

International Relations/Political Science Department
Guidelines for the Master's Thesis
January 2015

This document is a demonstration that the student is knowledgeable about both the broad aspects of a particular body of scholarly literature, and that s/he has the ability to ask and answer a research question relevant to that literature and to noteworthy aspects of international relations and/or domestic politics. Concretely, students should submit a document the body of which is between 45 and 60 double-spaced pages (there are also likely to be anywhere from 20-50 works cited in the references), of potentially publishable quality, organized as follows and covering the following points

1. Introduction

- What is the real-world phenomenon of interest and what is its significance?
- What precisely is the question that one wishes to ask about the phenomenon?

2. Literature Review

- What does the existing scholarly literature say about the question and in what ways do the contributions of that literature fall short of a satisfactory answer?

3. Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

- What is a better way of potentially answering the question?
- What specific hypotheses are suggested by that potentially better way of answering the question?

4. Research Design/Approach and Methods

- What type of inferential scheme (cases which vary on key elements of the hypothesis) was used to assess the hypothesis?
- What are the units of analysis for the cases (i.e., what are the administrative, spatial, and temporal boundaries of the cases)?
- What is the population from which the cases were drawn and what potential inferential threats were posed by the particular selection of cases?
- What are the definitions of the key concepts in the hypothesis?
- How was each concept be measured: what are the indicators, what are the information sources, how was the information coded?

5. Presentation of Original Research and Analysis

- What the evidence suggest for the hypotheses?

6. Conclusion and Discussion

- What the broader implications of the evidence are for future research and for substantive issues?

More specific discussion on the elements and expectations of the thesis should be conducted *with the primary thesis divisor*.