

## 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 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study. The precise deadlines are listed in the Table 1.
3. The submission and defense of the thesis have a combined value of 12 ECTS.
4. The student must be a primary author of the Master's thesis.
5. Students must attend the Master's thesis workshops, 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 Master's thesis should be an HSE staff member.
2. With the Academic Council approval, the thesis supervisor can also be associated with an external organisation as long as he/she has either of the following:
  - practical experience in the topical field of the Master's 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 Programme's lecturers, who will evaluate and control the course of work on the Master's 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 organisation where he/she had his/her internship or underwent a study semester abroad).

3. The student must be the sole author of the thesis.
4. The student should attend a consultation with the Programme's Supervisor during the 1<sup>st</sup> year of study and thesis supervisors discussing possible research topics. After that the student choose his or her topic and thesis' supervisor.
5. The student submits a printed and filled in Application form for Master's thesis topic and supervisor (Appendix 1)<sup>2</sup> 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.
6. 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 indicated in Table 1.
7. The Academic Council may recommend that the student make 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).
8. The student must also choose one external reviewer of his or her thesis. This person should require to the same characteristics as the thesis's supervisor but cannot work at the same department as the latter. This person can be an associate of an external organisation/other university.
9. If the student is not able to arrange the external reviewer, the Academic Council of the Programme will support with suggestions.

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<sup>2</sup> Please consult your Programme manager on how to fill in the course application form.

## **Thesis supervision and student interaction**

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:

1. Submission of Synopsis (Master's thesis project proposal) to the Academic Council. Synopsis describes the relevance and structure of the work plan and lists the main references for future work and the expected result (Appendix 6). Synopsis will be reviewed by the Academic Council of the Programme, after which it will either be accepted or send back to the student for revisions according to the advice of the committee members.
2. Pre-defence (presentation of synopsis). Students present the relevance and structure of the work plan, a list of the main references for this work and expected result.
3. Submission of the first draft and feedback on it by the supervisor.
4. Students provide to the Study office names and job titles of the academic supervisor and the external reviewer.
5. Final text submission of the thesis to the supervisor and the external reviewer.
6. "Anti-plagiat" (or relevant English-language anti-plagiarism software) text check-up.
7. Feedback and grading by the thesis supervisor and the external reviewer.
8. Thesis defence.

## **Thesis content and structure**

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

1. General requirements:
  - Master's thesis should be written in academic English. All Russian words should be translated in English.
  - Master's thesis should meet the formal requirements of an advanced draft or "ready for submission" stage of an academic paper for a peer-reviewed journal, or it may already be submitted to such journal.
  - Master's thesis already submitted to a journal and representing publishable quality in the eyes of the supervisor will be granted a bonus grade. A letter or email from the journal's editor or manager must document this.
  - Master's thesis should be submitted in one single electronic data file.
2. Thesis contents:
  - The student must be the sole author of the thesis. No co-authors are allowed.
  - 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 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 must be of the highest scientific standards of ethics and research (adequately and accurately citing all relevant sources, containing no plagiarism).
3. Thesis structure:
  - Title Page (Appendix 5)
  - Abstract
  - Table of Contents
  - List of Abbreviations (if included)
  - Introduction
  - Main Body (Chapters: theoretical part, methodological part and empirical part)
  - 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 thesis supervisor, the external reviewer, the Master's Programme manager and to LMS. The report from the "Anti-plagiat" or other relevant anti-plagiarism software 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 template (Appendix 4).
5. To defend Master's thesis in front of Defence Committee, the student should prepare presentation and present it within maximum of 20 minutes. After that Committee will ask questions for maximum of 15 minutes.
6. The grade for defending the Master's thesis before the Committee will be calculated as an average of all grades of the Committee members.
7. If the grades two or more of the three grading parties (the 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. 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 in the next module. The Master's thesis topic can be modified upon consultation of the Master's thesis supervisor and Programme's Academic Supervisor. The student may resubmit the Master's thesis only once.
9. 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 Programme within 3 working days upon receiving the grades with detailed grounds for appeal. The appeal committee will make a decision within 3 working days.
10. Master's thesis defence is 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 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.
11. 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 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), 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.

### **Master's thesis storage**

The Study Office of the Master's Programme stores copies of Master's theses for three years (in the form of electronic files).

### **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 – 2,01cm.
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 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***

1. Reference list includes not less than 50 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.