

5. Master Thesis

General info on the Master thesis

1. The Master thesis is a compulsory part of The International Master in Comparative Social Research.
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.
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.

Topic and supervisor choice

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 with regard to the thesis's relation to the social science discipline.

In addition, students with supervisors who do not work at the Faculty of Social Sciences are required to choose their external reviewers from the School of Sociology (preferably) or from any other department at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

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. The student must be the sole author of the thesis.
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.
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.

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.

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).

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 mid-May; “Anti-plagiat” (or relevant English-language anti-plagiarism software) text check-up has to be attached to the thesis
- Review and grading by the thesis supervisor and the external reviewer by June 4th.
- 2 hard copies of the Master thesis should be provided to the study office by June 5
- Thesis defense in mid-June

Thesis content and structure

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

1. General requirements

- The thesis has to be written in English.

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.

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

Grading, re-examination and appeal

The final grade is decided by the defense commission which takes into account the grades by the academic supervisor (25% weight) and by the external reviewer (25% weight) for the thesis text as well as the commission's grade for the MA thesis defense (50% weight).

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.
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).
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
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. 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.
 6. The student may contest the grade for the thesis following the general appeal procedures. 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 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.
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.

MA thesis storage

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

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 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.