

Guidelines for Preparation and Defense of BA Theses
by the students of the BA Programme in Political Science and World Politics

Approved by the Academic Council of the BA Programme in Political Science and World Politics

Minutes № 8.3.2.3.2-11/01 as of 25.08.2022

1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 1.1. These Guidelines have been prepared in line with the Regulations on the Regulations on Practical Training of Students under Core Bachelor's, Specialist and Master's Programmes at HSE University (hereinafter – the Regulations on Practical Training).
- 1.2. A thesis is performed by the students of the fourth year of study. The students may choose the format of the thesis – either a research thesis or a project thesis.
- 1.3. Regardless of the format, students prepare the theses individually.
- 1.4. The students are free to choose the language of the thesis (English or Russian), upon the supervisor's approval during the selection and approval of the topic of the thesis.
- 1.5. The thesis requirements depend on the format of the thesis:
 - 1.5.1. Research thesis shall present the results of their research effort and demonstrate the skills and competencies they have acquired. Students are expected to produce a high-quality literature review covering their chosen research subject, a fundamental theoretical analysis of the problem under consideration as applicable to the student's research project, as well as to collect and analyze empirical data and formulate their findings which have to be of some theoretical and, possibly, practical value.
 - 1.5.2. Project thesis shall present the results of the project solution, based on the deep analysis of the practical problem within the socio-political or socio-economic sphere. The project thesis is conducted in the form of a policy paper, aimed at (1) analyzing the chosen policy within the chosen socio-political or socio-economic sphere; or (2) analyzing the activities of the governmental or non-governmental actors and developing a solution to the chosen problem, followed by policy recommendations.
- 1.6. Theses may be carried out by request or with the participation of a legal entity, external to the HSE. In this case, the procedure for establishing relations between the HSE and a legal entity is determined by the Regulations on Practical Training.
- 1.7. The academic supervisor appointed by the Campus Director shall oversee the preparation of the student's thesis. The procedure of appointment, approval and replacement of the academic supervisor is defined by the Regulations on Practical Training. An additional adviser can be appointed if necessary.¹
- 1.8. The topics of the theses are chosen by the students on the fourth year of study.

2. STAGES OF THE THESES PREPARATION

- 2.1. Deadlines for completing the main stages of the topic selection and approval, as well as the preparation and defense of the theses, are defined by the Regulations on Practical Training. The key stages are specified in Annex A.

¹ HSE employees with an academic degree, as well as practitioners with at least 3 years of experience in the industry, working at the HSE (including on a part-time basis) are appointed as supervisors. It is allowed to appoint a staff member of the HSE without a scientific degree, who has the position of a senior lecturer, as the supervisor.

- 2.2. The preparation of the theses includes the following milestones:
 - 2.2.1. Students receive from academic supervisors and sign the statement of work, which specifies the deadlines and other terms of the thesis preparation;
 - 2.2.2. Students present the thesis project, with the preliminary motivation of the research, its structure and expected results;
 - 2.2.3. Students present the draft version of the thesis, and get feedback from academic supervisors on what is to be corrected or improved;
 - 2.2.4. Students submit the final version of the thesis to the virtual learning information system (VLIS) of the HSE, as well as to the academic supervisor.
 - 2.2.5. Academic supervisors write a feedback on the theses;
 - 2.2.6. Students submit a printed version of the thesis, previously submitted to the VLIS, alongside with the feedback from the academic supervisor and plagiarism check report to the Study Office;
 - 2.2.7. Theses review: reviewers are appointed, the theses are sent to the reviewers, reviewers submit reviews, the reviews are sent to the students;
 - 2.2.8. Public defense of the thesis.
- 2.3. Any changes and refinements of the topic are possible no later than one month before the deadline of the thesis submission, upon the application of the student.

3. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CONTENT AND VOLUME OF THE THESES

- 3.1. If a student opts to continue the work that he/she did in the previous years, the text of the thesis can include references to the previous student's term papers. However, word-for-word borrowing of entire paragraphs or chapters from the previous term papers are considered unacceptable and shall be qualified as resubmitting the same paper, as defined by the HSE Regulations on Checking Student Papers for Plagiarism. In exceptional cases, students are entitled to ask for the academic supervisor's permission to use small excerpts from their previous term papers, but such excerpts cannot reproduce a whole paragraph or a chapter. Upon approval of the academic supervisor, small excerpts borrowed from a previously submitted term paper and properly formatted as quotations (with quotation marks and followed by a reference), shall not be regarded as self-plagiarism.
- 3.2. The structure of the thesis includes the front page, two abstracts (in Russian and English), the table of contents, the main body, the conclusion, the bibliography and annexes (if necessary). The template for the front page is available in Annex B. The table of contents should be automatically generated in Microsoft Word or any other word processor of student's choice.
- 3.3. The research thesis should include the following elements:
 - 3.3.1. Introduction: the research question and research motivation, object and subject of the research, goal and tasks of the research, brief description of the theory (methodology) used, brief description of the research design, methods and data used, time and geographical scope of the research, brief description of the paper structure;
 - 3.3.2. Main Body: (1) The literature review, containing the results of the critical analysis of the chosen research field. The review should characterize the state-of-the-art in the chosen field, define the research gaps and thus emphasize the motivation of study; (2) The theoretical framework of the research, theoretical and methodological approaches which help to build assumptions and / or hypotheses of study; (3) The description of the empirical research design, justification of the data collection and data analysis methods used in the paper; (4) The results of the empirical analysis, research findings, hypotheses / assumptions testing.

- 3.3.3. Conclusion: general findings of the paper, answer to the research question. It is also recommended to outline the possible avenues of the future research.
- 3.4. The project thesis should include the following elements:
 - 3.4.1. Introduction: formulation of the policy problem, its topicality, justification of the necessity to solve this policy problem, description of the status quo.
 - 3.4.2. Main Body: (1) Description and justification of the possible alternatives (policy options); (2) Analysis of the political and institutional context (main stakeholders, institutions, legal acts); (3) Evaluation and comparison of the policy alternatives based on a chosen set of criteria, analysis of their compatibility. The context analysis should be conducted using Political Science and Social Sciences methods of data collection and analysis, based on the theories and concepts in the fields of Policy Studies and Policy Analysis, empirical data on public policies in regions and countries of the world, and policy evaluations. The choice of criteria for comparison must be justified. When relying on policy evaluation conducted in other jurisdictions, the analysis must take the local context into account.
 - 3.4.3. Conclusion: policy recommendations to the decision-makers on the implementation of the proposed solution(s), main findings on the problem.
 - 3.4.4. Conclusion: policy recommendations to the decision-makers, based on the results of the analysis, main findings on the problem.
- 3.5 The bibliography includes all legislative acts, research papers, specialized publications and other sources used while preparing and writing theses and referenced in the text. The bibliography shall consist of at least 35 academic items (monographs and scholarly articles) for the research theses, and at least 25 academic or policy items for the project theses. Academic sources in Russian may account for up to a half of the total number of academic items in the bibliography. Depending on the topic, the relative number of Russian-language sources can be increased if approved by the academic supervisor.
- 3.5. The volume of the thesis should be at least 90 thousand characters with spaces for a research thesis, 70 thousand characters with spaces for a project thesis (including all elements, mentioned above, except annexes).
- 3.6. Conformity with the requirements, related to the word count and bibliography, is specified by the academic supervisor in the feedback. The points are deduced from the final mark after the public defense.
- 3.7. A thesis shall follow the terminology accepted in the relevant field, as well as notations, applicable abbreviations and symbols. The author of the thesis shall stick to the academic style of presentation and focus reader's attention on the issue under consideration. Journalistic clichés, slang, terms and expressions, which are typically not used in academic literature, as well as words with diminutive suffixes, shall be avoided. Papers shall be free of excessive expression of emotion, as well as populist and political slogans, accusations and emotional assessments.

4. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FORMATTING

- 4.1. The theses shall 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 B). Abstracts (125-175 words) in Russian and in English or the executive summary (200-450 words) shall follow the front page.
- 4.2. All pages shall be consecutively numbered in the page header in the center of the page, starting from the second page (the front page is left unnumbered). Page numbers shall be provided for all elements of the Table of Contents (chapters, sections, etc.). The consecutive numbering shall be used for all tables and figures. Tables and figures shall be titled.

- 4.3. 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 bibliography 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” shall not be inserted before the title, and a full stop sign shall not be used. Arabic numbers shall be used for chapter numbering; a dot shall 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 shall be reflected in the table of contents. Headings shall be highlighted in semi-bold.
- 4.4. The text alignment throughout the paper shall be justified, including footnotes. References to the sources cited shall be provided as footnotes placed in page footer.
- 4.5. If there is a reference to personal names (of scholars, researchers, experts), their initials shall precede the last name (i.e. V.M. Petrov, rather than Petrov V.M., as is customary for the bibliography).
- 4.6. Each annex shall start from a new page with the word “Annex” given in the upper right corner, above the title. The main body of the text shall correlate with annexes via links. Annexes shall retain continuous numbering of pages, originating from the main text.
- 4.7. 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 shall be given. For the papers written in Russian the GOST Footnotes referencing style shall be used. For the papers written in English the Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition) Full Footnotes Style shall be used. If the source is quoted verbatim, the author shall provide the material ‘as it is’, with quotation marks and a full reference. References shall 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. Continuous numbering shall be applied to footnotes on all pages (starting from the first to the last footnote).
- 4.8. If the paper is based on a large body of academic literature, the bibliography can be subdivided into several parts, including legislative acts and official documents; specialized literature, e.g., monographs, research articles, publications in periodicals, etc. Sources in Russian shall be listed first and are to be followed by materials in foreign languages. All papers included in the list are given in alphabetical order (by the author’s surname), 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 paper shall be put on the list by the first letter in its title. The list of legislative documents shall be compiled in chronological order based on the legal effect of the documents (international enactments are given first and are to be followed by the federal constitutional and federal laws, legislation of constituent bodies, and bylaws). If electronic sources are used, the student shall indicate the title of the relevant material, the source, and the electronic address (URL) with the access date. The bibliography shall be comprised of only those papers and sources to which the student has made references to in the footnotes.

5. THESES ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

5.1. The criteria for assessment of the research theses are:

- 5.1.1. Justification of the relevance of the research problem, justification of the significance of the research puzzle in the context of the existing academic debate;
- 5.1.2. Correspondence between the topic (title), the goal, objectives, content and conclusions of the paper, the extent to which the research question has been answered in the paper;

- 5.1.3. Quality of the literature review: orientation within the broader literature and research field, correspondence to the state of the art within the subfield (issue area) reviewed, justification of the existing views within the academic field, as well as the research gaps;
- 5.1.4. Extent to which the paper demonstrates the skills of a student to apply theories and concepts to form theoretical and methodological frameworks of the research, to formulate the hypotheses / expectations (assumptions) of the study;
- 5.1.5. Quality of the empirical research, the demonstrated level of skills in data collection and analysis, justification and reliability of findings;
- 5.1.6. Coherence of the paper structure, quality of logical reasoning;
- 5.1.7. Conformity with the requirements for the formatting, citation rules, bibliographical references and lists;
- 5.1.8. Quality of the presentation, report and slides, the extent to which the student understands the material and uses relevant political science terminology;
- 5.1.9. Quality of the answers to the questions and reviewer's comments, understanding of the field and topic, as well as a broader research context.

5.2. The criteria for assessment of the project theses are:

- 5.2.1. Correspondence of the topic of work (title), the goal, objectives, content and results.
- 5.2.2. The quality of the formulation of the policy problem, justification of the need for policy intervention, the justification of the relevance and novelty of the policy problem;
- 5.2.3. The quality of the analysis of the context and problem, description of the social, economic, political and other relevant conditions;
- 5.2.4. The quality of the policy alternatives analysis and selection, validity and feasibility of the proposed solution, the depth of its description, the use of academic and policy literature, as well as the empirical data on the public policies implementation;
- 5.2.5. Conformity of the paper structure with the policy paper style and structure, quality of reasoning, the relevance of the writing style to the target audience;
- 5.2.6. Conformity with the requirements for the formatting, citation rules, bibliographical references and lists;
- 5.2.7. Demonstrated proficiency in the data collection and analysis methods, relevant to the goal and objectives of the paper, the use of the Policy Analysis theories and approaches;
- 5.2.8. Quality of the presentation, report and slides, the extent to which the student understands the material and uses relevant political science terminology;
- 5.2.9. Quality of the answers to the questions and reviewer's comments, understanding of the field and topic, as well as a broader research context.

6. RULES OF TERM PAPERS ASSESSMENT

- 6.1. The final grade for the thesis is based on the decision of the State Qualification Exam (SQE) board, after the public defense;
- 6.2. When deciding on the final grade, the SQE may consider the feedback from the academic supervisor and the review;
- 6.3. In case the project thesis is carried out by request or with the participation of a legal entity, external to the HSE, this legal entity may provide a feedback on the paper, using the template for the academic supervisors. Such feedback may serve as a recommendation.

6.4. Feedback from the academic supervisor and the review shall be provided within the defined deadlines and formatted according to the templates, available in Annex C.

Annex A. Stages of the Theses Preparation

№ п/ п	STAGES	PERSON (SUBDIVISION) RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINES
APPROVAL AND SELECTION OF THE THESES TOPICS			
1	<p>Submission of the topic proposals to the virtual learning information system (VLIS)</p> <p>Students negotiate their topics with prospective supervisors, supervisors submit the negotiated topics through the VLIS.</p>	Lecturers, faculty members, administration of the program and departments	September 1 – October 1
2	<p>Preapproval of the topics submitted to the VLIS by the Academic Director</p>	Academic Director	<p>Technical check: no more than 72 hours after the topic is submitted, check for the conformity with the requirements: no more than 96 hours after the topic is submitted.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">No later than October 10.</p>
3	<p>Topic selection / Submission of the initiative topics by the students</p> <p>Students fill out an electronic request to assign them an initially negotiated topic from the list of the preapproved topics in the VLIS.</p> <p>If a student and a supervisor have managed to agree on the topic only after October 10 (and as a result, a supervisor has not submitted the negotiated topic to the VLIS by October 10), the student has to propose the negotiated topic and to pick an academic supervisor at her own initiative; consequently, supervisors agree to the students' selection via the VLIS.</p>	Students, faculty members, Academic Director	October 10 – November 20
4	<p>Confirmation from the academic supervisors</p> <p>Academic supervisors agree to the students' selection via the VLIS.</p>	Faculty members, lecturers	November 1 – November 20
6	<p>Defense of the Theses Topics:</p> <p>Students provide the research proposal to the academic supervisor and the lecturer of the research seminar. The proposal includes the preliminary research question, research motivation, research design and structure, expected results.</p>	Faculty members, lecturers, students	November 23
7	<p>Defense of the Theses Topics:</p> <p>Students present their research proposals to the committee, consisting of the academic supervisor, lecturer of the research seminar and a member of the Academic Board.</p>	Faculty members, lecturers, students, Academic Board	November 24 – 27
8	<p>Defense of the Theses Topics:</p> <p>If it is necessary to adjust the topic as a result of the defense, students send the email with the adjusted topic to the members of the committee.</p>	Faculty members, lecturers, students, Academic Board	December 1
9	<p>Defense of the Theses Topics:</p>	Faculty members, lecturers, students, Academic Board	December 3

	The committee approves the adjusted topics.		
10	Approval of the topics by the Academic Board of the Program	Academic Board	No later than December 6
11	The Study Office ensures that the students have selected the topics, and the academic supervisors have approved them.	Study Office	November 20 – December 15
12	The Study Office prepares and issues a directive on assigning the topics of term papers. The topics are specified in the individual study plans of the students.	Study Office	No later than December 15
PREPARATION OF THE THESES			
1	Students receive and sign the statement of work	Students, academic supervisors	No later than December 15
2	Students present the thesis project, with the preliminary motivation of the research, its structure and expected results	Students, academic supervisors	No later than December 25
3	Students present the draft version of the thesis, and get feedback from academic supervisors on what is to be corrected or improved	Students, academic supervisors	No later than April 10
4	Students submit the final version of the thesis to the virtual learning information system (VLIS) of the HSE	Students, academic supervisors	May 17
5	Academic supervisors write a feedback on the thesis and provide them to the Study Office	Academic supervisors	May 24
6	Students provide printed versions of the theses (submitted earlier to VLIS) and provide them to the Study Office, together with the feedback from the academic supervisor and the report on plagiarism check from the system.	Students, academic supervisors, Study Office	May 24
7	Theses Review: The reviewer's appointment on the basis of a relevant directive	Academic supervisors, Academic Director	No later than 1 month before the defense of the theses
8	Theses Review: The thesis is sent to the reviewer	Study Office	No later than May 20
9	Theses Review: A review is provided to the Study Office and the students	Reviewers, Study Office	No later than 6 calendar days before the defense of the theses
10	The theses, feedbacks and reviews are provided to the SQE Board	Study Office, SQE Board	No later than 2 calendar days before the defense of the theses
11	Public Defense	Students, academic supervisors, SQE Board	Deadline shall be set forth in the SQE schedule as per the Regulations for the Final State Certification of Students of the Bachelor's, Specialist and Master's Level Programmes at National Research University Higher School of Economics

Annex B. Template of the title page

NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

St. Petersburg School of Social Sciences and Area Studies

Programme in Political Science and World Politics

The author's full name

THESIS TITLE

Thesis

in the field of study 41.03.04 «Political Science»

Reviewer

Doctor of ... Sciences, Professor

Initials and Last Name

Academic Supervisor

Doctor of ... Sciences, Professor

Initials and Last Name

Adviser

Doctor of ... Sciences, Professor

Initials and Last Name

St. Petersburg 202_

Annex C. Templates for feedback and review

National Research University Higher School of Economics		
St. Petersburg School of Social Sciences and Area Studies BA Programme in Political Science and World Politics		
Feedback of the Academic Supervisor / Review on the research thesis by		
fourth-year student of the BA Programme in Political Science and World Politics of the St. Petersburg School of Social Sciences and Area Studies		
		Full Name
on the paper:	«Topic»	
№	Evaluation Criteria	Comments
1	Justification of the relevance of the research problem, justification of the significance of the research puzzle in the context of the existing academic debate	
2	Correspondence between the topic (title), the goal, objectives, content and conclusions of the paper, the extent to which the research question has been answered in the paper	
3	Quality of the literature review: orientation within the broader literature and research field, correspondence to the state of the art within the subfield (issue area) reviewed, justification of the existing views within the academic field, as well as the research gaps	
4	Extent to which the paper demonstrates the skills of a student to apply theories and concepts to form theoretical and methodological frameworks of the research, to formulate the hypotheses / expectations (assumptions) of the study (if required by the chosen methodology)	
5	Quality of the empirical research, the demonstrated level of skills in data collection and analysis, justification and reliability of findings	
6	Coherence of the paper structure, quality of logical reasoning	
7	Conformity with the requirements for the formatting, citation rules, bibliographical references and lists	
Recommended grade (10-point scale)		
<i>Additional Comments</i>		
Academic Supervisor		<i><signature></i>
		<i>Name, academic title, subdivision</i>
		<i><date></i>

National Research University Higher School of Economics		
St. Petersburg School of Social Sciences and Area Studies BA Programme in Political Science and World Politics		
Feedback of the Academic Supervisor / Review on the project thesis by		
fourth-year student of the BA Programme in Political Science and World Politics of the St. Petersburg School of Social Sciences and Area Studies		
	Full Name	
on the paper:	«Topic»	
№	Evaluation Criteria	Comments
1	Correspondence of the topic of work (title), the goal, objectives, content and results	
2	The quality of the formulation of the policy problem, justification of the need for policy intervention, the justification of the relevance of the policy problem	
3	The quality of the analysis of the context and problem, description of the social, economic, political and other relevant conditions	
4	The quality of the policy alternatives analysis and selection, validity and feasibility of the proposed solution, the depth of its description, the use of academic and policy literature, as well as the empirical data on the public policies implementation	
5	Conformity of the paper structure with the policy paper style and structure, quality of reasoning, the relevance of the writing style to the target audience	
6	Demonstrated proficiency in the data collection and analysis methods, relevant to the goal and objectives of the paper, the use of the theories and approaches in the field of Policy Studies and Policy Analysis	
7	Conformity with the requirements for the formatting, citation rules, bibliographical references and lists	
	Recommended grade (10-point scale)	
	<i>Additional Comments</i>	
Academic Supervisor	<i><signature></i>	<i>Name, academic title, subdivision</i>
	<i><date></i>	