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2024

MA THESIS GUIDE

2024-2026

Bishkek, 2024

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1. Introduction

The OSCE Academy's MA Thesis Guide is aimed to inform students, faculty, and affiliated scholars and administrators about the rules governing the process for conducting and successful completion of an MA thesis project. The MA Thesis Guide establishes expectations of the OSCE Academy for its students and supervisors with regard to this process, specifies the academic standards that apply during this process, and provides criteria for review and grading of MA thesis projects. The list of appendices presented below serves to facilitate collaboration between all parties involved in the process of thesis writing and defense. It also contains forms and templates for quick orientation during various stages of MA thesis preparation. The MA Thesis Guide is subject to regular reviews and is approved by the Director of the OSCE Academy.

All students are expected to comply with the requirements of this Guide. Failure to do so will incur penalties.

2. MA Thesis Project

The Master thesis is an important stage and final product of the MA study programmes at the OSCE Academy. It demonstrates a student's ability to conduct original research and present its findings in an academically correct way. The process of implementing a thesis project improves students' research, analytical, and writing skills. The result must be an independent work demonstrating a student's comprehensive understanding of the subject investigated, application of appropriate research methods and analytical tools, as well as the ability to present results in a clear and precise manner in writing and as an oral presentation (defense).

A final MA thesis should be the result of a student's independent research efforts. The ultimate responsibility for its successful completion rests with the student. For the purpose of facilitating students' research efforts, the OSCE Academy offers its support in the form of preparatory courses, guidance provided by supervisors, and assistance in conducting field research or accessing resources. However, all of these cannot substitute for a student's responsibility to choose and define a topic, develop a methodology, conduct research and analyze data, draft a thesis paper, and submit it in time. A thesis needs to have a clear purpose of resolving an academic problem, demonstrating substantial and persuasive evidence, and providing contribution to the body of knowledge existing on a particular subject in a proper academic manner. A mere description or compilation of already known information is not enough. Careful selection of a thesis topic and development of a strong research proposal are the key elements for writing a successful master thesis.

Students are required to undertake the following actions as part of their work on MA theses:

- choose a topic relevant to the current and ongoing debates in academia;
- develop a question / questions targeting the under-research area;
- outline a hypothesis / hypotheses guiding the scientific inquiry;
- design a methodology to organize and inform collection of (empirical) data;
- create an analytical framework to review, structure, and interpret the collected data and material; and
- present research explanations and findings.

Students are encouraged to consult with various scholars and professors and incorporate their advice and recommendations – sometimes complementing, sometimes not – into students' efforts for developing thesis projects. Students are expected to have initial ideas regarding their research topics prior to the stage when they decide to take specific relevant courses, initiate their cooperation with supervisors, and / or seek assistance from the Academy's staff, faculty members, or affiliated scholars and experts. In the OSCE Academy's MA programmes, students are expected to conduct preliminary literature reviews and / or corresponding online searches on topics related to their interests or potential areas of academic inquiry. Students are strongly discouraged from engaging into discussions over thesis questions with the Academy's faculty or supervisors without prior careful preparation (see Chapter 5 below).

3. Preparation

Students are encouraged to use information they have learned in any of their courses as a means to further develop their MA thesis projects. While thematically oriented courses offered under the standard curricula in both programmes invite to discuss questions, relevance, and methodology of potential thesis projects, the MA Thesis Seminar courses delivered in the Spring semester are specifically designed to support students in their thesis project development.

Participation in the MA Thesis Seminar courses can follow different formats as students might need a general introduction or an overview to develop their research design and find their research question(s) or request individual consultations with instructors. Any changes within the available formats of lecturer-student interaction require flexibility from both professors and students, as well additional efforts to be undertaken by students to prepare their individual thesis project ideas.

The seminar is graded by the MA Thesis Seminar instructor. Grading is based on the assignments, presentation and discussion of the research proposal, as well as on active participation during the seminar meetings. In addition to the grades the MA Thesis Seminar instructor gives personal feedback to each student. After the completion of the Thesis Seminar, the thesis proposal is evaluated and graded by the reviewer (See Chapter 4 below). The grades and comments of the MA Thesis Seminar instructor and the reviewer are sent to the student and his/her supervisor for further work.

The MA Thesis Seminar, thus, aims to help students formulate their thesis project ideas and to develop their research design and offer support in presenting these in students' research proposals.

After the Thesis Review, students may seek further guidance and advice for their thesis projects by requesting consultations from thesis supervisors (see Chapter 5 below).

Additional support for thesis project development will be provided to students as part of research methods according to their academic disciplines 'social sciences' and 'economics' related courses delivered in the Fall and Spring semesters.

For the MA Programme in *Politics and Security* such courses include:

- Research Methods;
- Quantitative Methods in IR; and
- Introduction into qualitative research methods.

For the MA Programme in *Economic Governance and Development* such courses include:

- Research Methods and Design.

Thesis seminar instructors are expected to provide general orientation and consultations regarding students' individual projects. They are neither responsible for a student's successful pass of the colloquium, nor do they occupy the role of the supervisor (see Chapter 5 below).

4. Thesis Proposal Review

The Thesis Proposal Reviewer examines thesis projects at their initial state of preparation and assesses adequacy of the selected methodology, feasibility of proposed research, as well as significance and relevance of the chosen topic and related questions. In addition, the Thesis Proposal Reviewer certifies the compliance to ethical standards as they apply to social science research, in general, and the Central Asian context, in particular.

Thesis Proposal Reviewers can be faculty members of the respective programme and may also be experts invited from external educational and professional institutions. The Thesis Proposal Reviewer's assessment is presented as a grade percentage / letter grade. This grade is given for a student's thesis proposal. The Thesis Proposal Reviewer provides written recommendations as to how a thesis project or its preparation process could be improved, for instance, advice on additional literature for further review, reformulation of research questions or hypotheses, changes to be made to the research methodology or overall work plan. In case of a student's failure, the Thesis Proposal Reviewer provides a clear description of weaknesses and drawbacks in the student's research proposal and offers specific and helpful suggestions on how to address them.

In addition, the Thesis Proposal Reviewer checks the compliance of the thesis project with ethical standards. To this end, students are required to provide detailed information about their planned research and conduct a preliminary risk assessment for all the subjects involved (including the student her / himself). The supervisor is requested to confirm her / his consent to the proposed research. Both the risk assessment and supervisor's consent shall be submitted to the Thesis Proposal Reviewer that has the right to require amendments to the research outline before approving the thesis project (regardless of the grade awarded for the thesis proposal examination).

Positive evaluation issued by the Thesis Proposal Reviewer means that a student has successfully completed preparation of his/ her thesis project. From this point forward, a student's supervisor shall be the focal person to provide advice and guidance for further work and development of a student's thesis.

The Thesis Proposal and Ethical Approval Form (see Appendix F. Ethical Approval Form) must be submitted to the Graduate Education Department by 15 June 2025 for further distribution to the Thesis Proposal Reviewer. For the 2024-2026 Academic Year, the dates for the thesis proposal review are tentatively set for 16 - 30 June 2025. Thesis Proposal and Ethical Approval Form must be submitted to the following e-mail addresses:

- MA in *Politics and Security*: MAthesisPS@osce-academy.net;
- MA in *Economic Governance and Development*: MAthesisEGD@osce-academy.net.

Thesis Proposal

Writing a good thesis proposal and developing a research design and outline is an indispensable part of the overall thesis writing process. A thesis proposal requires students to describe the focus and goals of their academic inquiries and helps to determine feasibility of the proposed research. It should contain a work plan that a student will follow during the development of his / her research thesis.

The selection of an acceptable and adequate research topic and preparation of a good thesis proposal are the key elements for writing a successful thesis. It is important to identify an adequate scope for the research topic as it will be impossible to conduct thorough and proper research if a topic is too broad, while a too narrow topic may result in research being insignificant and having little academic or scientific value. A topic should be selected in academic areas that constitute the curriculum of the MA programme a student is enrolled into.

A thesis proposal shall be a comprehensive document of required / adequate length containing sufficient information on all major parts of the planned thesis project. Below you can find the requirements with accompanying clarifying comments and questions to serve as additional guidance:

Title

Keywords mentioned in the title should reflect the core and general idea of the thesis. The title must be self-explanatory and unambiguous. It should not contain abbreviations and exceed 15 words.

Executive Summary / Abstract

What is the proposal about in brief? Which problem is being resolved, what knowledge gap is being addressed, and what methods will be used to resolve or fill it? This section should contain one paragraph and not exceed 400 words.

Introduction

Problem Statement / Explaining the Research Rationale: A brief discussion on general and / or specific background of the issue / case / phenomenon to be addressed by the thesis. What is the unresolved problem, and what is it about? How does this problem, the research topic and interest relate to an academic inquiry and production of knowledge? What do we hope / expect to learn from conducting an academic inquiry into the problem?

Research question(s): What research question does the thesis address? It should be one central research question that aims to answer why causalities or correlations exist or not, or how political or economic processes take place and unfold. Sub-questions, if included should be specific and narrowing down selected aspects or the research interest.

Research significance: What gap in the academic discourse will the thesis fill? How is it different from other existing research? Why is the student's research important for academia? For politics and / or for policy making?

This section should contain approximately 2-3 pages.

Literature Review (brief)

Review of the existing literature (major debates, theories, ideas, concepts, methods, cases, findings, problems) on the topic demonstrating a student's familiarity and

awareness of the current trends in the scientific area. It is recommended not to review all available literature, but rather focus on the most important sources relevant to the topic/ argument. Further, there will be a larger Literature Review chapter in the final thesis paper. This section of the thesis proposal should be an abridged version of the main Literature Review chapter.

Theoretical Framing

Presentation of a theoretical framework providing an overview of the established scientific assumptions. Which theory / theories serve best to guide the inquiry and proposed research? How do specific theories help to understand the problem, how / in what aspects do they differ from each other? How do different theories inform the research methodology? Which analytical tools from which theories will be used for conducting the research? Which theories provide key ideas and arguments that will be discussed later in the thesis paper?

Hypothesis/es

What key argument or which main assumption will be tested in the thesis? This is not a statement, but an assumption that is guiding the researcher through the process of writing. What can be expected as a result or key findings of the thesis?

Research design / Methodology

What quantitative and qualitative data (primary, secondary) will be used in the thesis? A student should provide a detailed description of methods that will be used for data collection and analysis (surveys, interviews, focus groups; content analysis, discourse analysis, process tracing, regressions, etc.). Is the researcher using triangulation or descriptive methods? The selection of methods must be explained, as well as expectations of what they will yield in terms of data generation. How are these methods that are chosen linked with the research question and theoretical discourse? What are the limitations of the selected method(s) or methodology?

Presentation of collected data

If data already was collected, the student should provide a description of his/her data for the further analysis.

Make use of the following research methods literature in the OSCE Academy library:

- Kathryn A. Adams / Eva K. Lawrence, Research Methods, Statistics, and Application, 2nd ed. Sage Publisher, 2019.
- John W. Creswell / J. David Creswell, Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches, 5th ed. Sage Publisher, 2018.

Timeline for Thesis Development

What are the exact dates and milestones in the preparation process for the thesis (please carefully consider the deadlines set by the Academy for writing the research paper)?

Limitations / Risks

What are the possible limitations for the research? What factors / impediments might prevent or interfere with the timely completion of the research? What other risks might affect successful completion of the thesis?

Contents / Tentative Thesis Outline

What issues, chapters, and potential sections will the thesis consist of? Indicate approximate page numbers.

References/ Bibliography

List the literature that will be used in the proposal using the Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition (the requirements for this reference style are presented in Appendix C).

The total length of a submitted proposal must be 10-12 pages, excluding Bibliography (1.5 line spaced, 12 Times New Roman (the formatting requirements are presented in the Appendix below).

5. Working with the Supervisor

The main responsibility of the thesis supervisor is to offer guidance, advice, and recommendations to a student in his / her attempt to write an MA thesis. A student should seek advice and guidance taking into consideration the supervisor's limited amount of time and multiple occupations and responsibilities. A student bears full responsibility in finding a thesis supervisor, the Academy may assist in this upon such request. The supervisor will be requested to sign a service contract with the OSCE Academy for the period of supervision. A student and a supervisor should discuss and achieve understanding regarding the interaction and supervision process. Such understanding should be reflected in a written agreement signed by both a supervisor and a student, and the copy of this agreement should be submitted to the Education Department (the Agreement template is provided in Appendix E) *by 31 March 2025*.

The purpose of the Agreement is to formulate expectations for both parties and set out a work plan for a student to follow in order to ensure timely preparation of his/ her thesis, as well as provide a framework for a supervisor to provide his/ her advice and consultations. It is critical that a student should follow the provisions of the Agreement, meet all the agreed deadlines, and keep the supervisor informed about progress, as well as problems and challenges encountered in the research process.

The student is required to submit a first draft of his/her MA thesis to the supervisor *by 30 September 2025*. This first draft must include the following:

- executive summary/abstract
- introduction
- developed literature review
- theoretical framing
- research design/methodology
- description of collected data (The data in form of transcripts, notes etc. do not have to be submitted yet.)

The analysis and interpretation of the data as well as the final conclusion are no obligatory part of the MA thesis first draft. In addition to the aforesaid agreement, both a supervisor and a student are required to report to the Academy about the progress a student has achieved over the summer period. This Intermediate Results Report drafted by a supervisor shall be submitted

by 26 October 2025 and will inform the Education Department about a student's progress or unexpected problems or challenges that emerged in the research process.

The Intermediate Results Report must be submitted by a supervisor to the following e-mail addresses. The student must be copied on the email.

- MA in *Politics and Security*: MAtesisPS@osce-academy.net;
- MA in *Economic Governance and Development*: MAtesisEGD@osce-academy.net.

The final deliverable provided by a supervisor is a review of a student's thesis included in the evaluation to be provided by the Comprehensive State Examination Committee in February 2026 (see Chapter 7 below).

6. Submitting the Final MA Thesis

Length

The thesis is expected to be 18,000–25,000 words (excluding prefatory pages, notes, in-text tables, bibliography, and appendices) for students of the MA in *Politics and Security* Programme, and 14,000-18,000 words (excluding prefatory pages, notes, in-text tables, bibliography, and appendices) for students of the MA in *Economic Governance Development* Programme. If the thesis exceeds the specified maximum length, supervisors and examiners will not read further than the specified limit and shall, therefore, not take into account any work beyond the specified limit when grading the thesis. If a thesis is shorter than required, it will not be accepted for evaluation by the Academy.

Deadline

All students must meet the MA thesis submission deadline. In case of an emergency, such as an illness or special family circumstances, a student can apply for an academic leave and submit his / her thesis the following year. Requests for an academic leave can be submitted until 30 September 2025 (for more information please see the *Academic Regulations*, §14). Academic leave requests will not be accepted after 30 September 2025.

Failure to meet the MA thesis submission deadline (**8 January 2026, 11:00 am Bishkek time**) will result in expulsion from the MA Programme. The expelled student retains the right to apply for re-admission to the OSCE Academy within the following two years. A decision regarding re-admission will be made by the OSCE Academy's management taking into consideration the availability of corresponding vacancies and resources.

To meet the official MA thesis submission deadline, students must submit *electronic versions* of their theses (both in MS Word and PDF formats) on the day of the deadline to the following e-mail addresses:

- MA in *Politics and Security*: MAtesisPS@osce-academy.net;
- MA in *Economic Governance and Development*: MAtesisEGD@osce-academy.net.

It is a student's sole responsibility to submit a properly formatted electronic version of the thesis. Once electronic versions of students' theses are submitted, the Academy's staff will check whether each thesis meets the Academy's formatting requirements. If any formatting

changes are needed, the respective student will be duly notified. Only a properly formatted electronic version of the thesis will be allowed to the thesis defense.

Penalty

MA thesis submitted after the specified deadline is subject to a penalty. Regardless of the number of days of delay, 5 points will be deducted from the final grade. Saturdays and Sundays are included in the penalty period. In case if a thesis is submitted five days after the set deadline, it is considered as failed.

7. The Comprehensive State Examination

The Comprehensive State Examinations (CSE) consist of two components: 1) the State Examination aimed to test students' knowledge in at least two main subjects that students have taken during the entire period of their academic programmes; and 2) MA thesis defense. Any student with a GPA below 2.00 fails the programme and shall not be allowed to take the CSEs.

In order to qualify for the Kyrgyz state diploma, as well as the Academy's certificate, all students are required to pass the CSEs. The CSEs are held in January-February 2026 by the committee specifically convened for this purpose. Students are informed about the date and general topics of the State Examination one month before the examination. The minimum passing grade for the CSE is C- (see Appendix J). An CSE that is evaluated below C- and is, therefore, failed can be retaken twice within the following two years after graduation.

The lowest passing grade for the MA thesis is C-. Each thesis is read by a supervisor and three independent reviewers who provide their written evaluations or comments. Reviewers also provide grades for each thesis and submit them to the State Examination Committee, that will make a final decision regarding grades, taking into consideration: 1) a student's thesis presentation (thesis defense); 2) supervisor's comments, and 3) most importantly, reviewers' feedback and grades. A thesis that is evaluated below C- (and, therefore, failed) can be rewritten twice within the following two years after graduation.

An expelled student retains the right to apply for re-admission to the OSCE Academy within the following two years. A decision regarding re-admission of an expelled student will be made by the OSCE Academy's management taking into consideration the availability of corresponding vacancies and resources.

8. MA Thesis Defense

An MA thesis must be defended in the form of a presentation delivered by a student to the State Examination Committee members. The presentation must be 15 minutes long and consist of a maximum of 12 slides (if an applicable software is being used for the presentation). During the MA thesis defense, a student should demonstrate her / his comprehensive understanding of the research subject, application of appropriate research methods and analytical tools, as well as the ability to present research findings in a clear and precise manner.

The MA thesis defense is not open to the general public and takes place in a face-to-face format individually with each student. Students of the same group can participate in the defense if they have received a written consent from the Education Department, as well as approval from the student defending her / his thesis (an e-mail notification shall be enough in this case). A

student's presentation is followed by a question-and-answer session (15 minutes). The State Examination Committee holds its internal deliberation meeting to discuss students' MA thesis grades. Students are notified about their thesis defense grades via email on the next day. Comments of external reviewers are sent electronically to each student after the graduation ceremony.

9. Appealing

In case a student decides to submit a grade review request, s/he shall follow the procedure presented below:

- A student shall consult with the Head of the Education Department and express his / her concerns about the final grade.
- In case the grievance has not been resolved through a consultation, a student shall submit a written request for review of the contested grade to the Head of the Education Department. Since the burden of proof rests with the student, the grade review request must include a detailed explanation of the reasons why the grade should be reviewed. The Head of the Education Department will immediately send a copy of the student's letter to the State Examination Committee and request a written reply within 5 working days.
- The members of the State Examination Committee shall take a decision whether to accept or reject the grade review request. If the State Examination Committee rejects the student's grade review request, the initial assessment shall be upheld. If the grade review request is accepted, the State Examination Committee initiates the grade review procedure. The result of the review procedure of the State Examination Committee shall be final and will be reported in writing to the parties concerned.

Appendix A. Thesis Preparation Deadlines in 2024-2026

Activity	Deadline
Selection of MA Thesis Supervisor	January – March 2025
MA Thesis Supervision Agreement	31 March 2025
Submission of the Thesis Proposal	15 June 2025
Review of the Thesis Proposal	16 - 30 June 2025
Submission of MA Thesis first draft	30 September 2025
Supervisor's Intermediate Results Report	26 October 2025
Submission of MA thesis final draft to supervisor	1 December 2025 (unless otherwise agreed with the supervisor and indicated in the supervision agreement)
Official submission of MA thesis (electronic version)	8 January 2026, 11:00 am (Bishkek time)
Thesis evaluation	9 - 31 January 2026
State Exam and Thesis defense	2 - 12 February 2026
Announcement of final grades	13 February 2026
Graduation	17 February 2026 (TBC)

Additional announcements regarding MA thesis completion will be sent to students by the respective Programme Assistant.

All requested documents and forms must be submitted to the following email addresses:

- MA in *Politics and Security*: MAthesisPS@osce-academy.net;
- MA in *Economic Governance and Development*: MAthesisEGD@osce-academy.net.

Appendix B. Plagiarism Regulations

All work submitted for assessment by a student is accepted on the understanding that it is the student's own effort without falsification of any kind. Plagiarism is the act of copying or including into one's own work, without adequate acknowledgement, intentionally or unintentionally, the work of another author, for one's own benefit. It is academically fraudulent and is, therefore, regarded as an offence against the *OSCE Academy's Academic Regulations* and *the Code of Conduct*. Any case of plagiarism, that may occur at whatever stage of a student's course of study, whether discovered before or after graduation, will be investigated and handled appropriately by the Academy's management.

Students are expected to offer their own analysis and presentation of information gleaned from research or any other outcomes of knowledge production, even when group exercises are carried out. In addition, students are required to acknowledge all help and other external assistance that they have received. This should be done both in a formal list of acknowledgements in a written work and at appropriate places and sections of the work. Any failure to adequately acknowledge or properly reference other sources in submitted work, as well as accurately and appropriately acknowledge external help and assistance received, will result in the non-award of the *Master of Arts* degree by the OSCE Academy.

If an examiner suspects that a thesis contains evidence of plagiarism, s/he will inform the Head of the Education Department. Evidence of the suspected plagiarism should be collected together with the Head of the Education Department, and a requisite report shall be made to the State Examination Committee. On the basis of this report and in consultation with both the Head of the Education Department and the examiner, the State Examination Committee will decide whether the reviewed case of plagiarism is minor or significant. If the plagiarism is minor, the examiner will be advised to take minor plagiarism into account in determining the academic quality of the paper.

If the plagiarism is significant, it will lead to failure of the Master Thesis and, as a result, of the master's degree in *Politics and Security* or *Economic Governance and Development*. This decision will be taken by the OSCE Academy Director and the Head of the Education Department in co-operation with the State Examination Committee. In this case, the Master thesis cannot be re-submitted, and the decision will be final with no appeal allowed.

If plagiarism or cheating is detected in a student's paper after graduation, the OSCE Academy has the right to revoke a degree and require the graduate to return his / her degree certificate and transcript.

Appendix C. Formatting Requirements: Thesis Proposal and Final MA Thesis

Referencing Style

Your essays, thesis proposal and MA thesis must be referenced in the format outlined by the Chicago Manual of Style (<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>). In case a proposal, including its bibliography, does not comply with the Chicago Manual of Style, it will not be accepted by the Academy.

There are two styles of Chicago formatting. You can choose one of them and use it throughout the whole work (essay, thesis or any other written assignment):

1. Author-Date in text citation. Please see the guide:
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html
2. Notes citation. Please see the guide:
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html

You can either create references manually or use one of the free automatic reference generators (*if you use an automatic generator, you should always check that the automatic referencing form is filled correctly – e.g. name, surname, year of publication etc.*):

Citation machine: <https://www.citationmachine.net/>

Cite this for me: <https://www.citethisforme.com/us/citation-generator/chicago>

Mendeley: <https://www.mendeley.com/download-reference-manager/windows>

Mendeley is also a useful free tool for creating an online and an offline library from which you can add automatic references and bibliographies in word documents. Please see:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkrVbBSrK_w

Thesis Proposal

Margins

Margins are the white spaces surrounding the text. The left margin should be 1.5 inches (3.81 cm). The right, top, and bottom margins should 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 in the center at 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 and data presented in 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 Manual of Style, 18th edition.

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 presented in tables.

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

Style

A proposal must be written in the format determined by the Chicago Manual of Style (<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>). In case if a proposal, including its bibliography, does not comply with the Chicago Manual of Style, it will not be accepted by the Academy.

Color

Color may be used for illustrative materials. Do not use colors for regular text, including 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. The Chicago Manual of Style must be followed for formatting your bibliography.

Appendix (Appendices)

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

Declaration

In this form, you declare that you are taking responsibility for the content of your proposal and that you have followed the academic honesty procedures.

Final Thesis

Parts of the Thesis

The following are the parts that your thesis must consist of. All sections are mandatory unless any of them is indicated optional. You must follow the sequence of the sections indicated below:

- A. Prefatory pages:
 - ☐ Title Page
 - ☐ Declaration
 - ☐ Abstract

- ☐ Acknowledgements (optional)
- ☐ Table of Contents
- ☐ List of Tables (if applicable)
- ☐ List of Figures (if applicable)
- ☐ List of Illustrations (if applicable)
- ☐ List of Abbreviations (optional)

B. Body of the thesis

- ☐ Body (text, chapters)
- ☐ Bibliography or References
- ☐ Appendix (or Appendices) (if applicable)

Margins

Margins are the white spaces surrounding the text. The left (binding edge) margin should be 1.5 inches (3.81 cm). The right, top, and bottom margins should be 1 inch (2.54 cm).

Page numbers

Placement of a page number should appear in the center at the bottom of the page. Use the same font and size that you use for the body of your thesis (Times New Roman, 12). Prefatory pages: use consecutive lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv, etc.). Title page, Declaration, Abstract, Acknowledgements (optional), and Table of Contents are all to be numbered and counted in a Roman numerical order (i, ii, iii, iv, ...). Start counting from the title page, but the number (i) should not appear on the title page. Thus, page numbering should start from the Declaration page which is counted as page (ii).

The body of the thesis: use Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, ...) in the same size and font as the body of the text.

Centering

All chapters should be centered. Headings and subheadings may not be centered.

Justification

All the text, including the prefatory pages, should be justified.

Spacing

Regular text (body) can be formatted with 1.5 line spacing. This includes chapters, headings, and subheadings. Block quotations, figure captions, data presented in tables (figures, illustration, etc.) are allowed to be single spaced. Endnotes and footnotes must be single spaced, but with a blank line after each entry, and must be formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition. Bibliography / References must be single spaced with one blank line after each entry and must be formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition, as well.

Font

The Times New Roman font must be used for all parts of the thesis, including the title page, prefatory pages, headings, bibliography, etc. (with exception for some data in tables or some texts in appendices). Times New Roman, 12 points, must be used for the body of the thesis, including bibliography / references. For headings, titles of figures (tables and illustrations), subheadings etc., larger points may be used (up to 14 point). Notes (i.e. endnotes or footnotes)

or in-text citations must be Times New Roman 12-point formatted consistent with the Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition. Smaller fonts, down to 10 point, may be used for data presented in tables.

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

Style

The thesis must be written in accordance to the OSCE Academy's Thesis Manual Formatting Policy, which is primarily based on the Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition, with minimal alterations. If the thesis, including the bibliography / references, does not comply with the policy and Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition, it will not be accepted by the Academy.

Color

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

Formatting of specific pages (Final Thesis)

Title page

Follow the MA thesis template of the OSCE Academy. Do not change and shift margins, lines, capital letters, font type, font size, etc. Make it as close as the sample (see the template provided).

Declaration

In this form, you declare that you are taking the responsibility for the content of your thesis and that you have followed the academic honesty procedures. Your declaration in both of the hard and electronic copies of your thesis must be signed.

Abstract

An abstract must not exceed 400 words and should describe the problem of your research, main methods used, and conclusions and results that you have discovered. The Abstract page must not include any of your details (e.g. your name, title of your research, page numbers, etc. should not appear on this page).

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements must be written in a first-person voice. Here, you may acknowledge (thank) people who have assisted you with the thesis or supported you during the process. For example, you may thank your supervisors, professors, experts, any funding sources that supported your research, persons whom you have interviewed, and family or friends who supported you. There are no minimum or maximum word requirements for this part.

Table of Contents

Do not include the title page, abstract and declaration page in the table of contents.

Do not use range numbers (e.g. 4-12 in indicating page numbers). Only the first page of the chapter (heading, subheading) must be indicated. You may single or 1.5 space the table of contents. Do not include illustrative materials (tables, pictures, figures) in the table of contents as you need to have a separate list for each illustrative group.

Illustrative materials (figures, tables, etc.)

Use separate pages for each illustrative group, even if you have only one item to display. “LIST OF TABLES”, “LIST OF FIGURES”, “LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS” must follow, not precede the “TABLE OF CONTENTS”. Titles and order of illustrative materials must be displayed in the “LIST OF TABLES”, (or “LIST OF FIGURES”, “LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS”) on the prefatory page. Titles and order of illustrative materials indicated in the LIST OF TABLES (LIST OF FIGURES, etc.) must match those written in the body.

Bibliography/References

Bibliography/ References must be in the same font and size as the body of the thesis. It should be single spaced, with one blank line after each entry. The Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition, must be followed in formatting your bibliography / references (see the template provided).

Appendix (Appendices)

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

Templates

Templates (sample pages) or other supplementary guidelines that may help you format your MA thesis can be found at: <http://osce-academy.net/en/masters/Programmeresources/>.

Appendix D. Thesis Proposal Review Form (template)



OSCE Academy
MA in Politics and Security Programme 2024-2026
MA in Economic Governance and Development Programme 2024-2026
Review of the Master Thesis Proposal
(grade percentage / letter grades)

MA Thesis Proposal Reviewer:
Institution:

#	Student	(Working) Title of the MA thesis:	Statement of problem / Research Issue		Research Question(s)		Research Design / Methodology		Literature Review		Feasibility		Final grade perce ntage s	Final letter grade
			grade %	comm ents	grade %	com ment s	grade %	comm ents	grade %	comm ents	grade %	comm ents		

Criteria

Statement of Problem / Research Issue:

- originality
- overall rationale and feasibility
- social and/ or political relevance

Research Question(s):

- research question appropriate and specific
- clear relevance with regard to academic discourse / knowledge production
- implicit reference to theories and / or methodology
- outlined hypothesis / hypotheses guiding the scientific inquiry

Research Design/ Methodology:

- relevance and appropriateness of chosen methods to research question and / or hypothesis
- methodology to organize collection of data
- analytical framework to review, structure and interpret collected data

Literature Review:

- comprehensive coverage of relevant literature
- literature analysis is expedient and productive
- accurate and complete references

Feasibility:

- project is realistic / doable
- compliance to ethical standards

Appendix E. Thesis Supervisory Agreement (template)



MA Thesis Supervision Agreement¹

Between

Student:

MA Programme (PS / EGD):

and

Thesis Supervisor:

Institution (incl. address):

Position:

Contact (phone, e-mail):

1. (Working) title of the MA thesis

2. MA Thesis Supervision Guidelines

The main responsibility of the thesis supervisor is to offer guidance, advice, and recommendations to a student in his / her attempt to write an MA thesis. A student should seek advice and guidance taking into consideration the supervisor's limited amount of time and multiple occupations and responsibilities. The supervisor will be requested to sign a service contract with the OSCE Academy for the period of supervision (May 2025 - January 2026). The student and the supervisor should discuss and achieve understanding regarding the interaction and supervision process.

The final MA thesis should be the result of the student's independent research efforts. The ultimate responsibility for its successful completion rests with the student.

The thesis supervisor is expected to:

- ❖ advise the student throughout the research and writing process about the nature and feasibility of his / her thesis project, planning and implementation of research activities, methods to be used, availability of sources, as well as general standards applied for graduate level theses;
- ❖ alert the student about relevant ethical and security issues that may affect both the student and research informants – human subjects – when a proposed research topic or

¹ Before sending the MA Thesis Supervision Agreement to a potential supervisor, the student should inform the Education Department by email - c.osmonalieva@osce-academy.net - and **receive its initial approval.**

methods give rise to such concerns; help the student find alternative approaches to mitigate ethical and security risks, if relevant;

- ❖ at the beginning of supervision, establish, together with the student and on her initiative, a plan for supervision and thesis writing that should include arrangements for meetings, deadlines for the student to submit drafts of thesis chapters and final draft; this outline should be fixed in writing and signed by both parties (*in addition to the present supervision agreement*);
- ❖ be accessible for the student during the supervision process within a reasonable format;
- ❖ provide timely notifications to the student and the Academy's management about the unsatisfactory progress or other problems that could impact successful completion of the thesis by the student;
- ❖ promptly notify the student and the Academy's management about the supervisor's inability to start, continue, or finish the supervision, and advise on potential replacement;
- ❖ apply sanctions for the student's failure to comply with the agreed plan, including, if necessary, refusal to review or comment on a thesis draft, if the text is not submitted in due time;
- ❖ evaluate the student's MA thesis based on the common quality standards applied to graduate theses and the OSCE Academy's Grading Guidelines;
- ❖ submit the MA thesis review following the OSCE Academy format by the established deadline.

The student is expected to:

- ❖ organise and follow the supervision process, take responsibility for making the best use of the support provided by the supervisor;
- ❖ work with the supervisor throughout the thesis writing process, planning of research activities, as well as their implementation;
- ❖ closely follow the agreed thesis research and writing plan, meet all deadlines set by the supervisor, and consult with the supervisor before making changes to the agreed research plan;
- ❖ promptly notify the supervisor about any concerns, problems or questions related to the thesis research and writing process;
- ❖ schedule meetings with the supervisor taking into consideration the supervisor's multiple duties;
- ❖ submit parts of the thesis paper or thesis draft for the supervisor's review with an adequate period of time for the supervisor to provide reasonable feedback;
- ❖ be accessible and well prepared for meetings with the supervisor;
- ❖ complete and submit the thesis paper in the required format by the deadline;
- ❖ remember that supervision does not mean writing the thesis for the student and that it can only facilitate the research and writing process;
- ❖ follow and comply with all the regulations of the OSCE Academy, including the Anti-Plagiarism Rules.

3. Deadlines and Work Schedule

The student and the supervisor agree on their MA thesis supervision schedule, that should be also presented as part of the MA thesis proposal. The MA thesis should be submitted by 8 January 2026, 11:00 a.m. (Bishkek time).

Thesis Preparation Deadlines

Activity	Deadline
Selection of MA Thesis Supervisor	January – March 2025
MA Thesis Supervision Agreement	31 March 2025
Submission of the Thesis Proposal	15 June 2025
Review of the Thesis Proposal	16 - 30 June 2025
Submission of MA Thesis first draft	30 September 2025
Supervisor's Intermediate Results Report	26 October 2025
Submission of MA thesis final draft to supervisor	1 December 2025 (unless otherwise agreed with the supervisor and indicated in the supervision agreement)
Official submission of MA thesis (electronic version)	8 January 2026, 11:00 am (Bishkek time)
Thesis evaluation	9 - 31 January 2026
State Exam and Thesis defense	2 - 12 February 2026
Announcement of final grades	13 February 2026
Graduation	17 February 2026 (TBC)

Additional deadlines / tasks agreed upon between the supervisor and the student

4. The signatures below confirm the Agreement on behalf of the Student and Thesis Supervisor.

Student:	Supervisor:
Date:	Date:
Signature:	Signature:

Appendix F. Ethical Approval Form



OSCE Academy in Bishkek

Application for Ethical Approval of Research Activities

Name of Student / Researcher	
Study Programme / Research Project	
Thesis / Research Project Title	
Name of Supervisor / Co-Investigator	
Institutional Affiliation of Supervisor / Co-Investigator	
Funding Institution / Grant (title)	
(Planned) Starting Date of Research Activity	
Contact Information of Student / Researcher (email)	
Contact Information of Supervisor / Co-Investigator (email)	

Information on the Thesis / Researcher Project

Please provide a short summary of the planned thesis / research project, outlining rationale and objectives (max 300 words)

--

Background Information on the Planned Research Activity:

Duration	
Location(s)	
Preparations (contacts, support structures, travels, technical equipment) – (max 150 words)	

Information on Study Design and Methods to be Used

Please provide detailed information on the access to the field / approach to participants. Describe the stages / schedules of the research activity, the methods to be applied (types of interviews, survey(s), observation, participation) and the rationale for the selection of methods (max 500 words)

--

Information on Vulnerable Participants

Please provide information about the approach to vulnerable participants in the research activity. This might include participants with physical limitations (e.g. elderly, disabled, children), members of socially stigmatized groups (e.g. LGBT, ethnic minorities), or under political surveillance (e.g. members of opposition, CS activities) – (max 300 words)

Information on Informed Consent / Waiver of Informed Consent

Please provide information if and how (oral, written, signed) informed consent will be obtained from participants. Detail the information provided to the participants about the research project, the procedures, its objectives, use of the results in further work. In case informed consent will not be obtained please specify the reason.

Information on Confidentiality / Data Protection

Please provide information about your efforts to guarantee anonymity of the participants and / or the confidentiality of the data collected in the research. Specify the methods used to protect and store data collected during the research (max 200 words).

Risk Assessment

Please provide information on the potential risks with regard to the planned research activities and the later use / publication of collected data. Assess to what extent the research activities can be interpreted as sensitive and opposed by official positions / other societal actors. Estimate the risk to personal (physical / psychological) safety of the researcher(s) and the participants before, during, and after the research. Consider to what extent the OSCE Academy and the OSCE and its Field Missions might be confronted with repercussions of the planned research activities and the results of the research work (including publications on sensitive questions) – (max 500 words).

Compliance with OSCE Academy rules and regulations:

With my / our signatures below, I / we confirm that I / we have read the Academic Regulations of the OSCE Academy and the Code of Conduct of the OSCE Academy.

Signed

Supervisor / Co-Investigator	

Recommendation

--

Approval²

Name	Date	Signature

² In case approval can not be granted the “recommendation” section should stipulate a recommended course of action (revision of research design / plan; provision of additional information; resubmission).

Appendix G. Supervisor's Intermediate Results Report (template)



OSCE Academy
MA in Politics and Security Programme 2024-2026
MA in Economic Governance and Development Programme 2024-2026

Supervisor's Intermediate Results Report

Student:
Master Thesis Topic:
Supervisor:
Institution:

1. With reference to the student's plan for the previous months, please comment on how and to what extent the plan has been fulfilled.

--

2. Please summarise the student's progress over the last two months.

Overall Evaluation	
General assessment of the student research progress:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress satisfying
<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress partially satisfying
<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress not satisfying

3. Comment on the student's plan to complete the thesis project within the next two months.

--

Date:
Signature:

Appendix H. Supervisor's Final Review Form (template)



OSCE Academy
MA in Politics and Security Programme 2024-2026
MA in Economic Governance and Development Programme 2024-2026

Supervisor's Review of Master Thesis (no grade, review only)

Student:
Master Thesis Topic:
Supervisor:
Institution:

Criteria	Comments
Research topic	
Structure: focus, relevance, coherence, argumentation, and logic	
Analysis: depth and development of discussion	
Research: adequacy of research design and execution, consistency of interpretation	
Bibliography and ability to incorporate research data	
Presentation: writing, expression, style, coherence and unity, grammar, spelling, punctuation	
Conclusion:	

Date:
Signature:

Appendix I. Master Thesis Grading Sheet (template)



OSCE Academy
MA in Politics and Security Programme 2024-2026
MA in Economic Governance and Development Programme 2024-2026

Master Thesis Grading Sheet

Student's ID:
Master Thesis Topic:
Reviewer:
Institution:
Letter Grade:
Percentage (mandatory):

Criteria	Comments
Choice of research topic	
Structure: focus, relevance, coherence, argumentation and logic	
Analysis: depth and development of discussion	
Research: adequacy of research design and execution, consistency of interpretation	
Bibliography and ability to incorporate research data	
Presentation: writing, expression, style, coherence and unity, grammar, spelling, punctuation	
Overall Assessment	
Comments:	

Date:
Signature:

Appendix J. Grading Scale

The table below describes the grading system to be followed for the Comprehensive State Examinations (MA Thesis and State Examination):

Letter Grades	Grade	Numerical Grades	Grade Points	Grade Percentages
A	Excellent	5	4.00	Above 92.49%
A-			3.67	89.50% – 92.49%
B+	Good	4	3.33	85.50% – 89.49%
B			3.0	82.50% – 85.49%
B-			2.67	79.50% – 82.49%
C+	Average	3	2.33	75.50% – 79.49%
C			2.0	72.50% – 75.49%
C-			1.67	69.50% – 72.49%
F	Fail		0.0	Below 69.50%

Appendix K. MA Thesis Approval Form



OSCE Academy
MA in Politics and Security Programme 2024-2026
MA in Economic Governance and Development Programme 2024-2026

MA Thesis Approval Form

I. To be filled by the student

SURNAME:	FIRST NAME:
STUDENT ID:	SIGNATURE:
DEGREE: Master of Arts	NATIONALITY:
EXACT TITLE OF A THESIS:	
SUPERVISOR'S NAME, INSTITUTION:	

II. To be filled by the OSCE Academy

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS (average grade of three external reviewers)	LETTER GRADE: PERCENTAGE:
---	------------------------------

III. To be filled by the State Examination Committee members

We, the undersigned members of the State Examination Committee, certify that this Thesis satisfies all the requirements established for the above noted degree issued by the OSCE Academy in Bishkek	
Title, Name, Institution	Signature
1) Chair	
2) Deputy Chair	
3) Member	
4) Member	
5) Member	
DATE OF DEFENSE:	FINAL GRADE*:

* The lowest passing grade is "C-".

Appendix L. Declaration (template)

Declaration

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

Name:

Date: