

**Санкт-Петербургский филиал  
Федеральное государственное автономное образовательное учреждение высшего  
образования  
«Национальный исследовательский университет  
Высшая школа экономики»**

Факультет  
Санкт-Петербургская школа социальных наук

**Методические рекомендации по подготовке выпускной квалификационной  
работы студентов, обучающихся на образовательной программе магистратуры  
«Сравнительная политика Евразии» по направлению 41.04.04 «Политология»**

Согласованы

Менеджер ОП «Сравнительная политика Евразии»

Д.Э. Ахмеджанова \_\_\_\_\_ [подпись]  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2024 г.

Утверждены

Академическим Советом ОП «Сравнительная политика Евразии»  
Академический руководитель ОП «Сравнительная политика Евразии»

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\_\_\_\_\_ 2024 г.

Санкт-Петербург – 2024

**Guidelines for Preparation and Defence of MA Theses Written by the Students of  
the MA Programme “Comparative Politics of Eurasia”  
St. Petersburg School of Social Sciences  
Higher School of Economics (St. Petersburg)**

**Approved by the Academic Council of the MA Programme “Comparative Politics of Eurasia” on \_\_\_\_\_**

## **GENERAL PROVISIONS**

These Guidelines for Preparation and Defence of MA Theses (hereinafter, the Guidelines) have been prepared in line with the Regulations on Practical Training of Students under Core Bachelor's, Specialist and Master's Programmes at HSE University (hereinafter, the Regulations), approved by the HSE University Academic Council (Minutes No. 6, dated June 17, 2021). As per the Regulations, these Guidelines shall be observed by the faculty and students of the “Comparative Politics of Eurasia” programme (hereinafter, the Programme), as well as all persons involved in preparation and defence of the term papers and theses (including the Programme Study Office staff, advisors, reviewers, etc.).

## **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MA THESIS**

1. MA research project is the focus of the work of MA students. As a general rule, MA research projects should be carried out within two academic years. In the first year, students prepare their term paper, whereas in the second year, they complete the entire research project as an MA thesis. For a comprehensive overview, please read these Guidelines together with the Guidelines for Preparation and Defence of term papers.
2. MA thesis should be a complete piece of research performed by student under the guidance of their supervisor. In MA thesis, students should develop theoretical framework and conduct empirical analysis based on the core methodological and theoretical elements presented in their term paper. In exceptional cases, students may prepare MA thesis on a topic substantially different from the topic of their term paper subject to prior approval by their supervisor and the Academic Supervisor of the Programme.
3. Research focus of MA thesis should fall within the scope of the Programme.
4. MA thesis may be prepared in one of the following formats (in line with the section 3 of the Annex 8 to the Regulations): a regular MA thesis or a journal article. Preparation of an MA thesis in the format of a journal article should be approved by both the student's supervisor and the Academic Supervisor of the Programme. Such approvals should be obtained by the formal deadline for the final modification of MA thesis topic.
5. MA thesis may result from student's research work accomplished in the framework of a research group (as part of research projects, laboratory research, study groups, etc.). If this is the case, this should be clearly stated in the preface or in the introduction of

MA thesis. In such cases, the introduction of MA thesis should also contain information about the collective research project necessary for contextualising of and understanding the student's contribution.

6. Irrespective of the thesis format (regular MA thesis or journal article), the research environment or the topic of research, the work should allow the readers and reviewers to evaluate the individual contribution of the author to the research paper and to what extent this contribution adheres to the requirements of these Guidelines and the Regulations. MA thesis should reflect the author's skills in working with academic literature, as well as collecting and analysing empirical material with the help of theoretical knowledge and methodological competencies obtained during their studies in the Programme.
7. If MA thesis is prepared as a journal article it should comply with standard requirements applied to this type of academic research outputs. It should be written as an English-language research paper for a relevant academic journal from *the List of Journals approved for HSE Academic Bonuses* or for another academic journal from the first and second quartiles (Q1-Q2) as indexed by the Web of Science or SCOPUS. If MA thesis in the format of a journal article is co-authored by the supervisor, the supervisor in their review and the student in preface to their MA thesis explain and detail the individual contribution of the student in this research paper.
8. When MA thesis is prepared as a journal article, it could only be accepted for defence if by the thesis submission deadline, student would have received a confirmation from a journal that their article had been accepted for review (i.e. there had been no desk reject outcome). If student also receives a summary of reviews, the student (under the guidance of their academic supervisor) prepares a detailed reply to the anonymous reviewers' comments indicating how these comments would be addressed in a revised version of the article. This reply should be submitted for evaluation together with the thesis by the thesis submission deadline.
9. MA thesis should be written in English.

## DEADLINES

1. Deadlines for completing the main stages of topic selection and approval, as well as preparation and defence of the MA thesis (checkpoints), are specified in Annex 1.
2. Failure to complete MA thesis by the fixed deadline constitutes an academic failure that can be remedied following the procedures established at the HSE.

## SUPERVISION OF MA THESIS

1. Supervisor appointed by the HSE St. Petersburg Director should oversee the preparation of the student's MA thesis.

2. MA thesis supervisors are appointed from among the University's faculty (from among full-time associate professors, professors, or research fellows who have a PhD/candidate of sciences or equivalent degree).
3. MA thesis supervisor can be replaced and/or an advisor of MA thesis can be appointed by the HSE St. Petersburg Director at the student's request and upon approval of the current supervisor, the prospective supervisor/advisor and the Academic Supervisor of the Programme no later than six weeks before the deadline for submission of the final version of the thesis.

## GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MA THESIS: CONTENT AND WORD COUNT

1. MA thesis should be compiled in the order appropriate for its chosen format. If written as a journal article, it should be compiled according to the rules of the journal to which it is submitted. If written as a regular MA thesis, it should be compiled in the following order: front page, abstract, table of contents, introduction, main part, conclusion, list of references, and related annexes (if applicable). Irrespective of its form, an MA thesis submitted for consideration by the Programme should include front page and table of contents.
2. Annex 2 contains a sample MA thesis front page.
3. The table of contents should be automatically generated in Microsoft Word or any other word processor of student's choice.
4. Detailed content of MA thesis prepared in a regular format:
  - the introduction should briefly describe the main research focus and the research design of the completed study. The main part of MA thesis should include several chapters with literature review, theoretical and methodological framework and empirical data analysis.
  - results of theoretical and empirical analysis, as well as the above-mentioned elements of a research project, should be presented in the main part of the text. Each chapter and paragraph shall include major ideas with description of findings, their interpretation and summary. Key theoretical statements, underlying each conclusion, should be substantiated with references to the scholarly works and experts' opinions, as well as to primary data, following the applicable standards. Students can refer to their own practical experience.
  - research outcomes should be summarized in the conclusion. It is essential that such research outcomes should focus on answering the research question(s) stipulated in the first part of MA thesis. The conclusion can also include proposals in regard to how this research could be developed in further work(s).
  - the list of references should include major academic publications (books, journal articles, working papers, etc.) as well as primary sources (legislative acts, newspaper articles, analytical reports, etc.) used for preparation of and quoted/cited in MA thesis.

- annexes should be used if the author would like to include materials which can provide useful supporting information for MA thesis. Field notes, interview notes or transcripts (with anonymity standards respected), the author's tables and calculations, diagrams, figures and other materials can be presented as annexes.
5. Detailed content of MA thesis prepared as a journal article: the content of the article should comply with the requirements of the journal to which it is submitted.
  6. The word count of MA thesis:
    - for MA thesis prepared in a regular format: minimum 15,000 words (including all elements mentioned above, except annexes);
    - for MA thesis prepared as a journal article: according to the requirements of the journal to which it is submitted.
  11. MA thesis should be written with due regard to the terminology accepted in the relevant field, as well as notations, applicable abbreviations and symbols. The author should stick to the academic writing style and focus the reader's attention on the issue under consideration. Journalistic clichés, slang words, terms and expressions, which are typically not used in academic literature, as well as words with diminutive suffixes, should be avoided. Research papers should be free of excessive enthusiasm, as well as ideologically loaded expressions, political slogans, accusations and emotional evaluations.

## GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FORMATTING OF MA THESIS

1. MA thesis prepared as a journal article should comply with the requirements of the journal to which it is submitted. The requirements below apply to MA theses prepared in a regular format.
2. MA theses should be prepared electronically and typewritten using Times New Roman 12 font size (footnotes shall be provided using 10 font size), 1.5 spacing. Margins: left – 2.5 cm, right – 1 cm, upper and bottom – 2 cm. The front page shall be prepared using the template form provided in these Guidelines (Annex 2). Abstract, up to 500 words, in Russian and in English shall follow the front page.
3. All pages shall be consecutively numbered in the page header in the centre of the page, starting from the second page (the front page is left unnumbered). Page numbers should be provided for all elements of the Table of Contents (chapters, sections, etc.). The consecutive numbering should be used for all tables and figures. Tables and figures should be titled.
4. New chapters begin on a new page; the same rule applies to other main parts of the paper (i.e. the introduction, the conclusion, the list of references, and annexes). Furthermore, chapters shall be subdivided into sections which are numbered as follows – 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, ..., 2.1, 2.2 etc. The word "Chapter" should not be inserted before the title, and a full stop sign should not be used. Arabic numbers should be used for chapter numbering; a dot should be placed after the figure with a space before the chapter title.

Titles of all main parts of the paper and page numbering in the text should be reflected in the table of contents. Headings should be highlighted in semi-bold.

5. The text alignment throughout the paper should be justified, including footnotes. References to the sources cited should be provided as footnotes placed in page footer.
6. If there is a reference to personal names (of scholars, researchers, experts), their initials should precede the last name (i.e. V.M. Petrov, rather than Petrov V.M., as is customary for the list of references).
7. Each annex should start from a new page with the word “Annex” given in the upper right corner, above the title. The main body of the text should correlate with annexes via links. Annexes should retain continuous numbering of pages, originating from the main text.
8. If a student uses quotations, excerpts from documents, research monographs, reference books or statistical data in the paper with the aim of supporting their own ideas and conclusions, relevant references to the sources should be given. Chicago Author-Date Style or Chicago Notes & Bibliography Style (The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition) should be used. If the source is quoted verbatim, the author should provide the material ‘as it is’, with quotation marks and a full reference. References should also be provided if somebody’s opinion is paraphrased (even with a reference to the author’s name), or some lesser known information is provided, etc. No references are required for commonly known events and facts. If footnotes are used, continuous numbering should be applied to footnotes on all pages (starting from the first to the last footnote).
9. If MA thesis is based on a large body of academic and primary sources, the list of references can be subdivided into several parts, including: legislative acts and official documents; specialized literature, e.g., monographs, research articles, publications in periodicals, etc. All items included in the list are given in alphabetical order (by the author’s surname if applicable), with full details of the publication provided. If the author’s name is not available (in case the article was published in a collection of research papers or in a collective monograph), the item should be put on the list by the first letter in its title. The list of legislative documents should be compiled in chronological order based on the legal effect of the documents (international agreements are listed first and are to be followed by national laws, legislation of constituent bodies, and bylaws). If electronic sources are used, the student should indicate the title of the relevant material, the source, and the electronic address (URL) with the access date. The list of references should be comprised only of those sources, which the student has referred to in the text of term paper.

## MA THESIS SUBMISSION

1. Students should upload a .doc, .docx or .pdf file with the final version of their MA thesis via their personal profiles in the LMS **no later than 19:59 (MSK) of 15 May 2025**.
2. Students should provide the Programme Office with a printed version of their MA thesis as per the Regulations.
3. Failure to submit the final version of MA thesis by the fixed deadline for a valid reason, supported by relevant documentary evidence, can be remedied following the procedures

established at HSE. In such cases, students are allowed to complete and defend their MA thesis within the period of six months starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July of the current academic year without expulsion from HSE.

4. Failure to submit the final version of MA thesis by the fixed deadline without a valid reason, as well as plagiarism or unsatisfactory grade following MA thesis defence leads to immediate expulsion from HSE for academic failure or, in the case of plagiarism, for violation of the HSE Student Internal Regulations. This can be remedied following the procedures established at HSE. In such cases, students can be re-enrolled into the Programme for purposes of completing and defending MA thesis, but not earlier than 10 months after their expulsion.

## ASSESSMENT AND DEFENCE OF MA THESIS

1. MA thesis is assessed in accordance with the criteria indicated in Annex 3.
2. Grades for MA theses should be given after public defence.
3. MA thesis defence procedure should be established in line with the Regulations for the Final State Certification of Students of the BA, Specialist and MA Level at National Research University Higher School of Economics.
4. Dates for MA thesis defence should be approved by the Academic Supervisor of the Programme upon prior agreement by the Head of the Programme Office and fixed in the Directive issued by the HSE St. Petersburg Director.
5. State examination committee should be set up by the decision of the Programme Academic Council in line with the Regulations for the Final State Certification of Students of the BA, Specialist and MA Level at National Research University Higher School of Economics.
6. Feedback from the student's supervisor should be submitted to the Programme Office no later than 7 calendar days after the receipt of the final version of MA thesis (date of MA thesis submission). In case the supervisor's feedback has not been provided, the Programme Office informs the chairperson of the State examination committee, the Academic Supervisor of the Programme, as well as the Head of the student's supervisor department, thereof, and disciplinary measures may be applied, if the feedback has not been submitted without a valid reason.
7. In order to maintain high quality of student MA theses, the Programme Academic Supervisor initiates and coordinates the preparation of reviews on MA theses. The reviewer of MA thesis is a representative of an external organisation of higher education or an employee of an organisation from a professional sphere that corresponds to the theme of MA thesis. Student's supervisor should propose a potential reviewer to the

Programme Office. The Programme Academic Council considers and approves the list of MA thesis reviewers. Reviewers should provide their reviews to the Programme Office no later than 7 days prior to MA thesis defence. The Programme Office should provide students with content of such reviews no later than 6 days prior to MA thesis defence.

8. Each MA thesis should be subject to anti-plagiarism checks by the Programme Office using appropriate software (e.g. TurnItIn) in accordance with the Regulations. Supervisors and reviewers should be notified of the outcome of such checks and should take them into account when preparing their feedback and reviews. If instances of plagiarism are uncovered in MA thesis, student may face disciplinary action in accordance with the Procedures for Applying Disciplinary Measures for the Violation of Academic Standards for Student Papers at HSE (Appendix 7 to HSE Internal Regulations).
9. MA thesis defence includes the following elements:
  - The student describes their research puzzle/research question(s), literature review/theoretical framework, hypothesis (if applicable), methodology and methods of data collection and analysis; major research findings and their interpretation; major research outcomes formulated in the conclusion of MA thesis.
  - The student provides answers to the questions of the State examination committee's members to further clarify certain points and arguments that have been presented;
  - The chairperson presents the feedback of the supervisor and the review;
  - The student is given possibility to reply to critical comments mentioned in the review and in the supervisor's feedback;
  - The defence is concluded by a general discussion of the term paper and its presentation.
10. The final grade for MA thesis should be assigned by the State examination committee with due regard to the opinions of the supervisor and the reviewer expressed in their feedback and review. However, the final grade is entirely determined by the State examination committee based on the defence outcomes. If the supervisor sits on the State examination committee, they should not be involved in assigning the grade by the committee



## MA THESIS: TOPIC SELECTION, TOPIC APPROVAL, PREPARATION, SUBMISSION AND DEFENCE

Stage of MA thesis preparation (with checkpoints)	Deadlines
Students are entitled to propose a topic and an academic supervisor at their own initiative.	November 1, 2024, 23:59
<p><b>MA thesis topic defence</b></p> <p>Students prepare research proposal needed to justify topic of their MA thesis (this could be a succinct revised version of their first year term paper if the topic remains the same or a new research proposal if they propose a substantial modification/change of topic) and submit this research proposal to their supervisor, research methods seminar instructor and the Programme Academic Supervisor. This research proposal should contain a preliminary formulation of research question, academic relevance of proposed work, description of MA thesis structure, preliminary design and methodological reflection. The length of the proposal: 2000-2500 words.</p>	November 10, 2024, 23:59
<p><b>MA thesis topic defence</b></p> <p>Students defend their MA thesis topic by presenting their research proposal in committees comprised of their supervisor, research methods seminar instructor and member(s) of the Programme Academic Council.</p>	November 14-16, 2024
<p><b>MA thesis topic defence</b></p> <p>If committee members believe that a modification of topic is necessary, students submit revised MA thesis topic for consideration of committee members by email.</p>	November 18, 2024, 23:59
<p><b>MA thesis topic defence</b></p> <p>Committee members preliminary approve of (revised) MA thesis topics.</p>	November 19, 2024
The Programme Academic Council discusses topics pre-approved by the committees and may introduce changes in their formulation if deemed necessary.	November 20-21, 2024

Approval of the proposed topics by the Programme Academic Council.	November 25, 2024, 18:00
Students submit the approved topics and an academic supervisor via LMS.	November , 26 - December, 1 2024
The Programme Office prepares a directive on assigning MA thesis topics.	December 13, 2024, 18:00
Supervisors provide students with assignments (terms of reference) for preparation of their MA thesis that include timetable and major requirements/benchmarks.	December 16, 2024
Students provide their supervisors with an updated research proposal incorporating feedback received during topic defence. This updated proposal should contain an extended justification of research relevance, proposed structure of MA thesis, methodological framework and research design.	December 27, 2024
Students submit first full versions of their MA thesis for pre-defence.	March 21, 2025, 23:59
Pre-defence of MA theses in committees composed of faculty members (academic and research staff).	March 31 - April 3, 2025
MA thesis topic can be revised and/or academic supervisor can be replaced. Respective requests are accepted by the Programme Office and should be approved by the student's supervisor and the Programme Academic Supervisor.	April 14, 2025, 18:00
Supervisor should propose a potential reviewer of the student's MA thesis to the Programme Office. The Programme Academic Council considers and approves the list of MA thesis reviewers.	April 14, 2025, 18:00
<b>Uploading the final version of the MA thesis to the LMS (via the dedicated LMS module).</b>	<b>May 15, 2025, 19:59</b>
Supervisors and reviewers submit their feedback and reviews to the Programme Office no later than 7 calendar days after MA thesis submission date. The Programme Office shares these materials with students no later than 6 calendar days prior to MA thesis defence.	May 26, 2025, 18:00
The Programme Office shares MA thesis, review and supervisor feedback with members of the State examination committee no later than 2 calendar days prior to MA thesis defence.	June 3, 2025
<b>Public defence of MA theses.</b>	<b>June 4-6, 2025</b>

NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY  
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS  
HSE Saint-Petersburg School of Social Sciences

The author's full name

**MA THESIS TITLE**

MA Thesis  
in the field of study 41.04.04 'Political Science'  
Student of Group No. \_\_\_\_ ('Comparative Politics of Eurasia' degree programme)

Reviewer  
Doctor of .... Sciences, Professor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Initials and Last name

Supervisor  
Doctor of .... Sciences, Professor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Initials and Last name  
Advisor  
Doctor of .... Sciences, Professor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Initials and Last name

St Petersburg  
2025

**National Research University Higher School of Economics**

**HSE St. Petersburg School of Social Sciences**

MA Programme 'Comparative Politics of Eurasia'

**Supervisor's feedback/ external review on MA thesis**

2-nd year student: full name

Topic:

No.	Evaluation criteria	Supervisor's / Reviewer's comments
1.	Explanation and substantiation of the research question(s)/puzzle by the student. Student's justification of the puzzle's relevance to the state of the art in the field, and its connection to the academic debate.	
2.	Correspondence between the topic (title), research goal(s), objectives, content and empirical findings (conclusions) of the paper: Does the paper answer the research question?	
3.	Breadth and coverage of the literature review and its analytic depth: the number of papers reviewed; quality of conclusions; explication of the logic underlying the selection of the sources.	
4.	Ability to use theoretical concepts for building theoretical and methodological research framework, as well as formulating the research expectations and/or hypotheses (if applicable).	
5.	Ability to use methods of data collection and analysis.	

6.	Structure of MA thesis, logical reasoning in building connections within the argument and between different parts of the thesis. Reliability of research outcomes and conclusions.	
7.	Conformity with requirements for the formatting, citation/quotation rules, as well as bibliographical references and lists.	
8.	<b>Recommended grade for the MA thesis</b>	

Other comments:

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Supervisor/Reviewer

academic degree, academic title

department/subdivision

(place of employment)

\_\_\_\_\_/signature/\_\_\_\_\_ Initials and Last name

Date