**Preparing for the written exam: a short guide for candidates**

**Introduction**

The purpose of this guide is to assist prospective candidates in preparing for the written examination component of the admissions process for the Master of Arts in Politics and Security at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek. The written exam is crucial in evaluating your analytical and argumentative skills. This document provides detailed instructions and recommendations to help you navigate this part of the admissions process effectively.

**Exam Format**

The written exam consists of composing two essays. You will be presented with four questions, divided into two sections, A and B. Your task is to select and respond to one question from each section, thereby composing two distinct essays.

Section A: Current events and processes in politics and international relations in Central Asia

* + The questions in this section require an analysis of political, socio-economic, or security developments in Central Asia and its surrounding regions.
  + A successful response will showcase your awareness of current events and provide a well-reasoned analysis.

Sample questions for Section A:

* "What factors are the biggest obstacles for Central Asian states to play a more active role in the international arena? What are the best ways to overcome them? Discuss with reference to specific cases."
* "What are the most important implications of digitalisation on political processes in Central Asia? Provide some examples to support your view."
* "What are the most important implications of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan for the broader region? Provide several arguments to support your view."

Section B: Theoretical and conceptual foundations of Politics and International Relations

* + This section's questions delve into theoretical aspects of international relations, comparative politics, international political economy, security studies, and related fields.
  + Your answers should reflect understanding key conceptual and theoretical topics and debates within these fields. You must demonstrate the ability to articulate a clear stance supported by well-founded arguments.

Sample questions for Section B:

* "How do different theories of international relations explain the ongoing war in Ukraine? Which approach do you find most convincing and why?"
* "What issues are at the core of the debate between proponents of a system with a strong and powerful president and those who support a parliamentary form of government?"
* "How does globalisation affect national sovereignty? Discuss the opportunities and challenges that globalisation poses for nation-states."

**Time Allocation**

* Candidates are allotted a total of 90 minutes to complete both essays.
* It is crucial to manage your time effectively to ensure that each essay is given adequate attention.

**Essay Guidelines**

* Format: Each essay should be structured as an argumentative essay.
* Length: While there is no strict word limit, a strong essay typically contains at least 5-6 paragraphs.
* Content: It is important to note that the essay questions have no "right" or "wrong" answers. What is important is that the essays:
  + a) Directly address the chosen question.
  + b) Take a clear stance and present balanced, evidence-based arguments
  + c) Exhibit a clear and logical structure.

**Useful Tips**

When writing essays as part of the admissions exam, it's essential to approach the task methodically to ensure clarity and depth in your arguments.

* First and foremost, take a moment to understand the question fully. Please read it carefully, noting key terms and what is being asked.
* Before you start writing, spend a few minutes brainstorming. Jot down your initial thoughts and ideas relevant to the question. This step is crucial for organising your thoughts coherently.
* After brainstorming, outline your essay. Draft a brief structure that includes an introduction, main points for the body of your essay, and a conclusion. This outline will serve as a roadmap and help you stay on track during the writing process.
* Be conscious of the time limit; allocate your time wisely between understanding the question, brainstorming, outlining, and writing. Ensure you leave enough time at the end to review your essay for any necessary revisions.

Remember, a well-structured argument, presented clearly and supported by evidence, is the hallmark of a strong essay. Keep your handwriting legible, as clarity in presentation can impact how your arguments are received. With careful planning and a clear structure, you can effectively convey your insights within the time constraints.

We encourage all candidates to thoroughly familiarise themselves with current and relevant topics in the abovementioned areas. This preparation will not only aid in the written exam but also contribute to your overall readiness for the MA in Politics and Security at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.