

Thesis Writing Guidelines

The thesis is the single most important element of the master's degree. It is a test of the student's ability both to undertake and complete a sustained piece of independent research and analysis, and to write up that research in a coherent form according to the rules and conventions of the academic community. As the official language of study at CEU is English, students are required to write the thesis in English to a standard that native speaker academics would find acceptable. A satisfactory thesis should not only be adequate in its methodology, in its analysis and in its argument, and adequately demonstrate its author's familiarity with the relevant literature; it should also be written in correct, coherent language, in an appropriate style, correctly following the conventions of citation. It should, moreover, have a logical and visible structure and development that should at all times assist the reader's understanding of the argument being presented and not obscure it. The layout and physical appearance of the thesis should also conform to university standards.

The purpose of this document is to outline the standard requirements and guidelines that a master's thesis should adhere to in the area of organization and writing skills in order to be accepted at CEU. These guidelines will not touch, or only tangentially, on questions of methodology and content, as these are likely to be subject specific, but will be limited to those issues that are generally true across disciplines. For information on discipline-specific requirements, deadlines for submission, and for documents required in preparation for the thesis, such as proposals, outlines, or annotated bibliographies, students should consult their departmental coordinator.

1. Thesis Language and Format

The thesis should be written in English. Quotations should normally be in English, with the original language included in a footnote where appropriate. Exceptions to this may be made when discipline specific guidelines permit (for example the use of Latin in Medieval Studies), or when issues such as the wording of the original language or the difference between different translations are under discussion. Other exceptions are short phrases in Latin or French typically used in English, such as '*raison d'être*' or '*inter alia*' which should be written in italics. For specific guidance in this area, students should consult their supervisor or another member of their department. Book titles, magazine titles, and newspaper titles may appear in their original language as long as English translations are given in parentheses or in a footnote. Cyrillic, Arabic and other non-Latin scripts should use their Latin equivalent. Where more than one transliteration style exists, a single style should be used consistently. Students should consult their academic writing instructor or advisor concerning proper transliteration procedures.

1.1 Ordering of parts

Parts of the thesis should be ordered as follows:

1. **Title page** **Required**
2. Copyright notice
3. **Abstract or executive summary** **Required**
4. Acknowledgements or dedications Optional
5. **Table of contents** **Required**
6. List of Figures, Tables or Illustrations Where required
7. List of Abbreviations Where required
8. **Body of the thesis** **Required**
9. Appendices Where required

10. Glossary Where required

11. Bibliography/Reference list Required

Students should consult their department as to whether any other discipline specific components should be included and if so where.

1.2 Layout and Appearance

- The thesis should be computer printed on white A4 paper, single-sided, in Times New Roman, 12pt; it should be between 50 and 80 pages¹. Double-spacing should be used in the abstract and text of the thesis. Single spacing should be used in long tables, block quotations separated from the text, footnotes, and bibliographical entries. Paragraphs should be indented, or an empty line left between paragraphs, depending on departmental requirements.
 - Margins should be one inch or 2.5 cm on all sides, and page size should be set to A4, not US letter. Pages should be numbered at the bottom in the centre, using Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3) starting with the first page of the thesis proper (i.e. the first page of the introduction). Pages prior to this should be numbered with lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii.)
 - Chapters should start on a new page, but sections and subsections should not.
- See the sample thesis page at the end of this document for an example of page layout.*

1.3 Structure of initial parts

1.3.1 Title page

The title page should provide the following information in the following order:

The full title of the thesis

The candidate's name

The department and name of the university

The statement: "In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts/Sciences"

The supervisors' names

The place of submission (Budapest, Hungary)

The year of submission

See the sample title page at the end of this document for an example of title page layout.

1.3.2 Declaration of Authorship/Copyright Notice

Some departments require a declaration of authorship or copyright notice. Students should consult their department for the specific wording.

1.3.3 Abstract or Executive Summary

The abstract should be between 100 and 250 words. It should be written in the present tense and should normally include the following information: (1) a statement of the problem the research sets out to resolve; (2) the methodology used; (3) the major findings.

1.3.4 Acknowledgements

This is an optional page acknowledging people who provided the author with assistance in the thesis project, notably, but not only the thesis supervisor.

1.3.5 Table of Contents

The thesis must have a table of contents page listing chapter headings, section headings and sub-headings, Appendices and references as well as their corresponding page number. The 'Table of Contents' feature of Microsoft Word should normally be used to create a table of

¹ Please note this sentence has been modified for the Political Science Department – other departments may have different length requirements.

contents and this should be done after final editing so that pages referred to in the table of contents are correctly numbered.

1.3.6 List of Figures, Tables or Illustrations

If appropriate, a separate list of figures, tables, or illustrations should be included on a separate page immediately following the table of contents.

1.3.7 List of Abbreviations

If the thesis makes use of a large number of abbreviations that may be unfamiliar to a reader, providing a list of them can act as a useful guide.

1.4 Structure of final parts

1.4.1 Appendices

Appendices may be needed for formulae, maps, diagrams, interview protocols, or any similar data that are not contained in the body of the thesis. These should be provided after the conclusion in the logical order they are mentioned in the main body. A list of appendices should be drawn up, each being given a consecutive number or a letter, and placed in the table of contents. If there are several appendices each should receive a title. If the thesis includes non-paper appendices such as computer data, software, or audio-visual material, students should consult departmental guidelines as to how to append and refer to these.

1.4.2 Glossary

A list of special technical words or acronyms may be necessary. This is particularly true if the subject deals with a new area with a specialized vocabulary that the average reader in the discipline might not be familiar with, such as the Internet. This list should come after the appendices.

1.4.3 Bibliography/Reference List

A list of the sources used in the thesis must be supplied which complies with the same departmental style guidelines used in the body of the thesis – this list should include *only* those sources cited in the thesis.

2. Structure of the thesis

The thesis should be divided into logical chapters and include an introduction and a conclusion. Excluding the introduction and conclusion, the thesis will normally be expected to have not less than three and not more than six chapters, unless this has been agreed with the supervisor. The chapters should reflect the nature and stages of the research.

The introduction and conclusion may either be given titles and counted as the first and last chapter, or alternatively be entitled 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion' and the first chapter after the introduction numbered Chapter 1.

2.1 Organization of the thesis

2.1.1. Introduction

The thesis should begin with a general introduction presenting an overview of what the thesis is about and situating it in the existing research. The introduction should show why the topic selected is worth investigating and why it is of significance in the field. This will normally be done with reference to existing research, identifying areas that have not been explored, need to be explored further, or where new research findings justify a reconsideration of established knowledge. Having precisely defined the research problem, the introduction should propose a response to this problem, normally in the form of a solution. This response will be formulated

as a thesis statement, in one or two sentences, and should make explicit the objective of the research, not simply state an intention to explore or discuss. The thesis statement may (typically in the second sentence, if two sentences are used) include a brief indication of the author's position or overall findings, where permitted by the department. If the nature of the research and the department require, the chosen methodology may also be introduced after the thesis statement. The final section of the introduction should briefly outline the structure of the body of the thesis. Where appropriate, this can be linked to and follow logically from the description of the methodology.

2.1.2. Conclusion

The introduction and conclusion are closely related to each other, thus students should take care in drafting and revising to ensure that these parts reflect and do not contradict one another. The conclusion should provide answers or solutions – to the extent this is possible – to the questions or problems raised in the introduction. The argumentation of the thesis should be summarized briefly, and the writer's main argument or findings restated clearly, without going into unnecessary detail or including additional arguments not dealt with in the body. The conclusion will normally be expected to return to the wider context from which the thesis departed in the introduction and place the findings in this context. The writer should, if appropriate, elaborate on how the research findings and results will contribute to the field in general and what sort of broader implications these may have. There is no need to hide the limitations of the thesis to the extent that these are appropriate to a work of this type (e.g. constraints of space, depth of research, etc.). Suggestions may be made for further research where appropriate, but this is not a requirement.

2.1.3. Literature Review

Depending on the nature of the research, the existing literature may be reviewed in the introduction or part of a chapter, or a separate literature review chapter may be appropriate. The purpose of the literature review is to summarize, evaluate and where appropriate compare those main developments and current debates in the field which are specifically relevant to the research area, according to the guiding principle embodied in the thesis statement. In effect, the literature review shows that the writer is familiar with the field and simultaneously lays the ground for subsequent analysis or presentation and discussion of empirical data, as appropriate. Well-selected sources should convince the audience that research gaps have been identified correctly and that the writer has posed the right research questions, which will then be further addressed in subsequent chapters. Rather than simply summarizing other authors' work, the chapter should make clear the writer's position in relation to the issues raised. The literature review should have a logical structure (whether by chronological, thematic or other criteria) and this should be made explicit to the reader. Like any other chapter, the literature review chapter should have its own introduction and conclusion.

2.2 Appropriate use of headings and subheadings

Headings should be distinguished from the surrounding text by a larger point size, a different font, bolding, italics, or a combination of these. All headings of the same level should use the same style, and headings at lower levels should be less prominent than those at higher levels. Example (not department specific):

<p>Chapter 2 – Title (Arial Bold Small caps 14 point) <i>2.1 Heading for section (Arial Bold Italic 12 point)</i> 2.1.1 Heading for sub-section (Times Bold 12 point)</p>
--

2.1.1.1 Heading for part of sub-section (Arial Bold 10 point)

All headings should be left-aligned, except chapter headings, which may be centred. A heading at the bottom of the page must have at least two full lines of text below it. Otherwise, the heading should begin on the next page. Captions related to visual material (graphs, tables, maps) should appear on the same page as the material itself. Chapter and section headings should be consistently numbered according to the numbering system recommended by the department. It should not normally be necessary to go beyond three levels of sections.

Examples:

Chapter I, section A, subsection 1, sub-subsection a)

or

Chapter 1, section 1.1, subsection 1.1.1, sub-subsection 1.1.1.1

All tables and figures should also be numbered, either sequentially within each section e.g. 1.1, 1.2 and then restarted sequentially in the next section e.g. 2.1, 2.2. Alternatively, they can be sequentially numbered from Table 1, Table 2, etc., throughout the whole work.

Headings should clearly reflect what the chapter or section is about, and should be expressed in the form of a concise noun phrase (normally less than one line), not a sentence. Information which is present in a higher level heading need not be repeated in a subordinate heading. Where possible, headings at the same level of hierarchy should have similar structure (e.g. *3.1 Common Law, 3.2 Continental Law*, and not *3.1 Common Law, 3.2 The Supreme Court*).

3. Text Development and Coherence

The thesis should be written for a reader who is a specialist in the discipline but not necessarily a specialist on the specific topic or question, even if the immediate supervisor is a specialist in exactly this narrow topic. The writer should take care to ensure that sentences and paragraphs flow logically from each other and do not demand knowledge the reader might not be expected to share in order to make these relationships clear. Where there is doubt as to the connection between two ideas, the onus is on the student to make this explicit not on the reader to try to deduce the connection.

3.1 Paragraph Development

A paragraph is a text unit of several sentences dealing with a single issue, topic or aspect. It should not therefore (except in special circumstances), be a single sentence, nor should it deal with a range of topics. The paragraph should develop one idea, through illustration or analysis, to a conclusion. It should normally start with a topic sentence indicating what it is about, develop this topic through further sentences until the topic is concluded and a new topic or a different aspect is ready to be broached. In linking sentences logically and coherently to one another, the writer should ensure that transition devices (e.g. *however, similarly, in consequence*, etc) are used appropriately wherever there is a danger that the connection between two sentences may be unclear. Reference back to previous sentences (e.g. *this, these, such, this question, these issues, this situation*) should also be used wherever it can help make the flow of logic clearer. When an already mentioned theme and new information about it are dealt with in one sentence, the theme should normally come first and the new information second, so as to facilitate the reader's understanding.

For more detailed guidelines on paragraph development, students should refer to the CAW course materials or the relevant CAW webpage, or consult an CAW instructor.

3.2 Transition between paragraphs

Although a well-structured paragraph is a unit in itself, paragraphs should also logically develop and flow from each other using devices similar to those that link sentences within the

paragraph. Where the reason for a shift of topic or approach might be unclear to the reader, this should be explained. Sections, like paragraphs, should have both coherence and cohesion, and should make use of appropriate linguistic devices to lead the reader logically and clearly through the stages of the writer's analysis or exposition.

4. Language and Style

The thesis should be written in an appropriate formal academic style. While it is not possible to prescribe the use or avoidance of the first person or the passive, or the length of sentences, students should make efforts to use the resources available to them, such as style manuals recommended by their department, the CAW course materials or the relevant CAW webpage to assess whether their written style is appropriate to their discipline. Excessive or superfluous use of jargon or technical terms should be avoided and any term or acronym that would not be understood by a non-specialist reader *within the discipline* should be explained and/or included in a glossary. The thesis should wherever possible use gender neutral language, avoiding the use of male-specific words such as 'man' or 'chairman' where these could be considered inappropriately exclusive or discriminatory.

Students should make every effort to ensure that the thesis is free from grammatical, lexical and punctuation errors. Not only should a computer spellchecker be used, but the student should also proof-read the thesis to check that errors do not remain that are not detected by the spellchecker. The thesis should consistently use **either** American **or** British spelling but should not alternate between the two. Students should also be aware that the punctuation rules of English are almost certainly different from those of their own language and should familiarize themselves with and apply the rules of English.

When using numbers in the text, numbers up to one hundred should normally be written in words, and if the first word of a sentence is a number it should be written in words. Numbers above one hundred are usually written as numerals (101, 102). For precise guidance, students should consult the style manual recommended by their department.

It is the student's duty to use the available resources during the year so as to master the skills necessary to write a thesis that is as far as possible error free, and so as to be able to proof-read that thesis and correct their own errors. Details of the precise use of punctuation can be found in "A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations" by Kate Turabian and also on the CAW website. The CAW website also includes resources for the learning and correction of grammar points. Further grammar resources are available in the CEU Multimedia Library.

5. Use of sources and citation style

All source materials, primary or secondary, published or unpublished that are the intellectual property of authors or institutions other than the writer of the thesis must be credited and correctly cited in full, including illustrations, charts, tables, etc. *Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism and will result automatically in a failing grade.* Students' attention is drawn to the following extract from CEU's policy document, "Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism"

Plagiarizing, that is, the offering as one's own work the words, ideas, or arguments of another person without appropriate attribution by quotation, reference or footnote [is a violation of the academic integrity code]. Plagiarism occurs both when the words of another are reproduced without acknowledgement, and when the ideas or arguments of another are paraphrased in such a way as to lead the reader to believe that they originated with the writer. It is the responsibility of all University students to understand the methods of proper attribution and to apply those principles in all materials submitted.²

² "Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism," as printed in *Administrative Policy Papers*, (Central European University, 1996) no.25.

5.1 Use of Citation Styles

All citations should include a reference in the body of the text to the author as well as an entry in the bibliography/reference list. The thesis should consistently use a single citation style as specified by the department, following the Turabian manual distributed to students at the start of the academic year (unless otherwise agreed with the supervisor. For further information on the use of sources, students should refer to the CAW course materials and/or the following CAW webpages:

5.2 Quotation, paraphrase and summary

Source material should be quoted where the precise wording is specifically relevant or significant, and the quotation always clearly marked as required by the citation style, including page numbers. Sources may be paraphrased or summarized where exact wording is not essential, but care should be taken not to change the original meaning through paraphrase, and all paraphrased and summarized sources must be fully cited, including page numbers. Where a quotation has been changed (for example, capitalization, punctuation, emphasis changed or a pronoun replaced by a noun), the changes should be clearly indicated according to the citation style used.

Although interaction with existing research in the field is a requirement for all academic writing, no part of the thesis should normally consist purely of summarizing the work of others, unless approved by the supervisor. Summarized or quoted source material should not be left to stand on its own, but should be introduced, explained, analyzed and the purpose of its use made clear. Where different sources are compared or contrasted, it should be made explicit to the reader both that this is being done and why.

Care should be taken to ensure that the reader is in no doubt as to where a cited author's ideas end and the comments of the author of the thesis begin. Where there is doubt, the cited author's name (or s/he) can be used in the sentence with an appropriate verb reporting what that person has said so as to distinguish it from the ideas of the author of the thesis.

5.3 Data Commentary

Where data is provided in the form of charts, figures or tables, it should be effectively commented. This includes not only a clear reference in the text to the table or figure in which the reader can find the data (e.g. 'as table 1 shows'), and a summary of what the data shows. Trends or irregularities should also be highlighted and the more important findings separated from those that are less important. The commentary should not simply repeat in sentences all the information presented in the diagram but should also discuss implications, problems and/or exceptions in relation to the data in question. As with any other material taken from the work of other researchers, the source of the table, graph, illustration, figure or related materials must be stated at the bottom or in a footnote as specified in the departmental style guidelines.

Concluding comments

It is the duty of the student to ensure that the thesis meets the standards described above, and the duty of the supervisor and department to ensure that the student takes the necessary steps to meet these requirements. Where a thesis fails to meet the requirements in one or more areas, it may be returned for revision and resubmission, or in the case of plagiarism, a failing grade awarded. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the above guidelines and to seek help from the support facilities provided by the university (CAW, Multimedia Library, assistance from relevant faculty, etc.) whenever necessary and in good time.

Sample Title Page

SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES IN POST-COMMUNIST RUTHENIA

By
Anna Other

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of.....

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of ...

Supervisor: Professor Mary Lamb

Budapest, Hungary
(2010)

CHAPTER 1: CAUSES OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

A number of seemingly convincing explanations has been offered to account for the reasons *why* countries decide to develop nuclear weapons. However, nobody challenges the argument that perception of external threats plays a fundamental role in driving the countries to develop their nuclear weapons programs. This chapter assesses these different explanations and argues in favor of the traditional, security threat-based explanation as the most pertinent to the Indian-Pakistani conflict.

1.1 Alternative Theoretical Explanations for Nuclear Proliferation

Acquisition of the nuclear weapons provides states with a powerful means of leverage in international conflicts. Different theories in the realm of International Relations suggest alternative explanations for the causes of nuclear proliferation. While all of them contribute to our understanding of *why* nations want nuclear weapons, the explanation provided by the realist/neo-realist school still dominates all the others. It argues that the external threats perceived from the real or potential adversaries, especially nuclear ones, force the states to acquire nuclear weapons to be able to protect themselves by threatening to retaliate in kind, which in turn, causes a security dilemma. This explanation appears to be the most relevant and applicable to the Indian-Pakistani case³ for the reasons that will be further elaborated here.

1.1.1 The Security Threat-Based Explanation

While the debate in IR theory over the causes of states' decisions to acquire nuclear weapons and engage in an arms race is divided, many policymakers and most international relations scholars agree on the traditional and perhaps the most powerful and convincing expl-

³ For this suggestion, see Joshua Goldstein, *International Relations* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 68, 205

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Electronic Theses and Dissertation Publishing

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2007

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