

## **Department of Political Science**

### **Policy on the Submission and Evaluation of MA Theses**

Students complete their studies at the MA level by submitting and publicly defending an MA thesis. The final version of the MA thesis has to be submitted by the very beginning of June (please see the academic calendar for the exact date). The thesis is considered submitted when the program coordinator receives three identical hard copies, two properly bound and one loose. Students must submit an electronic copy in Word for Windows or Rich Text and another copy in PDF format. All MA theses must be also uploaded to the CEU Library's Electronic Thesis Database (ETD).

Students are advised to not take more than four courses in the Winter Term in order to be able to concentrate on writing their thesis.

The deadline for choosing an MA thesis topic and supervisor is in January (see the departmental policy on MA thesis supervisor choice). Students are required to submit a formal research proposal of at least 2,500 words for their MA thesis in the second semester of their program (see the departmental calendar for the exact date). The proposal should identify and situate the topic and the research question within the broader field, with reference to appropriate theory; show a plan of the investigation that the thesis will employ to answer the question; indicate and justify the methodology as appropriate; and preferably indicate, if this is possible in advance, the overall argument of the thesis. The proposals will be distributed to the supervisors, and will be discussed in a series of thesis workshops. Supervisors and students have to meet and discuss the research proposal after the workshops concluded. Failure to meet the deadlines for submission of thesis drafts and/or to participate in the workshop will affect the final grade in the Thesis Workshop class and/or the MA thesis.

Students are required to submit an at least 5,000-words-long first draft of their thesis by deadline set in the departmental calendar for the given MA program. This draft should demonstrate the feasibility of their work and, preferably, is to concentrate on the overall argument of the thesis (it could, e.g., take the form of an outline or a methodology of the thesis, or of an introductory chapter). Handing in brief introductory statements or literature reviews beforehand is welcome, but cannot be accepted as a substitute for satisfying the above requirement.

An Ad Hoc Committee assigns each draft to a member of the faculty who serves as its anonymous referee. Each draft is evaluated, either as "all right", or as "problematic". In case of a "problematic" status of a draft, the Committee arranges that the supervisor(s) confers with the referee about the status of the draft. Upon this conferral, the "problematic" status of the draft is either confirmed, in which case the student is notified; or, alternatively, the evaluation is upgraded and the draft is accepted. No one will be disqualified from passing to the June defense phase at this point; neither will the evaluation of the first draft affect the final grade of the thesis.

Students are required to consult with a member of the Centre for Academic Writing on their draft version(s) of the formal research proposal as well as on their first draft to eliminate fundamental structural and stylistic problems before submitting their work.

Students in the two-year MA program must register for Thesis Writing in their second year of study and must submit a second draft of their thesis in the third teaching semester of their program (see the departmental calendar for the exact date).

A full draft of the thesis has to be handed in before the end of May (see the departmental calendar for the exact date) by all students. Supervisor(s) decide whether a student may pass to the June defense phase by June. Students who are not allowed to pass to the June defense phase can appeal, in writing, to the Ad Hoc Committee for reverse judgment. It is to be understood that only under the most exceptional circumstances can such an appeal be heard favorably. Students who are not allowed to defend in June have two more years to submit and to defend their thesis. If they defend it before October 1 their grade will be lowered with one grade point. The grade of those who defend the thesis later, within the two year period granted by university rules, will be lowered with two grade points (best grade is B+). In such cases the oral defense will be replaced by a written evaluation of the thesis.

Students can request a deferral of the submission of their MA thesis if medical problems or other extraordinary personal circumstances prevent them either from completing the thesis by the deadline or from appearing at the public defense as originally scheduled. The request must be submitted by June 1st to the Head of Department in written, and clearly specify the reason. The Head of the Department may ask the claimant to provide appropriate medical or other evidence supporting the request. If satisfactory reasons are provided for the deferral, the Head of the Department can accept the request and will establish a new deadline for the submission of thesis in consultation with the thesis supervisor. In these cases, the final grade will not be affected by the deferral.

Oral defense is scheduled to take place after thesis submission. Each thesis is assessed by at least two CEU faculty members, and the thesis grade will be given based upon the written evaluations by the faculty and the oral defense. The thesis will be graded according to the grading scheme of the university. A minimum grade of C+ is required in order to receive the MA degree, subject to having completed all other requirements. The Master's thesis represents 8 credits in the one-year MA program and 20 ECTS in the two-year MA program.

The following criteria may be viewed as a guideline of how grades for theses are determined:

A – the thesis shows originality and a high degree of conceptual sophistication in its critical examination of theoretical and empirical knowledge and contributes to the existing literature in the field;

A-/B+ – the thesis demonstrates analytic ability and a mastery of the subject matter and relevant theoretical material

B/B- – the thesis shows adequate rather than excellent level of mastery of the subject matter and relevant theoretical material

C+ – the thesis presents ideas unclearly, suffers from several weaknesses and misunderstandings regarding the relevant literature, leaves the argumentation insufficiently developed.

F – the thesis lacks a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and the academic literature. It does not demonstrate any analytic ability and/or suffers of major errors in applying research methods or theoretical knowledge.

In case of plagiarism offences, the thesis is graded as fail (F), without the possibility of resubmission.

The defense committee may decide that the thesis has been successfully defended but announces the received grade only upon departmental confirmation. The final grades are decided in a separate departmental meeting, which also tries to ensure the comparability of grading across the department.

In case of a fail grade, the student may be invited to write a new thesis. The grade of re-submitted theses can be maximum a Retake Pass (RP in the value of C+). In case of a failed thesis, the student receives a transcript of studies but no MA diploma.