EUROPEAN UNION – RUSSIA STUDIES PROGRAMME GUIDE

The following guide contains study requirements and recommendations for students enrolled in the European Union – Russia studies MA programme (EURUS) offered by the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies. It also focuses on the planning and definition of the master’s thesis writing process.

The thesis writing process reflects both the principles of the Institute and the approach to education and teaching (problem-based and project-based learning) adopted by the programme. Problem-based learning and project-based learning are future competence development-oriented.

This guide is designed to provide MA students with an overview of the program and of the process of writing the MA thesis, how it is structured, and how it runs. Its objective is to help students tailor the program to fit their learning objectives, maximize their opportunities, and make the most of their future career.

Substantive, structuring, and formatting requirements can be found in the Institute’s guideline for formatting papers.

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1. LEARNING PROCESS

The EURUS curriculum uses active learning as its primary form of study. Active learning is a learning process in which knowledge is obtained through active participation and experience. Such an approach helps students form independent perspectives, finding common ground between courses and the real world, while developing transferable skills. Problem-based and project-based learning are subcategories of active learning and they can be successfully used for conducting interdisciplinary studies. Both of these techniques use previous knowledge and skills obtained throughout the course in order to solve a problem or create a project.

Through ‘one-on-one’ mentorship, the programme and its leadership support the personal and academic development of each student. The programme’s teaching staff consists of a community of scholars with internationally acknowledged expertise in research and teaching, and combines various teaching cultures and educational backgrounds. The programme adopts an interactive and non-hierarchical approach with students.

Learning methods include the following:

1. Different approaches to active learning (including simulations, role-playing games, debates, discussions, study visits, case analysis, etc.);
2. Lectures, seminars, practicums, etc.;
3. E-learning and online education;
4. Independent work (including student-led activities in lectures, homework, etc.).

The EURUS curriculum uses differentiated (A-F) and non-differentiated (pass/fail) grading.

Students must register and fulfil all necessary course criteria to take the final exam. The examiner (responsible lecturer or individual appointed by said person) is responsible for determining the fulfilment of aforementioned criteria.

1.1. Logic of Programme

The full-time English-taught EURUS Master’s Programme provides students with the analytical tools and skills to grasp the political, historical, cultural, and economic developments in Russia, the European Union, and their shared neighbourhood. Students are involved in a dynamic process of active learning, in which the focus on global developments combines academic quality and the most innovative teaching techniques. Bridging academia and the “real world”, the programme emphasizes not only acquiring knowledge, but also applying it.

1.2. Logic of Modules

The EURUS curriculum consists of five modules: a mandatory methods module, a mandatory core module, a specialization module, an optional module and an MA thesis module.
The EURUS curriculum is 120 credit points that are calculated according to credit points of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The curriculum consists of the following five modules:

1. Methods module (18 ECTS)
2. Core module (36 ECTS)
3. Specialization module (24 ECTS)
4. Optional module (12 ECTS)
5. MA thesis module (30 ECTS)

The mandatory methods module provides students with an overview of social science methodologies, introduces the main research approaches in the study of contemporary democratic governance, and teaches how to use these methods in applied problem-solving settings.

The obligatory core module provides students with specific and in-depth knowledge about the functioning, institutional nature, and decision-making structures of the European Union and Russia, and the evolving nature of their mutual relations. Specific attention is devoted to the multidimensionality of the process of European and regional integration (both *per se* and in relation with Russia) in the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood.

The specialization module provides students with an opportunity to specialize according to their specific academic interests. A student can choose between a variety of courses focusing on different policy areas or disciplinary fields, dealing with the Russian Federation, the EU, and their shared neighbourhood.

The MA thesis module consists of three-semester long development seminar during which students are prepared for writing and defending the MA thesis. The second part of the module is the thesis. The written thesis is worth 15 ECTS and the development seminar is worth 15 ECTS. Students are given the possibility to defend a 30 ECST MA thesis, according to the criteria defined in Appendix 2.

The optional module (12 ECTS) offers students the possibility to further personalize their learning experience by choosing courses outside of the curriculum to deepen their knowledge and improve skills in the fields that they consider more relevant for their academic development and personal growth.

### 1.3. Curriculum Completion

Students – supported by programme’s development seminar – are responsible for planning their learning process. Students are required to follow the curriculum to which they have been matriculated, complete the required modules, and the obligatory courses as described in section 1.2 of this guide.

Courses from the core module (36 ECTS) and methods module (18 ECTS) are required to complete the curriculum. Students can choose between courses that suit them in the specialization module, accounting for a total of 24 ECTS. Students can choose any courses
offered by the University of Tartu (hereinafter, UT) in order to fill their Optional course credits (12 ECTS).

Based on the logic of the curriculum, all extracurricular courses – with the exception of the ones offered by the Institute of Political Studies (P2EC, SVJS, SHRG, SORG), incl. language courses, will fall under optional course credits.

If the students wish to add to the specialisation module, an extracurricular course (not offered by the Institute) that is related to his/her specialisation and comply with the curriculum outcomes (excl. language courses), they are required to present an application to the programme director. The application must contain the relation between a specific course's learning outcomes and the MA thesis or the project conducted in the development seminar. The specialization module can contain at most 18 ECTS worth of other than courses specified in the curriculum.

Courses taken in foreign universities can be carried over into the curriculum. Students must submit an application, a study plan, and form a learning agreement before beginning studies in a foreign country. The courses taken abroad must be approved by the programme manager. Courses taken in a foreign country will generally be replaced by courses of the Institute that have similar content and learning outcomes. If the student takes a course that cannot be replaced by a course of the Institute, they must provide an explanation letter that allows the ECTS to be carried over to the core module or specialization module. Students are advised to consult with the student coordinator before going to study abroad.

2. DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR

The aim of the development seminar is to support the student's learning process and provide the student with the necessary knowledge and skills to complete their MA studies and write the MA thesis.

The seminar pursues four learning objectives. They relate to the students’ learning activities, academic and personal growth, and to the finalization of their MA studies and MA thesis.

The four learning objectives include:

- Team building, developing of personal attitudes and non-disciplinary skills
- Support of the study process
- Completion of student-led group project
- Thesis development support

Each of the four learning objectives substantiates into a specific set of components, which translate objectives into its practical realizations and benefit the student in their subsequent academic and professional career. Functionally, the development seminar helps to identify possible problems that students may face during their study, guide them throughout curricula, and share their feedback.

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The development seminar is largely built on the principles of project-based learning, based on which the students carry out a large group project. The aim of the student-led group project is to provide students with the opportunity to autonomously obtain specific knowledge of narrower fields of interests and to apply it in the conduction of student-led collaborative projects, which combine academic quality with "real world" application.

While profiting from the advice of competent professionals/academics, the students are responsible for the definition, realisation, implementation, and finalization of the project, thereby developing an original sense of collective ownership. The project should end with a specific (previously-defined and agreed upon) outcome that is presented to the relevant audience/reference group and should have wide visibility as well as social and academic impact. The format of the project outcome is determined by students (examples include a public event, a multimedia project, a website, a campaign etc.).

Along with the specific set of components defined by each learning objective, the course favours students’ attendance of, at least, one MOOC (Massive Open Online Course), of the student’s choosing, that is accepted by the development seminar’s advisor.

The development seminar is led by two mentors that coordinate all activities carried out during the course relating respectively to academic performance and personal development. The mentors set – jointly and in good agreement – interim goals: a) help the group in agreeing upon a project and realise it in team/s and b) develop personal research interests that will result in an MA thesis.

2.1 Internships

The internships of EURUS consist of three subcategories that must be completed by the end of MA studies:

1. Internal organisational internship in the UT
2. Internal analytical internship in the UT
3. External internship in another organisation

The internship in the UT consists of organisational as well as analytical tasks for a total of at least 60 hours. The duration of an internship in another organisation must also be at least 60 hours. The internship does not grant ECTS.¹

The organisational internship helps students obtain knowledge and skills related to everyday institutional workflow and development, incl. event organisation and speaking to a foreign auditorium. The organisational internship takes place under the supervision of other employees, lecturers, project managers, etc., of the Institute or the UT. Suitable tasks for passing the internship include: organisation of lectures, conferences, workshops, etc.

¹ Except internships, for which students can receive up to 6 ECTS (240 hours), incl. Erasmus, etc.

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trips, student activities; giving speeches at conferences, public events; organising and carrying out working group meetings, different business-related tasks, etc.

Through the **analytical internship**, students can participate in the university’s research projects that are carried out by the employees of the UT. The internship allows students to apply different research methods in real research projects as well as experience how project management works, how different data analysis programmes work and to have a look at the project documentation. The analytical internship can be related to studies, e.g. composing course materials. Suitable tasks for passing the internship include: collecting and/or analysing data, collecting background information, writing reports and summaries, conducting interviews, proofreading, composing course materials, etc.

The external **internship in another organisation** introduces students to actual work in the field they are studying. It helps them understand theoretical knowledge through practical work, apply what they have learned in a real working environment, understand the workflow of an institution related to their field of study, observe different workflows, and develop their independent work skills and habits. The organisational/analytical internships and traineeships in another organisation are coordinated and approved by the development seminar’s supervisor.

In addition, students can pass an internship that counts as a separate course, 6 ECTS (156 hours), of the specialization module. If they so choose, the internship in a working environment must be a purposeful and long-term activity that takes place under the supervision of the organisation as well as a supervisor from the Institute. The internship must be in accordance with the curriculum’s aims and learning outcomes and must be in a related field or, more generally, develop the student’s research and analysis skills. The internship course is non-differentiated. The final grade will be given by the university supervisor, based on the organisation’s appraisal and the student's internship report. The internship is completed when the student receives a positive evaluation from the organisation where the student worked and the university supervisor has confirmed the internship report and the organisation’s appraisal.

### 3. MA THESIS

An MA thesis is an independently written research paper, conforming to *Guidelines for Writing and Formatting Papers*, that shows the MA students’ theoretical and practical knowledge, their ability to use literature of the field, substantiate their positions and express these in written form. The MA thesis is an analytical research paper with a clear problem statement where scientific methods are applied to a concrete object of research.

The MA thesis in the EURUS curriculum can be scientific or applied, must contain a theoretical component and should contain an empirical component. The first part of a thesis contains a theoretical approach and definition of a research problem. In the following parts of the thesis, the adopted approach is applied to researching a specific problem. An applied MA thesis focuses on a practical problem in some field.
3.1 Topic Choice and Thesis Supervisor

The student chooses their MA thesis topic in coordination with their thesis supervisor, the development seminar's supervisor is also available for assistance and advice. Lecturers, researchers, or doctoral students who hold at least an MA degree and work at the UT can serve as thesis supervisors. Additionally, a supervisor can be not affiliated with UT, but in this case an internal co-supervisor needs to be selected as well. An MA thesis can have either one or two supervisors. If a suitable supervisor has been found and supervision has been approved, the student will notify, in written form, the programme manager by 1st June of their first academic year.

Based on the content and aims of the curriculum, the EURUS MA thesis must be related to different policy areas or disciplinary fields, dealing with the Russian Federation, the EU, and their shared neighbourhood. Additionally, students should keep in mind the following points when choosing their research topic:

- Topicality and originality of the topic;
- Concreteness and delineation of the topic;
- Availability of literature and empirical information of the field;
- Personal interests and ability.

When choosing the topic, students should make sure that they do not choose a thesis with the same topic as an already defended thesis or a thesis currently being defended. Students are allowed to write several papers on related fields, but it is important that each thesis provides a valuable contribution. Therefore, an MA student should browse MA theses defended in the EURUS curriculum (available in DSpace).

3.2 Supervisor Cooperation

Students cooperate with their supervisor when writing their thesis. An MA student is expected to follow the supervisor's instructions, but he/she can ignore the supervisor's recommendations if they provide valid arguments for doing so.

Students consult their supervisor on questions of topic choice and during the writing process, and follows the deadlines and suggested timeline (see appendix 1). Students must inform their supervisor of possible changes in their problem statement or topic wording.

Students turn to their supervisor for consultation or to solve problems and questions that arise during the writing process. Students have the right to receive feedback on their thesis within an agreed amount of time and in the agreed form. The supervisor will answer any principal questions that may arise during the writing process, will point out mistakes and weak points in argumentation and structure; assess research methodology and terminology; correctness of referencing; and, style of language of the thesis. The supervisor is not a co-author or editor; it is not the supervisor's job to write the thesis or correct language or stylistic mistakes. If necessary, the supervisor offers advice on preparation for pre-defence or defence.

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Students may also turn to their development seminar supervisor who will help them find motivation, give advice on how the writing process could be more effective and, if necessary, consult with the supervisor(s) of the thesis.

The supervisor of an MA thesis has the right to refuse further supervision to an MA student (must be presented in written form to the programme manager) if the student does not follow deadlines, recommendations, or has changed the topic to something the supervisor deems out of the competence of either party.

The supervisor has the right to abandon supervision and the defender has the right to change the supervisor if it has been approved in written form by the programme manager.

### 3.3 Presenting and Assessing the Extended MA Thesis Research Plan (Prospectus)

Students are required to present and defend a prospectus as part of the development seminar. As the exact delineation of the topic, formulating the aim and research tasks, and a logical structure of work are essential to the quality of the thesis, it is important that the aforementioned points are thoroughly thought through before the writing process starts. Presenting the prospectus allows students to receive feedback on research questions, research methods, suitability of the theoretical background, and general structure of the thesis. Additionally, presenting the prospectus links what has been learned in courses to writing the MA thesis.

The prospectus must be submitted within the framework of the development seminar by 1st November if the student wishes to defend in the following spring semester, or by 1st April if the student wishes to defend in the following fall semester. As part of the prospectus submission process, the student states – in agreement with their chosen supervisor – his/her intention to write a 15 ECTS thesis or 30 ECTS thesis (see criteria defined in Appendix 2). The prospectus is either accepted or rejected, within the framework of the development seminar, in coordination with the MA thesis supervisor.

The prospectus has a crucial role in defining the topic, setting an aim and logical structuring of the thesis. It should contain the following aspects:

- **The thesis' title**, which should be concise and specific, but also reflects the research topic thoroughly and provides a clear picture of the nature of the research problem. Note also that this title is preliminary. Students are free to modify the wording of their title before they hand in their final thesis.

- **The thesis' author and supervisor(s).**

- **The research problem**, which must be exactly delineated and defined, should show the nature of the problem, topicality, and importance. This section of the prospectus should outline the research area or conceptual phenomenon that the thesis will address. The student should demonstrate his/her familiarity with the relevant theoretical parameters and relevant literature related to their topic. If the thesis is about, for example, social movements, the prospectus should give a brief
outline of the concept drawing from relevant literature and giving a sense of how this framework will feed into the empirical research that will be done.

- **The aim and main research question** need to be explicitly and clearly stated.

- **The thesis' structure.** The planned table of contents must be presented, preferably listed as chapters and subchapters. Research tasks set in the prospectus contribute to creating the thesis structure.

- The **theoretical framework and methodology** outline which theoretical perspective the thesis applies in order to address the stated research question and indicate the research method the student intends to apply and appropriately justify the choice. Here the student should outline the research design of the thesis (i.e. case study, comparative study, large-N). Chosen research methods have to be executable by the student.

- The **overview of the data collected, used, and analysed** should outline the empirical information that the thesis will examine as well as how these data will reflect the research problem or main conceptual framework. The student should also explain what kinds of problems may arise (e.g. availability of data, sources, other materials) and how they plan on solving them.

- The **Bibliography** should contain a list of the main source materials – books, scientific articles, etc. – used in the thesis. Theoretical sources and sources of empirical data, statutes/legislative acts, and other literature supporting the analytical part of the thesis needs to be introduced separately. The list introduced in the plan is not final and it can be updated during the writing process. The bibliography should be in accordance with the requirements set in the *Guidelines for Writing and Formatting Papers*.

The prospectus must be presented to the development seminar supervisor by **1st November** of the third semester if the student wishes to defend in the following spring semester, or by **1st April** if the student wishes to defend in the following fall semester. The prospectus is either accepted or rejected by the development seminar supervisor in coordination with the MA thesis supervisor.

Prospectus, incl. final thesis topic and supervisors, is to be confirmed by **15th November** or **15th April**. After the prospectus is accepted, the student continues writing their paper. If the prospectus is rejected, the student is required to take the comments of the supervisor into account. A new plan must be drafted and presented if the topic changes. If the plan is rejected a second time, the student is advised to change their topic and/or supervisor.

Guidelines and formatting requirements for the thesis prospectus are described in the *Guidelines for Writing and Formatting Papers*. 

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3.4 Presenting and Defending the MA Thesis

In order to defend the MA thesis and obtain an MA degree in social sciences, the thesis must be, respectively, pre-defended and defended. Dates of the pre-defence and defence are set by the Institute at the beginning of the academic year. MA theses defences generally take place during the fall semester (end of December or beginning of January) and in the spring semester (end of May or beginning of June).

3.4.1 Composition of the Defence Committee

Based on the inter-disciplinarity of the MA programme, the committee is comprised of representatives of Faculty of Social Sciences and, if necessary, other fields. In addition to MA programme lecturers, the committee can contain practitioners and recognised experts on different policy areas or disciplinary fields, dealing with the Russian Federation, the EU, and their shared neighbourhood.

3.4.2 Pre-defence

The goal of the pre-defence is to guarantee that theses presented for defence are in accordance with requirements and only theses that pass pre-defence are allowed to be defended. Theses presented to pre-defence must be at least 75% complete, must contain a table of contents, list of abbreviations (if necessary), main body (separated into chapters), references, and appendices. Theses presented for pre-defence are not required to contain a foreign language or an abstract.

Within the framework of the pre-defence, the student confirms his/her intention to defend a 15 or 30 ECTS thesis. The student’s statement is accompanied by an opinion of the supervisor assessing the goodness of fit of the thesis with the criteria defined in Appendices 2 and 4. As part of the pre-defence, and in the light of the student’s own statement and the supervisor’s opinion about the goodness of fit of the thesis with the criteria defined in Appendices 2 and 4, the committee assesses and finalizes the thesis format.

Pre-defences take place based on the timetable (see Appendix 1) no later than five weeks before the defence of the MA thesis. The pre-defence has the same format as the real defence and the thesis is either accepted or rejected in the process of it. The supervisor must give their approval before a thesis is presented for pre-defence.

A thesis approved by the supervisor must be presented electronically to the Study Affairs specialist together with the supervisor’s approval at least two weeks before the pre-defence. By that time, the supervisor can make his or her recommendations on the selection of the opponent. Pre-defence is not graded. As the result of the pre-defence, the defence committee will make one of the following three choices:

1. Thesis is ready for consideration
2. Thesis ready for considering after correcting mistakes
3. Thesis is not ready for consideration

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The student has the right to ask the committee for reasons of acceptance/rejection and/or suggestions for improvement.

### 3.4.3 Defence

An MA student is allowed to defend their thesis if they have completed the curriculum, passed the pre-defence and presented necessary documents, as well as the MA thesis, due the deadline. If a thesis passes pre-defence, but the author of the thesis has not completed all of the required courses, they must reach an agreement with lecturers/professors so that exams are taken before the defence. All grades must be in the Study Information System or submitted to the Study Affairs Specialist no later than two working days before the final defence.

The student must pay attention to the self-test list before presenting the MA thesis (cf. appendix 3).

The following documents must be presented to the Study Affairs Specialist no later than **two weeks before the defence:**

- One (1) bound (either hardcover or softback) and signed copy of the MA thesis
- MA thesis in electronic form together with supervisor's approval that the thesis is ready for consideration.

The bound copy of the MA thesis and the MA thesis in electronic form must be identical by content and format.

The MA thesis defence is held openly in front of the defence committee. The MA thesis defence procedure is, generally, as follows:

- Introduction by the committee chairman;
- Oral presentation by the candidate (up to 10 min);
- Opinion of opponent (if the opponent is not present, with reasonable excuse, a member of the committee will read the opinion);
- Debate (response to the opponent and, if necessary, additional questions from the opponent);
- Questions and statements from the defence committee and audience;
- Opinion of the supervisor (if the supervisor is not present, with reasonable excuse, a member of the committee will read the opinion);
- MA students closing statement.

An oral presentation should be prepared for the defence. As the presentation’s length is only up to 10 minutes, it should not state the obvious or well-known positions. The MA student must briefly explain the thesis' aim, describe the choice of object of research, present results, a detailed overview and an assessment. The presentation needs to clearly
illustrate the student's contribution to the topic of research. It is advisable to illustrate the presentation with visual aids (PowerPoint, etc.).

3.4.4 Review

An opponent submits a written review no later than two business days before the defence to the Study Affairs specialist, who forwards the review to the MA student no later than 24 hours before the defence. The opponent's task is to provide an objective assessment to the text according to the structural and formatting criteria laid down in the Guidelines for writing and formatting papers. Generally, the following aspects are outlined in the review:

- Assessment of the topicality of the research.
- Assessment of the thesis' relation to topic.
- Assessment of established goal(s) (clarity etc.) and research tasks (if completing these can lead to an established goal).
- Assessment of thesis structure (coherence, balance, consistency, etc.).
- Assessment of the level of analysis and comprehensiveness of material (clarity, relevance, thoroughness, correctness and logic of analysis, validity of conclusions, material combination skills, adequateness and sufficiency of material etc.).
- Assessment of sufficiency, relevance, and level of literature (e.g. relevant and recent articles from recognised international journals or simply some journal articles).
- Assessment of adherence to the rules of citation (e.g. all facts and opinions, including statements, causal descriptions, etc. can be verified based on primary sources)
- Assessment of linguistic correctness.
- Assessment of formatting.
- Assessment of set tasks and goal attainment.
- Assessment of the thesis as a whole.
- Opponent's questions concerning the subject matter of the thesis for the student, the answers of which determine the student's knowledge of the topic and skill of argumentation.

3.4.5 Supervisor's Opinion

The supervisor's opinion is submitted to the Study Affairs Specialist no later than two working days before the defence and it contains the following aspects:

- Assessment of the topicality of the research.
- Assessment of the thesis' relation to topic.
- Assessment of thesis structure (coherence, balance, consistency, etc.).
- Assessment of the level of analysis and comprehensiveness of material (clarity, relevance, thoroughness, correctness and logic of analysis, validity of conclusions, material combination skills, adequateness and sufficiency of material, etc.).
• Assessment of formatting.
• Assessment of set tasks and goal attainment.
• Assessment of thesis development during the writing process.
• Assessment of the student’s attitude towards the research and the supervisor's suggestions.
• Assessment of the thesis as a whole.

The committee will take into account the following while assessing the thesis:

• Thesis’ accordance to assessment criteria (cf. appendix 4.6 of Guidelines for writing and formatting papers).
• The MA student’s performance during the defence (content and style of presentation, answering of questions, etc.).
• Opinion of supervisor and opponent.

After the MA thesis defence, the committee will have a closed discussion to decide whether to give the MA candidate their MA degree. The committee is not obligated to go by the opinions of the opponent or the supervisor.
**APPENDIX 1: Suggested Thesis Writing Timeline**

(from September to June if the MA thesis is defended in spring)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Task to be completed</th>
<th>To be submitted to</th>
<th>Task to be completed by</th>
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<tr>
<td>November 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Submission of supervisor’s consent to supervise</td>
<td>The student, Study Affairs specialist</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Submission of thesis prospectus (if the student intends to defend the next spring semester)</td>
<td>Programme coordinator</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Prospectus reviewed and accepted or rejected</td>
<td>The student, supervisor</td>
<td>Programme coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Submission of thesis structure and finalized bibliography</td>
<td>The supervisor</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Submission of the first draft, i.e. about 50% of the final thesis</td>
<td>The supervisor</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven weeks before the defence (at the latest) / two weeks before the pre-defence</td>
<td>Submission of thesis for pre-defence</td>
<td>Study Affairs specialist</td>
<td>Student</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Submission of supervisor’s consent to present the thesis for pre-defence</td>
<td>Study Affairs specialist</td>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two days before the pre-defence</td>
<td>Submission of the opponent’s review of the MA thesis</td>
<td>Study Affairs specialist</td>
<td>Opponent</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 h after the pre-defence</td>
<td>Submission of the opponent’s review of the MA thesis</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Programme coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Five weeks before the defence (at the latest)</td>
<td>Pre-defence</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Submission of second draft, i.e. about 90% of the final thesis completed</td>
<td>The supervisor</td>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two weeks before the date of the thesis</td>
<td>Submission of the MA thesis</td>
<td>Study Affairs specialist</td>
<td>Student</td>
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<td>Event</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Responsible Parties</td>
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<td>defence (at the latest)</td>
<td>Submission of the supervisor’s consent to present the thesis for consideration</td>
<td>Study Affairs specialist, Student</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Two working days prior to the defence</td>
<td>Submission of the supervisor’s opinion about the thesis</td>
<td>Programme manager, Study Affairs specialist, Supervisor</td>
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<td>(at the latest), or during the defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two days before the defence</td>
<td>Submission of the opponent’s review of the MA thesis</td>
<td>Study Affairs specialist, Opponent</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 h before the defence</td>
<td>Submission of the opponent’s review of the MA thesis</td>
<td>Student, Study Affairs specialist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of May / beginning of June</td>
<td>MA defence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*If pre-defence take place (subject to programme manager’s decision)*
APPENDIX 2: Master’s Thesis Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>15 ECTS thesis</strong></th>
<th><strong>30 ECTS thesis</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General requirements</td>
<td>Thesis format should present a clear connection to the focus of the programme and – broadly – to the political, historical, and economic developments in Russia, the European Union, and their shared neighbourhood. Structure and rationale of a thesis should fit the instructions defined in the programme’s study guide (see section 3.1 Presenting and assessing the extended MA thesis research plan). Thesis’ format must correspond to the jointly agreed standards of scientific validity, objectivity, and academic integrity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FORMAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN TWO FORMATS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>≈ 20,000 words</td>
<td>≈ 30,000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of work</td>
<td>≈ 390 hours of work</td>
<td>≈ 780 hours of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POSSIBLE EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE TWO FORMATS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical component</td>
<td>&lt; 25% of the thesis</td>
<td>&gt; 25% of the thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original data collection process</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical component</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases analysed</td>
<td>1-3 unique cases</td>
<td>5-10 cases (could be less, but the cases must be valid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of thesis discussion (practical applicability)</td>
<td>The focus of the thesis is on contributing to the broader theoretical and academic debate; inferences made in the thesis are also applicable to other cases and can be generalized.</td>
<td>The thesis aims to solve practical problems or understand existing cases. Emphasis of the thesis is on external relevance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of academic sophistication</td>
<td>It implies successful and sophisticated use of the analytical component and scientific method to contribute to the academic debate</td>
<td>It implies successful use of scientific method and analytical component to solve practical problems or understand existing cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework</td>
<td>Different theoretical models are assessed and compared with the intention of developing integrated theoretical models and to test them on selected cases.</td>
<td>Existing theoretical models are used to analyse practical research problems. The main conclusion is, how appropriate is the chosen theory for analysing the selected cases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 3: MA Thesis Checklist (incl. any other research paper)

The following list should be considered before presenting the thesis. The list is composed, primarily, considering empirical research and is not exhaustive.

Introduction

☐ Define research questions clearly (question, not topic) and explain exactly what you wish to research.
☐ Discuss how your research relates to existing research.
☐ Compose a summary of your main arguments and findings.

Theory

☐ Discuss how existing literature is applicable, based on your research question (compose a literature overview, not a summary).
☐ Explain assumptions and concepts used in the theoretical component(s) of your thesis.
☐ Formulate one or more hypotheses that are based on theory.

Structure and method/sample of the research

☐ Give the reader enough information to critically assess your research.
☐ Explain the structure of the research.
☐ Explain the choice of sample.
☐ Explain which method(s) you used in your research.
☐ If necessary, use figures and tables.

Data and analysis

☐ Describe collected data to give the reader a good overview of your research’s empirical content.
☐ Give the reader enough information to critically assess your research.
☐ Explain how you interpret your findings.
☐ Present whether your hypothesis turned out to be true.
☐ Critically discuss your research result’s potential pitfalls (i.e. if something threatens validity, etc.).
☐ If necessary, use figures and tables.

Summary

☐ Answer the research question set at the beginning.
☐ Summarise how the research was conducted – what and how?
☐ Associate your findings with references and discuss legislation (where appropriate).
☐ Discuss the conducted research's delineation and possible further research directions.
APPENDIX 4: MA Thesis Assessment Components

When grading the MA thesis, the committee will base their opinion on the Institute’s assessment criteria (cf. appendix 8 of the Guidelines for Writing and Formatting Papers). Here, the skills and knowledge the student acquires while writing the thesis are described.

Identification of the research problem

The student has shown that they can formulate a relevant research problem for a complex research task, including research questions and corresponding strategy or general approach. The student has demonstrated, with their choices, that they are motivated to research a certain field, expressed by a systematic, thought-through aim, main problem and corresponding solution, as well being familiar with the necessary theoretical and/or empirical research.

Literature overview and theoretical/conceptual framework

The student has shown that they are capable of composing a presentable overview of scientific and professional resources (including recent scientific research) that are relevant to the research task and goal. Also, the student has shown that they are skilled in conducting critical and in-depth analysis of chosen sources and that they have the skill to develop their ideas by integrating and/or comparing different theories, concepts, and models to explain research questions and display the feasibility of them.

Approach to the problem

The student has shown that they are capable of independently creating a suitable action plan in order to conduct research. Additionally, the student is capable of independently developing their own conceptual approach to the research problem, which can later be proven by empirical data. The approach needs to be logically connected to the research problem and theory.

Data collection and analysis and/or validation of results

The student has demonstrated that they are capable of independently, in a professional and academic manner, planning solutions and using tools necessary for the collection and analysis of data, the result of which is data collection and corresponding analysis results. Additionally, the validity of said results has been proven and provides an answer to the research question(s).

Validation of results (in case of a project)

The student has shown that they are capable of independently and adequately composing a plan to achieve results, using necessary tools or instruments for selection and validation, the result of which is research that is suitable for solving a problem. This research must also be in accordance with concrete details/requirements and validity.

“European Union – Russia studies” Programme Guide, 2018
Findings and recommendations

The student has shown that they are capable of describing the research and results and linking them to the research problem(s), research question(s) and relevant literature. Additionally, the student can critically analyse the weak and strong points of the conducted research and its contribution to the field of research. While describing research results, the student is capable of linking them to social, societal, and/or ethical aspects in a narrower and broader context.

Written presentation of results

The student has shown the ability to present data – quantitatively and/or qualitatively – clearly, in accordance with accepted scientific norms, which are linguistically accurate. The student's argumentation is structured, logical, relevant, and linguistically accurate. References to literature are presented according to the scientific standards of the field of research.

Oral presentation of results

The student is capable of composing and conducting a presentation, in English, that is clear, structured, and features a sufficient amount of illustrative auxiliary material. The presentation is understandable for listeners of different levels and backgrounds and places emphasis on introducing the structure of the research as well as presenting the most important results. The student presents reasons for important choices they made in their research.

Independence and professional skills

The student has shown, during the preparation for, and the process of the task, that they are capable of acting independently, and are able to plan and execute (within the established time limit) the processes necessary for their research. Furthermore, the student has demonstrated that he/she is capable of effective cooperation with his/her supervisor and has demonstrated the ability to adequately perform in an organisational context. Additionally, the student is capable of critically reflecting the execution of their own research as well as their ability to learn.