

**THESIS GUIDELINES**  
**FOR THE TWO-YEAR MA PROGRAM**  
**OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

*CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY*

**Last reviewed August, 2022**

## Thesis Guidelines for the Two-year MA Program

### General Overview

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

### Important Deadlines

The Department of History has set up over the two years of studies several deadlines that will assist you in conceptualizing, advancing, and finishing your thesis project within the prescribed time frame. Before each deadline, allow the necessary time to consult your draft with your advisor(s) and to submit it to the Academic Writing Instructor for review and possible revision. You should finally send it as an email attachment to the destination specified in the following list. For the Thesis Prospectus, there is the additional requirement of submitting a digital copy to the Two-Year MA Coordinator.

### Departmental Deadlines for the 2-year MA Thesis in 2022-2023

#### Assignment

#### Due Date

##### *First year*

Determination of Advisors (Dept. Office)

March 15, 2023

Draft Prospectus (Prospectus Workshop)

April 28, 2023

Prospectus Submission (Dept. Office)

June 9, 2023, 12:00 noon

Prospectus Defense

June 13-16, 2023

##### *Second year*

First Research Chapter (Thesis Seminar)

November - December 2022

Working Introduction (Thesis Seminar)

March 2023

Framework Essay (Thesis Seminar)

March-April 2023

Second Research Chapter (Thesis Workshop)

Early May 2023

Thesis submission (Dept. Office)

**June 13, Tuesday, 12:00 noon**

Thesis defense

**June 15-21, 2023**

## **The First Year**

### **Fall Term: Academic Writing I**

You will attend formal academic writing courses during the Fall Term of the first year (1<sup>st</sup> term) and the Winter Term of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year (5<sup>th</sup> term). The first-term course has the form of weekly sessions and will provide training and evaluation in writing essays and research papers and in giving seminar presentations.

Exemption may be granted from attending the AW classes for native speakers and those with an MA in English literature or English language teaching. The exemption has to be applied for, and the decision to grant it depends on the evaluation of work submitted by the end of week 3.

### **Winter Term: MA Thesis Planning Seminar**

The first and second terms of the program serve to establish the groundwork of wider historical knowledge and skills. During the Winter Term, a mandatory Thesis Planning Seminar will detail and discuss the common tasks of research organization among the entire cohort of first-year MA students from History as well as Medieval Studies. In the main part of the seminar, discussion will turn to the individual challenge and potential of each project. To this end, you will form separate working groups according to the specific characteristics of your research. By the end of the Spring Session, you will be asked for an informed decision regarding your thesis title, your preliminary proposal ("MA Thesis Prospectus"), and the choice of your academic advisors.

### **Spring Session: MA Thesis Prospectus Workshop**

April is designated at CEU as a research period. During your first year, you will be encouraged to pursue research in primary and secondary sources that you can obtain at your place of residence during that time, be it Vienna or your home country.

During the Spring Session in May, you will demonstrate the fruits of your preliminary research at the mandatory MA Thesis Prospectus Workshop, which is organized for students in History and in Medieval Studies. In this workshop, you will present, discuss and revise the draft version of your MA Thesis Prospectus. You will submit in June a definitive version of the prospectus and defend it in front of a committee formed by your advisors.

### **Contents and structure of the MA Thesis Prospectus**

The purpose of the MA Thesis Prospectus is to expound in broad terms the *relevance*, the guiding ideas and the *feasibility* of the proposed thesis. It should comprise 5 to 10 pages.

The MA Thesis Prospectus should consist of the following components:

1. *Provisional Title*. The Provisional Title ought to be broad (comprehensive, inclusive) enough to accommodate relevant theoretical discussion. At the same time, it should be concrete enough to delineate a certain field of research in terms of subject-matter, geographical space, and periodization.

2. *Names of prospective supervisor and second reader* (and optionally, a third committee member)

3. *Thesis Statement*. This will outline

- a) the core problem;
- b) the “state of the art,” that is, the existing research literature;
- c) the gaps in research;
- d) the questions that remain;
- e) an explication of why the missing knowledge is worth discovering.

4. A short note on prospective *Sources* based on secondary literature and eventually some degree of preliminary exploration should characterize:

- a) their category (printed, manuscript, oral, visual, material), their character and location;
- b) the extent to which they were treated in previous research;
- c) expected problems of accessibility, over-abundance or scarcity;

5. *Framework (Approaches, Theory, Methodology)*. This section explains in one or two pages the theoretical approach(es) to the subject-matter that seems most promising as a framework of the thesis. Methodologies used by other authors writing on similar topics should be explored. The limitations, if any, of the applicability of such methods for the proposed research should also be noted.

6. *Structure of the Future Thesis*. This is a provisional table of contents, which should enumerate the partplanned chapters and possibly subdivisions of the future thesis. This is, of course, a temporary table, yet important in creating, focusing and explaining the internal logic and emphases of the planned project.

7. *Difficulties Envisaged*. All projects contain components that pose special challenges. It may be the scarcity, over-abundance, or location of sources; the prospective difficulties in their interpretation; your present lack of necessary language skills; the problem of finding or creating a suitable analytical approach, etc. This is the section to note this aspect with proposed remedies.

8. *Working Bibliography*. The bibliography should contain works of demonstrable relevance to the topic, arranged into sections of primary and secondary literature, with possible further subdivisions within the latter category according to the genre and/or various aspects of the topic. The bibliography should comprise at least 10 items (books and/or articles) and at most three pages.

### **The prospectus defense**

The prospectus must be defended in a forty-minute discussion session with your two advisors, who will give a joint grade reflecting the quality of your written text and your oral answers. An eventual delay in the submission of the prospectus will negatively affect the grade. You need a successful prospectus defense in order to start the second year in the program; in addition, a good grade will improve the chances of your application for a travel grant during the summer break or the second year.

## **The Second Year**

### **Fall Term: MA Thesis Seminar I**

#### **The first research chapter**

Based on the results of the earlier thesis planning seminars, amplified by individual research carried out during the summer break, and assisted by the academic advisors (supervisor and second reader), your research project will have evolved during the first term of the second year from the planning

stage into a more or less definite structure. In the mandatory Thesis Seminar, you will give account of the state of your work and develop it in discussion with other students and the class instructor. You will also present a draft of your *first research-based thesis chapter*. The chapter, about 15-20 pages (6000-8000 words) in length, will be prepared during the second term under the guidance of the seminar instructor and the academic advisors with assistance from the academic writing instructors. The draft may not be a chapter of introductory or conceptual(izing) 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 analyse 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. 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.

### **Winter Term: MA Thesis Seminar II Framework**

Each thesis project is embedded in its unique framework of theoretical and technical approaches, as well as applied research methods. Subject to consultation with the supervisors and second readers, the task of this particular seminar is the development of the reasoning behind such a framework and how it is integrated into the empirical presentation of the subject matter. The *Framework Essay* that you will write, present and discuss in this 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.

### **Winter Term: Academic Writing II**

The fifth-term mandatory Academic Writing course is offered in the form of six sessions and individual consultations. The course is designed to provide practical assistance in the systematic build-up of the thesis. The course includes one mandatory consultation on the thesis chapter you will have started drafting in the MA Thesis Seminar I.

### **Spring Session: MA Thesis Workshop Second Research Chapter**

During the month of May (Spring Session) all 1-year MA and second year 2-year MA students of the History Department will attend the main MA Thesis Workshops. About 8-10 students are assigned to each workshop, with details to be worked out within each workshop.

The main written work resulting from your investigations during the research break in April will be a *second research chapter* of your thesis, which must not coincide with the first research chapter presented in the MA Thesis Seminar. Unlike the first chapter, which may still be tentative and subject to many further changes and maturation, this chapter will be based on systematic research into primary and secondary sources, and will be drawn up with the hindsight of the theoretical approaches as well as the planned structure of your thesis. You will be required to present this chapter to your colleagues and faculty forming the Thesis Workshop, after having circulated the draft among them. The purpose is to receive preliminary comments and advice during and after the presentation and before you incorporate the chapter into the wider context of your thesis.

## **Thesis Submission**

The Thesis in Word and pdf document should be sent in a joint email to your Advisors and 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 so-called "ETD database", which is stored in the thesis/dissertation collection of 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) about 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 exceptional cases, the department may grant postponement of submission. These may be one of two kinds:

1. When a student, during the month of March or April of the second academic year 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 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 by the supervisor or the Academic Director may be initiated. This must be agreed on with the supervisor and the program director, 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 Final Examination is a composite oral examination scheduled for the last week of the Spring Session. It is a roughly 50-minute academic discussion of which the Thesis Defense takes up most of the available time. The two-member Examination Committee is chaired by the Second Reader of the MA thesis; the second member of the Committee is the First Supervisor.

The Defense part begins with a brief statement by the student on the principal findings of the thesis, and continues with observations, questions and comments by the examiners. 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.

## Thesis Grading Assessment

Theses in the 2-year MA program are graded according to three criteria:

- **Original findings:** All theses must show mastery of source work. The best theses employ a sophisticated apparatus of empirical demonstration that is not only sensitive to the ethics of accuracy but also capable of weaving together disparate source genres in an original fashion.
- **Substantive argumentation:** The presentation of the argument should be such that the generalist reader can readily ascertain the scholarly stakes even if subtleties are lost, while the specialist reader can easily identify the relationship of the thesis to a larger body of literature without detecting 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 scholarly debates, and simply the consistent use of working terminology throughout the thesis. The best theses will also demonstrate a reflexive awareness of historical inquiry.
- **Style:** Regardless of region or era, method or sources, each thesis should exemplify fluency in presentation, aiming to win the reader through polished prose and rhetorical sophistication.

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 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 18,000—22,000 words in length including footnotes, but not the bibliography and eventual 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 the footnotes. Titles of books, articles, journals, and newspapers that are quoted in the body of the text may appear in their original language 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. However, bibliographical references in footnotes and bibliographies must always contain the original titles; non-Latin scripts must be transcribed here as well. Consult your academic writing instructor or advisor concerning proper transliteration procedures.

### Page settings

Your body text should be set in clear, easily legible fonts and size (normally 12 point Times Roman, Arial, or Garamond). Use 2.5 cm margins on the top, bottom, and right on your A4 size papers and always justify your text on the right margins.

For formatting and stylesheet questions not specified below, see the Turabian *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* or consult your Academic Writing tutor for specific instructions.

Use double-spacing in the abstract and the text of the thesis. Apply single spacing in long tables, block quotations, 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.

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 must be consistent throughout the thesis. All page numbers in the main body of the thesis must be in Arabic script. Page numbers begin on the acknowledgment page.

### Footnotes

Either footnotes or endnotes may be used in the thesis, however footnotes are strongly recommended. Embedded notation is not permitted. Footnotes must conform to the margins of the paper and numbering should be consecutive throughout the thesis. You should apply single spacing and a smaller, but still easily legible font size (e.g. 10 points), but do not change the font face. Footnotes must follow the Turabian Manual. 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 must be numbered and titled by a system that makes them uniquely identifiable. The source must 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
Index	Optional

### Title Page

Using the sample provided at the end of this guide, the Title Page must 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, the main research questions, 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 includes a listing of Chapter Titles, Headings and Sub-headings of Chapters, Appendices and References as well as their corresponding page number. A separate *List of tables, figures, illustrations*, and related materials may follow this.

**Introduction**

The introduction must contain a brief statement of the issue under discussion, formulated as one or more research questions; outline the scope of the issue; and include 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 relevant material.

**Bibliography**

These pages contain a list of sources cited in the thesis. There are several techniques for the division of sources. Consult the Turabian *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* 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. Supervisors and external readers do not want to read a long list of “recommended readings”.

(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

2023

## **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 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 the CEU Faculty.

### 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 Final 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.