

**MA THESIS GUIDELINES  
FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

***CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY***

**Last revised April, 2021**

## **MA THESIS GUIDELINES**

This guide provides information concerning the thesis project. It includes deadlines and important instructions on the formatting and construction of your thesis as established by the Department of History of the Central European University.

### **General Overview**

The thesis is a scholarly work, an extensive analytical research paper relying on both primary sources and secondary literature, written in English with grammatical accuracy and in good academic style. The thesis must identify an adequate research topic, which includes a manageable field of research involving a number of original questions to investigate. The narrative must contain an original argument, show knowledge of the literature in the field, and demonstrate analytic faculties through the careful and critical use of the sources, the relevant concepts and approaches. Theses must also conform to the departmental academic style guidelines.

### **Important Deadlines**

Throughout the year, the Department of History has a number of deadlines to assist you in conceptualizing and finishing your thesis within the prescribed schedule. The procedure for completing these tasks is to submit them to the Academic Writing Instructor for review, then to your advisor(s). For the Thesis Proposal and the Selection of Two Advisors, there is the additional requirement of submitting a digital copy to the Coordinator of the one-year MA program.

### **Department Deadlines**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Thesis Title and Advisors	November 20, 2020
Thesis Proposal	January 15, 2021
Research Chapter	May 10, 2021
Spring Thesis Workshops	May 17–25, 2021
<b>Thesis Submission</b>	<b>June 16, Wednesday, noon</b>
<b>Thesis Defenses</b>	<b>June 18-24, 2021</b>

### **Academic Writing Class Deadlines**

Thesis Proposal (Academic Writing)	January 10, 2021
Annotated Bibliography (Academic Writing)	February 6, 2021
Working Introduction (Academic Writing)	March 6, 2021

## **Thesis Title and Academic Advisors**

Students are required to submit to the One-Year MA Coordinator information designating a primary advisor, a second reader, and the title of the MA Thesis.

## **Choosing Your Academic Advisors (Supervisor and Second reader)**

The Department does not assign supervisors *ex officio* to students. The supervisors and second readers need to be selected by the students themselves. In this process, they are welcome to rely on advice from relevant departmental faculty, especially the Head of the Department and the Director of the One-Year MA Program. The supervisor and second reader allocations are discussed at a faculty meeting, which may then advise alternatives. If changes in a thesis topic justify it, it is possible to alter one's supervisor at the beginning of the Winter Term.

## **Class Attendance**

*Regular attendance is mandatory in all classes. Students may miss up to two units (two 100-minute sessions) in any 2 or 4 credit class without giving an explanation for their absence. Any further absence without a verified reason beyond the student's control will be made up for by an 8-10 page paper assigned by the Professor, as a rule covering the material of the class missed. The paper has to be submitted not later than three weeks after the missed class.*

## **Thesis Proposal**

This is a 4-8 page paper describing your thesis project. It should include a clear thesis statement (or hypothesis), the "thesis question", the focus of your thesis, and a structured outline of the planned treatment of your subject, possibly divided into sections under prospective chapter headings; a preliminary list of sources, the location of those sources, and the anticipated results of the project. This is to be submitted to your Academic Writing Instructor for review and then submitted to the Academic Coordinator by the designated date.

## **Annotated Bibliography of Sources**

The Annotated Bibliography is a list of possible sources and their expected contribution to your thesis project. This is a preliminary list of sources you plan to consult when conducting your research on your thesis. It contains short descriptions and evaluations of ten major bibliographic items to be used for your project. These will be either books or articles/studies within books or journals. The purpose is to provide your advisor(s) with a potential list of sources and allow your advisor(s) to recommend further sources and/or comment on the sources listed in the bibliography. This is to be submitted to your Academic Writing Instructor for review and then discussed in a meeting with your advisor.

## **Working Introduction**

To write a fitting introduction, you need to have acquired a mature knowledge of the subject of the thesis and even familiarity with the main text. Therefore, a good academic essay writer puts the final touches to the Introduction at the very end of the project, perhaps even after the Conclusion has been finalized. Nonetheless, it is a necessary part of the systematic build-up of thesis work to have a Working Introduction ready before the research (and possible theory) chapters are embarked on. The final text may differ from this working draft significantly.

There are wide variations for the implementation of this assignment. It may or may not contain a theoretical framework essay, and it may or may not contain a major historiographical-bibliographical assessment. Yet, it is possible to provide general guidance. The Working Introduction ordinarily contains a thesis statement, describing the central, controlling idea that drives the inquiry contained in the main body of the thesis. It may delineate the significance of the subject-matter among related areas. The Introduction briefly situates the idea behind the subject-matter in an academic context, focuses the reader's attention and generates expectations on the part of the reader. It may contain comments regarding specific terminology or special sources that will be used in the thesis. The length of the Working (and final) Introduction should not exceed 5-15 pages.

A separate set of rules will be handed to you by the Academic Writing instructors of the Center for Academic Writing which prescribes, among other things, the number of mandatory consultations with the AW instructors during the periods of preparation for the various assignments.

## **Thesis Seminar: The First Research Chapter Draft and Framework Essay**

Assisted by your academic advisors, your research project will evolve during the fall term from the planning stage into a more or less definite structure. In the Thesis Seminar, you will present the state of your work and develop it in discussion with other students and the class instructor. You will present a draft of your first research-based thesis chapter as well as a framework essay. The draft of the research chapter, about 10-12 pages (3500-4500 words) in length, will be prepared under the guidance of the seminar instructor and the academic advisors and, if necessary, with assistance from the academic writing instructors. The draft may not be a chapter of introductory or theoretical character, but *must* be based on primary source research. The draft chapter, which will be circulated to your peers, your supervisor and the instructor, should analyze a major aspect of the thesis topic, reflect your conceptual approach as well as the interpretation of the sources you have studied thus far. A provisional title and draft table of contents of the entire thesis must be added to the chapter.

Each thesis project is embedded in its unique framework of theoretical and technical approaches, as well as applied research methods. The Framework Essay of approximately 3 pages (1000-1200 words) that you will write, present and discuss in class will reflect the individual needs and characteristics of your project. This essay can evolve into a separate

chapter of your thesis, into a part of the Introduction, or into a series of reflections that you will integrate in appropriate contexts of the empirical research chapters.

You will also be required to intellectually engage with the chapters of all of your peers and voice criticism and helpful suggestions in class. You will write a report on the seminar discussion concerning your research chapter and subsequently rework it.

## **Research Chapter**

On return from the research break, you will be required to submit to your academic advisor a complete chapter of your thesis, which is the result of the research work that you have carried out and addresses the core issues of the subject of your thesis. In most cases, this chapter will constitute the basis of your presentation at the Thesis Workshops. The purpose is to receive preliminary comments and advice before you make the presentation or incorporate the chapter into the wider context of your thesis.

## **Thesis Workshops**

During the month of May, all one-year MA students will have the opportunity to present one chapter of their thesis to their colleagues and faculty at the MA Thesis Workshops. Students are assigned to workshop groups of about 8-10 students, headed by a faculty member. Students circulate a copy of their chapter to the other students in the group prior to their presentation to allow peer critiques. Supervisors are usually present during the presentation of the research chapters.

## **Thesis Submission**

Three bound copies should be delivered to the Academic Coordinator of the Department of History by the required date of submission.

The final electronic version of the thesis also has to be uploaded to the “ETD database”, which is stored in the thesis/dissertation collection of the CEU Library. The theses stored in this database are accessible online according to the distribution option set by the author. The Computer Center will organize tutorials in May (well before the task is due) on the uploading process, where you will learn:

- How to structure and format your thesis correctly for uploading;
- How to convert a thesis into a PDF file in the required format;
- and the exact process of uploading the final pdf file.

The deadline for the submission of the MA theses will be announced by the Department. It is unalterable and must be met by all students who wish to fulfill the academic requirements. In

very exceptional cases, the department may grant postponement of submission. These cases may be one of two kinds:

1. When a student, during the months of March or April, realizes that his/her research has not yielded a sufficient quality or quantity of material to bring the thesis to completion by the current graduation period, he/she may then request temporary withdrawal from the program. Temporary withdrawal on this basis must be initiated before the start of the Spring Session. The request must be supported by the supervisor's recommendation and followed by the establishment of a final and non-negotiable deadline for submitting the thesis after the summer break.

2. Where circumstances demonstrably beyond a particular student's control (e.g. serious health, family, personal safety or technical issues) prevent submission within the deadline, postponement of submission may be initiated. This must be agreed on with the supervisor and the program director, reported to the department via the coordinators, and supported by relevant (medical or other) documents.

In all other cases of late submission, a grade penalty will apply: the passing of each 36-hour cycle calculated from the deadline entails the deduction of one grade during the evaluation of the thesis. (E.g.: 72 hours of delay means that the best possible grade for the thesis is B+ instead of A.)

## **Thesis Defense**

The Thesis Defense is a composite oral examination scheduled for the last week of the Spring Session. It is an approximately 50-minute academic discussion of which the Thesis discussion takes up most of the available time. The two-member Examination Committee is chaired by the Second Reader of the MA thesis; the other member of the Committee is the First Supervisor of the examinee.

The Defense part begins with a brief statement by the student on the principal findings of the thesis, and continues with the examiners' observations, questions and comments. Following the defense stage, the Examination Committee will lead the panel in asking the candidate two or three additional questions. These supplementary questions will aim to explore the wider conceptual, geographical and temporal contexts of the candidate's research questions and his/her answers proposed in the MA thesis.

A document entitled "Protocol for Conducting Thesis Defenses in Master of Arts Programs in the Department of History at CEU", explaining the examination procedure in full detail, is attached to the end of these guidelines.

## **Grading Assessment of the MA Thesis**

Theses in the 1yMA program are graded according to criteria of substantive argumentation, original findings, and style. Theses deemed worthy of the "A" grade must exhibit high quality in all three domains - excellence in one cannot compensate for shortcomings in another. The presentation of the argument should be such that the generalist reader can readily ascertain the scholarly stakes even if certain subtleties are lost, while the specialist reader can easily identify the relationship of the thesis to a larger body of literature and not detect serious gaps. The quality of argumentation is assessed at multiple levels: with respect to key concepts and theoretical approaches employed in the wider profession, practical engagement with more circumscribed debates, or simply the consistent use of working terminology throughout the body of the thesis. The best theses will also demonstrate a reflexive awareness of how the problem addressed may, in turn, shed light on the scope and uses of historical inquiry. All theses should show mastery of source work, whether archival documents, published works, oral interviews, etc. The best theses employ a sophisticated apparatus of empirical demonstration that is sensitive to the ethics of accuracy and is capable of weaving together disparate source genres in an original fashion. Regardless of region or era, method or sources, each thesis should further exemplify fluency in presentation, aiming to win the reader through polished prose and rhetorical sophistication.

## **The Hanák Prize**

The Department of History awards the Péter Hanák Prize for the best thesis defended in each of its two MA programs. This prize, named in honor of the founding Chair of the Department, has been awarded annually since 1998; the names of the laureates are published on <http://history.ceu.hu/hanakprizewinners>. Prize winners are chosen on the basis of nominations by supervisors and evaluations by a committee of faculty members.

## **THESIS FORMAT**

### **Length**

The thesis should be about 18,000-22,000 words in length including footnotes, but not the bibliography and appendices.

### **Language**

The thesis must be written in English. Quotations from foreign languages must be translated into English, while the original language text may be included in a footnote. The only exceptions to this are short quotations in Latin or French. Book, journal, and newspaper titles may appear in their original languages as long as English translations are given in parentheses at the first occurrence. Cyrillic, Arabic and other non-Latin scripts must be transcribed into Latin script. Consult with your academic writing instructor or advisor concerning proper transliteration procedures.

In summary, the thesis is an extensive analytical research paper relying on both primary sources and secondary literature, written in good academic style.

### **Fonts**

Most 12-point fonts are acceptable. It is recommended to use Arial or Times New Roman or Garamond font.

### **Margins**

Use 2.5 cm margins on the top, bottom, and right on your A4 size papers. The left margin must be 2.8 cm to compensate for binding, and always justify your text on the right margins.

### **Spacing**

Use double-spacing in the abstract and text of the thesis. Apply single spacing in long tables, quotations separated from the text, footnotes, and bibliographical entries.

Be careful not to leave subheadings at the bottom of the page. If a subheading is not followed at least by two lines of text, move it to the top of the next page.

See the Turabian *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* for specific instructions regarding spacing of other materials.

## Page Numbering

Page numbers are required on all main body text of the thesis. Page number placement may be on the top or bottom of the page. However, the location should be consistent throughout the thesis. All page numbers in the main body of the thesis should be Arabic numerals. Page number placement begins on the acknowledgment page.

## Footnotes

Either footnotes or endnotes may be used in the thesis. Embedded citation is not permitted. Footnotes should conform to the margins of the paper. They are to be written in the same font as used in the thesis but in 10-point size.

Footnotes should follow the Turabian *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. For citation of material not included in the manual, consult the Academic Writing Instructor.

## Tables, Graphs and Figures

Tables, graphs, illustrations, figures, and related materials should be numbered and titled by a system that makes them uniquely identifiable. The source should be stated at the bottom of the table, graph, illustration, figure or related materials. There is no requirement to list these separately, however it is recommended to create a *List of Illustrations* after your Table of Contents at the beginning of your thesis.

## The Components of the Thesis

The optional and required components of the thesis are listed below.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Optional/Required</b>
Title Page	Required
Copyright Notice	Required
Abstract	Required
Acknowledgments	Optional
Preface	Optional
Table of Contents	Required
List of Tables/Illustrations	Optional
Introduction	Required
Framework chapter	Optional
Body of Thesis	Required
Appendices	Optional
End(Notes)	(If endnotes are used)
Bibliography	Required

## **Title Page**

Using the sample provided at the end of this guide, the Title Page is to contain the following information:

The full title of the thesis

The candidate's name

The year of submission

The department and name of the university

The place of submission (Vienna, Austria)

The supervisors' names

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

## **Statement of Copyright**

The following statement is located on the page immediately preceding the title page.

"Copyright in the text of this thesis rests with the Author. Copies by any process, either in full or part, may be made only in accordance with the instructions given by the Author and lodged in the Central European Library. Details may be obtained from the librarian. This page must form a part of any such copies made. Further copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the written permission of the Author."

## **Abstract**

The abstract is a two-three paragraph summary of the thesis project. It includes a brief statement of the problem, a description of the methods/techniques, and major findings.

## **Acknowledgment Page**

This is an optional page that acknowledges those that provided the author with assistance in the thesis project.

## **Table of Contents**

This page contains a list of Chapter titles, Headings and Sub-headings of Chapters, Appendices and References as well as their corresponding page number.

It is recommended that a separate *List of Tables, Figures, Illustrations*, etc. follow the Table of Contents page.

## **Introduction**

The introduction must contain a brief statement of the issue under discussion, outline the scope of the issue, and describe the general character of the thesis. (See detailed notes on the Working Introduction above.)

## **Main Body**

These pages contain the body of your thesis divided into chapters. Each chapter must begin on a new page. The first page of each chapter contains the title of the chapter.

## **Appendices**

This is not a required component but may be included for some theses. Its purpose is to include supplementary information, original data, and other such relevant material.

## **Bibliography**

These pages contain a list of sources cited and consulted during the thesis project. There are several techniques for the division of sources. Consult Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (the Chicago Manual of Style) for appropriate techniques for subdividing the Bibliography. Be careful for citation consistency, meaning that all cited works should appear in the bibliography, but no items should be listed that are not cited.

(Sample title page)

# **THE HISTORY OF HISTORY**

By

Zora H. Hopeful

Submitted to  
Central European University  
Department of History

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Thomas Serious  
Second Reader: Professor Flora Goodall

Vienna, Austria

2021

## **Protocol for Conducting Thesis Defenses in Master of Arts Programs in the Department of History at CEU**

The Thesis Defense is a composite examination which candidates studying for MA degrees at the Department of History have to pass as the final academic requirement to qualify for receiving their degrees. The Thesis Defense follows one (in the case of the One-Year MA Program) or two (in the case of the Two-Year MA Program) academic years of course work, supervised academic research, and the submission of an MA thesis.

### The Examination Committee

The Examination is conducted by a two-member Examination Committee chaired by the Second Reader of the MA thesis. The second member of the Committee is the First Supervisor of the examinee. The main Supervisor of the thesis has to be a member of CEU.

### Thesis Defense

The first part of the examination comprises the detailed Defense of the MA thesis. The Defense begins with a brief statement by the student on the principal findings of the thesis. In the course of the Defense, the student should be prepared to answer questions and respond to comments and critique about his or her thesis from the Thesis Supervisor and the Second Reader – both of whom, as academic advisors, will have been familiar with the thesis research and writing. These questions may concern any substantive, formal, conceptual, structural, source- as well as terminology-related issues that they deem relevant. The inquiry also allows the student to amend, improve, highlight, correct or explain points and aspects of the thesis that the examiners identify for this purpose. This part of the examination is best conducted in the form of a conversation, an exchange of ideas.

### Additional examination questions

Following the Defense stage, both Members of the Examining Committee will ask two or three additional questions from the candidate. These supplementary questions, unlike those asked during the Defense stage, do not directly involve the particular subjects discussed in the thesis itself, nor do they constitute an examination of general historical knowledge or a testing of the student's ability to revisit and explain concrete problem areas analyzed in earlier course work. Instead, this part of the examination aims to explore how the student explains the meaning and significance of the research questions posed in the MA thesis. Questions will typically focus on events, dominant personalities, phenomena, concepts or narratives that run chronologically and/or geographically parallel to or concentrically around the historical problem areas discussed in the thesis and which explain the wider historical context in which the thesis may be interpreted.

This second stage of the examination should take less time than the defense: about one quarter to one third of the total length of the examination.

### Announcement of the Examination Grade

Following the defense and the additional questions stages, the candidate is asked to leave the examination room, whereupon a short discussion takes place among the examiners about the grading of the thesis and of the examination. This comprises two grades, both of which will appear in the SITS record of academic results and in the graduate's transcript:

1. *Final Grade for the MA Thesis* (arising from the aggregate of the grade for the written thesis as agreed by the Supervisor and the Second Reader), and
2. *Oral Grade for the MA Thesis Defense* (based on the oral part of the exam, and agreed by the two examiners)

The student will be invited back into the room and will be told the grades.

### Minutes

Detailed minutes, entered into a standardized pre-printed form, will be kept by the examiners. These contain the Grades for the written MA Thesis (given separately by the two advisors), the Final Grade for the Thesis, the grade granted for the Oral Exam (defense of the Thesis and additional questions).

The form also includes the Supervisor's ETD-approval and notes, if correction is needed on the Thesis, before the Library's Electronic Theses Database submission.

At his/her request, the examinee should be given the opportunity to see these minutes.

### Length of the Examination

The Examination should last between 40 and 50 minutes with the Thesis Defense taking up most of the available time.