

MA IN POLITICS AND SECURITY PROGRAMME 2019-2020

THESIS PROPOSAL WRITING GUIDE

You are about to start one of the most important requirements of your degree: the Master Thesis. In your Master Thesis you are asked to demonstrate your research skills and analytical abilities, to present original ideas and show your creativity, in addition to what you have learned during your studies at the OSCE Academy.

A master thesis is a research project for which you investigate a particular issue of academic significance on your own in consultation with your Thesis Supervisor. The thesis must constitute an original scholarly inquiry, it should clearly demonstrate your ability to conduct a critical analysis and for abstract reflection. A thesis needs to have a clear purpose – of proof; of solving the academic puzzle; of increasing our knowledge – and should be written in an academic manner. The pure description or compilation of already known material is not sufficient. The selection of your thesis topic and the development of a good proposal are key ingredients for the work towards writing a successful master thesis. Selecting your Thesis Supervisor is equally important in producing a successful thesis: she should possess expertise in the field of academic inquiry that you intend to engage, she should be someone who is willing to devote her time to supervise your work and who is open to establish a good academic and working relationship for the whole period of thesis work.

Please read carefully the Academic Regulations, the MA Thesis Supervisory Agreement as well as the MA Thesis Style and Formatting Manual for more details. These documents will assist you with structuring and formatting your thesis as well as familiarizing you with the academic requirements of the Academy as related to the MA Thesis.

The goal of this guide is to help you start with your Thesis, i.e. the development of your Thesis Proposal, which might serve as an introductory part of your Thesis as well. Writing a good proposal is an indispensable part of the process of writing a Thesis. The Thesis Proposal will help you to determine if your research is feasible, it will demand from you to provide with a clear focus of your academic inquiry, and it will request from you to have a plan for working on your Thesis. To make the proposal development process doable, the Study Programme requires students to work in three ascending stages:

I. THESIS TOPIC AND RESEARCH QUESTION

[please send to Nazira Abakirova, PS Programme Assistant via n.bakirova@osce-academy.net
Deadline is 30 May 2020]

The selection of an acceptable topic of your thesis and developing a good proposal are key ingredients for the work towards writing a successful thesis. The main issue is to delimit the scope of the topic. It will be impossible to research properly in case a topic is too broad. But the too narrow topic may produce the risk of being insignificant. The topic should be selected from economic governance and development area.

Select your thesis supervisor according to your research interests. It should be a person who would be willing to devote his/her time to supervise your work and with whom you will be able to establish a good academic and working relationship (which is equally important in producing a successful thesis). It is very important to keep in touch with supervisor regularly, as he/she will guide the development of your dissertation.

Requirements:

- Proposed title.
- Proposed supervisor, her/his full name and institutional affiliation.
- Short description of your topic.
- Research question(s).
- Length of document must be 300-400 words, 1.5 line spaced, using 12 Times New Roman (details to be discussed in your Research Methods/Thesis Seminar classes).

II. SUBMISSION OF MA THESIS PROPOSAL

[Submission of a final version of MA thesis proposal deadline - **30 June 2020, 9.00 a.m.**
Please send to Nazira Abakirova, PS Programme Assistant via n.bakirova@osce-academy.net
Thesis proposals will be evaluated by the members of the colloquium committee.
Evaluation results and recommendations will be sent you by email by 20 July 2020.
There is no need to prepare a Power Point presentation.]

Requirements (Comments/questions under each section are to provide general guidelines. You may address each section individually depending on your research). Consult with your Thesis Supervisor to modify your final Thesis Proposal where needed.

- a) Title: Keywords that you chose in your title should reflect the general idea of the Thesis that you plan to write. The title must be self-explanatory and unambiguous.
- b) Executive summary: What is your proposal about in brief? Include key aspects of your proposal that you elaborated on (aim, problems, literature, methods to be employed, etc.). This section should not exceed over one page double spaced.
- c) (Short) Literature review: Review the existing literature (major debates, theories, ideas, concepts, findings, issues, problems etc.) on your topic. Demonstrate your familiarity and awareness of the current, up to date trends in your topic. Do not attempt to review all available literature, but focus on the most important and relevant ones to your topic/argument. Note that you will also have a far larger Literature review chapter in your Thesis. This section of your Thesis Proposal should be an abridged version of the main Literature review chapter.
- d) Statement of the problem/Research rationale: Brief discussion on general and/or specific backgrounds of the issue to be addressed by your Thesis. What the unresolved or not investigated issues in your topic? Will your research fill the gap?
- e) Research question(s): What question(s) does your Thesis address? These are narrow and specific research questions. It can be one major research question or several (two or three) specific questions.
- f) Research significance: What gap will your research fill? How is it different from other existing research? Why is your research important for academia? For politics? List at least three points to highlight your research significance.

- g) (Short) Theoretical framework: What specific theoretical approach will you use? What are the key theories and names? How are they tied to your research/problem? How do the theories you have chosen help you to make sense of the problem you want to address? How do they help you structure your inquiry?
- h) Hypothesis/es: What is/are the argument/s or affirmation/s in your thesis which you wish to test?
- i) Research design/Methodology: Will you use primary (your own) or secondary (other) data? Describe in detail how you will find your data. What kind of methods (survey, interviews, focus groups; content analysis, discourse analysis, process tracing, etc.) will you use? How are your methods to collect material and your methods to examine it linked to your question and to your theoretical framework? How do they fit into your analytical framework? Explain why you are selecting your particular research method(s). Briefly state the advantages or limitations of your methods?
- j) Potential outcome: What do you assume (expect) to find out from this research?
- k) Research limitations: What are possible limitations of your research? List two to three such limitations.
- l) Contents/Tentative thesis outline: What issues, chapters and potential sections will your thesis consist of with approximate page numbers.
- m) Timeline of Thesis completion: What are the exact dates and milestones you have planned to complete your Thesis in an orderly and timely manner?
- n) References: List the literature that you have used in your proposal using the *Central Asian Survey* style/format.
- o) Length of submitted document must be 10-12 pages (excluding Bibliography), 1.5 line spaced, using 12 Times New Roman (formatting requirements in the Appendix below).

III. THESIS PROPOSAL FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

Margins

Margins are the white pages surrounding the text. Left margin must be 1, 5 inches. Right, top and bottom margins must be 1 inch (2.54 cm).

Page numbers

The body of the proposal: use Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4 etc) in the same size and font as the body of the text. Page numbers should appear at the center of the bottom of the page. Use the same font and size that you use for the body of your proposal (Times New Roman, 12).

Spacing

Regular text (body) must be formatted with 1,5 line spacing. This includes chapters, headings and subheadings. Quotations, data in the tables (figures, illustration, etc.) are allowed to be single spaced. Endnotes and footnotes must be single spaced. Bibliography must be single spaced with one blank line after each entry and must be formatted according to the Chicago Style.

Font

Times New Roman, 12 points must be used for the body of the proposal, including the bibliography. For headings, titles of figures (tables and illustrations), subheadings, etc., larger points may be used (up to 16 points). Endnotes and footnotes must be formatted with 10 points. Smaller fonts, down to 9 points, may be used for data in the tables.

Bold face and italics may be used in subheadings, tables, figures, and specific words in text, but extensive use should be avoided.

Style

Proposal must be written in the format determined in the Chicago Manuscript Format. If the proposal, including the bibliography, does not comply with the Chicago Manuscript Format, it will not be accepted by the Academy.

Color

Color may be used for illustrative materials. Do not use colors for regular text, including the headings, chapters, titles of tables etc.

Bibliography

Bibliography must be in the same font and size as the body of the proposal. It should be single spaced, with one entry in between. Chicago Style must be followed in formatting your bibliography.

Appendix (Appendices)

Appendices (if you have any) must be placed after the bibliography. In the Appendix, you may include any information (attachments) that is not directly relevant to your proposal but still worth to mention. If more than one, they have to be written as APPENDIX A, APPENDIX B and each appendix has to be on a separate page.

Declaration

In this form you take the responsibility for the contents of your proposal and declare that you followed academic honesty procedures.

“Declaration

I declare that I clearly understand §11 of the Academic regulations, and that the submitted paper is accepted by the OSCE Academy in Bishkek of the understanding that it is my own effort without falsification of any kind. I declare that I am aware about the consequences of plagiarism or/and cheating.

Name: Date:”