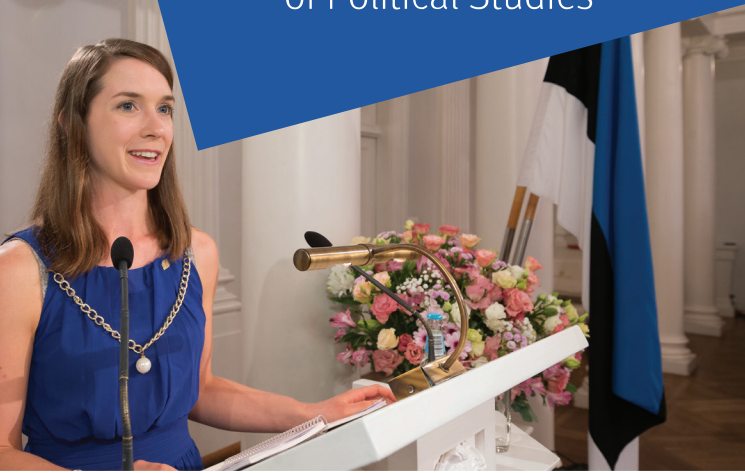




UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Johan Skytte Institute
of Political Studies



STUDY GUIDE

Politics and Governance in the Digital Age (PG) Master of Arts in Social Sciences

2023

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,
Head 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 provides an in-depth understanding of how the world is changing in the 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 Director*

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.

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Degree
Master of Arts



Study language
English



Location
Tartu, Estonia



Student places
20



Duration and credits
2 years, 120 ECTS



Form of study
Full-time regular studies



Scholarships
Available for national
and international students



Tuition fee
4,200 EUR/year



Tuition waivers
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

How do governments change and adapt in the digital era? What do e-governance and e-democracy mean? Do technologies shape and transform social processes? How can democratic political leaders govern with higher efficiency whilst respecting citizens' data privacy? Could it lead to greater discontent with politics and renewed authoritarian tendencies?

These are important questions to address in countries all over the world. While new technologies are rapidly emerging, governments often face the challenge to keep up with the speed of innovation and to adapt their legal framework. Understanding digital governance is therefore crucial for all future leaders and decision-makers.

This English language master curriculum offers you the knowledge and skills to understand modern governments and political developments in the contemporary world. The programme integrates core topics of political science such as governmental institutions, elections, political behaviour and ethics, combined with data-driven governance, e-democracy and critical thinking in the digital society. This is reinforced by training in research methods, quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques.

The first pillar of the programme examines questions around:

- What democratic institutions exist and how does technology impact on them?
- How do political and procedural changes occur?
- How does decision-making within the state bodies as well as outside of the actual governance stream evolve?
- What kind of challenges do democratic governments face in the digital era?

The second pillar reflects on institutional operations with the following key questions in mind:

- How do we ensure operational integrity of day-to-day issues of governance?
- How does running a state actually work?
- How to provide public services? How does the digital transformation of public services take place?
- How can digital technologies transform public services and enhance their effectiveness?
- How can we develop an understanding of technology itself and its application in public services from the society's perspective as well as from an institutional/organisational perspective?

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 PG curriculum.

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.

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 (PG) curriculum provides you with essential skills and knowledge both in comparative political science as well as in governance. Political scientists study the structure and theory of government and seek practical and theoretical solutions to political problems. Data analytics adds practical solutions to the identified problems. After graduating from this programme many possibilities for applying your skills and knowledge will open up.

This MA programme prepares you for advisory positions, high-level positions in ministries and governments, or to be employed at highest levels of administrations. Similarly, it enables you to start a career in the private sector, e.g. in consulting, given the expertise in digital transformation of the public sector.

Our graduates have been employed at international organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme, the European e-Government Programme in Luxembourg, the European Commission or as a technology attaché in an embassy in Washington D.C. Some have opted for academia and continued in doctoral studies. The PG master programme equips you with a skill set to be able to operate in a wide array 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 Braghioli
Associate Professor,
European Politics



Andres Reiljan
Research Fellow,
Comparative Politics



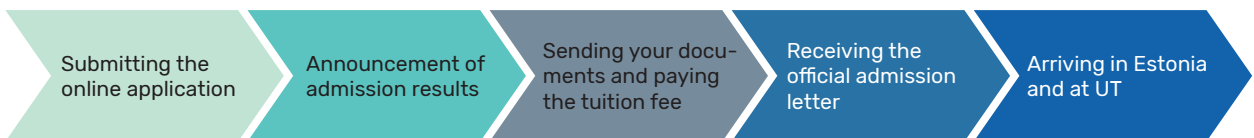
Louis Wierenga
Junior Research
Fellow, Populism

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



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

January 2, 2023: Application system opens

March 15, 2023: Application system closes

May 15, 2023: Final admission results are announced

September 4, 2023: 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 PG 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-waver 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 & Student life in Tartu](#)

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 - "Master's programmes in Society and State - Info Session 2021" \[01:15-12:15 - Politics and Governance in the Digital Age\]](#)

[Youtube - "Politics and Governance in the Digital Age"](#)

[Youtube - Interviews with lecturers](#)

2. Curriculum Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The goal of the PG 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. You will learn what impact digital transformation has on society and how to make use of this knowledge for a better future.

The learning outcomes include:

- integrated knowledge on core components of politics and governance as well as of digital transformation, including state-held e-services;
- data analysis skills using examples from digital services, the Estonian e-residency programme and the e-Estonia open data repository;
- analytical competencies and critical thinking;
- understanding of modern political institutions and how digital transformation shapes 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 PG 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 PG MA programme is structured into five 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, specialised training in politics or governance, open elective subjects and an independent research project.

After successfully completing the curriculum, you will:

1. have a broad-based knowledge in the main components of modern politics and public administration (incl. democratic theory and institutions, elections and party systems, policy-making and organisation of public services) and be able to apply this knowledge in practice;
2. have acquired basic knowledge in technological development and the functioning of information societies, and understand how technological transformation affects modern political processes and public administration;
3. have a thorough knowledge in the approaches and research methods used in political science and be able to independently formulate policy and public administration problems and/or research questions, synthesise and analyse source materials, be source- and theory-critical, and present the results of your analysis clearly orally and in writing;
4. have acquired the necessary skills and digital competencies to solve the practical tasks of democratic public administration, which enables analysing 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 innovation or in a qualified field of activity in the public/private/non-profit sector, while demonstrating initiative, responsibility, management and teamwork skills;
6. be able to identify your needs 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 PG 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 causal 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

<p>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</p>	<p>within the programme: seminar discussions and debates; discussing assignments or analyses during group assignments; learning in an international environment</p>	<p>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</p>
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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 2023 and spring 2024), you should focus on key courses 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 2024).** 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 2025), 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 to contact your Academic Affairs Specialist.

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	<p>The goal of the module is to provide an overview of social science methodology, to introduce the main approaches and methods used in the study of contemporary democratic governance and political studies, and how to use these methods in applied problem-solving settings.</p> <p>All courses of this module are compulsory.</p>	<p>Introduction to Impact Assessment (6 ECTS) Quantitative Methods (6 ECTS) Social Science Methodology (6 ECTS)</p>

<p>2.   </p> <p>CORE COMPETENCIES MODULE</p> <p>36 ECTS</p>	<p>The objective of the module is to provide a comprehensive overview of the main fields of democratic governance and to develop your knowledge of concrete political systems and of societal developments. The sub-modules provide in-depth knowledge about modern political institutions, elections, and political behaviour, combined with data-driven governance, e-democracy and critical thinking in the digital society.</p> <p>All courses of this module are compulsory.</p>	<p>2.1 Module in politics Comparative Politics (6 ECTS) Elections and Political Behaviour (6 ECTS) Political Theory and Ethics (6 ECTS)</p> <p>2.2. Module in governance Administration of Democracy and Elections (6 ECTS) E-Governance (6 ECTS) Public Governance (6 ECTS)</p>
<p>3.   </p> <p>SPECIALIZATION MODULE + ELECTIVES</p> <p>24 ECTS</p>	<p>The aim of the module is to complement the modules of the curriculum with specialisations that (a) deepen your knowledge in either politics or public administration and (b) examine in depth the consequences of technological change in this field; and thereby strengthen the practical output and interdisciplinary dimension of the curriculum.</p> <p>Additionally, it is required to complete another course or courses worth in total 6 ECTS to complete this module.</p> <p>It is compulsory to choose one of the two sub-modules. (Specialise either in politics <u>OR</u> in governance)</p>	<p>3.1 Specialisation module in politics EU Institutions and Policy-making (6 ECTS) (NB! The course is only taught every 3rd semester) Extreme Right-Wing Movements and Populism (6 ECTS) Political Culture (6 ECTS) (NB! The course is only taught every 3rd semester)</p> <p>3.2 Specialisation module in governance Cross-border E-governance (6 ECTS) Policy Writing and Advocacy (6 ECTS) Recent Issues in Governance (6 ECTS)</p> <p>+ 6 ECTS from elective course(s) There is a variety of elective courses to choose from, such as Big Data, Leadership and Management, Public Sector Marketing, Research Methods, The Basics of Innovation, etc. You can also choose an elective class from the other specialisation, as long as you complete one specialisation (e.g. complete the governance specialisation and take Political Culture as your additional elective).</p>

<p>4.    </p> <p>OPTIONAL COURSE MODULE</p> <p>6 ECTS</p>	<p>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. Starting from autumn 2024, all students who have not studied Estonian language before, must complete a 6 ECTS Estonian language course. You can find the course description in the Study System (https://ois2.ut.ee/#/courses/FLLC.09.001/version/2b7d5633-0c5e-c1e0-05b0-c2cf0a4f6f0b/details).</p>	<p>Free-choice of course or courses (6 ECTS), except for Estonian language requirement, see last column.</p>
<p>5.  </p> <p>MASTER THESIS</p> <p>36 ECTS</p>	<p>The goal of the MA thesis is to carry out in-depth research on a topic or problem related to the programme's fields, to gather original empirical material or data within a suitable framework, and to convey the research results in a clear and argued form. The Master's Seminar supports you in your thesis writing process and provides tools for a successful completion of the MA thesis. The seminar will take place in your third and fourth semester.</p> <p>All courses of this module are compulsory.</p>	<p>Master's Seminar (3 ECTS in autumn 2024 + 3 ECTS in spring 2025)</p> <p>MA Thesis (30 ECTS)</p>

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

3.2 Exemplary Study Plan

The exemplary study plan provides guidance on how your study plan could be structured. It is based on the courses from academic year 2022/23. **Please keep in mind that some courses may change over time, and there may be variation in semesters in which the course is offered (autumn or spring).** You may have to adapt the study plan based on the electives and the specialisation that you choose.

Modules 1 and 3 are compulsory for everyone. It is also compulsory to complete either the specialisation module 3.1 (Politics) OR the specialisation module 3.2 (Governance).

Semester	Module	Course Name
Semester 1 Autumn 2023 30 ECTS	1	SHRG.03.024 Quantitative Methods (6 ECTS)
	1	SHRG.03.022 Social Science Methodology (6 ECTS)
	2.1	SHRG.02.021 Political Theory and Ethics (6 ECTS)
	2.2	SHRG.02.024 E-Governance (6 ECTS)
	2.2	SHRG.02.020 Public Governance (6 ECTS)
Semester 2 Spring 2024 30 ECTS	1	SVJS.00.020 Introduction to Impact Assessment (6 ECTS)
	2.1	SVJS.00.031 Comparative Politics (6 ECTS)
	2.1	SHRG.02.022 Elections and Political Behaviour (6 ECTS)
	2.2	SVJS.00.032 Administration of Democracy & Elections (6 ECTS)
	3.1 or 3.2	Specialisation ; one course from the specialisation module (6 ECTS)
Semester 3 Autumn 2024 27 ECTS	3	Specialisation ; one course from the specialisation module or electives (6 ECTS)
	3.1 or 3.2	Specialisation ; one course from the specialisation module (6 ECTS)
	3.1 or 3.2	Specialisation ; one course from the specialisation module (6 ECTS)
	4	Optional course, e.g. Introduction to Programming (3 ECTS)
	4	Optional course, e.g. How to build a Start-up Company (3 ECTS)
	5	SVJS.00.036 Master's Seminar (3 ECTS)
Semester 4 Spring 2025 33 ECTS	5	SVJS.00.036 Master's Seminar (3 ECTS) SHRG.02.027 MA Thesis (30 ECTS)

More information about the curriculum and courses is available on the UT student study information system **OIS** - <https://ois2.ut.ee/#/curricula/129637/details> (select your study year at 'select version' to see the details).

3.3 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 and specific services can be found on the University's website (<https://ut.ee/en/supprting-students-special-needs>) and special needs advisers can be contacted via the website as well (<https://ut.ee/en/content/counseling-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/ut.erivajadused?previous_action=info)

4. Study Abroad and Internship

4.1 Study Abroad

During your studies in the PG programme, you can spend one semester (autumn 2024) 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>

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 PG 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 PG 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: <https://skytte.ut.ee/en/content/studies>.

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.

The 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 2026).

You should prepare the prospectus in four steps:

1. Review earlier assignments from the Social Science Methodology course and any other courses in the research topic.
2. Formulate ideas into a **1-2 page overview** that clearly outlines the project's main topic, research design and expected data gathering processes.
3. Approach a possible supervisor with this preliminary outline. It is not good practice to approach the faculty with very preliminary or vague ideas.
4. Lastly, with your advisor's recommendations, prepare the 4-page (1200-word) prospectus and submit it by deadline.

The prospectus should be submitted electronically to the Academic Affairs Specialist by **November 1**. In accordance with Institute rules, **only students whose prospectuses have been fully approved are allowed to defend their thesis.**

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 (<https://skytte.ut.ee/sites/default/files/2022-03/Requirements%20for%20final%20theses%2C%20defence%20committee%2C%20reviewer%2C%20and%20the%20defence%20at%20the%20JS%20Institute.pdf>).

The submission deadline for the thesis is in May 2024. 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 PG 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!

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