

# **GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION, DEFENCE AND PROCESSING OF FIRST-YEAR PAPER (MA RESEARCH PROPOSAL) OF MA PROGRAMME IN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL HISTORY**

Approved by Resolution of the Council of the St Petersburg School of Arts and the Humanities on 27 October 2020

These Guidelines have been developed on the basis of the *Regulations for First year Papers and Theses Prepared by Students of the Bachelor's, Specialist and Master's Level at the National Research University Higher School of Economics* approved by the HSE Academic Council, minute No.08, 28 November 2014.

## **1. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

- 1.1. The first-year paper of the MA Programme Global and Regional History is a presentation of a MA student's research project that reflects the first year of work towards the MA Thesis (Dissertation) and represents a detailed MA Research Proposal. The first year paper is the same as the MA thesis research proposal.
- 1.2. The research problematic of each first-year paper must fall within be relevant to the corresponding degree programme
- 1.3. It According to the program's curriculum the first year paper submission falls on Module 4 during the 1<sup>st</sup> academic year. The first year paper has a value of 6 ECTS. According to the HSE regulations the first year paper's supervisor gives a grade for successful first year paper

completion. First year papers prepared on master's programs may also be defended at the discretion of the Program Academic Supervisor.

- 1.4. First year paper is completed in English or Russian.
- 1.5. Students attend the Research Seminar (НИС) during Module 1-4 of the 1st academic year, where they discuss their research projects, work out the subject of MA thesis and get regular feedback on their progress from his instructor and peers.

## **2. SELECTION AND APPROVAL OF FIRST YEAR PAPER TOPICS**

1. The faculty of the Department of History may develop a provisional list of first year paper topics or research areas to be subsequently finalised by Academic Council of the Master Programme.
2. HSE academic staff members (including those outside the Department of History) and potential employers may also propose topics and research areas to be added to the list to be subsequently finalised by Academic Council of the Master Programme.
3. Proposals must be structured as follows:
  - Topic or research area of the first year paper;
  - First year paper supervisor (full name, position, academic degree, place of employment);
  - Year of study for which the given topic or research area is intended.
4. The Programme Office collects proposals (if any) for first year paper topics or research areas and publishes the information along with the Guidelines for preparation and processing the first year papers on the program website.
5. Students may propose a topic of their own or choose one of the topics from the list. Students may choose any member of the faculty of the Program as their first year paper supervisor, subject to this member's consent.

6. First year paper topics are assigned to students upon their personal requests submitted by the LMS system by 15 November 2012.

7. The list of first year paper topics and supervisors must be finalized by the Academic Council by early December. Some first year paper topics may be declined by the Academic Council if they are not suited to the field of study, purpose of a first year paper or the level of complexity. In this case, the Academic Council must also provide a justification for its decision and recommendations on how to adjust the topic.

8. The Programme Office must notify students and their supervisors if their first year paper topic was declined within one business day from such decision.

9. Students may submit a new request for the first year paper topic to the Programme Office. The Academic Council must approve the final list of first year paper topics and supervisors no later than 5 working days after supervisor's approval.

10. Upon the approval of the chosen topic by the academic council of the Master's program, the program manager issues an order on the topic and supervisor for each student. The order is prepared no later than December 15 of the current academic year.

11. If students fail to choose a first year paper topic by the deadline, or if their topic is declined by the Academic Council, they are facing academic failure. Such students may select their first year paper topic during the extension period – from the start of the Module 3 to the end of the retake period for Modules 1 and 2. If the new topic is selected on time and approved by the Academic Council, academic failure is waived.

### **3. FIRST YEAR PAPER SUPERVISION**

3.1. First year paper supervisors appointed by the Dean's directive are responsible for direct supervision of first year paper preparation.

3.2. First year paper supervisors have the following duties:

- Advise students on shaping the final topic of their first year paper, drafting first year paper outline and preparation schedule, and selecting scholarly literature and resources;
- Help students choose appropriate research methodology;
- Monitor the progress of first year paper preparation against the established outline and schedule;
- Notify the Program Academic Supervisor and Program Office if students are behind the schedule;
- Provide students with informed recommendations on the content of their first year papers;

3.3. First year paper supervisors are entitled to

- Select a suitable mode of interaction with students, in particular, agree on the first year paper preparation schedule and the frequency of face-to-face meetings or other communications;
- Request that students prepare and present a brief summary of the received recommendations and further steps in first year paper preparation after each face-to-face meeting;
- Request that students pay close attention to the received recommendations and come to meetings well-prepared
- Take into account compliance with the preparation schedule when grading student first year papers.

3.4. Supervisors assess quality of first year papers against fixed requirements. They must fill in a special form (see Appendix 5) where they put their review and grade for the first year paper.

3.5. First year paper supervisors must draw up an official memorandum to notify the Program Academic Supervisor and the Dean of plagiarism and any other violations of academic code of ethics committed by students.

#### **4. CHANGING FIRST YEAR PAPER TOPIC AND SUPERVISOR**

4.1. Requests to change the first year paper supervisor signed by both former and future supervisors and addressed to the Program Academic Head may be submitted to the Program Office no later than one month before the date of submission of the final draft of the first year paper for pre-defence.

4.2. Requests to change the first year paper topic and title signed by the supervisor may be submitted to the Program Office no later than one month before the date of submission of the final draft of the first year paper for pre-defence.

4.2. Changing first year paper topics or supervisors must be authorised by the Program Academic Supervisor and Academic Council within the first years mentioned in Clause 4.1.

#### **5. FIRST YEAR PAPER PREPARATION RESTRICTIONS**

5.1. Students prepare first year papers as prescribed by these guidelines.

5.2. Students comply with the first year paper preparation schedule developed and finalised together with their supervisors.

5.3. First year papers are not subject to external review (examination). They are marked by the First Year Examination Committee that consults the report by MA student's supervisor.

5.4. Failure to complete a first year paper by the fixed deadline constitutes academic failure that can be remedied following the procedures established at HSE.

#### **6. FIRST YEAR PAPER CONTENT AND STRUCTURE**

6.1. The length of the first year paper should be between 40000 and 90000 characters (with spaces)

6.2. It should be based on Chicago reference style for footnotes and bibliography ([http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html))

6.3. Historical sources should be accurately cited; anthropological sources should be used in accordance with the research ethics guidelines of the American Anthropological Association (<http://ethics.americananthro.org/category/statement/>).

6.4. The structure of the first year paper's content includes the following main sections:

- title page with student name, title of the research project, and the name of academic supervisor
- abstract of the research project
- description of the purpose of the proposed research
- historiography: description of relationship of the proposed research to existing scholarship
- research methodology
- description of MA student background and skills relevant to carrying out the proposed research
- summary of project's contribution
- proposed MA thesis structure
- list of sources and bibliography

6.5. Title Page includes the full title of the first year paper and the student's name, the department and the university, the supervisor's name, the place and the year of submission.

6.6. Abstract of the proposed research is a short summary which reflects its overall scope and importance specifying the explored time and place.

6.7. Aims of the proposed research:

- (1) Describe the purpose of your research. What will be the focus of your investigation?

- (2) What is your main research question or hypothesis? What other questions will you need to answer to address it?

Guidelines:

- a) Focus your research question, hypothesis, or objective narrowly. Ask ‘why’, ‘how’, or ‘what’ about an issue of significance. Do not present a vast question as the object of investigation; instead, develop answerable questions (or testable hypotheses) in the context of the larger research topic.
- b) Do not present your research questions as if the answers were already known.
- c) Be realistic about what you can achieve. Convince the reader that your investigation will answer any single one fully and carefully.

6.8. **Historiography:** How does your research draw inspiration from existing scholarship? Whose findings will you be building on? What gaps it will cover? Give specific examples of the various lines of work with which you are in dialogue and which you are seeking to advance. What are broader conversations that have guided you in formulating your research questions? It is not enough to just cite literature here. Please provide a clear and comprehensive discussion of the issues at stake and demonstrate how your work fits into current debates in the field. The section “Historiography” of your first year paper should make up no less than two thirds of the length of the whole paper. It must reflect the state of the field relevant to the project and analysis of the questions which have not been studied in depth so far. This section may be suitable to be used as a first draft of the relevant chapter of the future MA thesis.

6.9. **Methodology:** What evidence will you need to collect to answer your research question? How will you go about collecting and analysing it? This section is to include:

1. detailed description of the historical or other sources which you investigate and on which your MA thesis will potentially be based;
2. analytical procedures proposed will realistically support the research goals expressed in 6.7; research tasks which are needed for achieving the aims of the research
3. reflection on the feasibility of the proposed project made on the basis of its aims and available sources;
4. timeline for your research. Demonstrate that you can complete your planned activities in the allotted time. Come up with a feasible research plan with clearly defined procedures. If you are planning to conduct the research in phases, provide a timeline and explain why separate trips to the archives or the field are necessary.

6.10. **MA student background and skills:** How have you prepared yourself to do this research? Describe your language competence, technical skills, previous research and any other relevant experience. Describe any work you have already done on this project and how this research relates to other research you have done. If you work with academic collaborators, describe their role in this project and how it will relate to your specific project.

6.11. **Summary of project’s contribution:** how innovative is your research? How does it add to an existing body of knowledge in your specific field of inquiry? What new insights will it bring to the field of global and regional history as a whole? What is its broader relevance beyond its specific regional or chronological frames? What, if anything, might be the interdisciplinary relevance of the proposed research in such fields as, for example, anthropology, history of art, social, political and literary theory, and philosophy?

6.12. **Proposed MA thesis structure:** what is a tentative content of future MA thesis?

6.13. **List of sources and bibliography** of the proposed research.

## 7. FORMATTING

The first year paper should be computer printed on white A4 paper in Times New Roman 12pt, 1.5 space intervals, either single-sided or double-sided. Single spacing should be used for block quotations, footnotes, and bibliography. Margins should be 2.5 cm on all sides. Paragraphs should be indented, or an empty line left between paragraphs. Pages should be numbered at the bottom in the centre using Arabic numerals starting with the first page of the first page of the introduction.

Each chapter should start on a new page.

## 8. SUBMISSION

8.1. The students should submit a printed and filled in First year Paper Topic and Supervisor application form to the program manager on the first week of December of the 1<sup>st</sup> academic year. The form should indicate the first year paper's title and be signed by the supervisor.

8.2. Students must upload a .doc, .docx or .pdf file with the final text of their first year paper through their personal profiles in the LMS no later than **23:59 of the date indicated in calendar (see below #12)**

8.3. Students must submit a draft of their first year paper to their supervisors ten days before the upload date. Students who fail to do so may receive a fail grade for their first year paper from the supervisor.

8.4. Submission deadlines for first year papers that are subject to defence cannot be extended. Failure to complete a first year paper by the fixed deadline (as per Clause 8.1 or Clause 8.2) constitutes academic failure that can be remedied in autumn of the subsequent academic year, following the procedures established at HSE.

## 9. REVIEW AND DEFENCE

9.1. First year paper defence normally takes place during the period between 20-20 June.

9.2. Defence dates and Board composition are stipulated by the Dean's directive. Defence is held in the presence of the Dissertation Board of at least three faculty members, research fellows or doctoral students of HSE, including one supervisor of the given first year paper. Faculty members from other HSE faculties and subdivisions who wish to participate may be appointed to the Board.

9.3. The Program Office and IT Assistant must provide the Board with at least one paper copy of each student's first year paper and of the review written by the first year paper supervisor. The Board is provided with the version that had been uploaded through the student account in the LMS.

9.4. Each first year paper defence is a public event. The Program Office must publish defence dates on the program website at least one week in advance.

9.5. Results of a first year paper defence are reflected in the Board minutes. Chair of the Board is responsible for the Board's operation and minutes preparation. The Chair is appointed by the Program Academic Supervisor jointly with the members of the Academic Council of the Program.

9.6. If students miss their first year paper defence for a valid reason supported by documentary evidence, they will be allowed to defend their first year paper on a different date within the specially designated period.

9.7. Missing first year paper defence without a valid reason supported by documentary evidence is counted as academic failure.

9.8. Students whose supervisor gave their first year paper a fail grade shall not be allowed to proceed to the defence. If a fail grade is received at the defence, no repeat defence shall be held

during the current academic year.

9.9. Each first year paper must go through the Antiplagiat (Антиплагиат) system pursuant to the *Procedures for Using Antiplagiat System for Collection and Checks of Academic Papers at HSE*. First year paper supervisors will be notified of the outcome of such checks and must take them into account when grading the first year papers. First year paper supervisors grade the version that was uploaded through the student account in the LMS.

9.10. If plagiarism is discovered in a first year paper, it is handled in accordance with the *Procedures for Applying Disciplinary Measures for the Violation of Academic Standards for Student Papers at HSE*.

## **10. GRADING, RE-EXAMINATION AND APPEAL**

10.1. According to the HSE regulations, the final grade is made up by the first year defence committee on the basis of a grade of the thesis supervisor and performance at the oral defence of the first year paper. During oral viva of the first year paper the student is tested on the depth and scope of the proposal and as well as on the feasibility of the project in terms of relevant archival, oral historical and ethnographic sources, and necessary technical as well as linguistic skills. Marking criteria (see 10.8 below) apply both to the proposal's text and to the oral defence.

10.2. The first year paper's supervisor assesses the coursework on a ten-point scale. To receive credits for the coursework, students should be awarded a grade of at least 4 on a ten-point scale.

10.3. Students are considered to have failed their first year paper if they receive a fail grade after the defence or after a review by their supervisor.

10.4. Final grades for first year papers are entered into student performance records by respective supervisors in the end of June.

10.5. Students may access the grades and reviews of their first year papers through the account in the LMS or at the Program Office.

10.6. In the case where the coursework is graded less than 4 on a ten-point scale the student will not get ECTS's awarded. The student is expected to resubmit the coursework in the next module. The coursework topic can be modified upon consultation of the coursework supervisor and program academic supervisor. In order to change the topic student must submit a new request signed by their first year paper supervisor and addressed to the Program Academic Supervisor before the end of the current academic year. The student may resubmit the coursework only once.

10.7. The student may contest the grades for the coursework following the general appeal procedures. The student may file an appeal to the academic supervisor of the program within 3 working days upon receiving the grades with detailed grounds for appeal. The appeal committee will make a decision within 3 working days.

### **10.8. MA Thesis marking criteria:**

A grade will normally be assigned for a combination of reasons and the final grade is based therefore on the overall impression rather than on isolated features, and on both the text of the first year paper and its oral defence. The main categories are represented below.

*Deficient (0-3):*

The first year paper does not have a central research question. It shows poor knowledge of the scholarly context and little evidence of independent thought. The research proposed is superficial, unsystematic, and shows little effort. The project is unfeasible in terms of primary and secondary sources. The project presentation does not meet professional standards.

*Pass (4-5):*

The first year paper has a central question and attempts to answer it. It shows knowledge of the academic context. It shows evidence of independent research potential in the relevant field using appropriate methods. At the same time, its grasp of the issues involved in the question is limited and it demonstrates a limited grasp of the academic context. The selection and understanding of primary evidence and the secondary discussion is not justified or feasible in terms of the project's aims. The writing falls short of correctness and clarity; the project presentation is not up to professional standards.

*Good (6-7):*

The first year paper formulates solid research question in a satisfactory way. It demonstrates a good basic understanding of the topic and of its complexities. The paper shows a good knowledge of the relevant academic context. It demonstrates solid coverage of the relevant secondary and primary sources, and outlines appropriate methods for the proposed research. The oral presentation and discussion during defence is generally professional. The language is correct and the main points are made explicitly and in a structured way. However, it shows little evidence of independent thought or of critical reflection on methods and theories.

*Excellent (8-10):*

The first year paper's central question is innovative and sharply formulated. It is shown to have considerable relevance for the scholarly discussions in the field. It is very clearly situated in the relevant scholarly discussions and the writer shows an above average level of familiarity with the relevant scholarly context. The paper demonstrates careful and systematic grounding in proposed sources. It demonstrates critical reflection on methods and theories, and shows evidence of independent thought, knowledge of the field, and high-level insight. The paper shows evidence of original and independent thought but also excellent potential for systematic, broad-ranging and thorough research into the proposed field using appropriate methods. Project's feasibility is realistically outlined. As a whole, the project's presentation is of high professional standard.

**11. FIRST YEAR PAPER STORAGE**

The Study Office of the Master's program stores copies of the first year paper for 2 years (either in the form of hard copies or electronic files).

**12. CALENDAR OF DEADLINES, YEAR 2020-2021**

<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Event</b>
10 November	Submission of first-year-paper topics via the LMS system

6 December	Topics are approved by the Programme Academic Council
10 January	<b>First short draft version of the thesis proposal (aka first year paper, with no less than 10 000 characters) is submitted</b>
27-28 February	Presentation of your thesis project at the HSE Saint Petersburg Winter School
May 11, 17.00	Deadline for submitting the request for term paper topic or supervisor change
12 May, 23.59	<b>Deadline for the first year paper submission for pre-defence</b>
19-22 May	<b>Pre-defence of the first year paper</b>
16 June, 23.59	<b>Deadline for the first year paper submission to LMS</b>
23-26 June	<b>Defence of the first year paper</b>