(Oral defense mark))	

Head of the Committee

(name, signature, date)

Members of the Committee

(name, signature, date)

(name, signature, date)

APPENDIX 2

Criteria	Exemplary (9-10 points)	Good (6-8 points)	Acceptable (4-5 points)	Unacceptable (0)	Score
1. Purpose & question	<p>The purpose and argument are clear and well defined.</p> <p>The student never digresses from the main argument.</p> <p>The question is clear and well defined.</p> <p>The question is relevant to the field of study and/or society more broadly.</p>	<p>The purpose and argument are clear but not well defined.</p> <p>The student occasionally digresses from the main argument.</p> <p>The question is clear.</p> <p>The question is relevant to the field of study and/or society more broadly, BUT the student does not clearly explain why this question is worth asking.</p>	<p>The purpose and argument are not clear.</p> <p>The student frequently digresses from the main argument.</p> <p>The question is not clear.</p> <p>The question is NOT relevant to the field of study and/or society more broadly.</p>	<p>The audience finds difficulty in following the purpose and argument of the paper.</p> <p>The students repeatedly digresses from the main argument.</p> <p>The question is not presented.</p>	
2. PAPER: Content & Analysis	<p>The paper's central purpose is supported by valid and relevant information.</p> <p>The paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the topic.</p> <p>The audience gains valuable information.</p>	<p>For the most part, the paper's central purpose is supported by valid and relevant information.</p> <p>The paper provides a basic analysis of the topic.</p> <p>The audience gains some useful information.</p>	<p>The paper's central purpose is not supported by enough relevant information.</p> <p>The paper provides a poor analysis of the topic.</p> <p>The audience gains little useful information.</p>	<p>The paper's central purpose is not clear and is not supported by relevant information.</p> <p>The paper provides no analysis or the analysis provided is confusing.</p> <p>The audience does not gain useful information or is misled by inaccurate information.</p>	
2. PRESENTATION: Organization & structure	<p>There is a logical arrangement of ideas throughout the presentation.</p> <p>The audience can follow the argument easily. Transition between ideas is logical and smooth.</p>	<p>For the most part, the arrangement of the ideas is logical.</p> <p>The audience may find some difficulty in following the argument. For the most part, transition between ideas is generally logical and smooth.</p>	<p>Most of the ideas are not arranged logically.</p> <p>The audience may get confused in following the argument of the presentation. Transition between ideas is generally weak, illogical and or not smooth.</p>	<p>The ideas are not arranged logically.</p> <p>The audience is confused in following the argument of the presentation. Transition between ideas is weak, illogical, and not smooth.</p>	
4. PRESENTATION: Register	<p>The presentation is engaging and lively.</p> <p>The tone is professional and suitable for an academic discussion.</p>	<p>Generally, the presentation is engaging, but some parts are dull.</p> <p>The tone is generally professional and suitable for an academic discussion.</p>	<p>The presentation is not engaging.</p> <p>For the most part, the tone is unprofessional and not suitable for an academic discussion.</p>	<p>The presentation is generally dull.</p> <p>The tone is completely unprofessional and unsuitable for an academic discussion.</p>	

Criteria	Exemplary (10 points)	Good (8 Points)	Acceptable (5 Point)	Unacceptable (0 Points)	Score
5. PRESENTATION: Mechanics	<p>The key points are worded well.</p> <p>Sentences are varied in structure, length, and complexity.</p> <p>Word choices are well-chosen, vivid and precise.</p> <p>The text on the slides is error-free.</p>	<p>The key points are worded relatively well.</p> <p>Most sentences are varied in structure, length, and complexity.</p> <p>Most word choices are appropriate.</p> <p>They convey meaning, but they lack variety and sophistication.</p> <p>The text on the slides has some minor errors, but they do not interfere with meaning.</p>	<p>The wording of the key points is confusing.</p> <p>There is a limited variety in sentence structure, length, and complexity.</p> <p>Most word choices are basic and not precise.</p> <p>The text on the slides is full of errors that might interfere with meaning and distract the audience.</p>	<p>The wording is unclear and confusing.</p> <p>Sentences lack proper sophistication and variety in structure and length.</p> <p>Word choices are limited and inappropriate.</p> <p>The text on the slides is full of major errors that interfere with the audience's understanding.</p>	
6. Timing	10 minutes	5 minutes longer than it is supposed to be OR a bit too short	The presentation is considerably shorter (e.g., 5 minutes and less) or longer than it is required (e.g., 15 minutes and more).	The presentation is way too long (e.g., the Head of the Committee had to interrupt the presentation) or too short.	
7. Quality of data sources & literature	The audience can trust the credibility and reliability of all the information provided.	The audience can trust the credibility and reliability of most of the information provided.	The audience might doubt the credibility and reliability of some of the information provided.	The audience cannot trust the credibility and reliability of the information provided.	
8. Creativity	The paper is creative and original.	The question is obvious but the argument is creative and original.	The question is obvious but the argument is somewhat creative.	The question is banal and the argument is obvious.	
9. Q & A 1	<p>The student understands questions and responds appropriately.</p> <p>Answers are clear, thoughtful and often insightful.</p>	<p>The student understands questions and responds appropriately.</p> <p>Answers are clear but not enough comprehensive.</p>	<p>The student understands questions and responds appropriately.</p> <p>Some answers are not correct or efficient.</p>	The student does not understand questions and responds appropriately.	
10. Q & A 2	<p>The student understands questions and responds appropriately.</p> <p>Answers are clear, thoughtful and often insightful.</p>	<p>The student understands questions and responds appropriately.</p> <p>Answers are clear but not enough comprehensive.</p>	<p>The student understands questions and responds appropriately.</p> <p>Some answers are not correct or efficient.</p>	The student does not understand questions and responds appropriately.	

Total _____/100