National Research University "High School of Economics"

Faculty St. Petersburg School of Humanities and Arts

Department of history

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING AND DEFENDING MA THESIS
for the master's program “Global and Regional History”

Approved by the Academic Council
of the " Global and Regional History "
Minutes dated August 24, 2026, No. 8.3.2.5.1-11.5/02

Saint Petersburg 2026

1. Introduction

Writing a thesis is a distinct educational experience as there is no teacher who organises the student's activities. Although the thesis, as well as the student working on it has a thesis supervisor, it is the student who has to do most of the 'steering' and 'structuring' by themselves. This sometimes causes some confusion. The aim of these guidelines is to make sure that the students know both what is expected of them in writing their thesis, and what they might expect from their supervisors. Students have both rights and duties. These guidelines provide information on all aspects of writing a thesis, except for its contents.

1.1. The purpose of the MA Thesis

The purpose of the MA Thesis is to write a treatise according to the rules and methods current in the research field of MA programme, and in doing so learn them. You will have to do this individually. During the first three semesters of your programme, you have become acquainted with the rules and methods in your field. You know the kinds of reasoning that are employed, and you have practised them in research seminars and other courses, both orally and in writing. The MA Thesis gives you an opportunity to show that you have sufficiently mastered the knowledge, rules and methods that are expected from graduates of the MA programme.

The thesis is the product of independent research; it assesses earlier work on a chosen topic and contributes to scholarly debate. It will normally be written in English. The document is based on independent research, refers to relevant literature and contains a comparative element. It includes a critical discussion of the findings of other research. The thesis should demonstrate that the student is able to produce new scholarly knowledge and insights, and can share their results with fellow researchers in a coherent way. The MA thesis may be written in such a form that it supports the student's research plans for a dissertation; it may also prepare the student for independent scholarly research in another context.

If you wish to continue your academic career after graduation, in many cases your thesis will serve as your passport to PhD programmes in Russia and abroad. That is why the teachers in your programme and outside examiners take assessing and grading your thesis very seriously. Apart from the opinion of your supervisor, there are an internal examiner and an external examiner, the latter usually chosen from outside the HSE, who are asked to propose a mark. To help prepare assessment reports, we provide all supervisors and examiners with a form and instructions (s**ee Annexes 3&4, 5&6**). It is worth for you having a look at how your work will be assessed and marked.

1.2. What a Research MA Thesis ought normally to consist of

MA Thesis has to contain the formulation of a problem or the presentation of a question. Scholars tend to speak informally about their 'topic'. However, a topic is not the same as a problem or question. You need to show what is known about the topic of your choice, while adding your own comments, analyses and conclusions. Your research will consist of the systematic treatment of an as yet unsolved problem or an as yet unanswered question that you have come across while studying your topic. You need to delimit your problem or question thematically, considering time and place. In your treatment you will refer to (published or unpublished) source materials and to the relevant scholarly literature.

MA Thesis therefore consists of:

the formulation of a problem;

a critical description of the knowledge concerning the problem, using the (most) relevant literature;

a critical evaluation of the sources used;

a description and justification of the research methods used;

a discourse in which the materials are presented and analysed according to the logic suggested by the formulation of the problem;

a conclusion and a consideration of the value of the research;

references in the form of footnotes;

a bibliography of the sources and literature used.

1.3 The size of the MA Thesis

Obviously, not all parts of the thesis are of the same size. Sometimes the formulation of the problem can be fitted on a single page. Sometimes it will take much more paper. Similarly, a description and justification of the research methods used may take only a page - or require much more ink. As long as you refer to the relevant literature and to 'what is current practice' in your field of studies. The conclusion, too, may be short. That which we have called the 'discourse' will usually take up most of the space.

The MA Thesis will normally be between 60 000 to 120 000 characters (with spaces) including notes and bibliography, but excluding appendices. This limit has been set because longer theses do not necessarily signify quality. The inability to order the materials may also lead to the increased length of the thesis. In most cases brevity is preferred. Do consult your supervisor about the maximum size of your thesis.

Many students write more than they ought to because they are unable to limit themselves in their research. Their problem has not been circumscribed well, and they collect too many sources and data. In their defence it has to be said, however, that it is often difficult to assess the necessary limitations beforehand. This needs to be done in consultation with the supervisor. It pays to continue to look for ways of limiting the problem, thereby limiting the size of the thesis. It is always possible to suggest avenues for further research in the Conclusion.

The MA Thesis is valued at a uniform 3 ECTS. This means a semester of full-time work. Planning your research and writing over a semester is difficult. Quite often the time set aside may prove insufficient. Nevertheless, it ought to be your aim to hand in your thesis near the end of the fourth semester. This will enable the supervisor and the examiners to write their reports, and will allow you to do the paperwork for your graduation in time.

To avoid planning problems, be sure that you start the preparatory work on your thesis before you start doing the research. Before your final semester you can start investigating possible topics and problems, talk to possible supervisors, and do bibliographical research.

2. Stages in writing the thesis

2.1 The choice of topic; the problem

The choice of a topic is a problem for many students. Sometimes there seems to be an abundance of attractive topics, from which it is difficult to choose. Sometimes attractive topics seem less suitable because you think that as yet you know too little about them. Quite possibly you have no idea as to what you might add to the knowledge of a particular topic. Few students realise that most topics will become 'attractive' once you start investigating them. It is therefore sensible to look for a problem rather than for a topic. There are no set rules for finding an interesting problem. Possibly the following suggestions may prove useful:

- There is always a problem when two (or more) scholars disagree about some question. In the introductions of scholarly publications or in reviews published in scientific journals you often find references to questions which are a 'problem' - or are likely to become one.

- Always try to consult more than one type of materials about any single topic. Between scholarly literature and sources, or between different genres of sources there are often significant differences in perspective. These differences help you to 'problematise' the topic.

- Try to develop a sensitivity for problems, e.g. when taking part in research seminars. During the courses you take many problems are discussed. Some of them may have been resolved during the course, but many more remain without solution. Quite often the most interesting and intriguing problems are those that you yourself have formulated in class as a question or as a request for elucidation.

- You will have come across incomprehensible aspects of the discourses of articles and monographs you have studied. You may have thought this was due to your own inabilities. It is possible, however, that your incomprehension stems from a problem that the author did not recognise themselves.

- Maybe you once presented a paper that resulted in the formulation of a problem that you could not go into. The MA Thesis gives you an opportunity to do so.

You have come across many research problems that might be treated in a thesis. However, because your attention was not yet directed towards your MA Thesis, those problems may have been disregarded. You might try to start a small collection of all those things you noticed in your field of study which you considered problematic. Take some time to consider these problems, to discuss them with others, or to read a book about them. If the problem does not go away, maybe it might be suitable for a thesis.

Asking a teacher for a research problem is not prohibited, but a problem you came across yourself is almost always more attractive, as you can identify with it more easily. Some teachers, however, work within research programmes in which themes are investigated which are mutually related in some way. Sometimes they may lead to the topics of theses. There are obvious advantages to such a research programme with its sub-projects. Much preliminary work has been done already, a research area has been demarcated, and the beginning of the formulation of a problem announces itself. Much of the relevant literature, too, may have been collected already, and there is some idea as to viable research methods. These advantages are considerable. But working in this way somewhat limits your own inventiveness. Yet there are so many aspects that will allow you to use your creativity that this is hardly a decisive consideration.

2.2 Finding a supervisor

The MA Thesis is a compulsory component of the Research MA programmes and ought to be supervised by a teacher in your particular programme. The second reader or consultant can also assist in an advisory capacity, but the supervisor is responsible for the final result. A student is free to approach any teacher to act as supervisor. Quite often the supervisor is chosen because of the courses taught by the supervisor that the student has attended. As these courses are meant to prepare you for research, it is understandable that you approach your teachers to have a chat about your thesis. Usually a teacher will respond positively. In some cases, however, the teaching load has been divided in such a way that a teacher will have to say no. If this happens, you will need to find another supervisor.

If you will be spending the first semester of your study that you better start looking for a thesis supervisor.

Clearly, there is little to be gained from an initial conversation with your supervisor if you have no suggestions about possible topics or problems. The teacher you approach will most likely ask you about your ideas so far - and you better have something to say. You cannot, however, be asked to be eloquent at this stage. Do accept that your side of the conversation will be somewhat halting because you have not yet acquired sufficient knowledge of your topic. Do bring pen and paper, or a laptop, because your supervisor will mention authors and books, and ask you whether you have already come into contact with them. Most of them will be new to you. During the second supervision, however, this will

be slightly different already, and from the third supervision meeting onwards you will most probably have enough background knowledge for an in-depth conversation about your topic.

Once you have found a supervisor, you first discuss your ideas, preferably on the basis of a written notice. You will take notes about the plan of your thesis and the suggested readings. Often a supervisor will then ask you to develop your ideas into a 'concept'. In this, you pay attention to the main lines of your research, together with a work plan.

2.3 Stating the problem

One of the first things to do when you are thinking about the choice of a topic or a problem is to read up on it. You need to acquire a global idea of the knowledge available about your chosen topic. To this end you need to look for the relevant literature. Your finds are the basis of your bibliography. Start collecting references in such a way that later, when you edit the bibliography of your thesis, you do not need to look up the same bibliographical data again. At this stage you will find out that some administrative order in your work saves much time and effort. When reading up on your topic, you will notice that your problem will be constantly changing; it will show aspects you had not thought of at the beginning. Do not be afraid: this uncertainty will remain with you until you hand in the definitive version of your thesis. Keeping a 'thesis diary' helps some students to control the changes in direction, which occur when working on your thesis.

Reading up on your topic is a necessary part of your work. Its purpose is, first of all, to allow you to form an image of the nature of the research necessary to solve your problem. As long as you are not collecting data or sources, you need to use this stage to define your problem in such a way that you can in fact investigate it. The formulation of the problem makes clear which information you need to collect. Once you start collecting information, you may need to adapt the formulation of your problem. Quite often the interaction between your materials and your formulation of the problem persist for quite a while. Only later on, in another stage, do all parts find a more solid form.

The formulation of the problem is much more than an academic exercise: it is the most incisive formulation of the question you are posing while studying your materials. Make sure, therefore, that do more than writing down a correctly formulated problem, so as not to investigate your materials without method.

Often it is possible to subdivide the formulation of the problem into a number of questions, which can be answered in the course of the research. In these cases, these partial problems determine the plan of your thesis. A list of questions may lead to a first table of contents, which in turn can be used as a guideline in ordering the materials and writing the thesis. Within our MA programme you are doing this by writing your first-year paper.

2.3.1. Writing your first year paper

The first year paper is **a research proposal** for your MA Thesis project that is normally between **30000 and 90000 characters (with spaces)**. The structure of the first year paper follows the template of the Wenner-Gren Foundation's grant application and includes the following main sections (apart from the title page with student name, title of the research project, and the name of academic supervisor, and the abstract of the research project):

project abstract (up to **1000 characters with spaces)**

summary of proposed chapters

description of the purpose of the proposed research

historiography: description of relationship of the proposed research to existing scholarship

research methodology

description of your background and skills relevant to carrying out the proposed research

summary of project's overall contribution

proposed MA thesis structure (table of contents)
list of sources and bibliography

Question 2: How does your research draw inspiration from existing scholarship in history, anthropology and other disciplines? Whose findings will you be building on? Give specific examples of the various lines of work with which you are in dialogue and which you are seeking to advance.

This section is also known as 'Historiography section 'in historical research proposals. It is important to clearly demonstrate that you have a good knowledge of the existing literature, as well as other disciplinary literature, relevant to your topic.

Be explicit in showing how your research will draw on — as well as expand on previous work. We prioritise research that is theoretically driven, and Question 2 allows you to discuss the broader conversations that have guided you in formulating your research questions. It is not enough to just cite literature in answer to this question. Please provide a clear and comprehensive discussion of the issues at stake and demonstrate both how your work fits into current debates in the field, and what is/will be new or different about your research project.

Question 3: What evidence will you need to collect to answer your research question? How will you go about collecting and analysing this evidence?

Students are strongly advised to clearly and explicitly demonstrate that the evidence gathered and the analytical procedures proposed will realistically support the research goals expressed in Question 1.

Provide a 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 field are necessary.

The Wenner-Gren Foundation, Russian Science Foundation and other research funding bodies support projects using all appropriate methods of data collection and analysis commonly employed in anthropology and history, including both qualitative and quantitative methods, laboratory, archival and/or museum research, and fieldwork.

Question 4: 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. You may be working with academic collaborators. If so, please describe their role in this project and how it will relate to yours.

In assessing your project we will pay close attention to your preparation. Do you have the required language skills, relevant expertise and/or have you identified relevant historical archives needed for your project? Have you developed a network of local contacts and/or arranged academic affiliations? Have you already carried out a pilot study? If so, what data/material/results are already available? Have you encountered any safety or access issues related to your research? If so, how will you manage them? What are the ethical issues raised by your research? How will you address them?

If a particular field site or archive is inaccessible for your project, what is you 'plan B'? Where will you turn as an alternative?

Question 5: What contribution will your project make to historical research and/or anthropological theory? Please note that our mission is to support innovative research in history and anthropology. We are interested in supporting work that does

more than simply add to an existing body of knowledge. Describe how your project will bring new insights to the field as a whole.

A successful research proposal is one that emphasises the proposed project's contribution not only to the specific area of research being addressed but also to the broader field of history and anthropology. Be explicit about what your research will add to wider historical and anthropological conversations.

Question 6: What are the ethical dimensions of your project if your research involves human subjects, as in oral history and anthropology, or animals, landscape, non-human entities such as AI, robots, etc?

Describe how you will receive consent of the people et al. for you to study them.

Question 7: What is the timetable for the implementation of your project? When will you go to do archival and/or field research, and where will you go?

Question 8: What is the proposed MA thesis structure? What is the tentative content of your future MA thesis?

Provide synopsis of your proposed MA thesis with up to 600 characters (with spaces) summaries of its chapters

2.4 Collecting materials

After you have written and defended your first-year paper (AKA the MA Thesis research proposal) you have noting to do but start actual research — although of course writing your first-year paper involves preliminary research. Most research in the humanities requires the collection of data. They are needed to test your hypotheses. No clear-cut advice can be given on this matter, as there are many methods for the collection of materials. In any case you will have to ask yourself: 'Which primary or secondary sources can I use to check the answers to my problem I can think of?' A historian may have to visit archives or special collections in libraries, and may have to think of which ones are necessary. An anthropologist may need to conduct interviews and participant observation. A historian wore with archives and/or oral history. It is important to know how to find your way in archives and libraries. And it is necessary to be aware of the methods you can use to solve your problem in an adequate way. In an early stage of your research, in consultation with your supervisor you will have to decide on the research method that seems most appropriate. Describe the method you propose on paper and discuss this with your supervisor.

It is possible that the problem cannot be solved with the method you have proposed. It is even possible that there is no method whatsoever to solve your problem. Sometimes it may be he case that it is worthwhile nevertheless to investigate the topic proposed. The question of your chances of success, however, needs to be discussed with your supervisor at an early stage.

2.5 Ordering the materials

There are fields of study in which the ordering of the materials poses certain problems, e.g. when the topics have been the object of much research in the past. It can be very complicated to have to order the results of earlier investigations, which may be contradictory, to distinguish between commonly accepted facts and specific interpretations, or to separate relevant data from irrelevant data. The question, which publications merit a central place in your discourse, and which ones had better be left aside, will require much attention. Consultation with your supervisor will prove beneficial in these cases.

2.6 Writing

Going through the stages described so far, you have already started to write your thesis. The formulation of the problem has been given a definite form while you were collecting and ordering your materials. You have put your method and its justification into writing, and they may now be further developed. From the start you have made drafts and outlines of individual chapters and discussed these with your supervisor. You are now in a position to start writing in earnest. Do not delay this moment too much: a first version of a chapter is easier to write than you may think. Try not to write as if the first version is the last one!

Which part of your thesis should you write first? On this matter there are roughly two schools of thought. According to the first, it is advisable to write an introductory text first, in which you explain once more the theme and method of the thesis. This text may serve as a draft for an Introduction, which can be finished after the other parts of the thesis have been written. The advantage of this method is, that you are forced once more to dot your intellectual i's and cross your t's. Afterwards, the agenda for writing the rest of the thesis is often much easier to set. But such an introductory chapter should not start to lead a life of its own: do not use too many words, for this text ought to remain subservient to the thesis as a whole. According to the second school of thought, it is preferable to start writing the more concrete, tangible parts of the thesis first, in which one's own research is presented. Many feel more secure here than in the wider-ranging general introduction - which can also be written at the end. No matter which order you adopt in writing your theses: Make sure to keep your subject clear and well-defined before your mind's eye, as this is the first necessity in writing. In all cases the Introduction and Conclusion will prove to be in need of considerable revision after you have written the main part of your thesis. While you have been writing, the accents are bound to change.

When writing, make sure to keep a distance between yourself and your materials and bibliography. Never copy long fragments from the literature. Think twice about direct quotations: they need to be given meaning through your subsequent analysis. It may prove useful to regularly write down partial conclusions, or to highlight one key word per paragraph. These highlights can be deleted at a later stage.

First produce rough drafts, which you can correct and refine later on. Do not hesitate to show these rough drafts to your supervisor. A supervisor knows that you need to discuss work in progress. However, make sure that rough drafts, too, need to be written in correct English and that your text needs to be presented down to the last detail. It may be useful to discuss a trial chapter that you think acceptable from all points of view, to avoid misunderstandings about the supervisor's expectations. Thus, you know well in advance what you need to do about your definitive version. Consult your supervisor about the frequency with which you will send (drafts of) chapters.

2.6.1 English

When you start your thesis, you will have produced written assignments for many courses. These had to be written in correct English. If you had adverse comments on your English, or if you felt insecure about writing in this language, you will have taken steps to increase your writing abilities. Your supervisor cannot be expected to correct the English of your thesis - although some corrections will inevitably appear in the margins of your thesis. You will, however, be graded on your English as well. Use your spellchecker to avoid spelling mistakes. Unclarity due to grammatical or stylistic errors has to be avoided. Unclarity due to the use of words in a less than common meaning, or due to the use of uncommon words or jargon, can be avoided through an intelligent use of your spellchecker (unknown words are marked as if they had been spelled incorrectly) or a good dictionary.

If you write your thesis in British English, use, e.g., the *Oxford Dictionary of English and Oxford Thesaurus of English*. A useful summary of matters of grammar and punctuation

is J. Seely, *Oxford A-Z of Grammar and Punctuation* (Oxford, 2004). You can opt for American English, but be consistent throughout your thesis.

In writing, you have to keep in mind the audience you are writing for, its expectations and knowledge. The MA Thesis will be read in its definitive form by your supervisor and the examiners, and later it might be read also by the committees that decide on applications to PhD programmes. The content, but also the language and presentation of the thesis will influence the opinion of these readers. Clearly, you will have to avoid relaxed, colloquial, chatty or friendly language.

2.6.2 Presentation

Considerations of the presentation of the definitive version of the thesis are often left to the end. This, however, is a mistake. It saves an inordinate amount of time when the rules for making references and the layout of the text are adhered to from the start of the writing stages.

No thesis is acceptable without footnotes in which reference is made to the sources and literature adduced to buttress an opinion or establish a fact. These references need to be transformed into a bibliography that is inserted at the end of the thesis. There are many ways of making references in footnotes. We use Chicago style for both.

You may wish to deviate from some of these guidelines after consultation with your supervisor.

2.7 The conclusion

Obviously, your thesis has to result in a conclusion. Here, you have to connect with the formulation of the problem as presented in the introduction. You have to make clear how your research contributes to the solution of - or the debate about - the problem under consideration. Usually, no new information is introduced in the conclusion. You need, however, to present your conclusion in a wider context. It is not sufficient merely to provide a summary!

Sometimes the problem could not be solved with the help of the available data. It is nevertheless conceivable that this can be seen as a positive result of the research carried out. This, however, is not always the case. You need to decide this matter with your supervisor. As we have said before, at an early stage you need to discuss with your supervisor whether the method you prose is likely to shed light on the problem you wish to investigate.

2.8 The definitive version

It is important to provide your thesis with a suitable title. It is not necessary to think of a catchy title. Avoid funny titles. Before your thesis has acquired its all-but-definitive form - a form, that is, with which you yourself at least are satisfied - several concepts or drafts will have been discussed. Keep in mind that your thesis is not your life's work! Before you hand in your thesis to your supervisor, you may consider asking a fellow student to read through your thesis with a critical eye. Although the comments will seldom be the same as those of your supervisor, you may nevertheless put them to your advantage.

It is often the case that your supervisor asks for ameliorations in the penultimate version. At this stage you may ask the supervisor for his provisional opinion of your work. This will make clear how important the changes are that you are asked to make. Make sure that you agree with your supervisor which version will be graded. Changes made afterwards will not make a great difference to your mark.

2.9 Examiners reports

After you have handed in the version of your thesis that will be marked by your supervisor and two examiners: the internal and the external. The head of the programme needs to make sure that the examiners receive a copy as well. The role of the examiners is

to make sure that the thesis conforms to the standards of the MA Thesis work. The examiners are chosen as independent experts on the topic of the thesis. The internal examiner is appointed from the academics of the HSE, and the external reader has to come from outside the HSE. Your supervisor also provides a mark and a brief report; but these are not taken into accord in calculation of the final mark.

2.10 Grading your thesis

The MA Thesis final mark is awarded by the State Examination Committee (Exam Board) which consists of no less than 3 members of HSE faculty and 3 external academics. A Head of the State Committee (Examination Board) should not be a member of HSE faculty. The Committee considers the mark by the thesis supervisor but is not bound by it. The Committee also considers the quality of the oral viva of the MA student, and their ability to defend their approach and materials. Students in affect get three individual marks: the two are by the examiners (submitted before the viva), and the third one by the Board. You need to know that this Committee has the authority of giving you the final theses mark, taking into account but not being bound by the marks of the examiners.

2.11 What to do if you are stuck?

Writer's block is an ailment that even renowned authors may suffer from. Many authors of theses wrestle with situations in which the blank page they stared at in the morning is as blank in the evening. There are no remedies that will help in all cases. Sometimes it helps to 'cut up' a large task in a number of smaller ones. Have yet another look at the provisional list of chapters and paragraphs, which forms the framework of the thesis. Try whether a slightly different framework of the part of the thesis that is causing you trouble may solve the problem. Often problems of writing are due to an ill-considered arrangement. A clear order makes the small 'jumps' from one item to the next that much easier. Do realise that when you put pen to paper you are not, as yet, working on the definitive version. Your supervisor does not expect a literary MA piece, but a solid written report. It may also help to talk to an interested fellow student about your research. This forces you to put into words the nature of the problem you are wrestling with. You can also ask your supervisor for advice, e.g. when you make changes to the arrangement of the materials. You might also ask, which part of the problem you could start to write on first.

2.12 Summary

Stage 1: Start the preliminary work in an early stage, preferably before the beginning of your second year.

Stage 2: Make a list of - loosely formulated - topics and problems that might be developed.

Stage 3: Choose a supervisor, make a first appointment, and discuss your ideas for your thesis. Note suggestions for literature, and make a second appointment.

Stage 4: Try to formulate the problem to be investigated in a well-defined way. Summarise the opinions of the main authors who worked on the topic in a few sentences or paragraphs. Add your own provisional analysis. Try to work out the synopsis of your thesis, if possible in the form of an annotated table of contents. Discuss this with your supervisor. Note comments and suggestions, and make a new appointment.

Stage 5: At an early stage, discuss the research method to be used. Write this down in a proposal and ask your supervisor for an opinion.

Stage 6: Do not delay the actual writing of the thesis too much. Produce rough drafts, which can be refined later on.

Stage 7: Determine, in consultation with your supervisor, which version will be the basis for your mark. Agree on the dates for handing in, correcting, revising and grading the thesis. Make sure the second reader is informed of these dates and agrees to them.

Stage 8: After you have received your mark, prepare the file for your graduation.

3. Supervision

3.1 What can you expect from a supervisor?

Your research topic and focus is up to your to decide. But as it has become clear from what has been said before, you may seek your supervisor's assistance with many things:

- A reaction to the proposed formulation of the problem.
- Assistance with the selection of a problem.
- Suggestions for the way in which the formulation of the problem may be developed.
- Suggestions for additional sources and literature.
- A reaction to the proposed research method, to the way the research will be conducted, assistance with the limitation of the materials to be used in the thesis.
- Comments on preliminary sketches and versions.
- Some assistance and counsel when you experience setbacks.

You have a right to supervision by someone teaching in your MA Programme. You also have the right to propose a supervisor. There are, however, some conditions. Some teachers supervise many theses, and therefore will sometimes say 'no' to a request. Once a teacher has accepted to act as supervisor, you may ask for help and advice. Every supervisor has ideas about the organisation of thesis supervision. Some ask you to come to their office during office ours; others want you to make appointments. Some devote much time to you, others value brevity.

Supervision is efficient when you provide written proposals, ideas and sketches, and if you prepare the conversation by formulating questions.

The supervisor also has expectations of the students. We have already stressed the importance of independence in doing research for your thesis. The supervisor will give directions and suggestions, but will never 'pre-cook' the thesis. You are meant to use the comments provided to continue independently; the comments are never ready solutions. Take care also to continue the logic of the supervisor's comments on one part of the thesis in the other parts. This concerns also minute details: once corrected imperfections in a bibliographical reference, e.g., you can easily correct in the rest of your text. You are responsible for the English of your text, and cannot expect the supervisor to proofread it. You are also meant to keep your appointments. If by chance you prove unable to meet a deadline, make sure your supervisor knows in advance.

You may expect your supervisor (and the examiners) to grade your thesis within 7 working days after handing in the definitive version. You need to make allowance for this when you wish to meet the deadline for the handing in of all data necessary for your graduation. Make sure that you and your supervisor agree on the date for handing in the penultimate version of the thesis, the time allowed for reparations, and the dates of the 7 working days' period in which your mark is determined.

It is possible that something goes wrong in the relationship between student and supervisor. Writing and supervision lead to a rather personal relationship; usually this works well, sometimes problems occur. If you have the merest suspicion that things are not going as they ought to, make sure to note carefully the decisions arrived at during each meeting. Refer to these agreements at the next meeting. Keep the contacts as business-like as possible. If you are unable to find a modus vivendi, ask your programme coordinator, the MA Coordinator, or the student advisor. They will mediate or suggest another supervisor.

3.2 The roles of the examiners and 'second supervisors'

As we have said before, the role of the examiners is limited to giving a judgement on the written version of thesis. Sometimes a supervisor will suggest you contact a specialist on the topic of your thesis. Sometimes this specialist will agree to read and comment (part of) your thesis in such as way that in effect he or she becomes a 'second supervisor'. There is nothing against asking the advice from specialists in your field. Indeed, when this benefits the quality of your thesis, such contacts are to be applauded - provided your thesis remains an independent piece of work. However, there is only one supervisor who is responsible for your work and can grade it - in consultation with the second reader. If the second reader has contributed towards your thesis in the capacity of a 'consultant', it is imperative that this will not interfere with the grading of your work.

4. MA Thesis marking criteria

Your MA thesis receives three examiners' reports: (1) by your supervisor; (2) internal examiner from the HSE and (3) external examiner from outside the HSE. The HSE rules require the report by your supervisor, but we take into account the internal and external examiner's reports. The State Examination Board is NOT bound by the mark and assessment that your supervisor gives you; furthermore, it MAY take into consideration marks and assessments that your internal and external examiners give you. The Examination Board is however sovereign in deciding your final mark as a result of the viva (defence).

A mark will usually be assigned for a combination of reasons and the final mark is based therefore on the overall impression rather than on isolated features. The main categories are represented below:

10 - no errors were made in the work. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements and argument. The work contains an literature relevant to the argument posed.

9 - no errors were made. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument. The paper contains an analysis of self-researched literature relevant to the argument posed.

8 - no errors were made in the essay. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument.

7 - no factual or methodological errors were made in the thesis. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument but contains a minor amount of technical or linguistic errors.

6 – there are one or two factual or methodological errors in the thesis. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument. It contains a minor technical or linguistic errors.

5- there are one or two factual or methodological errors in the thesis. It does not fully substantiate all meaningful assertions, or inconsistently formulates all the author's argument. Contains a minor amount of technical or linguistic errors.

4- there are one or two factual or methodological errors in the thesis. It does not fully substantiate its assertions, or inconsistently formulates all the necessary statements to support the author's argument. Contains a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

3 - there are more than two factual or methodological errors in the thesis. The work does not fully substantiate all its assertions, or inconsistently formulates all the author's argument. Limited use of literature; and a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

2- there are more than two factual or methodological errors in the thesis. It does not fully substantiate its assertions, or inconsistently formulates its argument. The thesis does

not contain an analysis of any works and contains a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

1- the thesis contains a significant amount of factual or methodological errors does not substantiate its assertions, or inconsistently formulates the author's argument. Does not contain an analysis of any works and shows a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

0- The thesis does not have a central research question. It shows poor knowledge of the scholarly context and little evidence of independent thought. The thesis is superficial, unsystematic, and shows little effort.

5. Relevant dates and deadlines (tentative):

MA Thesis (second year of study)

15 November 23:55	**Deadline for theses topics submission via VLIS**
27 November	**Thesis topic and supervisor approval**
30 November	**First chapter or case study draft submission**
2-8 December	**First chapter or case study discussion at the Research Seminar**
24 January	**Second chapter or case study submission**
27 January - 5 February	**Second chapter or case study discussion at the Research Seminar**
5 April	**Thesis Full Draft Submission to the Supervisor**
12 April	**Feedback from the Supervisor**
15 April 23:55	**Deadline for submission the thesis for the pre-viva (pre-defence)**
22-30 April (TBC)	**Theses pre-viva (pre-defence)**
20 April	**Deadline for submission a request for changes in the title of MA thesis and its supervisor**
24 May 23:55	**MA Thesis submission via the VLIS and to the Examiners**
31 May 23:55	**Deadline for MA theses' Supervisors' Reports**
31 May 23:55	**Deadline for MA theses' Examiners' Reports**
7-12 June (TBC)	**MA Thesis viva voce (oral defence)**

6 A checklist of mistakes often made in theses (and some suggestions on how to avoid them)

The structure of the argumentation

General:

1 absence of indications of place and time or a delay in introducing such indications;
2 lack of clarity in the terminology used;
3 lack of accuracy.

Start from the assumption that all personal names and place names need to be dated and localised. Expressions that are not commonly used in English, or expressions which are used with an unusual meaning, need to be explained.

Title:

4 insufficient.

The title ought to refer to the contents of the paper. Whenever a 'gripping' title fails to make clear what the paper is about, use a subtitle to explain the title.

Introduction:

5 the question under discussion has not (or insufficiently) been put into words;
6 absence or insufficiency of the explanation of the question:
- chronologically;
- geographically;
- as far as the terminology is concerned;

7 no indication of the 'order' (the parts of the argumentation and their sequence);
8 no explanation of the reason for this order;
9 superfluous information.

Middle:

10 the question is not treated in the order promised in the introduction;
11 the links between the several parts ('paragraphs', 'chapters') are not or not sufficiently indicated;
12 data belonging in one part are presented in another part of the argumentation;
13 statements in different parts of the argumentation, the relevant links between which are not clarified;
14 lack of generalisation (e.g. enumeration of events without giving a clue as to what they are supposed to illustrate);
15 excessive pleasure in copying (copying, paraphrasing, etc.);
16 superfluous or senseless information;
17 statements that are clearly untrue;
18 unsubstantiated statements.

Conclusion:

19 no sufficient summary;
20 no sufficient answer to the question posed in the introduction;
21 an answer that does not (or not evidently) follows from the foregoing arguments;
22 absence of a wider perspective.

II. The presentation of the text

Language:
23 mistakes in spelling;
24 stylistic errors;
25 unclear punctuation;
26 use of words with a wrong meaning.

Annotation:
27 no annotation where needed;
28 annotation where it is superfluous;
29 insufficient references (no indication of page numbers; only the first page of an article is mentioned; no mention of the place of an article in a collection of essays, etc.);
30 inconsistency in the references.

In general notes are meant for references to sources and literature only. Disquisitions in notes are anathema. One ought not to address new problems in the annotation. Whenever mention is made of a publication for the first time, give full references. Avoid abbreviations such as ibid., op. cit. etc. Cross-references are also to be avoided.

Bibliography:
31 absence or incompleteness;
32 inadequate bibliographical references;
33 inconsistency.

Only titles that were used in the writing of the paper are to be included.

7. Summary of the formal MA thesis requirements:

GENERAL PROVISIONS ON THE MASTER THESIS

The MA dissertation, or thesis, is a compulsory part of the MA curriculum. It is an academic MA Thesis in the form of research paper ideally of publishable quality;

Thesis submission falls on Module 4 during the 2nd year of study.

The submission and defence of the thesis have a combined value of 3 ECTS.

MA thesis should be a work of independent research reflecting one's ability:

formulate a problem or research question,

undertake and complete a piece of independent research and analysis,

collect, analyse and interpret historical sources,

adequately use the methodology or theoretical framework relevant to the research question and historical sources,

demonstrate knowledge of the historiography and other analytical traditions relevant for the chosen subject,

produce an academic text with appropriate structure and idiomatic use of language,

discuss coherently the outcome of the research, its relevance for the public, possible implications and applications for non-academic spheres (where applicable).

SELECTION AND APPROVAL OF MASTER THESIS TOPIC

The supervisor of student's MA thesis may be HSE staff member. In exceptional cases where student has an external supervisor, the HSE appoints a curator from the HSE staff. The supervisors and curators should held international PhDs or Russian 'Candidate of Sciences' or 'Doctor of Sciences' degrees.

Student submit the Thesis Topic and Supervisor's name via LMS system not later than 15 November of the 2d academic year.

Upon the approval of the chosen topic by the MA's academic, the programme manager issues an order on the topic and supervisor for each student. The academic council may recommend that the student makes changes to the topic. The order is prepared by 15 December of the 2d academic year.

The student may request change of Thesis Title no later than in 30 days before of submission of the definitive (final) version of the MA Thesis.

THESIS SUPERVISION AND SUBMISSION

The student and the supervisor agree on the time table for thesis completion. According to HSE regulations the main elements are:

Thesis Research proposal (the first year paper) which is prepared and defended by the student during the 1st academic year (there are separate guidelines for this);

Submission of a first version by 2 April of the 2nd academic year and feedback on it by the supervisor in 1 week after submission;

Final text submission of the thesis to the supervisor and the external reviewer by 23 May;

'Turnitin' or other relevant English-language anti-plagiarism software text check- up by 25 May and attached to the thesis;

Feedback from the external reviewer and the thesis supervisor no later than 5 days before the thesis oral viva;

Thesis viva takes place on the second week of June of the 2nd academic year.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the thesis meets the standards described in Clause 1 (above), and the duty of the supervisor and the MA Programme to ensure that the student takes the necessary steps to meet these requirements.

THESIS CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

General requirements

The length of the MA Thesis is between 60 000 to 120 000 characters (with spaces).

The MA Thesis should be written in English. Words and phrases in other languages, such as 'videlicet' or 'raison d'état' should be put in italics. Titles of the bibliography entries should appear in their original language, however, titles in Cyrillic should be transliterated according to the Library of Congress style in parentheses.

Thesis content

The thesis must include substantial original content produced by the student, including the empirical part as its core.

Historical sources should be accurately cited

Thesis structure

Sections of the thesis should be ordered in the following way:

Title page

Abstract (between 300 and 500 words), including a statement of the problem, the methodology used and the major findings

Table of contents with chapter headings, section headings and sub-headings

List of Figures, Tables or Illustrations

Acknowledgements

Tables of measures (where applicable)

List of Abbreviations

Body of the thesis

List of sources

Bibliography

Appendices, e.g. formulae, maps, diagrams, interview (where applicable)

Glossary of special technical words or acronyms (where applicable)

MA Thesis should be submitted in one single file.

The thesis 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.

The title page should have the full title of the thesis, the student's name, the department and name of the university, the supervisor's name, the place of submission, and the year of submission.

The thesis should be structured as chapters of its main body with an introduction and a conclusion.

The bibliographic citations are provided in the footnotes, supplemented by a final bibliography. The final bibliography must include all works cited in the footnotes throughout the text. The reference style is one and the same for both the First Year Paper (research proposal) and MA Theses.

SUBMISSION, GRADING, RE-EXAMINATION AND APPEAL

State Examination Committee: The MA Thesis final mark is awarded by the State Examination Committee which consists of no less than 3 members of HSE faculty and 3 external academics. A Head of the Committee should not be a member of HSE faculty. The Committee also considers the quality of the oral viva of the MA student.

The **supervisor** assessed the final version of the thesis on a ten-point scale and gives more detailed feedback according to a review template (Appendix 2).

Internal examiner is appointed by head of MA programme from the HSE faculty and assesses the final version of the thesis on a ten-point scale also giving more detailed feedback according to a review template (Appendix 3).

External examiner is appointed head of MA programme from scholars outside the HSE and assesses the final version of the thesis on a ten-point scale also giving more detailed feedback according to a review template (Appendix 3).

The student submits both a hard copy and an electronic thesis file to the MA Office and the LMS. The report from the 'Turnitin' or other relevant anti-plagiarism software is attached to the final version.

Marking basis for the State Examination Committee, the supervisors and the examiners are:

Adequacy of thesis topic and the contents of the research, both of which should lay clearly in the field of comparative sociology

Fulfillment of goals and objectives of the research project

Originality and novelty of the thesis

Adherence to professional ethics and citation standards

Level of student's personal contribution into the topic development

Thesis formatting

The MA thesis receives three examiners' reports: (1) by supervisor; (2) internal examiner from the HSE and (3) external examiner from outside the HSE. The Examination Committee is NOT bound by the mark and assessment that your supervisor gives you; it MAY take into consideration marks and assessments that your internal and external examiners give you. The Examination Committee is however sovereign in deciding your final mark as a result of the viva (defence).

FORMATTING

Text format

Headings of sections

Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations, Introduction, Conclusion, References, Appendices, and Annexes: Times New Roman 16, bold, aligned left, not numbered.

Headings of chapters: Times New Roman 16, bold, aligned left, numbered (1, 2, etc.).

Headings of sub-chapters and sub-sub-chapters

Times new Roman 14, bold, aligned left, optionally numbered (1.1, 1.1.1, 1.2, etc.).

Paragraphs

Each paragraph should be from 10 to 15 lines (on average). There should be no spacing between a paragraph and the following one.

Main text:

Times New Roman 12, spaced 1.5, justified, each line indented left.

Footnotes:

Times New Roman 11, single-spaced, aligned left, no first line indentation.

Page numbers: All the pages of the file should be counted and listed

Margins: 2.5 cm on all sides.

Bibliography

Entries should be categorised and alphabetised.

Times New Roman 12, aligned left, single-spaced with spacing between each entry and the next one.

No first line indentation, no numbering, no bullet points.

Page numbering

starts from the Table of Contents (page 2) and end with the Bibliography.

appears at the bottom of the page, centred.

Page break between sections and chapters:

Page break between sections, e.g. between the Table of Contents and the List of Abbreviations (if included), between the List of Abbreviations, list of tables, list of figures and Introduction, between the Introduction and the Main Body, between the Main body and the Conclusion, between the Conclusion and the Bibliography, between the Bibliography and the Appendixes or Annexes (if included).

Page break at the end of each chapter (i.e. start each chapter on a new page).

7. MASTER THESIS PAPER STORAGE

The Study Office of the MA Programme stores copies of MA Thesis in the form of electronic file.

Annex 1

Federal State Educational Institution of Higher Education

‘**National Research University Higher School of Economics**’

Saint-Petersburg School of Arts and Humanities

Student’s full name

MASTER’S THESIS

theme *master’s thesis*

Field of study: *46.04.01 History*

Degree programme: «Global and Regional History»

Reviewer
Professor...

_____
Last name and initials

Supervisor
Professor…

_____
Last name and initials

Advisor
Professor…

_____
Last name and initials

Saint Petersburg, 202__

Annex 2

Federal State Educational Institution of Higher Education
‘**National Research University Higher School of Economics**’

Saint-Petersburg School of Arts and Humanities
Department of History
Report of the supervisor on the master’**s thesis**

Student [Last name, first name, middle name]
Of the 2nd year of the educational programme ‘Global and Regional History’
On the theme: ‘_____’

Please characterise (following these points or in your own terms):

- **The general characteristics of the thesis:** clearly defined research question or hypothesis; the correspondence of the research question to the topic of the thesis; the presentation of the material on the topic and the thesis’ logic

- **The methodology and methods:** how appropriate methods are, how the methodology is justified in light of the goal of the thesis and its research question

- **The theoretical and empirical foundation of the thesis:** how thorough is the discussion of relevant theory; how well-grounded the thesis is empirically

- **Conclusions:** if they correlate to the research question and provide an answer to it; and if they are substantiated empirically

- **Formatting:** the thesis’s correspondence to academic standards in style

- **Strong points and weak points of the thesis**
- **Whether the thesis should be admitted to defence**
- **Recommended grade on a ten-point scale**

Supervisor (degree, position)
Faculty/department
(Place of work) /signature/ _____Initials Last name

Date

Marking criteria: Note that a grade will usually be assigned for a combination of reasons and the final grade is based therefore on the overall impression rather than on isolated features. The main categories are represented below:

10 - no errors were made in the work. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements and argument. The work contains an literature relevant to the argument posed.

9 - no errors were made. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument. The paper contains an analysis of self-researched literature relevant to the argument posed.

8 - no errors were made in the essay. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument.

7 - no factual or methodological errors were made in the essay. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument but contains a minor amount of technical or linguistic errors.

6 – there are one or two factual or methodological errors in the essay. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument. The paper contains a minor technical or linguistic errors.

5- there are one or two factual or methodological errors in the essay. The essay does not fully substantiate all meaningful assertions, or inconsistently formulates all the author's argument. Contains a minor amount of technical or linguistic errors.

4- there are one or two factual or methodological errors in the paper. It does not fully substantiate its assertions, or inconsistently formulates all the necessary statements to support the author's argument. Contains a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

3 - there are more than two factual or methodological errors in the paper. The work does not fully substantiate all its assertions, or inconsistently formulates all the author's argument. Limited use of literature; and a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

2- there are more than two factual or methodological errors in the paper. The paper does not fully substantiate its assertions, or inconsistently formulates its argument. The essay does not contain an analysis of any works and contains a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

1- the paper contains a significant amount of factual or methodological errors does not substantiate its assertions, or inconsistently formulates the author's argument. Does not contain an analysis of any works and shows a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

0- 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.

Annex 3

Federal state educational institution of higher education
National Research University 'Higher School of Economics'

Saint-Petersburg School of Arts and Humanities
Department of History

Examiner's report
on the master's thesis

Student [Last name, First name, Middle name]

2nd year, educational programme 'Global and Regional History'
on the theme: '_____'

Please characterise (following these points or in your own terms):

- **The general characteristics of the thesis:** clearly defined research question or hypothesis; the correspondence of the research question to the topic of the thesis; the presentation of the material on the topic and the thesis' logic

- **The methodology and methods:** how appropriate methods are, how the methodology is justified in light of the goal of the thesis and its research question

- **The theoretical and empirical foundation of the thesis:** how thorough is the discussion of relevant theory; how well-grounded the thesis is empirically

- **Conclusions:** if they correlate to the research question and provide an answer to it; and if they are substantiated empirically

- **Formatting:** the thesis's correspondence to academic standards in style

- **Strong points and weak points of the thesis**
- **Whether the thesis should be admitted to defence**
- **Recommended grade on a ten-point scale**

Examiner [degree, position]:
Academic affiliation [Place of work]:

/signature/ _____Initials Last name

Date

Marking criteria: Note that a grade will usually be assigned for a combination of reasons and the final grade is based therefore on the overall impression rather than on isolated features. The main categories are represented below.

10 - no errors were made in the work. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements and argument. The work contains an literature relevant to the argument posed.

9 - no errors were made. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument. The paper contains an analysis of self-researched literature relevant to the argument posed.

8 - no errors were made in the essay. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument.

7 - no factual or methodological errors were made in the essay. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument but contains a minor amount of technical or linguistic errors.

6 – there are one or two factual or methodological errors in the essay. The thesis substantiated all relevant statements, formulated all necessary clear, concise, and logically connected assertions that support the author's argument. The paper contains a minor technical or linguistic errors.

5- there are one or two factual or methodological errors in the essay. The essay does not fully substantiate all meaningful assertions, or inconsistently formulates all the author's argument. Contains a minor amount of technical or linguistic errors.

4- there are one or two factual or methodological errors in the paper. It does not fully substantiate its assertions, or inconsistently formulates all the necessary statements to support the author's argument. Contains a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

3 - there are more than two factual or methodological errors in the paper. The work does not fully substantiate all its assertions, or inconsistently formulates all the author's argument. Limited use of literature; and a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

2- there are more than two factual or methodological errors in the paper. The paper does not fully substantiate its assertions, or inconsistently formulates its argument. The essay does not contain an analysis of any works and contains a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

1- the paper contains a significant amount of factual or methodological errors does not substantiate its assertions, or inconsistently formulates the author's argument. Does not contain an analysis of any works and shows a significant amount of technical or linguistic errors.

0- 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.