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2025

MA THESIS GUIDE

2025-2027

Bishkek, 2025

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1. Introduction

This MA Thesis Guide sets out the official rules, standards, and procedures governing the preparation, supervision, submission, and defence of Master's theses at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek. It defines the Academy's expectations of students, supervisors, and faculty members; outlines the sequence of stages through which every thesis project must pass; and specifies the academic, ethical, and procedural requirements that apply to the process. The purpose of the Guide is to ensure consistent standards, transparent procedures, and the highest level of academic integrity in the completion of MA degree programmes.

The Guide applies to all students enrolled in the following Master's programmes:

- **MA in Politics and Security (PS)**
- **MA in Economic Governance and Development (EGD)**
- **MA in Human Rights and Sustainability (MAHRS)**

It covers all activities related to the thesis—from the initial exploration of research ideas to the final defence and approval of the completed work—and should be read together with the Academic Regulations, the Code of Conduct, and other relevant institutional policies of the OSCE Academy.

Issued under the authority of the Director of the OSCE Academy, this Guide constitutes an official regulatory document. It is reviewed periodically to reflect changes in academic policy or operational practice, and the version in force is the one most recently approved and signed by the Director.

The Guide is intended for:

- **Students**, who are responsible for understanding and complying with all requirements described herein;
- **Supervisors**, who must adhere to the guidance and timelines defined by the Academy;
- **Faculty and external reviewers**, who participate in instruction, evaluation, and supervision; and
- **Administrative staff**, who coordinate the implementation of the thesis process.

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with this Guide upon enrolment and to follow its provisions throughout their studies. Compliance with the requirements and deadlines set out herein is an integral part of maintaining good academic standing under the Academy's regulations.

Organized chronologically, the Guide follows the full cycle of thesis preparation - from early planning through defence. It also includes appendices with deadlines, key forms, and essential formatting and integrity requirements. Supplementary templates and materials referenced herein are available through the Academy's official website and learning platforms.

2. Overview of the Thesis Process

2.1. What is the Thesis?

The MA thesis is the capstone of graduate study at the OSCE Academy. It is an independent and original piece of scholarly research that demonstrates the student's ability to apply appropriate theoretical and methodological tools to a topic relevant to the Academy's areas of study. The thesis should address a clearly defined research problem and reflect high standards of analytical rigour, clarity of argument, and academic integrity.

Each programme defines specific expectations regarding scope and focus, but in all cases the thesis represents the student's individual achievement, completed under academic supervision and evaluated through peer review and oral defence.

The thesis process begins during the first semester and continues through the defence and approval of the final work in the second academic year. It follows a clearly defined sequence of stages that ensure steady academic progress, proper supervision, and consistent quality assurance. While the timeline may vary slightly across programmes or academic years, the logic of progression remains the same.

2.2. Key Stages

The thesis process follows a defined sequence of stages designed to guide students from early topic exploration to the defence of the completed work. Each stage represents an important milestone in the development of independent research skills and ensures continuous academic progress and quality assurance.

Approximate timing is indicated below for orientation. The full and binding list of deadlines is provided in *Appendix A. Thesis Preparation Deadlines in 2025-2027*.

Stage	Period or Due Date	Main Activities and Deliverables	Responsible Parties
Preparatory Stage	Semester 1	Participation in Research Methods course; identification of general area of interest; preliminary literature review.	Learning stage – student guided by course instructor.
Thesis Seminar	Semester 2	Development of research question, theoretical framing, and draft proposal. Final deliverable: draft thesis proposal (mid-April).	4-credit course – graded by instructor.
Thesis Proposal Review	Jun	Submission of revised proposal for independent review; feedback and clearance to proceed.	Coordinated by Department of Education.
Supervisor Assignment	Jan – Mar	Appointment of supervisor and signing of Supervision Agreement.	Department of Education; student and supervisor.
Research and Writing	Jul – Dec	Fieldwork, data collection, analysis, drafting of chapters; periodic consultations with supervisor.	Student under supervision.
Intermediate Progress Review	Oct	Supervisor submits Intermediate Results Report to Department of Education.	Supervisor; Department of Education.
Final Submission and Defence	Early 2027	Submission of final thesis to programme e-mail by official deadline. Independent review oral defence before State Examination Committee.	Student; Supervisor and reviewers; State Examination Committee.

2.3. Key Principles

The MA thesis process at the OSCE Academy is guided by a set of core principles that ensure academic quality, fairness, and individual responsibility. These principles define how students, supervisors, and the institution contribute to the successful completion of a rigorous and independent research project.

- **Independent research:** The thesis is the student's own scholarly work. While faculty and supervisors provide guidance and feedback, the student bears full responsibility for defining the topic, conducting the research, and meeting academic standards.
- **Progressive development:** Each stage builds on the previous one, linking coursework, proposal development, and research implementation into a coherent learning process.
- **Collaborative support:** The process relies on active engagement from the student, constructive feedback from the supervisor, and procedural coordination by the Department of Education.
- **Academic integrity and compliance:** Adherence to ethical standards, deadlines, and formatting rules is mandatory and constitutes part of maintaining good academic standing.
- **Transparency:** All requirements, timelines, and evaluation procedures are communicated clearly and in advance through official Academy channels.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The successful completion of the MA thesis depends on the coordinated efforts of several actors within the OSCE Academy. While the student bears primary responsibility for the quality and timely completion of the thesis, supervisors, faculty, reviewers, and administrative staff play essential supporting and quality-assurance roles.

3.1 Student

The student is the principal author and owner of the thesis and are required to undertake the following actions as part of their work on their MA theses:

- Select and refine a research topic consistent with programme objectives and personal academic interests;
- Develop the thesis proposal, conduct the research, and write the thesis in line with approved ethical and methodological standards;
- Communicate regularly with the supervisor and respond constructively to feedback;
- Observe all deadlines and submission requirements set by the Academy;
- Uphold academic integrity in all aspects of research and writing; and
- Ensure proper formatting, referencing, and submission of the final work.

3.2 Supervisor

Supervisors guide students in shaping, conducting, and finalizing their research projects. They are expected to:

- Provide academic advice on the feasibility, relevance, and methodological soundness of the student's research;
- Offer timely feedback on drafts and maintain regular communication throughout the supervision period;
- Submit the *Intermediate Results Report* and other required updates to the Department of Education;
- Alert the Department promptly if serious issues arise that may prevent the student from completing the thesis on time; and
- Evaluate the thesis and submit an assessment form once the final version is submitted.

Supervisors are not responsible for the language editing or technical formatting of the thesis.

3.3 Thesis Seminar Instructor

The Thesis Seminar instructor supports students in the early stages of defining their research. Responsibilities include:

- Guiding students in formulating research questions, objectives, and methodological approaches;
- Providing structured feedback on draft proposals and assessing them for course grading purposes; and

- Coordinating with the Department of Education to ensure that students are prepared for the formal Thesis Proposal Review.

3.4 Reviewers

Independent reviewers are appointed by the Department of Education to evaluate thesis proposals and final theses. They are expected to:

- Provide objective, detailed, and constructive written feedback within the specified deadlines;
- Evaluate the academic quality and originality of the work against the Academy's standards; and
- Participate, when invited, in the oral defence or related review discussions.

3.5 Department of Education

The Department of Education administers all stages of the thesis process and ensures procedural integrity. Its responsibilities include:

- Coordinating the scheduling of stages, reviews, and defences;
- Appointing supervisors and reviewers in consultation with programme management;
- Ensuring that all deadlines and forms are communicated clearly and maintained in official records;
- Overseeing ethical clearance and compliance with academic regulations; and
- Serving as the first point of contact for administrative questions or procedural clarifications.

4. Thesis Development Stages

The preparation of the Master's thesis unfolds through a series of clearly defined stages, beginning in the first semester and culminating in the submission of the completed work in the second academic year.

Each stage serves a specific purpose within the broader process, helping students progress from identifying a topic, to developing a research proposal, conducting independent research, and producing a final thesis that meets the Academy's academic standards.

This section describes the stages of thesis development in chronological order. For each stage, it outlines the purpose, expected activities, and key deliverables. Deadlines mentioned here are indicative; the official and binding dates are listed in *Appendix A. Thesis Preparation Deadlines in 2025-2027*.

Students are expected to follow these stages closely and to maintain regular communication with their supervisor and the Department of Education throughout the process.

4.1 Preparatory Stage (Semester 1: September – December)

The early preparatory stage lays the groundwork for the MA thesis. Its purpose is to help students begin identifying a potential research area, understand methodological approaches, and gain initial exposure to academic research design before formal thesis preparation begins.

This stage is linked to the Research Methods courses taken in the first semester. The course introduces the logic of social-science inquiry, research design, and data-collection techniques. Although the course does not require a completed proposal, students are encouraged to use course assignments to test ideas that could later evolve into their thesis topics.

Student Responsibilities

During this stage, students are expected to:

- Reflect on personal academic and professional interests to define a general area of inquiry relevant to the programme;
- Conduct a preliminary review of key literature, data sources, or policy debates;
- Discuss tentative ideas with faculty and peers; and
- Familiarize themselves with the Academy's expectations for research ethics and academic integrity.

Expected Outputs

There is no formal deliverable at this stage; however, students are encouraged to maintain brief notes or outlines of emerging ideas, possible research questions, and relevant readings. These materials will serve as a useful foundation for the Thesis Seminar in the following semester.

Successful completion of the Research Methods course and early conceptual preparation enable students to enter the Thesis Seminar with a preliminary topic and a basic understanding of research design. This ensures a smoother and more productive start to formal thesis development.

4.2 Thesis Seminar (Semester 2: January – April)

Purpose

The Thesis Seminar provides the formal starting point for the development of the MA thesis. It enables students to transform a broad area of interest into a coherent research plan and to demonstrate mastery of research design, methodology, and analytical reasoning. The seminar offers structured academic support while maintaining the student's responsibility for defining and justifying their own research project.

The Thesis Seminar is a 4-credit required course delivered during the second semester of study. It combines lectures, workshops, and supervised discussions. The course is graded and counts toward the cumulative grade-point average. Instruction focuses on designing feasible research, developing argumentation, and writing the thesis proposal.

Students are expected to attend all sessions, complete assigned readings, and participate actively in discussions. The seminar instructor provides collective and individual feedback on research ideas and proposal drafts.

Student Responsibilities

During the Thesis Seminar, students are expected to:

- Refine their research topic into a clear, focused question or problem statement;
- Develop a conceptual and theoretical framework informed by relevant literature;
- Identify and justify methodological choices and data sources;
- Draft key components of the proposal in line with Academy standards; and
- Engage in peer review and respond constructively to instructor feedback.

Expected Outputs

The final deliverable for this course is a draft thesis proposal, normally submitted by mid-April (see *Appendix A. Thesis Preparation Deadlines in 2025-2027* for the exact date). The draft proposal should clearly state the research question, rationale, theoretical approach, and methodology. Detailed content and formatting requirements are provided in *Appendix C*.

The Thesis Seminar grade is based on the quality of assignments, participation, and the final draft proposal. Passing the course is required for progression to the Thesis Proposal Review stage.

4.3 Thesis Proposal Review (May – July)

Purpose

The Thesis Proposal Review is a formal institutional process that ensures the academic quality, feasibility, and ethical integrity of each student's proposed research before full-scale work begins. It serves as a quality-assurance step distinct from coursework and is mandatory for all MA students.

The review is non-credit but successful completion is required to proceed to research and writing stages. The process is coordinated by the Department of Education and involves evaluation by two independent reviewers, who may include faculty members or qualified external experts.

Submission Requirements

Students submit a revised thesis proposal – updated in response to feedback received during the Thesis Seminar – by the deadline indicated in *Appendix A*. The submission must include:

- The final proposal document; and
- A completed Ethical Approval Form (see *Appendix F*) if the research involves human participants or sensitive data.

Content and Format

The thesis proposal should be approximately 3,500–4,000 words in length (excluding bibliography and appendices). It must be formatted in 12-point Times New Roman, 1.5 line spacing, and comply with all specifications in *Appendix C*.

The proposal must:

- Present a clear and focused research problem or question;
- Explain the significance and relevance of the topic;
- Outline the conceptual or theoretical framework;
- Summarize the key literature;
- Describe the research design, data sources, and methods of analysis;
- Address ethical considerations; and
- Provide a tentative structure of the thesis and timeline.

Review Process

Each proposal is evaluated independently by two reviewers using a standard assessment form. Each reviewer provides an independent written evaluation of the thesis proposal, assessing its methodological soundness, feasibility, and relevance. Reviewers may also comment on the significance of the topic and its sensitivity to the Central Asian research context.

Each reviewer provides an independent written evaluation and assigns a letter grade based on the overall quality of the proposal. Reviewers also offer written recommendations to help students improve their projects and prepare for the next stages. Feedback may include suggestions for additional literature, refinement of research questions or hypotheses, adjustments to research design or methods, or revisions to the overall structure and timeline.

If a proposal does not meet the required academic standards, reviewers must clearly identify its weaknesses and provide specific, constructive advice for revision.

The Department of Education communicates outcomes and feedback to students and their prospective supervisors.

4.4 Research and Writing (Summer – Autumn)

Purpose

This stage marks the transition from thesis planning to full-scale research and drafting. Its purpose is to enable students to implement their approved research design, collect and analyse data, and translate their findings into a well-structured, coherent written thesis that meets the Academy's academic standards.

The research and writing stage typically extends from July to December of the second academic year. The pace and sequence of activities may vary depending on the nature of the research (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method) and the approved methodology.

Student Responsibilities

Students are expected to:

- Conduct independent research in line with their approved proposal and ethical commitments;
- Apply appropriate data-collection and analysis methods;
- Maintain accurate and verifiable records of data sources and fieldwork;
- Communicate with their supervisor regularly, providing updates on progress and discussing any significant methodological or practical issues;
- Draft thesis chapters in a timely manner, following the agreed structure; and
- Ensure full compliance with ethical standards, data-protection requirements, and referencing conventions.

Good Research Practice

Students must adhere to the principles of academic integrity and responsible scholarship. This includes:

- Obtaining informed consent as/when necessary;
- Ensuring confidentiality and secure data storage;
- Avoiding plagiarism and proper citation of all sources;
- Reporting data and findings accurately and transparently; and
- Reflecting on limitations and potential biases in their work.

Expected Outputs

By the end of this stage, students are expected to have:

- Completed all data collection and analysis;
- Produced a full first draft of the thesis, normally by 30 September; and
- Revised the draft based on supervisory feedback, preparing the final version for submission by early January (see *Appendix A. Thesis Preparation Deadlines in 2025-2027* for exact deadlines).

Once the research and writing process is complete and the thesis has been approved by the supervisor as ready for submission, the student proceeds to the Final Submission stage.

4.5 Final Submission (January)

The final submission stage concludes the thesis preparation process. Its purpose is to ensure that all theses are submitted in the approved format, by the official deadline, and ready for evaluation and defence.

Submission Requirements

Students must submit both Word and PDF versions of the thesis to the following addresses:

- MA in Politics and Security: MATHesisPS@osce-academy.net
- MA in Economic Governance and Development: MATHesisEGD@osce-academy.net
- MA in Human Rights and Sustainability: MATHesisMAHRS@osce-academy.net

It is the student's sole responsibility to ensure that the submitted thesis is correctly formatted and complete. The Department of Education reviews all submissions for formatting compliance; only theses meeting the prescribed standards are accepted for evaluation.

Length and Formatting

The thesis must comply with the following word limits:

- MA in Politics and Security: 18,000 – 25,000 words
- MA in Economic Governance and Development: 14,000 – 18,000 words
- MA in Human Rights and Sustainability: 18,000 – 25,000 words

These figures exclude prefatory pages, notes, tables, bibliography, and appendices. 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.

Formatting and citation requirements are detailed in Appendix C.

Final Submission Deadlines and Penalties

All students must meet the official MA thesis submission deadline—8 January 2027, 11:00 a.m. (Bishkek time). Timely submission is a mandatory condition for completing the programme.

Theses submitted after the official deadline incur an automatic deduction of five points from the final grade. Saturdays and Sundays are counted in calculating the delay. Submissions received more than five days late are considered failed.

Academic Leave

In exceptional cases, such as illness or serious family circumstances, a student may request an academic leave to postpone the thesis submission to the following academic year. Such requests must be submitted to the Department of Education no later than 30 September 2026. Requests received after this date will not be considered (see *Academic Regulations*, §14).

Failure to Submit

Failure to meet the submission deadline without an approved academic leave results in expulsion from the MA Programme.

An expelled student retains the right to apply for re-admission to the OSCE Academy within the following two years. Decisions on re-admission are made by the Academy's management, subject to the availability of programme places and resources.

5. Supervision and Progress Monitoring

Thesis supervision ensures academic guidance and institutional oversight throughout the research and writing process. It provides students with expert support while maintaining the independence of their scholarly work and the integrity of the thesis process.

5.1 Appointment of Supervisor

Supervisors are normally appointed between January and March 2026, following the submission and approval of the thesis proposal. Students may suggest preferred supervisors; final assignments are approved by the Department of Education based on academic relevance, workload balance, and faculty availability.

All supervisors must sign a service contract with the OSCE Academy covering the supervision period (May 2026 – January 2027).

5.2 Thesis Supervision Agreement

Each student and supervisor must complete a Thesis Supervision Agreement (template in Appendix E) and submit the signed copy to the Department of Education no later than 31 March 2026.

The Agreement records the working title, supervision plan, and mutual expectations, including draft submission timelines and communication arrangements. It forms the basis for assessing progress and accountability during the thesis process.

5.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Student:

- Take full responsibility for the progress, content, and timely completion of the thesis.
- Communicate proactively with the supervisor and meet all agreed deadlines.
- Submit drafts or chapters allowing adequate time for review.
- Attend meetings fully prepared and respond to feedback constructively.
- Inform the supervisor promptly of any difficulties affecting research progress.

Supervisor:

- Provide academic guidance on topic refinement, methodology, and structure.
- Help the student identify relevant literature, data sources, and ethical or security issues.
- Be accessible for reasonable consultations throughout the supervision period.
- Notify the student and the Department of Education of any issues jeopardizing timely completion or of inability to continue supervision.
- Review the thesis according to the Academy's quality standards and submit the Supervisor's Review by the prescribed deadline.

The thesis must remain the student's independent scholarly work; supervision is advisory, not collaborative authorship.

5.4 Progress Monitoring

First Draft

By 30 September 2026, each student must submit to their supervisor a first complete draft that includes:

- Abstract or executive summary
- Introduction
- Literature review
- Theoretical framework
- Research design and methodology
- Description of collected data
- (Analytical chapters and conclusions are optional at this stage.)

Intermediate Results Report

The supervisor submits an Intermediate Results Report to the Department of Education by 26 October 2026, summarizing the student's progress and any challenges encountered.

Reports must be e-mailed to:

- MA in Politics and Security: MAthesisPS@osce-academy.net
- MA in Economic Governance and Development: MAthesisEGD@osce-academy.net
- MA in Human Rights and Sustainability: MAthesisMAHRS@osce-academy.net

Students must be copied on this correspondence.

Final Review

The final deliverable provided by a supervisor is a review of a student's thesis. Supervisor's Review becomes part of the thesis evaluation package considered by the State Examination Committee.

6. Evaluation and Defence

6.1 Comprehensive State Examinations

The Comprehensive State Examinations (CSE) represent the final stage of the Master's programme and consist of two components:

- a written State Examination, designed to test the student's knowledge in at least two core subjects studied throughout the programme; and
- the MA thesis defence, assessing the student's research competence and analytical skills.

Only students with a cumulative GPA of 2.00 or higher are eligible to take the CSE. Students whose GPA falls below 2.00 automatically fail the programme and are not permitted to participate in the examinations.

6.2 Evaluation of the MA Thesis

Each MA thesis is evaluated by the supervisor and three independent reviewers, who provide written assessments and grades. Reviewers' comments and grades are submitted to the State Examination Committee (SEC), which makes the final grading decision based on:

- the student's thesis presentation and oral defence;
- the supervisor's written assessment; and
- the reviewers' evaluations and grades.

The lowest passing grade for the MA thesis is C-. A thesis graded below C- is considered failed but may be rewritten and resubmitted twice within two years after expulsion.

6.3 MA Thesis Defence

The MA thesis is defended in the form of an oral presentation delivered by the student before the State Examination Committee.

The presentation should last 15 minutes and may include up to 12 slides if visual materials are used.

The student must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, appropriate use of research methods and analytical tools, and the ability to present findings clearly and persuasively.

The defence is individual and conducted in person; it is not open to the public. Students from the same group may attend a defence only with written consent from the Department of Education and the approval of the presenting student (e-mail confirmation is sufficient).

Each presentation is followed by a 15-minute question-and-answer session. After all defences are completed, the State Examination Committee meets in closed session to determine final grades. Students are informed of their results by e-mail on the following day, while written comments from external reviewers are shared after the graduation ceremony.

6.4 Final Outcome and Re-Admission

The evaluation and defence process confirms the academic quality of the MA thesis and the student's eligibility for graduation.

Students who fail to meet the thesis or program requirements are subject to expulsion. An expelled student retains the right to apply for re-admission to the OSCE Academy within the following two years. Decisions regarding re-admission are made by the Academy's management, taking into account the availability of programme places and resources.

6.5 Appeals

Students who wish to contest the final grade received for their MA thesis may submit a grade review request following the procedure below:

- **Initial Consultation.** The student must first consult with the Head of the Department of Education to discuss and clarify the reasons for concern regarding the final grade.
- **Formal Request.** If the issue cannot be resolved through consultation, the student may submit a written request for grade review to the Head of the Department of Education. The request must include a detailed written explanation justifying why the grade should be reviewed, as the burden of proof lies with the student. Upon receipt, the Head of the Department of Education will forward a copy of the student's request to the State Examination Committee (SEC) and request a written response within five (5) working days.
- **Review and Decision.** The State Examination Committee will decide whether to accept or reject the grade review request. If the request is rejected, the initial grade remains unchanged. If the request is accepted, the SEC will initiate a formal grade review procedure. The outcome of the review will be final and communicated in writing to all parties concerned.

Appendices

Appendix A. Thesis Preparation Deadlines in 2025-2027

Activity	Deadline
Selection of MA Thesis Supervisor	January – March 2026
Submission of the Thesis Supervision Agreement	31 March 2026
Submission of the Thesis Proposal	15 June 2026
Review of the Thesis Proposal	16 - 30 June 2026
Submission of MA Thesis First Draft	30 September 2026
Supervisor's Intermediate Results Report	26 October 2026
Submission of MA Thesis Final Draft to Supervisor	1 December 2026 (unless otherwise agreed with the supervisor and indicated in the supervision agreement)
Official Submission of the MA Thesis (electronic version)	8 January 2027, 11:00 a.m. (Bishkek time)
Thesis Evaluation	11 - 31 January 2027
State Exam and Thesis Defence	1 - 10 February 2027
Announcement of Final Grades	12 February 2027
Graduation	19 February 2027 (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 e-mail addresses:

- MA in Politics and Security: MAtesisPS@osce-academy.net
- MA in Economic Governance and Development: MAtesisEGD@osce-academy.net
- MA in Human Rights and Sustainability: MAtesisMAHRS@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 the 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 Department of Education. Evidence of the suspected plagiarism should be collected together with the Head of the Department of Education, 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 Department of Education 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 Department of Education 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.

Use of AI Tools

The OSCE Academy recognizes that AI tools have become increasingly widespread in everyday life. When used appropriately, they present a valuable resource for everyone in the education and research industry, including students, faculty, and staff of academic institutions. However, as with other forms of technology, AI tools pose a serious risk when the way they are used directly contradicts the most critical purpose of the academic process: students' learning.

The Academy's highest priority is to help students master critical knowledge skills such as organizing thoughts, developing arguments, writing clearly, and presenting ideas verbally. If students delegate these tasks to AI, the learning process loses its meaning. Therefore, it is the Academy's firm expectation that the works students submit are explicitly their own. Students may use relevant AI tools for technical assistance (e.g., grammar checking, brainstorming), but the ideas, structure, and analysis must always reflect the student's own thinking and effort. Submitting work that relies on AI-generated content undermines the educational goals of the Academy and will be treated as academic misconduct. Whenever they have questions on proper use of AI tools, students are encouraged to consult faculty.

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 Department of Education. Evidence of the suspected plagiarism should be collected together with the Head of the Department of Education, 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 Department of Education 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 Department of Education 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 for Thesis Proposal and MA Thesis

1. Referencing and Citation

All written work must follow the **Chicago Manual of Style** (the 18th edition, <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>). Work that fails to meet Chicago referencing standards will not be accepted.

Students may choose either:

- **Author–Date** (in-text citations), or
 - **Notes and Bibliography** (footnotes or endnotes).
- Whichever format is selected must be used consistently throughout all coursework, the thesis proposal, and the final thesis.

Helpful resources:

- Chicago quick guides: [Author–Date](#) | [Notes & Bibliography](#)
- Reference-management tools (check entries for accuracy): Citation Machine, Cite This For Me, Mendeley.

2. General Formatting Standards (apply to both proposal and thesis)

Element	Requirement
Font	Times New Roman 12 pt (body); 10 pt for notes; up to 16 pt for headings.
Spacing	1.5 lines in body text; single-spacing for footnotes, block quotations, tables, and bibliography.
Margins	Left 1.5 in (3.8 cm); Right/Top/Bottom 1 in (2.5 cm).
Alignment	Text fully justified.
Page numbers	Bottom-centre; Arabic (1, 2, 3...) for main text; lowercase Roman (i, ii, iii...) for prefatory pages in the final thesis.
Colour	Permitted only for figures or illustrations, not regular text.

3. Thesis Proposal Format

- **Length:** approx. 3,500 – 4,000 words (excluding bibliography and appendices).
- **Content:** research question, rationale, theoretical/conceptual framework, literature summary, methods, ethical considerations, structure & timeline.
- **Bibliography:** Chicago-style, single-spaced, one blank line between entries.
- **Appendices:** optional; labelled APPENDIX A, B, etc., each on a new page.
- **Declaration:** signed statement of academic honesty (template provided).

4. Final MA Thesis Format

Structure

1. **Prefatory pages** – Title Page, Declaration, Abstract (≤ 400 words), Acknowledgements (optional), Table of Contents, Lists of Tables/Figures/Illustrations, List of Abbreviations (optional).
2. **Body** – Chapters, Conclusion.
3. **Bibliography/References.**
4. **Appendices** (if any).

Additional notes

- Use provided templates for the **Title Page** and **Declaration**; do not alter fonts or layout.
- **Headings** should be clearly hierarchical but used sparingly; chapters centred, sub-headings left-aligned.
- **Illustrative materials:** each list (tables, figures, etc.) appears on a separate prefatory page; titles in lists must match titles in the text.
- **Abstract:** ≤ 400 words summarizing topic, methods, and key findings.
- **Acknowledgements:** first-person; optional.
- **Appendices:** placed after the bibliography, labelled APPENDIX A, B ... ; include only supplementary materials.

5. Templates and Support

Official templates and sample pages are available on the Academy's website:

<http://osce-academy.net/en/masters/Programmeresources/>

Appendix D. Thesis Proposal Review Form (template)



OSCE Academy

MA in Politics and Security Programme 2025-2027

MA in Economic Governance and Development Programme 2025-2027

MA in Human Rights and Sustainability 2025-2027

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 percentage	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 with ethical standards

Appendix E. Thesis Supervisory Agreement (template)



MA Thesis Supervision Agreement¹

Between

Student:

MA Programme (PS / EGD / MAHRS): _____

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 2026 - January 2027). 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 Department of Education by e-mail - c.osmonalieva@osce-academy.net - and **receive its initial approval.**

methods give rise to am 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 Department of Education 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 2027, 11:00 a.m. (Bishkek time).

Thesis Preparation Deadlines

Activity	Deadline
Selection of MA Thesis Supervisor	January – March 2026
Submission of the Thesis Supervision Agreement	31 March 2026
Submission of the Thesis Proposal	15 June 2026
Review of the Thesis Proposal	16 - 30 June 2026
Submission of MA Thesis First Draft	30 September 2026
Supervisor's Intermediate Results Report	26 October 2026
Submission of MA Thesis Final Draft to Supervisor	1 December 2026 (unless otherwise agreed with the supervisor and indicated in the supervision agreement)
Official Submission of the MA Thesis (electronic version)	8 January 2027, 11:00 a.m. (Bishkek time)
Thesis Evaluation	11 - 31 January 2027
State Exam and Thesis defence	1 - 10 February 2027
Announcement of Final Grades	12 February 2027
Graduation	19 February 2027 (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 the 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	
Institutional Affiliation of Supervisor	
Funding Institution / Grant (title)	
(Planned) Starting Date of Research Activity	
Contact Information of Student / Researcher (e-mail)	
Contact Information of Supervisor (e-mail)	

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	

Recommendation

--

Approval²

Name	Date	Signature

² In case approval cannot 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 2025-2027

MA in Economic Governance and Development Programme 2025-2027

MA in Human Rights and Sustainability 2025-2027

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 2025-2027

MA in Economic Governance and Development Programme 2025-2027

MA in Human Rights and Sustainability 2025-2027

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 2025-2027

MA in Economic Governance and Development Programme 2025-2027

MA in Human Rights and Sustainability 2025-2027

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			Below 69.50%

Appendix K. MA Thesis Approval Form



OSCE Academy

MA in Politics and Security Programme 2025-2027

MA in Economic Governance and Development Programme 2025-2027

MA in Human Rights and Sustainability 2025-2027

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 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 DEFENCE:	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: