



UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Johan Skytte Institute
of Political Studies

Requirements for final theses, forming of the defence committee, appointment of a reviewer, and for the defence and second defence at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

The requirements for the final theses, as well as the procedure for defending them, will be published on the website of the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies (hereafter: Institute). Current document and its three annexes lay out the rules and the requirements: Annex 1: Guidelines for writing and formatting papers, Annex 2: Thesis guidelines and assessment criteria, Annex 3: Informed consent for the online defence of the thesis and for the recording of the defence. Specific programme requirements, including double and joint degree programmes, are specified in the study guides.

1. Dates and location of the final defence

1.1. The defence of Bachelor's (BA) and Master's (MA) thesis (hereafter: the thesis) occurs twice per academic year. Exceptions will be made at the discretion of the Programme Manager in consultation with the Deputy Head for Academic Affairs. The defence of dissertations for joint and double degree programmes will be carried out in accordance with the procedures agreed upon by the consortium partners.

1.2. At the beginning of each academic year, the Head of the Institute, on the recommendation of the Programme Director, approves the dates of the final defence by November 1st, at the latest.

1.3. The location of the defence will be determined by the Programme Director. With the approval of the Programme Director, virtual defending is also allowed and considered equivalent to defending in an auditorium. The virtual defence proceeds in the same manner as the traditional defence.

2. Defence committee

2.1. Based on the proposal of the Deputy Head for Academic Affairs, the Head of the Institute will confirm the composition of the defence committee within three working days after the submission deadline of the theses.

- 2.2. The defence committee for Bachelor's theses must consist of at least two members and the defence committee for Master's theses must have at least three members. Membership of a defence committee shall be open to persons holding at least a Master's degree. Depending on the curricula, the defence committee shall be composed of representatives of the Institute, the Faculty of Social Sciences and, where appropriate, other disciplines. Practitioners and recognised experts in the field may serve as defence committee members.
- 2.3. Only a lecturer with a doctoral degree can be the chairperson of the defence committee. As a general rule the Programme Director chairs the defence committee.

3. Supervisor(s)

- 3.1. The supervisor of a thesis can be a lecturer or a research fellow with a valid employment contract with the University of Tartu (hereafter: UT) or a doctoral student. In the cases of external supervisors, co-supervisors from the UT shall be appointed.
- 3.2. The student has the right to receive feedback on the thesis from the supervisor(s) at the agreed-upon time and in the agreed-upon manner.
- 3.3. The supervisor(s) has/have the right to withdraw, and the student has the right to change the supervisor with the written approval of the Programme Director.

4. Thesis prospectus

- 4.1. The student must select a supervisor by the deadline set by the Programme Director, work out the thesis topic and compile a thesis prospectus in cooperation with the supervisor(s), and then write a thesis that meets these requirements.
- 4.2. Unless otherwise agreed, the thesis prospectus and the final choice of supervisor(s) shall be submitted to the Academic Affairs Specialist or in Moodle by November 1st, if the thesis is to be defended in the following spring semester, or by April 1st if the thesis is to be defended in the following autumn semester.
- 4.3. The Programme Director will organise a review of the prospectuses and will approve or reject them. Upon the approval of the prospectus, the student begins writing his or her thesis. If necessary, additional improvements to the prospectus and/or suggestions for finding a co-supervisor will be made. If the prospectus is rejected, the Programme Director will set a new date for the student to submit an improved prospectus and will review the prospectus a second time. Should the prospectus be rejected again, the Programme Director may suggest that the student select a new topic and/or supervisor(s). The student can then submit the new prospectus in the following semester.

4.4. If the topic of the final thesis is changed, a new thesis prospectus must be submitted. During the thesis writing process, the final content of the thesis or the solving of the research problem may be specified.

4.5. Only theses for which a thesis prospectus has been previously submitted and approved will be allowed to defend.

5. Submission of the final thesis

5.1. Students may submit the theses only if they have been registered for the corresponding course. The final thesis must be submitted no later than two weeks before the defence date in Moodle. On the same day, the supervisor will send approval to the Academic Affairs Specialist by e-mail that the thesis is ready for consideration.

5.2. The final thesis may be written in either Estonian or English. Theses in other languages may be written at the Institute's Council's discretion.

5.3. The final thesis, including the non-exclusive license and supervisor approval that the thesis is ready for consideration, must be submitted to the Academic Affairs Specialist electronically (in pdf-format).

5.4. By submitting the thesis, the student confirms having personally written the thesis and that the views and data of other authors used in the thesis have been properly cited.

6. Defence of the final thesis

6.1. In order to obtain a Bachelor's or Master's degree in social sciences, the thesis must be defended. The defence of the thesis shall be oral and open before a defence committee, except in cases where the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs declares the defence closed.

6.2. On the recommendation of the Programme Director, a pre-defence may be organised before the thesis is defended. No pre-defences are held at the BA-level.

6.3. Students who have completed the curriculum to the required extent, whose thesis prospectuses have been approved, and who have submitted the other required documents alongside with the theses, which meets the set requirements, will be admitted to the defence. The curriculum is considered to be completed if all examinations are passed before the defence and the results are published in the study information system or communicated to the Academic Affairs Specialist at least two working days before the final defence of the thesis.

6.4. If the curriculum includes a pre-defence, the students shall be admitted to the final defence if they have successfully passed the pre-defence.

6.5. Following the submission of the required documents, the Programme Director will determine whether the thesis will proceed for final defence and will approve the reviewer (in coordination with the supervisor, if necessary).

6.6. If the Programme Director is the supervisor of the thesis, another curriculum-leading lecturer will be involved in the appointment of the reviewer. In the event of disagreement, the Deputy Head for Academic Affairs may consult with a third lecturer.

7. Review of the thesis

7.1. The reviewer of the Bachelor's and Master's thesis will generally be decided by the supervisor of the thesis in consultation with the Programme Director. The reviewer will be contacted by the latter.

7.2. The thesis reviewer must have at least a Master's degree or equivalent qualification as well as relevant scientific expertise.

7.3. The role of the reviewer is to provide an objective assessment of the thesis.

7.4. The written review, along with a suggestion for a final grade, shall be submitted to the Programme Director and/or the Academic Affairs Specialist no later than two working days before the defence. The review will then be sent to the author of the thesis and the defence committee at least one working day before the defence.

7.5. The student's supervisor and the reviewer should be present during the defense, unless they have compelling reasons not to attend.

8. Procedure of the defence

8.1. The defense procedure typically begins of the oral presentation of the degree seeker, followed by a debate between the reviewer, the defense committee, and the degree seeker (response to the reviewer, additional questions, and questions from the defense committee, and closing statements).

8.2. The final thesis will be assessed according to the grading system in force (A-F) based on the accomplishment of objectives and learning outcomes listed in the curriculum.

8.3. The defence committee will assess the thesis in a closed session. When evaluating the thesis, the defence committee considers the thesis' compliance with the assessment criteria outlined in the curriculum, including the student's performance in the defence, the review, and the supervisor's opinion.

8.4. The grade for the thesis is proposed by the reviewer. The opinions of the reviewer and the supervisor are not binding for the defence committee in the process of grading.

8.5. The defence committee shall make its decision by simple majority; in the event of a tie, the opinion of the chairperson of the defence committee take precedence.

8.6. The grades for the final theses will be announced via the Study Information System no later than one working day after the defence.

8.7. The decision of the defence committee can be contested in accordance with the procedure provided for in the University of Tartu Regulations.

9. Virtual thesis defence

9.1. In the case of virtual defence, the student must ensure that the necessary technical equipment is available (computer with Internet connection, camera, microphone, headphones, or speakers). If this is not possible, the student shall contact the Academic Affairs Specialist, who will find a suitable solution on the university premises.

9.2. In the case of an open defence, as in the case of a traditional defence in an auditorium, anyone who wishes to do so can follow the defence process as a guest in the online environment. In the case of a closed defence, the prescribed restrictions (similar to those for an auditorium defence) apply.

9.3 As a general rule, defences of theses will not be recorded, and incidental recording is not permitted.

9.4 If necessary, the defence committee has the authority to record the defence, and all parties will be notified. The defender and the members of the defence committee must provide their written consent for the defence to be recorded (Annex 3).

9.4.1 The Chair of the defence committee or any other person designated by the Head of the Institute shall be responsible for the recording and the subsequent processing of the recording.

9.4.2 The student's written permission shall be requested for the transmission or disclosure of the recording of the defence. The responsibility of proving the existence of the student's consent lies with the person requesting it, i.e., the person who will further process (view, transmit, disclose) the recording. UT Data Protection Rules apply to the recording. <https://www.ut.ee/en/data-protection-policy>.

9.4.3 The recording shall be preserved by the UT and shall be stored in storage facilities under UT control. The recording must be kept until the end of the corresponding academic year unless otherwise agreed.

9.5 The defence committee has the right, if necessary, to request the identification of the defender and to halt the defence process in the event of technical difficulties.

9.6 The procedure of the defence, including the procedure for the submission of questions, shall be established by the chairperson of the defence committee or a moderator appointed by the former.

10 Publishing of final theses

10.1 The theses and multimedia files that are the part of the theses that have received a positive mark will be published electronically in the University of Tartu digital archive

ADA. If a fixed-term restriction has been set to the publication of the thesis, the thesis will be published in the digital archive once the time limit has expired.

10.2 If the public defence and/or electronic publication of the thesis is not possible due to the author's proprietary rights belonging to other people, the Personal Data Protection Act, state or trade secrets or other classified information, the author submits a reasoned request to the Academic Affairs Specialist of their programme of study 14 days prior to the submission of the thesis for (pre-)defence to declare the defence of the thesis closed and/or to impose restrictions on the publication of the thesis together with the confirmation of the person(s) concerned (e.g., confirmation from a company that the thesis contains trade secrets).

10.3 The restrictions will be set by the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs with his order, based on the suggestion from the Deputy Head for Academic Affairs of the Institute.

11 Regulations for the repeat defence

11.1 In the event of a failing grade of the final defence, the student is entitled to repeat the defence once.

11.2 Before a repeat defence, the student must either improve the existing thesis based on the recommendations of the defence committee and the supervisor or write a new thesis on a different topic. The student is not entitled to a second defence of the thesis if the result of the thesis defence was negative due to academic fraud.

11.3 When writing a thesis on a new topic, all of the rules and procedures stated above must be followed from the beginning, including obtaining approval from the Programme Director for the thesis topic and the selection of the supervisor, as well as having the supervisor approved by the order of the Head of the Institute.

11.4 The repeat defence of the final thesis will take place on the date of the thesis defences set by the order of the Head of the Institute, in accordance with the guidelines for the defence of the final theses.



GUIDELINES FOR WRITING AND FORMATTING PAPERS

The aim of the current guidelines is to give an overview of the requirements for writing and formatting papers at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies. Unless there are more specific requirements set within a specific course, these requirements apply to all written assignments. The guidelines must also be followed when writing a Bachelor's or Master's thesis.

Table of Contents

General Formatting Requirements	2
Language use	2
Spelling	3
Abbreviations.....	3
Writing numbers	3
Citation.....	3
List of sources	5
Tables, figures, and formulas.....	5
The length of the theses	6
Compulsory elements and the structure of the thesis.....	6
<i>Example of a written paper's cover page</i>	<i>10</i>
Example of a final thesis cover page	11
<i>Non-exclusive licence to reproduce thesis and make thesis public.....</i>	<i>13</i>
Non-exclusive (restricted) licence to reproduce thesis and make thesis public.....	14

General Formatting Requirements

- All written papers must be submitted in A4-format, either electronically or in hard copy.
- Unless the lecturer has established other formatting rules, written coursework assignments may be submitted on double-sided paper.
- Bachelor's and Master's theses must include a title page (see Example 1b). Longer research papers (10 pages or more) written as coursework are also recommended to be submitted with a title page (see Example 1a).
- The thesis is usually formatted with 1.5 line spacing, a font size of 12 point, and *Times New Roman* font. Footnotes should be written in a font size of 10.
- The custom margins of the Word programme are used (2,54 cm all sides).
- The text alignment must be consistent throughout (e.g., *Align left* or *Justify*).
- Thesis submissions for Bachelor's and Master's degrees are done electronically in PDF format.

Language use

The language used must be **strictly scientific** in nature. Slang, journalistic, populist, or poetic phrases should not be used in a research paper, unless the use of such language is central to the research. Additionally, when describing phenomena or processes, one should avoid using (overly) emotional adjectives and adverbs.

DO NOT USE EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE!

„The international relations situation was great.“

„The conflict erupted scarily fast.“

The influence of a foreign language on your text should be kept to a minimum, and the text should not be overloaded with unnecessary foreign words. When translating from a foreign language, the meaning of the sentence must be conveyed. The source language's syntactic structure should be avoided.

It is advisable to adhere to terminology used in earlier sources. If a previously used term is deemed insufficient, its replacement must be substantiated (e.g., in a footnote). If there is no adequate equivalent for a term in a foreign language, or if one is not sure of their choice, it is recommended to enclose the original term in brackets [] after the translated term. Foreign words that do not morphologically or phonetically fit the language must be italicized. Use of terms and symbols must be consistent throughout the text.

The grammatical mood and form of writing must be consistent throughout the paper (e.g., “I analysed” or “the thesis analysed”). It is recommended to use the indicative mood, because the conditional (e.g., *Tries to research, seeks to answer, seems to cause*, etc.) may indicate that the author is unsure of their arguments.

Spelling

There should be no spelling errors in written work. Before submitting the text, it should be spell-checked with a spell checker to avoid spelling errors. It is recommended that you use a dictionary of the language in question check the spelling of foreign words and uncommon terms. If the work is written in English, ensure that the spelling is either American or British English throughout the text.

Abbreviations

When an abbreviation is used for the first time, it must be defined by its full spelling.

EXAMPLE

- The Official Journal of the European Union (OJ)
- United Nations (UN)
- World Health Organisation (WHO)

If an abbreviation has already been fully defined in the work, there is no need to repeat the full spelling; instead, the abbreviation can be used. If the latter are used frequently, it is advisable to include a list of the abbreviations used in the work, as well as the spelling of the full name.

Writing numbers

It is advisable to write single digits in words and the rest in numbers, e.g., “two points,” “eight working days,” “27 Member States.” However, if a single-digit number is followed by a unit of measurement or a symbol, it should be written with a number, such as ‘3 cm’, ‘8%’, etc. Years should be given numerically, not ‘last year’ or ‘this year’. The use of figures with more than three or four digits should be avoided in both text and tables. When dealing with large numbers, it is recommended to use a combined spelling in which the number is given in figures and the order of magnitude in words, e.g., ‘1.42 million inhabitants’. In English, a full stop is used between the whole and the fractional part of the decimal point (e.g., 4.3 km).

Citation

All papers must adhere to general academic practices as well as ethical standards. Cases of intellectual theft will be handled in accordance with the [Procedure for processing cases of academic fraud in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#).

All statements and factual/statistical data used in the papers, including information from newspapers, the Internet, and oral presentations, must be correctly cited and referenced from other authors, including the student's previous written texts. Using academic sources with lower quality (e.g. high school textbooks, blogs, etc.) in any written paper at university, especially in a final thesis, is discouraged unless they are the subject of the research. Similarly, Wikipedia and other encyclopaedias or dictionaries are not acceptable sources.

Every source cited in the references must be cited in the body of the paper and/or footnotes. When quoting or referring to specific data, ideas, or sentences, the reference should be made indicating where the text comes from using a page number. A whole article, book, or chapter of a book is referred to when the reference is based on the entire argument of the work.

MOST COMMON CITATION STYLES

- [APA style](#) (most commonly used in social sciences)
- [Chicago style](#)
- [Harvard style](#)
- [MHRA style](#) (sources cited in footnotes)

There are several different styles of referencing, and the author can choose which style of referencing to use. Both in-text and footnote referencing are permitted, but it is important that the style must be consistent throughout the text.

Citation	Referencing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • True to the original in terms of wording, orthography, punctuation, and distinguishing marks • Translated as closely as possible to the original (in terms of the meaning of the quotation, not the wording), with the original text footnoted where appropriate • Use the existing translation in case of a previous translation (unless the previous translation is incorrect) • Distinguishes itself from the rest of the text (e.g., "separated by quotation marks" or in <i>italics</i>) • Even if it is in the middle of the sentence, the end of the quote is immediately followed by a reference • If a part of the original text is omitted, it shall be indicated as follows (...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conveying another author's idea in free form, in your own words • Referencing is not separate from the rest of the text, but rather a normal part of it • A reference to the source or author should be included at the end of the citation, along with the page number if possible

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the author wants to add their own addition to the original text, [insert addition in square brackets]• A longer quote (more than three lines in Estonian and more than 40 words in English) is placed a separate paragraph and formatted as a Word quotation | |
|--|--|

ALWAYS AVOID!

- Submission of the original text with minor changes as a reference or as the author's own text (e.g., deleting individual words or replacing them by synonyms)
- An entire paragraph consisting of a quotation from a single source, without adding your own thoughts
- A reference constituting an entire subsection or a subchapter
- Excessively long quotes (e.g., several paragraphs are quoted)

See more on [what is plagiarism and how to avoid it](#). Remember that plagiarism is one of the most serious potential offences in academia, carrying with it harsh consequences.

List of sources

The sources used and cited in the thesis are the only ones included in the list of used sources. The important information on the publications can be found on the title page and the back cover. Sources need to be listed in alphabetical order of the authors' surnames, or, in case of their absence by the first word of the title or by the name of the publishing organisation. In case of multiple authors, the names should be listed in the order they appear on the publication's title page. Publications written in the Latin alphabet (both Estonian and foreign) should be listed first, followed by sources written in another alphabet or writing system (e.g., Cyrillic, Arabic). If necessary, the list of sources used can be numbered.

Tables, figures, and formulas

All tables and figures in the text are numbered in Arabic numerals, either overall (simple numbering) or by chapters (compound numbering). All illustrations in the work, whether they

EXAMPLE

- Simple numbering: Table 1, Table 2, etc.
- Compound numbering: Table 3.4 (Chapter three, Table four), Table 3.5, etc.

are diagrams, graphs, geographical maps, drawings, diagrams, or photographs, are considered figures. The serial number of the table or figure should be written before the title and separated from it by a full stop (e.g., Table 1: Parliamentary elections 1992-2019). In the case of a table, the

title should be placed above the table, while in the case of a figure, it should be placed below it. The source reference of the table or figure is usually added below the table or figure. Every table and figure must be mentioned in the text.

EXAMPLE OF A FORMULA

The effective number of parties is calculated as follows:

$$N = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n s_i}$$

where N – effective number of parties;

s – share of the party's seats/votes;

n – number of parties.

Formulas are separated from the rest of the text by punctuation marks that adhere to the general rules of language the used in the thesis. All signs, figures, and letters must be placed correctly in the formula and in accordance with the content of the formula. Formulas should be

entered into Word using the equation insertion function. Throughout the work, the consistent spelling of formulae must be followed. Single symbols and simple mathematical expressions are typically presented within the text rather than on a separate line. Units of measurement are not mentioned in the formulae, but they are given in the explanations of the symbols used in the formulae. Explanations of formula symbols begin with the word 'where' (without a colon) and are written below each other for clarity.

The length of the theses

A Bachelor's thesis has a word count of 8,000-12,000 (approximately 25-30 pages, but no more than 40 pages). A Master's thesis should be between 20,000 to 25,000 words long, but no longer than 30,000 words (approximately 50-60 pages, but no more than 100 pages). The word limit applies only to the main body of the text and excludes the title page, the abstract, the table of contents, references to the literature, appendices, and a summary in another language.

Compulsory elements and the structure of the thesis

This subsection outlines the overall structure of the thesis as well as the mandatory elements. They are listed in the order that they should appear in the thesis.

COVER PAGE

- All theses must have a correctly formatted cover page
- See example 1b (all elements in the example must be included)
- The cover page is considered when numbering pages, but it is not assigned a page number

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

- Immediately after the title page, where the author declares that there is no plagiarism and confirms the volume of the work (in words)
- The author confirms that he/she wrote the paper independently and has correctly referenced the work of others.
- See Example 1c

ABSTRACT

- A brief overview of what was researched and what are the main findings of this work
- Approximately half a page

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- All chapters and subchapters of the thesis correspond exactly to the titles and page numbers given in the thesis, from which the corresponding subdivision begins.
- Chapters and subchapters are distinguished by serial numbers (E.g. 1.; 1.1.; 1.1.2.)
- It is recommended to use Word's automatic table of contents function.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- This is not required if the thesis does not include a large number of abbreviations
- On the use of abbreviations, please see *Abbreviations*

INTRODUCTION

- Introduces the subject and helps the reader to understand the following text
- The introduction consists of mandatory elements (see Annex 2, *Introduction*).
- Forms up to 5% of the total volume of work

CONTENT

- Consists of different chapters: e.g., theoretical framework, methodology, case background, analysis including interpretation of results (analysis may be divided into several chapters)
- The chapters are further subdivided into subchapters, but it is best to avoid overcrowding the text
 - In case of a multi-level list, the third level is the deepest recommended level (e.g., 1.1.1. and 1.1.2.)
- The chapter begins on a new page, and the sub-chapter follows on the same page
- Chapters and sub-chapters could be more or less proportionate; however, a sub-chapter should be at least more than one page long
- The main body of the text is made up of paragraphs, each of which contains a single idea/argument (about 5-6 sentences)
- Avoid paragraphs that consist of one or two sentences or run across the page

CONCLUSIONS

- Provides a comprehensive overview of what was written in the thesis
- Conclusions must include certain mandatory elements (see Annex 2, Conclusions)
- Forms up to 5% of the total volume of the thesis

LIST OF SOURCES

- Sources cited in the thesis in alphabetical order
- See also *List of sources*

APPENDICES

- The appendices should contain figures and other material that are necessary to solve the research problem but are not required to be included in the text.
- If surveys or interviews were conducted as part of the research, the appendices should include questions and a list of interviewees, which can be anonymised if necessary
- Make sure to cite the appendices in the work, and avoid adding appendices that are only tangentially related to the work.
- Appendices should be numbered in the order in which they appear in the work (e.g., Appendix 7).
- The number of the appendix should be placed above the title at the top right of the page, and if the annex is several pages long, it should be marked in the same place on each new page (e.g., Appendix 7 continuation).

NON-EXCLUSIVE LICENCE

- A non-exclusive licence authorises the university to reproduce the thesis for the purpose of preservation and/or electronic publication
- If a time limit has been imposed on the publication of a thesis by the Dean's order, the author shall allow the University to publish the thesis electronically after the time limit expires
- Non-exclusive licence must be submitted in a single file with the electronic thesis (in PDF format) and is a prerequisite for the author to be admitted to the defence
- The licence does not need to be signed, as consent can be placed at the end of the thesis
- See non-exclusive licence Example 1d and non-exclusive (restricted) licence Example 1e

Example of a written paper's cover page

TARTU UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Essay / Research paper

Ivar Kukk
How to Live in Estonia?

Course: SORG.00.362 The Role of Estonia in the History of the EU

Lecturer: Peeter Vaim, PhD

Tartu 2021

Example of a final thesis cover page

TARTU UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Jaan Lepp

ESTONIA'S PLACE IN THE EUROPEAN COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

BA / MA thesis

Supervisor: Mart Kask, PhD

Tartu 2021

Authorship Declaration

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

Word count of the thesis:

Name, date

Non-exclusive licence to reproduce the thesis and make the thesis public

I, _____ ,
(author's name)

1. grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to

reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the digital archives of the University of Tartu until the expiry of the term of copyright, my thesis

(title of thesis) ,

supervised by _____ ;
(supervisor's name)

2. grant the University of Tartu a permit to make the thesis specified in point 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the digital archives, under the Creative Commons licence CC BY NC ND 4.0, which allows, by giving appropriate credit to the author, to reproduce, distribute the work and communicate it to the public, and prohibits the creation of derivative works and any commercial use of the work until the expiry of the term of copyright;
3. am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in points 1 and 2;
4. confirm that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

author's name
dd/mm/yyyy

Non-exclusive licence to reproduce the thesis and make the thesis public

I, _____ ,
(author's name)

1. grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to

reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the digital archives of the University of Tartu until the expiry of the term of copyright, my thesis

(title of thesis)

supervised by _____ ;
(supervisor's name)

2. grant the University of Tartu the permit to make the thesis specified in point 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the digital archives, under the Creative Commons licence CC BY NC ND 4.0, which allows, by giving appropriate credit to the author, to reproduce, distribute the work and communicate it to the public, and prohibits the creation of derivative works and any commercial use of the work from **dd/mm/yyyy** until the expiry of the term of copyright;
3. am aware that the author retains the rights specified in points 1 and 2;
4. confirm that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

author's name
dd/mm/yyyy



THESIS GUIDELINES AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

This guide is intended to supplement the requirements for final theses, the formation of the defence committee, the appointment of a reviewer, and for the defence and second defence at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies. The aim of these guidelines is to provide students with an overview of the thesis writing process, the components of the research process, and how they interact. In addition, it also establishes the requirements to be met by the thesis and the criteria for the assessment of the latter. The final theses must be formatted following the same formatting requirements as for all written papers (Please see Annex 1 *Guidelines for writing and formatting papers*).

Table of contents

Table of contents	1
What is a thesis?	2
Difference between a Bachelor’s and a Master’s thesis	3
Types of research	3
Learning outcomes of the thesis	4
Thesis writing process	4
Starting points for research	5
Selecting the sources and work with the sources	7
Prospectus of the thesis	8
Preparations for writing the thesis and collecting data	9
Thesis writing	11
Introduction	11
Substantive chapters	12
Conclusion	14
Thesis defence and assessment	15
Assessment criteria	17

What is a thesis?

A thesis (unless otherwise specified, applies both to BA and MA theses) is a research paper written according to the guidelines for writing and formatting papers (Annex 1), which the student completes independently, following the recommendations of the supervisor. In the thesis, the students must exhibit the following skills:

- Theoretical and practical knowledge,
- The ability to choose an appropriate methodology for research,
- The ability to engage with specialist literature,
- The ability to gather new empirical material or data,
- The ability to conduct independent analysis on the basis of a relevant theoretical or conceptual framework,
- The ability to justify his or her position,
- The ability to express his or her ideas clearly in written form.

Each thesis must clearly demonstrate the student's unique contribution to the research puzzle. The amount of contribution varies depending on the level of study (undergraduate or postgraduate) and the type of research, but the output of the research must provide original results. For example, the student's contribution could be:

- Contrasting and comparing the opinions of different authors with their own views and assessments;
- Drawing conclusions or implementing proposals on the basis of the material reviewed;
- Evaluating the feasibility of using a theory or model under specific conditions or on the basis of specific data.

It is crucial that students should not limit their analysis of the puzzle to citing, criticising, or praising the views of one or a few authors, but rather evaluate the empirical evidence presented to support the arguments and identify potential counter-arguments (their own and ones from other authors). As a result, a thesis is neither a refutation of the views of other authors nor an essay based on personal observations and unsubstantiated conclusions.

Difference between a Bachelor’s and a Master’s thesis

Although the general approach to the thesis is the same at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, the expectations for theses differ according to the different workloads and the skills acquired at the different levels of study.

Bachelor’s thesis	Master’s thesis
Volume: 6 ECTS; 8,000 – 12,000 words	Volume: 30 ECTS; 20,000 – 25,000 words
The student demonstrates the ability to follow and apply the logic of scientific research.	The student demonstrates the ability to independently carry out a comprehensive scientific research process. On the basis of a thesis of a high standard, the student will be able to publish a research article.
The theoretical section is proportionally smaller (approximately 15-20% of the total) and illustrates the students’ understanding of the broader context in which their research is situated.	The theoretical section is proportionally larger (approximately 30% of the total) and the student synthesises the central argument of the thesis using the available theoretical literature.
The new knowledge generated by the research is making independent conclusions based on the analysed data.	The new knowledge generated by the research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an original central argument based on the theoretical literature; - OR original research methodology; - OR independently developed empirical knowledge.

Types of research

All theses should contribute to the generation of new knowledge in some way, and there are various ways to do so. Different methods of research allow for different approaches to theses. For example, theoretical, empirical, and policy analyses, for example. The type of research chosen must be properly specified and explained, and it must be consistent with the objectives of the study, the methodology, and the structure of the paper - i.e., the purpose of the research, the objects of the research, the units of analysis, and the time frame of the study must all be consistent.

The thesis can be either scientific or applied but it must incorporate a theoretical and analytical component. The first part of a thesis, whether scientific or applied, should set out the theoretical concepts or general principles of the research puzzle. The subsequent sections of the paper apply these approaches/concepts to the study of a specific puzzle. Applied research focuses on a practical problem in a specific field.

Learning outcomes of the thesis

Students who have successfully defended the thesis can:

- Independently formulate research puzzles, objectives, and questions, reason them, and select appropriate theoretical approaches and methodologies;
- Independently search for appropriate empirical data and theoretical sources and use them in their research;
- Apply research methodologies in a purposeful way, based on the principles of scientific ethics;
- Present their research findings in a systematic and comprehensible way, in accordance with the previous discussion of the work;
- Base their assessments and conclusions on the research results; in the analysis, they should argue and conclude in a clear and logical manner;
- Build the research logically, forming a coherent whole;
- Format the research paper according to the thesis requirements;
- Explain and defend the results of their research and answer questions related to the research in front of the defence committee.

Thesis writing process

Writing a thesis is a lengthy process that students should start in the final year of their studies at the latest. In order to succeed in this process, students must carefully consider the steps of their research and consult their supervisor, who will provide them with constructive feedback at various stages. However, it is important to bear in mind that the writing of a thesis is an autonomous research project for the student, so managing the process is the responsibility of the student. In order to ensure that the process runs well, a step-by-step breakdown of what has to be done at each stage is provided below.

Starting points for research

The process of writing a thesis begins with **defining the student's research interests**. Based on the research interest, the student consults with the academic staff of the Institute to specify their research topic. Students can find the supervision competences of the Institute's staff on the [Institute's webpage](#). To find a thesis supervisor, you can also contact the Programme Director, who will direct you to the appropriate person. However, it is the student's responsibility to establish contact with the supervisor.

In collaboration with the supervisor, the student formulates a **research topic**. It is advisable to choose a topic on which there is sufficient literature and data available. However, topics that have been thoroughly explored earlier and on which nothing new can be added are not suitable for a thesis.

The research topic should not be too broad. A topic is too broad if it is not possible to arrive at reasoned and scientifically argued conclusions within the scope of the thesis. In this case, the topic must be narrowed down.

The student also needs to assess whether researching the topic is a task that is within their reach. In order to assess the feasibility of a thesis topic, the following factors should be considered:

- The student's knowledge/competences and skills (e.g., mastery of methodology, language skills, etc.)
- The size of the research (e.g., if a large-scale opinion poll is needed to carry out in the research, it will be too large)
- The availability of necessary data (e.g., data is classified, there is no suitable database, etc.).

Once the research topic has been defined, the next step is to **formulate the research puzzle**. To do so, you need to find something in the research topic that is unclear, contradictory, or that behaves/acts in a way that contradicts to the theoretical expectations. Thus, a research puzzle is something that needs explanation or justification. This is the purpose of research. In other words, if the research topic is a large field before the researcher, the research puzzle points specifically to a place in that field that is confusing or incomprehensible.

Read more about research puzzles in the [article by C. Day and K. L. Koiv \(2019\)](#).

Any research begins with a research puzzle, from which the research objective and research question(s) emerge. **The objective of the thesis** dictates the ambition of the research and what the

author wants to achieve. The objective of the thesis should be as explicit as possible. An in-depth study in a narrow field is usually more convincing and productive than a broad discussion of an overly broad or vaguely formulated puzzle. A research project has a single clear objective, which may consist of several sub-objectives. Based on what the research puzzle is, the objective may be:

- ***Explaining the contradiction*** - this study seeks to answer the question of why a given phenomenon exists;
- ***To prove or disprove prior knowledge*** - this is research that seeks evidence to confirm or disprove previously held hypotheses;
- ***Systematising existing knowledge*** - this research can either focus on finding regularities in existing data or propose a way of categorising phenomena;
- ***Mapping the unknown*** - this study deals with a phenomenon that has not been studied before, so it is necessary to describe it in order to understand what it is about;
- ***Testing a theory/method*** - this study comes up with a new explanation to test, or finds a better method to interpret the data previously studied.

The student selects the aim of their thesis is and this determines the type of research (see also Types of research).

The foundation of a thesis is a **research question**, which must be answered in a scientifically valid manner. The research question stems directly from the research puzzle. The research question helps to solve the puzzle in such a way that the thesis provides an answer to it. This answer is the solution to the whole research puzzle, or it allows the puzzle to be partially solved. A thesis has a central research question, which may be followed in turn by sub-questions that serve to address the main question step by step.

When formulating the research question, the objectives of the research, i.e., what the work intends to achieve and what must be taken into account.

The research question vs the objective

- „Why“ question – helps to create knowledge to explain
- „How“ or „which“ questions – help to map or describe a phenomenon/research object

As a central research question, bivalent questions answered only in the positive or negative should be avoided. Simple yes or no answers can be given to such research questions, making them only marginally informative. However, some sub-questions may be either-or questions.

Selecting the sources and work with the sources

In order to carry out the research, it is first necessary to become familiar with the most relevant scientific literature on the subject, which will give the student an understanding of:

- How a similar topic has been studied in the past?
- Which key terms and theoretical concepts have been used?
- What are the previous findings or conclusions made on this topic?

This will assist you in reaching an informed conclusion on how to approach the phenomenon under investigation in your own research. You will need to work with the relevant literature both when drafting and writing your thesis. It is the individual responsibility of the student to find, review, and analyse the literature needed for the thesis.

When working with literature, it is important to bear in mind the following aspects:

- When working with the sources, attention should be paid to being familiar of the concepts related to the given topic, as this will give you an overview of the most important sources to consider to when drafting the thesis.
- The literature used in the thesis must be diverse, including a variety of authors and sources.
- Textbooks, dictionaries, popular science, or daily newspaper articles may be cited only in exceptional cases, unless it is the actual object of research.
- The main emphasis must be on scientific sources, including recent scientific articles in other languages.
- Ensure that the concepts and data used in the work are relevant and not outdated.
- A good way to get an overview of the literature is to search the relevant key words in [The databases of the University of Tartu Library](#) or in [Google Scholar](#). In the course of the

It is advisable to use source and reference management programmes:

- [Zotero](#)
- [Mendeley](#)
- [JabRef](#)

literature review, it is recommended to draw up short summaries based on the material read, which should contain relevant statements, quotations, definitions, and problem statements that deal with the research puzzle in depth. They should be accompanied by the name of the author and any other information required in the

bibliographic record and references. This will make it easier to compile and refer to the bibliography. It is also a good idea to leave space on these pages for your own reflections and for referring to the related material.

However, the preparation of abstracts is only the first step; under no circumstances should a thesis consist of poorly linked extracts from a thesis. As a result of the literature review, the student must be able to convey the arguments and data read as a coherent whole. Referring to sources is not an end in itself; sources must be used to support one's arguments and the development of a topic.

Prospectus of the thesis

The next stage in the preparation of the thesis is the thesis prospectus, which is due in the middle of the semester preceding the thesis defence. The length of the prospectus is about 4-5 pages long. It should be written in accordance to the requirements of this guide. If a study programme has its own guidelines for the thesis prospectus, those should be followed.

The aim of the prospectus is to provide the student the feedback on the research questions, the suitability of the theoretical framework, the research method(s) chosen, and the overall structure of the thesis. In addition, the submission of the prospectus provides a clear link between the material covered during the semester and the writing of the thesis.

The prospectus is divided into the following sections:

- *The title of the thesis*, which should be as brief and concrete as possible while still conveying the reader the essence of the research puzzle. However, this is a preliminary formulation which can be further refined before the final submission.
- *Names of supervisor(s)*. The name of the author and the name of the supervisor must be indicated in the prospectus. The prospectus will also serve as the basis for formally approving the supervisor(s).
- *The research puzzle*, which must be as detailed and specified as precisely as possible. The nature and importance of the problem must be disclosed. In other words, the research puzzle must be formulated in such a way as to make it clear what the subject or phenomenon that needs to be investigated is and why it is necessary to investigate it.
- *Objective and research question*. The aim of the thesis and the research question, which are derived from the research puzzle, must be clearly stated and explained in the prospectus.
- *The theoretical framework*. The basis of the theoretical approaches and academic literature for the solving of the research puzzle must be clearly identified.

- *Methodology and data.* It explains the methodological technique employed to answer the research question and how data is acquired. It should also state any problems that may arise with the data (e.g., data availability, lack of sources, language barrier in working with sources, etc.) and how these issues will be addressed. Finally, the method of analysis that will be utilized to analyse the data will be explained.

Examples

Methodological approach: quantitative;
Data collection method: baseline data from public opinion surveys (e.g., Eurobarometer);
Data analysis method: regression analysis.

Methodological approach: qualitative;
Data collection method: in-depth interviews;
Data analysis method: qualitative content analysis.

- *The structure of the thesis.* If possible, the proposed table of contents should be provided possible in chapters and subchapters. The structure of the thesis should be as logical and comprehensible as possible.
- *List of sources and mapping of academic literature.* The list should include all sources referred to in the text of the prospect. Second, a list of the sources that are planned to be used in the thesis should be included. The list of sources given in the prospectus is not exhaustive, and it may be expanded to during the course of the thesis. The list of references must comply with the requirements of the thesis guidelines (see Annex 1).

Only students whose thesis prospect has been approved by the Programme Director will be admitted to the thesis defence. The prospectus will be assessed on the basis of :

- Clarity in defining the topic and research puzzle,
- Formulating the objective and the research question,
- Whether the theoretical framework is appropriate,
- The suitability of the methodology for answering the research question and solving the research puzzle,
- The logical structure of the research.

Preparations for writing the thesis and collecting data

Once the draft thesis has been approved, the student can begin conducting the research. Initially, the main emphasis is on working with academic literature to frame the research. In the process,

there may be some discrepancies from the initial plan presented in the thesis prospectus. If these changes do not lead to a fundamental change in the research topic, the student may include these changes into their work. If, however, the changes lead to a conceptual change in the research puzzle and research questions, consideration should be given to resubmitting the prospectus. To assess the extent of the changes, the students should consult their supervisor.

The central part of the thesis is the collection of data and their independent analysis.

Different types of research require different types of data.

In the context of all kinds of research, the term 'data' should be considered in a broad sense.

Data are not just numbers, as is sometimes assumed, but any kind of information that is

analysed in the course of one's work. The definition of 'data' varies depending on the nature of the work and the research topic.

Depending of the field, "data" refers precisely to the unanalysed information that the author of the research uses as input for their analysis. It should not be analysed in the sense that analyses or conclusions already made by someone else cannot, in most cases, be considered as data for a thesis. The analyses already carried out should be discussed in the literature review or the theory section of your thesis.

Consideration must also be given to the research puzzle, as well as the research objective and research questions. These will determine the method to be used for data collection and analysis. The data may be self-collected (e.g., interviews), or existing data sets may be used (e.g., baseline data from public opinion surveys). Regardless of how the data is obtained, you have to be critical of the source and transparently map the data collection process. If statistical data is used in the thesis, it must be obtained from reliable sources (e.g., EUROSTAT, Statistics Estonia, Kantar Emor, etc.).

Data collection may be hampered if the necessary data is not available, the planned interviewees cannot find the time to be interviewed, and so on. Therefore, it is important to start data collection

Examples of data:

- **Text**, in the case where interviews, transcripts, opinion pieces, etc., are analysed
- **Numbers** when analysing public opinion polls, economic indicators, budgets, etc.
- **Visual material**, when analysing visual memes, representations, audio-visual productions, etc.
- **Theoretical/philosophical arguments** or assertions, when analysing political theory

as soon as possible so that suitable alternatives can be considered in case of difficulties. On the other hand, care must be taken not to collect data before there is a clear understanding of what exactly is being investigated. In such cases, the data may need to be re-collected later.

Both the collection and processing of data must be based on [principles of research ethics](#) (just in Estonian).

Thesis writing

Writing a thesis is an important component of the thesis process, which is very personalised. Some students start writing in small sub-parts, which eventually form a complete text, quite early on, while others work through most of the necessary literature first, gather data, and start the writing process later. Whatever the style of writing, the thesis should follow a clear logical structure depending on the type of research. The compulsory elements of a thesis are set out in Annex 1 under 'Compulsory elements and structure of the thesis'. These mandatory aspects are described in detail below.

Introduction

The introductory section of the paper aims to introduce the topic and the paper as a whole to the readers. In other words, the introduction should explain what the subsequent research will do, why it will be done, and how it will be done. The introduction to the thesis should contain the following elements:

- **A brief introduction to the topic.** One or two paragraphs that give the reader an idea of the focus of the research.
- **Identifying the research puzzle.** After presenting of the topic, the research puzzle of the thesis is identified. More on the research puzzle, please see above.
- **Topicality/relevance.** The academic significance of the topic of the paper, why it is necessary to study this particular puzzle, why it is relevant, and how the paper differs from previous work should be delineated. Personal motives ('I chose this research topic because it is of interest to me'), or appeals to third-party opinion ('This topic is important because it was discussed at the last European Council') should not be emphasised when justifying the topic of choice.
- **Objective of the thesis.** The research must then be focused by stating its objective. The objective must be related to the research puzzle, as stated above.

- **Research question.** Once the objective has been established, the central question to which that the following research seeks to answer must be identified. Sub-questions may be added if necessary.
- **Formulating theoretical expectations.** It is necessary to state the primary argument of the research in the introduction. The central argument is derived first and foremost from the theoretical starting point. Depending on the type of research, the central argument may be presented in the form of a hypothesis that is empirically tested in the work (positivist research), or a central thesis that is the theoretically expected result.
- **Brief description of the methodology and data used.** It should clearly describe how the research question is answered. What is the research design? What is the case(s) to be analysed? What method(s) does the author use? What empirical data forms the basis of the work? What is the source of the data? How is it planned to analyse it?
- **Explaining the structure of the thesis.** The introduction should briefly describe how many chapters there are in the work, what is the purpose of each chapter, and how the chapters relate to each other. This is crucial for the coherence of the work, and the research steps should therefore be explained (e.g., 'In the first chapter I will give an overview of ... in order to ... In the next chapter I will introduce ... in order to ... After that I will describe ... in order to ...', etc.). An overview of the structure of the thesis will be laid out at the end of the introduction.

It should be noted that the introduction does not deal with solving the tasks set, nor is it overloaded with facts and figures. The introduction does not include tables or figures. It is appropriate, inter alia, to refer in the introduction to the persons or institutions who helped with the research process.

Substantive chapters

The substantive part of the thesis is dedicated to answering the research question posed in the introductory part, thereby solving the research puzzle. For this purpose, the substantive part of the thesis must be separated into different chapters and sub-chapters. An orderly division of the thesis into chapters and/or sections is critical both for the traceability of the topic and for making a strong overall impression. It also gives a solid overview of the author's command of the subject. The structure of the thesis should reflect the type of research and its internal logic. Although all papers must have both a theoretical and an analytical component, the balance between theoretical discussion and analysis depends on the topic, objectives, and the type of research.

The following example structure is based in particular on the most common form of empirical study conducted at the Skytte Institute:

- **Conceptual/theoretical framework.** As a general rule, it is advisable to begin the substantive part of your research by introducing the theoretical approach, ending with the central research argument. Drawing on the scientific literature, the student describes the key concepts related to the research puzzle and shows how they are interrelated. In order to know how to use these concepts in the thesis, it is vital to synthesise the various scientific sources. Here, a critical approach to the sources must be demonstrated and, in the case of alternative definitions, the choices must be justified. The fundamental theoretical argument expresses the expected outcome of the research,
 - which the following research aims to prove
 - OR the suitability of which is tested by empirical analysis.
- **Presentation of an empirical case.** In order to better understand the research puzzle, an overview of the case(s) to be analysed should be provided. This part of the paper should also include a literature review of how the case has been previously studied and what conclusions have been reached. In this way, it will be possible to demonstrate what is missing in the larger understanding covered by this thesis. It is critical, however, that this part of the thesis does not obscure the analysis itself, so the background should be presented in a concise manner and should contain only the information needed to understand the case study.
- **Methodology.** The aim of this section is to provide a comprehensive overview of the research. In order for the thesis to act as a coherent whole, it is necessary to assess whether the research methodology is appropriate for the study. This means that the methodology must be capable of answering the research question, thereby solving the research puzzle. The description of the methodology should be based on the principle that it is possible to replicate similar research if necessary. It must therefore be a guide for another researcher to carry out similar research. The methodology section should highlight the following aspects:
 - **Research design.** This should be explained in detail, linking the answer to the research question.
 - **Selection of case(s).** Justify why a particular case is appropriate or interesting in relation to the research puzzle. Personal reasons should be avoided (e.g., "I chose Estonia because I live here.")
 - **Choice of method(s).** Both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used to carry out empirical analysis, depending on the field of research, the objective of the work, and the nature of the data. The choice of method(s) must be clearly justified. It is

recommended that the strengths and weaknesses of the chosen method(s) are highlighted. This does not imply that it is necessary to give detailed descriptions of commonly accepted methods (e.g., textbook outline of how the method is used), but it is important to show how such methods are applied in the thesis.

- **Data collection methods.** A detailed description of how the data was collected, including the principles used to select the data or to compile the database, should then be provided.
- **Principles of data analysis.** A detailed description of how the data was analysed and how it will be interpreted must also be provided. Where quantitative methods are used, reference should be made to the data processing software (packages) used.
- **Research limitations.** It is important to bear in mind that few thesis writers have access to an 'ideal dataset'. Problems with the data set (lack of representativeness, reliability, difficult availability, etc.) should be clearly identified. Thereafter the reasons for using the data should be explained, as well as how the above problems have been taken into account in the treatment of the data and how the shortcomings in the data set affect the conclusions of the work.
- **Analysis.** In the analysis section, the student provides the empirical findings of their study, following the principles of data analysis outlined in the methodology section. The analysis can be divided into several different subsections, depending on the research design and the internal logic of the work. The analysis should only use data that are relevant to answer the research question and to solve the research puzzle. Information that may be of interest but does not contribute to answering the research question should be discarded. At the end of the analysis section, the main empirical findings should be highlighted and discussed in the light of the theoretical framework of the thesis. Here, the central theoretical argument of the research should be invoked to help interpret these findings. The interpretation must respond the central question of the research, which in turn will aid in the solution of the research puzzle.

Conclusion

The aim of the conclusion is to summarise the main findings of the thesis. In other words, the summary should give an overview of what the authors planned to do, what they did, and what they found in their research

In the conclusion of the thesis, the following aspects must be highlighted:

- **The research puzzle and objective** - these are the starting points of the research and it is useful to remind the reader of them at the beginning of the conclusion. It also serves as a good reminder to the author when writing the conclusion.
- **Main theoretical starting point and methodology** - briefly outline the theoretical approaches that were used in this work and the central theoretical argument. In addition, it should briefly outline how the research objective was met, what data was used, or how they were collected.
- **Research question and its answers** - since the research must answer the research question, which will lead to a solution to the research puzzle, the central part of the conclusion is the answer to this research question. In other words, it is the space to emphasise what the research uncovered and to explain those findings. In turn, the results of the research must answer the research question. This is an excellent opportunity for the student to evaluate the integrity of his or her research. If the findings of the research do not address the research question, the separate parts of the research are inconsistent with each other.
- **Main conclusions and author's assessment** - At the end of the research paper, the student must present their own conclusions based on the findings of the research. This is where an assessment can be made of the extent to which the work has solved the research puzzle and what further research needs to be done in order to address the puzzle if a full solution was not found in this work. The student should also provide their assessment of the broader implications of the findings and may also include policy recommendations if these are compatible with the type of research.

It is vital to remember that the conclusion does not introduce new research puzzles or present views or conclusions on issues that have not been dealt with in earlier parts of the paper. As a general rule, the conclusion does not refer to literature sources, present tables and figures, or present views and conclusions from other authors.

Thesis defence and assessment

The final stage of the thesis is its defence. All theses are assessed at a public defence and must be defended in front of a defence committee. For the defence, a compact presentation must be prepared using presentation software (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.) and presented orally to the committee. The length of the presentation will be between 5 and 15 minutes, depending on the

curriculum and the level of study and must be rigorously adhered to. After the stipulated time, the chairperson of the defence committee interrupts the presentation.

The recommended structure of a presentation is as follows:

- Research puzzle, research objective, and research question
- A brief summary of the theoretical framework as well as the central theoretical argument
- Justification of the selected case and the method used to analyse it
- The main findings and conclusions of the research; the contribution of the author should be emphasized.

Prior to the defence, the student will receive the opinion of the thesis reviewer, which will serve as the basis for discussion after the student's presentation. As a result, there is no need to respond to the reviewer's criticisms or questions during the presentation. After the author's debate with the reviewer, the members of the committee will ask questions. The student must be able to answer them without prior preparation.

Following the defence, the committee meets in closed session to decide whether or not to confer the degree and grade to give it. The thesis will be evaluated by the defence committee using the thesis assessment criteria (see assessment the criteria table). The thesis reviewer and the thesis supervisor will also formulate their opinions on the basis of these criteria. The latter also assesses the collaboration with the student in the thesis writing process. The defence committee will take into account the opinions of the reviewer and the supervisor, but their assessments are not binding to the committee.

Assessment criteria

F – fail	E – poor	D – satisfactory	C – good	B – very good	A – excellent
Setting and justifying the topic, research puzzle, objective, and research question					
The choice of topic is unjustified. The research puzzle is incomplete and unsubstantiated. The research objective and research question are missing or unclear and unrelated to the research puzzle.	The choice of topic is insufficiently justified. The research puzzle is vague and insufficiently justified. The research objective and research question are vaguely formulated and weakly linked to the research puzzle.	The choice of topic is superficially justified. The research puzzle is explained in a simplistic way. Although the research objective and research question are clear, they are weakly linked to the research puzzle.	There is a clear rationale for the choice of the research topic. The research puzzle is clearly explained. Although the aim of the research and the question are clear, their link with the research puzzle remains tenuous.	The choice of topic is convincingly justified. The research puzzle is clearly formulated and unambiguously linked to the research objective and research question, both of which are clearly formulated.	The choice of topic is convincingly justified and scientifically well formulated. The research puzzle is convincingly presented and clearly formulated. The research objective and the research question are formulated very clearly and directly linked to the research puzzle.
Knowledge of thematic literature, critical use of sources, and theoretical framework building					
There is a lack of understanding of key thematic literature, its use is referential and does not provide a theoretical framework. The list of sources used is inadequate. There is no central theoretical argument.	Lack of use of appropriate scientific publications. Knowledge of the literature is superficial, lack of source citation. Theoretical framework is unclear and not linked to the research puzzle. There is no central theoretical argument or its origin is not understood.	Relevant academic publications have been used, but knowledge of them is minimal. Sources are insufficiently and incoherently used. Key concepts are defined and related to the research puzzle but do not form a comprehensive theoretical framework. The central theoretical argument is superficial and does not build on the previous overview.	Appropriate academic publications have been predominantly used in the research. A certain degree of source-criticism is evident in the use of sources. Concepts relevant to the research puzzle have been defined by drawing on a variety of sources. Although the work has applied a certain degree of source synthesis, the theoretical framework of the study remains uneven, and the central argument of the work unclear.	The research work is based on academic publications, demonstrating the student's thorough understanding of the research topic. Sources are used critically and are synthesised seamlessly. The concepts defined relate well to the research puzzle and form a comprehensive theoretical framework. The central argument of the thesis is presented, but its justification remains superficial.	The research work is based on scientific publications, demonstrating the student's thorough understanding of the research topic. The student has critically synthesised a variety of sources to define concepts related to the research puzzle. The theoretical framework of the thesis forms a coherent whole, culminating in a convincingly argued and original central argument.

Methodology and its implementation					
The chosen methodology is inappropriate and not justified. The methodology is not described, and it is poorly implemented. The research does not comply with the principles of scientific ethics.	The chosen methodology is not fully appropriate or sufficiently justified. The methodology is inadequately described, and there are major shortcomings in its implementation. The research is guided by fundamental principles of scientific ethics.	The chosen methodology is appropriate to answer the research question and solve the research puzzle, but the choice is not sufficiently justified. The methodology is partially described but not fully understood and not consistently applied. The research adheres to the basic principles of scientific ethics.	An appropriate and justified methodology has been chosen to address the research puzzle and answer the research question. The methodology is broadly described, but some details remain unclear. The methodology has been applied systematically, but some errors are noticeable. The research adheres to the principles of research ethics.	An appropriate methodology has been chosen to solve the research puzzle and answer the research question. It has been convincingly justified. The methodology is described in detail, helping to understand how it has been applied in the work. The methodology has been applied systematically and is broadly correct, contributing to answering the research question. The research adheres to the principles of research ethics.	An appropriate methodology has been chosen to solve the research puzzle and answer the research question, and it has been convincingly justified. The methodology is described in detail, allowing a detailed understanding of how it has been applied in the work. The methodology has been systematically and flawlessly applied to answer the research question. The research adheres to the principles of scientific ethics.
Research results and their presentation					
The results of the research are inadequately and/or inappropriately presented. The results are biased and not supported by data.	No distinction is made between significant and insignificant findings. Their presentation is unclear and unsystematic.	Some important findings have been highlighted in the research. The consistency between the findings and the methodology is difficult to discern. The presentation of the results is satisfactory.	The main findings of the study are outlined. The consistency between the research findings and the methodology can be observed. The research results meet most of the research questions. Their presentation is well understood.	The results of the research are clearly set out - important results are clearly distinguished from unimportant ones. The consistency between the research results and the methodology is very good. The results of the research are consistent with the research questions. They are presented in a comprehensible way.	The results of the research are clearly presented - important results are clearly distinguished from unimportant ones. There is excellent consistency between the findings and the methodology. The results provide a comprehensive answer to the research questions. They are presented in a way that is easy to understand.

Discussion and conclusions					
The reasoning is inconsistent and incoherent; the argumentation is not based on research findings. There is no critical approach	The discussion and conclusions are superficial and lack a link to the theoretical framework. The discussion does not relate to the research findings and does not contribute to solving the research puzzle. The central research question is not fully answered. Conclusions do not adequately address the limitations of the research.	The findings and conclusions are satisfactorily linked to the results and the theoretical framework. The research puzzle is poorly addressed. The central research question is partially answered. The limitations of the research have been to some extent reflected in the conclusions	The findings and conclusions are well linked to the results and the theoretical framework. The research puzzle has been partially solved. The central research question has been answered. The conclusions have partly outlined the limitations of the research.	The discussion and conclusions are well linked to the results and the theoretical framework. The research puzzle is skilfully solved. The central research question has been convincingly answered. The limitations of the research have been taken into account in the conclusions.	The course of reasoning and the conclusions are perfectly linked to the results and the theoretical framework. The research puzzle is exhaustively solved. The central research question has been fully answered. The conclusions have been drawn with due regard to the limitations of the research.
Structure and coherence					
The structure of the research is not fit for its purpose, and the subsections do not form a coherent whole.	The structure of the study is partially fit for its purpose, and the subsections are not sufficiently linked. The logic of the research process is difficult to follow.	The structure of the study is partly purposeful, and the subsections are weakly interconnected and the division of (sub)chapters is sometimes difficult to understand. The logic of the research process cannot be fully followed.	The structure of the study is generally purposeful, and the subsections are well interlinked. The (sub)chapter structure is understandable. The logic of the research process can be followed.	The structure of the study is purposeful, the subsections are very well interlinked. The (sub)chapters are clearly divided. The logic of the research process is easy to follow.	The structure of the study is fully purposeful, the subsections are perfectly interlinked, and the (sub)chapter divisions are clear and purposeful. The logic of the research process is can be followed fully.
Language use, spelling and compliance with formatting requirements					
Language use is incorrect and complicates understanding the content. There are numerous grammatical and typographical errors. The work does not	The language is appropriate, and the text is generally understandable but difficult to read. There are a few grammatical and typographical errors which seriously hamper	The language is appropriate and generally understood. There are some grammatical and typographical errors, which sometimes make the text difficult to	The language is generally academic and easy to understand. A few grammatical and typographical errors do not interfere with the understanding of the	The language is academic and easy to understand and read. The paper is linguistically flawless. The work is fully compliant with the formatting requirements.	The use of language is academic, highly comprehensible, and easy to read. The thesis is linguistically flawless and complies with the formatting requirements.

Annex 2 – Thesis guidelines and assessment criteria

comply with formatting requirements (including referencing) and is significantly (20%) over or below the required word limit.	understanding of the text. The work generally meets the formatting requirements and is slightly (5%) over or below the required word limit.	understand. The work complies with the formatting requirements.	text. The work meets the formatting requirements.		
Public presentation and defence of the thesis					
The thesis was not presented, or no presentation was made with the presentation software.	The thesis is not presented in the required time limit. Self-expression is not clear and convincing, and the use of presentation software is not skilful. Partial answers were given to criticism, and answers to additional questions were unsatisfactory.	The presentation runs over the allowed time limit. The presentation of the thesis is superficial. Self-expression is unclear and unconvincing at times and the use of the presentation software is satisfactory. Criticisms and additional questions are partially answered.	The presentation sticks to the required time limit. The presentation of the thesis is good. Argumentation is based on research. Self-expression is generally clear and convincing, and the use of presentation software is good. Criticism and further questions are answered.	The presentation sticks to the required time limit. The presentation of the thesis is thorough. All argumentation is based on research. The presentation is clear and convincing, and the use of presentation software is good. Criticisms and further questions are answered convincingly.	The presentation sticks to the required time limit. The presentation of the thesis is concise, systematic. All argumentation is based on research. Self-presentation is clear and convincing, and the use of presentation software is excellent. Criticisms and further questions are answered exhaustively.

In defending my thesis in the online environment of the Johan Skytte Institute for Political Studies, I have been informed of the following:

1. The online defence will be video streamed and will be equivalent to the in-person in person. That is to say:
 - a. all the rules laid outlined in the procedure for the defence of theses apply, including the same requirements and expectations for language use and the procedure of the defence itself as in case of an in-person defence;
 - b. in the case of an open defence, similar to the defence in an auditorium, anyone can observe the defence process as a guest in the online environment. The University will inform the guests that guest recording of the defence is not permitted. The procedure for the submission of questions will be established by the Chair of the defence committee;
 - c. in the case of a closed defence, the following restrictions apply (similar to a defence in an auditorium).
2. The defence committee shall have the right, where necessary, to:
 - a. request the identification of the seeker of the degree;
 - b. halt the defending process in the event of technical failure.
3. A member of staff of the University of Tartu (hereafter UT) may, with the consent of the Data Protection Officer, record what is being protected in the online environment, subject to UT Data Protection Conditions <https://www.ut.ee/en/data-protection-policy>
4. The recording will be held by the UT and stored in UT-controlled storage facilities. Unless otherwise agreed, the recording shall be preserved until the end of the academic year.
5. The university may only share the recording with the defender of the thesis.

I hereby confirm that I have read the terms and conditions of the online defence above and **agree** with the recording of the defence.

I hereby confirm that I have read the terms and conditions of the online defence above and **do not agree** with the recording of the defence

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