UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
Johan Skytte Institute
of Political Studies

STUDY GUIDE

Politics and Governance in the Digital Age (PGDA)

Master of Arts in Social Sciences

2024

University of Tartu

Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

www.ut.ee/en

Welcome to the MA Programme in Politics and Governance in the Digital Age!

"Congratulations! If you read this study guide, you might already be accepted to the programme, or just about to apply. Good choice! I would even say – a clever choice. Choosing Estonia, the University of Tartu, and this programme is like finding a hidden pearl in the ocean. There is no doubt that skills and knowledge gained from the programme will change your and others' lives. We are very proud to have this programme in our institute."

Kristiina Tõnnisson,
Director of Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

"Dear current or perspective student, I am very happy that you are interested in our programme. We have worked hard to put together a curriculum that gives you an understanding of how democratic politics unfolds and the modern state functions in the current digital era. We hope that you find this journey of knowledge acquisition interesting, and that it gives you plenty to take along for your future endeavours!"

Martin Mölder,
Programme Coordinator

Study Guide

This Study Guide is designed to provide both current and prospective students with a one-stop overview of the programme, how it is structured and how it runs. Its aim is to help students tailor the programme to fit their goals, maximise their opportunities and make the most of their studies.

Contents

	Degree		**Study language**		**Location**
	Master of Arts		English		Tartu, Estonia

	Student places		**Duration and credits**		**Form of study**
	17		2 years, 120 ECTS		Full-time regular studies

	Scholarships		**Tuition fee**		**Tuition waivers**
	Available for national and international students		4,200 EUR/year		5 for EU/EEA/Switzerland citizens, 5 for non-EU citizens

1. Studying Politics and Governance in the Digital Age M.A

1.1 About the Programme

Democratic governance is facing many challenges. Citizens demand high-quality services and have high expectations about how governments should take their concerns and ideas into account in policy-making and public service delivery. At the same time, more and more interactions between governments and citizens take place digitally. In Estonia, Internet voting has become a prevalent mode of casting a vote at local, national and European elections. Social media have become platforms through which political actors, including populist and extremist ones, reach out to voters and through which citizens' political discontent is voiced and sometimes amplified. Furthermore, algorithms are increasingly being used to determine what services citizens are entitled to get, but also to identify which citizens are more likely to commit tax fraud or have difficulties finding employment. All these digital innovations provide promising perspectives but also raise fundamental political and ethical questions: what are the impacts of social media on voting behaviour, should Big Tech companies be regulated (and if so, how), and how 'just' and fair is algorithmic governance?

The master's degree programme in Politics and Governance in the Digital Age offers knowledge and skills that enable you to navigate this changing landscape of governance, politics and digital innovations. This programme integrates the fundamentals of governance, digital transformation and data analysis to improve our understanding of contemporary challenges to governance, politics and democracy. Understanding aspects of digital governance, as well as the basic structures of democratic states and societies, is key to a successful career in modern government, civil society, politics, public sector innovation or international organisations.

The master's programme provides in-depth knowledge about core political science topics, such as political ideas and institutions, elections, and political behaviour, along with a study of digital democratic innovations, electronic governance and digital society. This is reinforced by training in data analytics, research methods and techniques of quantitative and qualitative analysis.

A student who has completed the programme:

- has comprehensive knowledge of modern politics and public governance (including democratic theory and institutions, elections and party systems, policymaking and organisation of public services) and is able to use this knowledge to develop solutions for real-world problems;

- has acquired basic knowledge of the development and functioning of information societies and understands how the digital transformation affects public administration, politics and society;

- is familiar with the approaches and research methods used in political science and public administration and is able to independently formulate research questions, develop and test hypotheses, synthesize and analyse data, make inferences and draw valid conclusions, and be able to assess the academic and societal impact of research, including ethical implications;

- has acquired the necessary skills and digital competences to understand and analyse opportunities and threats associated with digital innovations at various levels of governance, including local, national, European and international;

- is prepared to work as a specialist in the field of research, government, non-governmental organisations, public sector consultancy, or international organizations, by demonstrating initiative, creativity, responsibility, leadership, management and teamwork skills;

- is able to identify his/her needs for continuing education and professional development and masters effective methods for independent learning.

Five reasons to study Politics and Governance in the Digital Age

1 To learn the 'nuts and bolts' of politics and public policy; how to analyse and shape political processes.

2 To gain insight into the effects that digital transformation has on politics and modern governance.

3 To experience first-hand how e-democracy and e-governance can affect different aspects of life, as Estonia is at the forefront of digital democracy.

4 For the opportunity to meet the policymakers, software developers and technology companies that are leading the public sector digital transformation.

5 To learn how the digital transformation affects society and how to make use of it for a better future.

1.2 Why study Politics and Governance in Digital Age in Estonia?

We believe that Estonia is the best location to study how digital governance can be implemented in today's world. The country is not only one of the global leaders in e-government, but was also the first country to implement internet-based voting. Estonia has additionally been ranked as one of the most dynamic reformers in Europe while at the same time maintaining a stable democracy. Based on this, Estonia provides many practical examples on the implementation of digital governance. These practical examples, as well as lessons from the Estonian success story are integrated in the PGDA curriculum.

Tartu is the second biggest city of Estonia and is considered the Student Capital of the country. The University of Tartu (UT) is Estonian's national University and ranks among the TOP 1.2% of world's best universities (https://ut.ee/en/rankings-surveys). It offers advanced study facilities, excellent libraries, well-equipped computer labs and modern residence halls. Interactive and innovative teaching and learning methods are widely used. There is a large variety of opportunities to study abroad, including Erasmus agreements with a broad range of partner universities in Europe and beyond. International students have rated Estonia as the best place to stay (https://ut.ee/en/rankings-surveys).

Studying in Tartu is both attractive and affordable – it means high-quality education at an accessible cost in a country that is close to nature as well as technologically advanced, is proud of its unique culture and traditions as well as open to the world.

1.3 Career Opportunities

The Politics and Governance in the Digital Age master's programme provides you with essential skills and knowledge both in comparative political science and governance. Combined with data-driven governance, e-democracy and critical thinking in the digital society, students can explain how digital transformation affects modern political processes and public administration. This opens up many possibilities for applying your skills and knowledge after graduation from this programme.

Political scientists study the structure and theory of government and seek practical and theoretical solutions to political problems. This MA programme prepares students for advisory positions, high-level positions in ministries and governments, or to be employed at the highest levels of administration. Similarly, it enables students to start a career in the private sector, e.g. in consulting, given the expertise in the digital transformation of the public sector.

Former students have been employed at international organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme, the European e-Government Programme in Luxembourg, the European Commission or an embassy in Washington D.C. as a technology attaché. Some have opted for academia and continued in doctoral studies. The master's programme in Politics and Governance in the Digital Age equips students to operate in vast arrays of professional fields.

1.4 Teaching Staff

The MA programme is taught by a young and diverse team trained at some of the world's best universities (Columbia, Cambridge, European University Institute, Central European University, etc.). Our staff encompasses people from different nationalities, offering students a multi-faceted knowledge and experience.

Vincent Homburg
Professor, e-Governance

Liisa Talving
Research Fellow,
Comparative Politics

Piret Ehin
Professor, European Politics

Kristina Muhhina
Research Fellow, Public Governance

Mihkel Solvak
Associate Professor, Impact Assessment

Eva Piirimäe
Associate Professor, History of Political Thought and Theory

Martin Mölder
Research Fellow, Party Politics

Stefano Braghiroli
Associate Professor, European Politics

Edgars Eihmanis
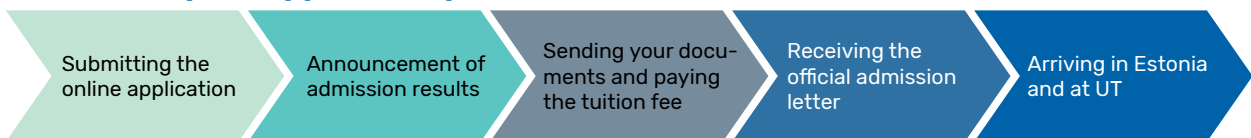Research Fellow, Comparative Politics

Helen Eenmaa
Associate Professor, Governance and Legal Policy

More information about the teaching staff of the Skytte Institute is available here: https://skytte.ut.ee/en/johan-skytte-institute-political-studies.

1.5 Application Process

Once you have taken the decision to study Politics and Governance in the Digital Age, you can start the application process. The five steps of this process are shown below.

The five steps of application process

| Submitting the online application | Announcement of admission results | Sending your documents and paying the tuition fee | Receiving the official admission letter | Arriving in Estonia and at UT |

Please keep in mind the following four important dates when applying to the University:

January 2, 2024: Application system opens

March 15, 2024: Application system closes

April 30, 2024: Final admission results are announced

September 2, 2024: Academic year starts

More information about the application process, entry requirements, and evaluation criteria are available here: https://www.ut.ee/governance

1.6 Tuition Fee and Scholarship

The tuition fee for the PGDA master studies is 4,200€ per year. On the basis of the admission results, outstanding applicants (regardless of citizenship) can receive **tuition waivers,** which cover the cost of tuition. Applicants do not have to apply for the tuition waiver separately, they will be considered automatically.

There are a number of **scholarships** available for national and international students. You can apply for these during admission or once you are enrolled. More information about scholarships and tuition-wavers is available here: https://ut.ee/en/content/scholarship-information.

1.7 Useful Links and Videos

Links (University of Tartu)

> University of Tartu website
>
> MA programme in Politics and Governance in the Digital Age
>
> Information for new students & Contacts for international students

Links (Johan Skytte Institute of Political Science)

> Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies website
>
> Information on MA programmes
>
> Study material and guidelines
>
> Study regulations

Study Systems

> Curriculum of Politics and Governance in the Digital Age (select your study year at the top of the page to see course details)
>
> Study Information System OIS (University access required)
>
> Moodle (University access required)

Videos

> YouTube - Politics and Governance in the Digital Age (MA) | 10 questions with an international student
>
> YouTube - "Politics and Governance in the Digital Age - Info Session 2024"
>
> Youtube – Interviews with lecturers

2. Curriculum Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The goal of the PGDA curriculum is to provide you with in-depth knowledge and practical skills related to contemporary democratic governance. It will prepare you to work in advanced positions in the government, civil society, politics or international organisations in Estonia or elsewhere in the world.

The skills and knowledge that the programme provides, include:

- integrated knowledge on core components of politics and governance as well as of digital transformation, including state-held e-services;
- data analysis skills;
- analytical competencies and critical thinking;
- understanding of modern political institutions and political processes;
- the ability to identify and analyse the key problems and processes of governance, involving both government institutions and civil society;
- proper research skills to perform policy analysis and contribute to policy formation;
- solid writing and oral presentation skills to be effective in a professional career;
- an international perspective that will enrich career prospects both at home and globally.

The PGDA programme builds life-long skills of how to analyse political change, communicate one's analysis, and to work with others in collaboration. The three inter-locking dimensions of the curriculum - **knowledge acquisition, skills training** and **learning sequence** - are embedded in an overall principle of international learning. You will study in a multinational English-language environment with students and faculty coming from a variety of backgrounds.

2.1 Knowledge Acquisition

Knowledge comes in many different forms, ranging from general concepts and methods to specific phenomena or issues. The PGDA MA programme is structured into three separate layers in order to cover this spectrum and ensure that our graduates obtain a well-rounded education. Seen as modules, these layers bring together methods training, core knowledge about politics and governance, and specialised training in politics or governance.

After successfully completing the curriculum, you will:

1. have a broad-based knowledge of the main components of modern politics and public administration (incl. democracy theory and institutions, elections and party systems, policy-making and organization of public services) and is able to apply this knowledge in practice;

2. have acquired basic knowledge of technological development and the functioning of information societies and understand how technological transfer affects modern political processes and public administration;

3. have a thorough knowledge of the approaches and research methods used in political science and are able to independently formulate policy and public administration problems and/or research questions, synthesize and analyze source materials, be source- and theory-critical, clearly present the results of your analysis both orally and in writing;

4. have acquired the necessary skills and digital competences to solve the practical tasks of democratic public administration, which enables analyzing and implementing ICT solutions

to address societal problems and understanding their opportunities and threats (incl. public policy analysis, impact assessment, public service design, governance ethics, international comparative analysis);

5. be ready to work in the field of research, development or creativity or in a qualified field of activity in the public/private/non-profit sector, thereby demonstrating initiative, responsibility, management and teamwork skills;

6. be able to identify your need for continuing education and professional development and master effective methods for independent learning.

2.2 Skill Training

A career in public affairs requires not only factual knowledge, but also professional competences. The courses in the PGDA programme are designed to **train you in various lasting, occupational skills** that you can use in a variety of professional contexts. The skills are outlined below, along with specific learning activities within the programme that promote these skills as well as their future applications in your professional life.

During your studies, you should be reflective in relation to the kind of assignments you are asked to do: What should this task be teaching me to do (better)? How can I get the most out of this experience? **Assignments or projects should not be seen as just hoops to jump through, but rather as learning opportunities, both regarding knowledge as well as skill.**

Skills	Activities	Applications
critical reflection: how to examine information and develop a critical perspective; how to reflect on differing viewpoints or opposing arguments	**within the programme:** reading; formulating questions about a particular reading; group discussions, listening and debating	**future uses:** reflecting on and interpreting political developments as part of political analysis, weighing alternative understandings and perspectives
conceptual skills: how to relate individual facts to generalized concepts or processes; how to abstract from the particular	**within the programme:** comparative conceptual essays; generalizing from case-studies; current events monitoring	**future uses:** formulating an analytical conclusion or generalization "The issue here is XYZ."; identifying appropriate solutions, responses
causal analysis: how to look for and establish links between phenomena; how to investigate both causes and consequences that may be related to a given phenomenon	**within the programme:** written assignments such as a research outline where you are required to form hypotheses; research papers	**future uses:** formulating an assertion that certain social or political problems are caused by something or how certain actions will bring along particular consequences, e.g. for policy analysis
verbal communication skills: how to present analytical results or arguments in a convincing and compelling manner	**within the programme:** oral presentation of a reading diary entry, a position paper, a research proposal, or an MA thesis; includes using electronic and digital media effectively	**future uses:** presenting orally an analysis or policy position to colleagues, superiors, a public audience, the media, or donors/stakeholders; communicating effectively with results

written communication skills: how to convey information and arguments to readers across a range of different writing forms	within the programme: putting together smaller-size, operational documents (policy briefs, position papers, informational summaries); or structuring longer analytical documents (proposals, research papers, an MA thesis)	future uses: submitting written briefs or reports to superiors or other colleagues; publishing longer analytical studies for policy-makers or the public; preparing funding proposals
collaborative skills: how to work with others in a fruitful and effective manner; how to work out responsibilities and plan tasks; how to exchange views and come to consensus;	within the programme: group assignments involving common problem identification and problem solving; peer-review of writing assignments, providing constructive feedback; organizing independent study projects	future uses: working on group projects, collaborating with stakeholders or funders, developing collaborative relationships with target groups
inter-cultural skills: how to understand different cultural or regional perspectives on social or political affairs; how to take these perspectives into account when working collaboratively	within the programme: seminar discussions and debates; discussing assignments or analyses during group assignments; learning in an international environment	future uses: working with other nationalities in international organizations, other national administrations or partner associations; successfully carrying out collaborative projects or policy coordination among such colleagues

2.3 International Learning Environment

Because politics and governance are global phenomena, it only makes sense to study these issues in an international learning environment. This means not only learning in English language, but also learning from (and through) the perspectives of students and academic staff from different nationalities. Especially in the case of politics and governance, perceptions and experiences, as well as challenges differ across regions and countries. It is therefore essential for all those interested in the field to understand the way in which these standpoints vary.

Given Estonia's history as a post-communist country, it is perhaps not surprising that this experience shapes noticeably how we look at political and governance issues. However, these perspectives also need to be placed in an international context and that means learning just as much about political and governance issues in other world regions. Partly this is the task of faculty, but also for you to draw on your own personal national background. The ethos of international learning is therefore not just to get to know other people, but also to understand their perspectives on political issues and to see them as part of an international learning process.

2.4 Learning Sequence

In order for knowledge acquisition and skills training to be effective, the two have to be timed into a sequence. This helps create a cumulative and enriching learning process, while also facilitating effective completion of the programme. After all, the ultimate objective for you is to embark on a successful career and professional life!

Seen from this angle, the Politics and Governance in the Digital Age programme is structured in a way that you can fulfil your required and elective courses, while also having opportunities to study abroad, do internships or gain other educational experiences.

During your first two semesters (autumn 2024 and spring 2025), you should focus on key cours-

es from the Methods Module and the Core Competencies Module. **Completing the mandatory courses from these two modules in the first year is strongly advised if you wish to study abroad or complete an internship in the third semester (autumn 2025)**. This is important to consider since some courses are only offered every other year. Interspersed among these required courses should be different specialisation courses as well as electives.

Finally, you should note that while most of the work on the MA thesis takes place during the final semester (spring 2026), thinking about this final assignment should already begin during the first semester, and it will be built up and updated during the entire study period.

3. Programme Structure

3.1 Modules and Courses

This master programme has a very clear interdisciplinary focus. It gives you a thorough understanding of politics and governance, and combines this knowledge with building your critical thinking and analytical skills. The curriculum offers a variety of courses to build up those skills and to acquire the relevant knowledge.

You are free to create your own study plan. It is however strongly recommended to complete the first two modules during the first year, as well as some elective courses. Please keep in mind that most courses are offered annually (not every semester) and some are only offered every other year. This is especially relevant if you decide to complete an internship or semester abroad in the third semester. In that case you have to complete specific courses in the first year. If you are not sure what exactly you need to study and when, please do not hesitate the Academic Affairs Specialist, Eelika Laane-Hannus (eelika.laane-hannus@ut.ee).

A general guiding rule is to complete 30 ECTS per semester, to distribute the workload of 120 ECTS of the curriculum equally to the four semesters.

Module	Description	Courses
1. SCIENTIFIC METHODS MODULE 18 ECTS	The goal of the module is (a) to provide an overview of social science methodology, (b) to introduce the main approaches and methods used in the study of contemporary democratic governance, and (c) to teach how to use these methods in applied problem-solving settings. **All courses of this module are compulsory.**	Qualitative and Interpretive Research Methods (6 ECTS) Quantitative Methods (6 ECTS) Social Science Methodology (6 ECTS)

2. CORE COMPETENCIES MODULE 36 ECTS	The objective of the module to provide a comprehensive overview of the main fields of democratic governance and to develop students' knowledge of concrete political systems and of societal development. **All courses of this module are compulsory.**	2.1 Module in politics Comparative Politics (6 ECTS) Elections and Political Behaviour (6 ECTS) Political Theory and Ethics (6 ECTS) 2.2. Module in governance Administration of Democracy and Elections (6 ECTS) E-Governance (6 ECTS) Public Governance (6 ECTS)
3. ELECTIVE MODULE WITH SPECIALIZATION 30 ECTS	The aim of the module is to complement the other modules of the curriculum with specializations that (a) deepen the postgraduate student's knowledge of specific areas of governance (b) expand on more general phenomena in politics and governance, (c) relate to the digital transformation, (d) develop entrepreneurship in students and strengthen the practical output of the curriculum, (e) provide additional analytical and methodological skills.	Big Data and Society (6 ECTS) Cyber Defence (3 ECTS) Political Culture (6 ECTS) EU Institutions and Policy-making (6 ECTS) Global Governance (6 ECTS) Internship in the Public Service, Private Sector, Civil Society (6 ECTS) Introduction to Impact Assessment (6 ECTS) Policy Writing and Advocacy (6 ECTS) Political Culture (6 ECTS) Project Management (6 ECTS) Quantitative Methods II (6 ECTS) Estonian for Beginners I, on the Basis of English, Level 0 – A1.1 (6 ECTS)
4. STUDY ABROAD MODULE 15 ECTS	The aim of the module is to offer the master's student the opportunity to study at a foreign higher education institution for at least one semester. **The module is optional.**	Students can choose courses from a foreign higher education institution according to their interests instead of the subjects of the elective module in the amount of at least 15 ECTS. Courses to be passed must be coordinated with the program leader.

5. OPTIONAL COURSE MODULE 6 ECTS	This module gives you the opportunity to choose courses from any other curricula at the UT or other universities in order to improve professional knowledge and skills. You can also select courses from the elective module.	Encounters with Estonian Culture (3 ECTS) How to Build a Startup Company (3 ECTS) Introduction to Programming (3 ECTS) Introduction to Programming II (3 ECTS) Project-based Internship (6 ECTS) Teams in Organization (3 ECTS) The Basics of Innovation (3 ECTS)
6. MASTER THESIS 30 ECTS	The goal of the MA thesis is to carry out in-depth research on a topic or problem related to the curricular field, to gather original empirical material or data within a suitable conceptual or theoretical framework, and to convey these research results in a clear and argued form. **This module is compulsory.**	MA Thesis (30 ECTS)

More information about the curriculum and courses is available on the UT student platform OIS – https://ois2.ut.ee/#/curricula/129637/version/2024/details (select your study year at 'select version' box to see details).

3.2 Special needs

If you are a student that requires assistance throughout your studies because of physical or psycho-social needs, the University offers a range of support services. The objective of providing support services is to help students with such needs to cope independently, support their social integration and equal opportunities and promote efficient involvement in studies. Therefore, the University of Tartu helps with administrative tasks, participation in studies including meeting deadlines or providing study materials as well as specific special needs advisers who help with all potential needs. Specifically, the University's library offers home service for members with special needs, for example with has audio files of literature for students with visual disabilities. Moreover, when moving to Tartu, the Students Village offers rooms that are adjusted for persons with reduced mobility in the dormitory located at Raatuse 22. There are also "support" students, i.e., volunteer students who support other students with their specific needs. More information, specific services, and dedicated advisors can be found on the University's website (https://ut.ee/en/content/counselling-students-special-needs). You can also subscribe to an e-mail list which shares information related to this topic (https://lists.ut.ee/wws/subscribe/strukt.erivajadused?previous_action=info)

4. Study Abroad and Internship

4.1 Study Abroad

During your studies in the PGDA programme, you can spend one semester studying abroad. Why consider a semester abroad? One reason could be finding courses or doing research in a country that may be related to your MA thesis. If you are considering a certain country as a case study in your research, then find out if Tartu has a partnership agreement with a university in that country. This could provide an opportunity for you to conduct fieldwork, but also to get to know local experts, perhaps even find a co-supervisor. Another reason may be interest in topics that are not taught in Tartu. For example, specific courses on African politics, international development policy or methods training could be more available elsewhere.

Note that the UT has specific rules about what courses may be taken abroad and how these credits are to be transferred back to your programme. For example, you are required to pass the minimum of 15 ECTS worth of courses each semester to meet the curricular requirements of your degree. You must complete a learning agreement before going abroad, and within that agreement you need to demonstrate which courses will go towards which section of your curriculum.

If you consider studying abroad then **we strongly advise you to complete both the Methods Module and the Core Competencies Module during your first year**. As a rule, you are recommended to study abroad only during your third semester. Studying abroad earlier (during the first academic year) is not allowed. Requests to study abroad during the fourth semester will be considered on a case-by-case basis if you have demonstrated that the prospects for completing the MA thesis are in good standing or if you expect to take an extension semester. Note that studying abroad may depend on your academic performance: you may be declined from going abroad if your grade point average (GPA) is below a critical level.

Further information about study abroad regulations and the complete list of the UT's partner universities are available at: https://ut.ee/en/studyabroad. You can also consult our Internship and Study Abroad Coordinator Uta Kührt (uta.kuhrt@ut.ee).

4.2 Internship

Another way to broaden your horizon is to pursue an internship. From a career standpoint, internships are valued more and more as they offer practical experience alongside university learning and therefore embellish your CV. Within the PGDA programme, internships can be a way of demonstrating the professional skills that were described above as part of the programme's study process. You should seek to utilise and hone these skills as much as possible during your internship. A list of open internship opportunities is available on the Institute's webpage: https://sisu.ut.ee/skytteinternship/internship-offers-0

More information is available in the Internship Manual: https://sisu.ut.ee/skytteinternship/internship-manual

5. Master Thesis

The MA thesis is the culminating of the PGDA curriculum. Its objective is not only to demonstrate your ability to complete an independent research project, but it is also an opportunity to distinguish yourself within a specific issue-area or to really tackle a problem that you see as needing more research. A complete guideline for writing and defending an MA thesis is available on the Institute's website.

To get the most out of this process, you should not see the MA thesis as merely a final paper to write before graduating but as a cumulative process during your studies. This is because the process will inevitably have its setbacks, and choices have to be made which require time to deal with. Moreover, a very important expectation of the thesis is that you demonstrate your ability to complete a longer-term project independently. This means exhibiting sufficient responsibility, accountability and conscientiousness to carry out the assignment and earn the final degree.

Start in the first semester

For the above reasons, work on the MA thesis already begins in the first semester when you are asked to prepare a preliminary thesis prospectus as part of the course Social Science Methodology. Use this opportunity to start thinking about:

- What issue or topic would be most interesting to research?
- What kind of topic might fit well with my future career plans?
- What particular methods need to be learned in order to pursue this topic?
- What kind of empirical data will be necessary?
- What kind of research design would be most beneficial to employ?

Second semester: refine the methods

If you have done a thorough job scoping out a future research area, you will be in a good position to learn more about specific methods you may need to acquire during your second or third semester. Likewise, you should use the second and third semester to choose specialisation courses that will deepen your conceptual and empirical knowledge in your research area. Keep in mind that such courses could be found in some of our Erasmus partner universities or via an internship.

I second semester is also a good time to reach out to the Institute's faculty members (https://skytte.ut.ee/en/johan-skytte-institute-political-studies) in order to begin laying the groundwork for future supervision or for simply getting advice or perspective. You can always contact the Programme Manager if you need guidance on which faculty member might be most appropriate to supervise a certain topic.

Third semester: put together a thesis prospectus

During the third semester, you are required to refine your project further into your first formal 4-page prospectus (i.e., a thesis plan) which will be reviewed by the Programme Manager and other relevant faculty members. The usual deadline for the submission of prospectuses is **November 1** (or the Monday following that day, if the deadline falls on a weekend). If you opt for an extension and plan to write your thesis in the fifth semester (NB, make sure you know the consequences of this decision first!), please make sure to inform the Programme Manager by November 1. For those who extend their studies, the prospectus deadline is April 1. The defence will then take place in the autumn term (i.e. January next year).

Fourth semester: complete the thesis

Ideally, your MA thesis prospectus lays out a roadmap on how this final independent project will be completed. The prospectus will have sketched out different tasks such as overall structure, theoretical framework, data collection and analysis methods, expected results, etc. Active work on writing the thesis will take place in your final semester and with close cooperation with your supervisor. More information on writing the thesis and specific requirements can be found in the study guidelines, which are also available on the website.

The submission deadline for the thesis is in May 2026. The date for the defence is at the end of May or in the beginning of June.

6. Graduation and Career Planning

Following the successful defence of the MA thesis, you must make sure you have completed all other curricular requirements (e.g. completed all courses or made sure that credit points earned elsewhere have been properly transferred and counted at the UT). Graduation ceremonies are generally scheduled for mid-June; the precise date is announced in early spring. If you do not plan to attend the graduation ceremony, please inform the academic affairs specialist in order to arrange the receipt of your diploma by mail.

As this Study Guide has stressed throughout, the PGDA programme is about preparing you for your future career and professional life. Planning for this next stage can take place as soon as you arrive in Tartu by looking around for internships or study abroad opportunities that might open up possible job prospects after graduation. It might also involve looking for study topics that are linked to professional fields or societal problems in your home country. Advice on future career plans can be sought from the Programme Manager or other members of the faculty (https://ut.ee/en/content/career-counselling).

Irrespective of where you head after your graduation, we would love to continue hearing from you! The Institute maintains an alumni liaison programme, through which we hope to remain in contact with you for many more years. Consider becoming a UT Student Ambassador in your home country or elsewhere outside Estonia. Spread the word about study opportunities in Tartu – as well as about other treasures of Estonia. And come visit us again during your travels in the region. You will always remain a member of our academic community!

Dr. Martin Mölder

Programme Manager, MA Politics and Governance in the Digital Age martin.molder@ut.ee

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