

BA INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
THESIS SEMINARS GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS
2019-2020

In the third year of their education in the BA International Studies, students are scheduled to write their thesis. The following text aims at providing them with all relevant information concerning the requirements, process, and assessment.

1. AIMS OF BA INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The Bachelors of Arts in International Studies provides students with the tools to investigate globalization, and its regional effects, from a humanities perspective. They study these effects through the prism of four disciplinary perspectives: culture, history, politics and economics, coupled with in-depth knowledge of one of eight world regions. The humanities perspective is ensured by placing an understanding of the historic and cultural context central in the programme, and linking this directly to the political and economic conditions. Students learn to apply the acquired knowledge of the four disciplinary approaches in the analysis of a geographical area of their choice with the aid of a language spoken in that area. The thesis is one of the culmination point of the programme in which much of the knowledge and many of the skills come together. Below, in section 2, you will find a specification of the knowledge and skills you as students are expected to display.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE BACHELOR THESIS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Based on the knowledge and skills acquired, students will be able to:

- a) work with research techniques that are current in the discipline(s) covered;
- b) comprehend sophisticated academic debates;
- c) report on their studies and research in good written English;
- d) work and write under time-pressure, and deal with deadlines.

The general academic skills covered by these aims are the following:

- a) collect and select specialized literature using traditional and electronic methods and techniques;
- b) analyse and evaluate this in terms of quality and reliability;
- c) formulate a well-defined research question based on this;
- d) set up, under supervision, a study of limited size, taking into consideration the traditional and electronic methods and techniques relevant for the discipline;
- e) formulate a reasoned conclusion on the basis of this;
- f) explain research findings in writing, in a clear and well-argued way.

The thesis should count ca 10.000 words ($\pm 10\%$), excluding bibliography and notes.

SUPERVISION

Students working on their bachelor's thesis are supervised by faculty members both in a classroom context (the thesis seminar), and individually. The seminar concentrates on research skills and writing processes; for guidance in matters of substance and content, a more individual approach is provided. The thesis seminar leader is also responsible for the individual supervision and finally acts as the first examiner/reader. The supervisor is not responsible for the final version of the thesis – the students must themselves decide when the final version is ready to be submitted and graded (provided that they do so on or before the due date).

Attending a seminar is mandatory; no thesis can be submitted that has not been written in the context of a thesis seminar. If a student misses more than two class meetings or more than one individual meeting, the supervisor may have the student disenrolled from the seminar, which in practice means that no thesis can be submitted. Students should inform their supervisor when possible in advance when they are unable to attend a session.

Each seminar will be devoted to one of the geographical areas covered by International Studies. The seminars will have a theme that lends itself to an approach from various disciplinary perspectives. Although the theme should be broad enough to allow students to choose a topic of their own preference, the topic they choose should be clearly connected to the theme of the seminar. The same applies to the disciplinary approaches taken by the student. Overall students should be able to write a thesis covering at least two of the four disciplinary fields of the programme: politics, economics, history, and culture. The student must include at least (one of) the stated disciplinary perspective(s) of their assigned seminar in the analysis of the chosen topic of their thesis. Instead of taking two disciplinary perspectives they can use a single perspective defined by their thesis seminar and place their analysis in a global perspective.

By means of a separate survey, next to the enrolment for the seminar through uSis, students are asked to indicate the research topic they would like to be covering and the disciplinary perspective(s) they intend to use, as well as how these will connect to one or two of thesis seminar's themes and approaches. This indication will be used to match students with a seminar/supervisor.

The exact set-up of the seminars may vary somewhat, due to the nature of the area, the number of seminars taught for each area, and the teaching approach of the seminar leader, but in general they will have the following format.

The schedule requires six classroom meetings for general instruction, discussion and students' peer feedback, as well as four individual meetings of approx. half an hour each (for an indicative time table, see Appendix 1). Attending the classroom meetings and individual meetings is mandatory. The schedule for the individual meetings is an indication only; there is a limit to the amount of supervision students can obtain.

In the context of the seminar, the student is to submit three assignments before submitting the final version of the thesis:

- Thesis proposal: research question and plan (within four weeks; see Appendix 2).
- Literature review (within seven weeks; see Appendix 2).

- Draft of the thesis (within 13 weeks).

The assignments are a prerequisite for submitting the thesis, they provide the only opportunity for you to receive actual feedback on your work (Appendix 3). The more effort you put in these assignments the more you will benefit from it in your overall mark. All three assignments including the draft thesis will be discussed individually. The deadline for assignments is always Friday, at 23.59 h., in the appropriate week.

Note that due dates cannot be extended, unless there are personal circumstances that justify delay. Students claiming such circumstances will have to contact their thesis supervisor and in serious cases also their coordinator of studies.

COURSE LOAD

Total course load for this course is 15 EC (1 EC = 28 hours), which equals 420 hours, broken down by:

- Active participation (in class): 14 hours.
- Research question and plan: 21 hours.
- Literature review: 70 hours.
- Thesis: 315 hours.

ASSESSMENT METHOD

Submission of the following assignments is prerequisite for submitting your thesis:

- Thesis proposal (approx. 1.200-1.500 words)
- Literature review (approx. 3.000-4.000 words)
- Draft thesis (minimum format to be decided by the supervisor, but including at least a full chapter next to the literature review)

End Grade

- The grade for the thesis seminar is determined by the thesis grade. Assessment of participation in the thesis seminar is included in the final thesis assessment form, under process.
- To successfully complete this course, the grade for the thesis needs to be a 6.0 or higher.
- Late submissions of the final version, without previous permission, normally leads to a deduction in the grade. This is to the lecturer's discretion.

The thesis will be assessed by two readers/examiners: the supervisor of the seminar (first reader) and a member of one of the faculty's institutes (second reader). Whether or not a student can receive a pass grade depends on whether the following minimum standards ('knockout criteria') are observed:

1. Contains a clear academic research question.
2. Is situated within a relevant academic debate.
- 3a. Analyses the topic from at least two different disciplinary perspectives, and/or
- 3b. places the analysis of the regionally defined topic in a global perspective.

4. Accounts for the chosen research method(s) and materials.
5. Is based on the evaluation of a sufficiently large body of independently collected scholarly literature and/or sources (10-20, depending on whether books and/or articles are discussed).
6. Contains a well-structured and consistent argument.
7. Is written in correct English.
8. Produces a scholarly argument and analysis.

The referencing style used is Chicago. It is up to the supervisor to determine whether that should be the 'notes and bibliography' or the 'author-date' version.

If the first or second reader finds that the thesis does not fulfil the above minimum standards, they decide together whether a fail grade should be awarded. Please note that a fail grade for one criteria cannot be compensated with sufficient grades for others.

If the above criteria are met, the supervisor and the second reader independently assess and grade the thesis based on the specific criteria of the thesis assessment form. This includes the following categories for assessment:

- Knowledge and insight (contents, relation to the field).
- Application knowledge and insight (methodology).
- Reaching conclusions (interpretation, argumentation, conclusion).
- Communication (writing skills, structure).
- Learning skills (process).

If first and second reader cannot reach consensus on the grade, the thesis must be sent, together with the opinions of both readers, to the Board of Examiners. The Board will then arrange for a third reader to decide on the final outcome. This can delay final assessment.

The thesis grade will be expressed as a whole number or a number with one decimal place between 1.0 and 10.0, including both limits. The grade will not be expressed as a number between 5.0 and 6.0. If the grade awarded is a 6.0, the thesis will also be sent to the Board of Examiners with the request for a third reader to either confirm the assessment of the first two readers that the thesis is passable, or decide that the thesis does not fulfil the requirements and should be awarded a fail grade. In the latter case, the third reader will motivate this decision in writing.

Students who score an insufficient grade for the thesis (6.0 or lower) are allowed to resubmit a reworked version of their thesis. The deadline for resubmission of the thesis is 10 working days after receiving the grade for the thesis and subsequent feedback.

In case of resubmission of the thesis the grade will be lowered as a consequence of the longer process of completion.

The procedure is as follows:

- The supervisor will provide the student with final instructions, preferably in an individual meeting. In case of a fail grade having been awarded the deadline for resubmission is 10 working days after receiving the grade for the thesis and subsequent instructions.
- Students who fail to hand in their thesis on or before the original deadline, get 10 working days, counting from the original deadline, to hand in a first version of their thesis. However, this first version will count as a resubmitted thesis with consequential lowering

of the grade, and there will be no option of handing in a reworked version based on feedback from the supervisor.

- In establishing the final mark for the resubmitted thesis by both readers, the fact that the thesis had to be resubmitted will be taken into account, and an appropriate deduction of the mark will be made.
- Students who receive a fail grade for their resubmitted thesis have to take another seminar in the next semester. Please note that theses can only be submitted in the context of a seminar; students cannot submit or re-submit their original thesis in another seminar.

Supervisors and second readers are formally appointed by the Board of Examiners on recommendation of the Directors of Studies of the Faculty's academic institutes. Under no circumstances should students themselves approach faculty members for this task.

APPENDIX 1: TIME SCHEDULE*

Fall semester 2019

week	date	activities
40	30 sept. - 4 Oct.	submission of research question and plan; deadline 4 October
43	21 - 25 Oct.	submission of literature review; deadline 25 October
49	2 - 6 Dec.	submission of the draft, deadline 6 December
2	6 - 10 Jan.	submission of definitive version; deadline 10 January

The deadline for all documents is always Friday, at 23.59 h.

Spring semester 2020

9	24 – 28 Febr.	submission of research question and plan; deadline 28 Febr.
12	16 - 20 March	submission of literature review; deadline 20 March
18	26 April – 1 May	submission of the draft; deadline 1 May
23	2 - 5 June	submission of definitive version; deadline 5 June

The deadline for all documents is always Friday, at 23.59 h.

For class and individual meetings, check the timetable for time and location.

- THE EXACT TIMING OF ALL CLASS AND INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS IS SUBJECT TO ADJUSTMENT BY THE THESIS SEMINAR LEADER EXCEPT FOR THE SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL VERSION OF THE THESIS

APPENDIX 2. THESIS PROPOSAL AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Thesis proposal: research question and plan (approx. 1.200-1.500 words)

Students have to write their thesis in the context of the theme and disciplinary approach(es) of their seminar. They have to be able to explain to their fellow students in the seminar how their research contributes to the more general question that is central to the seminar. Ideally, the thesis proposal presents their research question according to the three-tiered structure with which they have become acquainted in the second-year thematic seminars, through the book of Booth *et al.*, *The Craft of Research*, esp. pp. 49-52.

The thesis proposal will consist of the following parts:

1. Tentative title.
2. Three to five keywords that quickly identify the research field and focus.
3. Research question.
4. Relevance of the research.
5. Methodology (how will the research question be answered?).
6. Preliminary outline of chapters.
7. Timeline/planning.
8. Bibliography (key sources).

All thesis proposals will if possible be presented but at least be discussed, in class.

Literature review (approx. 3.000-4.000 words)

Once students have decided on a topic which the thesis seminar leader is willing to supervise, and formulated a concrete research question and plan, they will be looking for relevant academic studies to formulate a concise state of the art. The aim is to come to a survey of the debate on the topic or the theoretical approach taken in the relevant academic studies on the subject, i.e. well-documented and published through widely respected channels. The number of publications discussed will be somewhere between ten and twenty, depending on whether books and/or articles will be discussed. Online sources may be used, depending on the quality of the website and always in combination with academic literature.

Students should realise that the substance of argument made in the thesis proposal and literature review basically leads to the framework of the introduction and the first, introductory chapter of their thesis. They are strongly recommended to anticipate the writing of these by presenting the thesis proposal and literature review as drafts that in a later stage will be condensed and integrated into the draft and final version of the thesis.

The literature review is to be submitted using the Turnitin module on Blackboard.

APPENDIX 3. INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS: WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

During the semester each student participating in a thesis seminar will have at least four individual meetings of approximately half an hour each with his or her supervisor. The aim of these meetings is not only to discuss the topic of the student's research, but also to discuss written feedback and give oral feedback on the submitted assignments: the research proposal, literature review, and draft. The supervisor will need some time to properly read and comment on the assignment, and normally schedule the meetings one or two weeks after a submission deadline. The assessment criteria depend on the nature of the assignment, but should always be linked to those formulated in the thesis guidelines.

Students should realize that the amount of in-depth feedback they receive usually depends on the supervisor's specialisms and the focus of the seminar, as well as on the quality of their work. Less developed work results automatically in more superficial feedback. The feedback may vary from one assignment to another:

Research proposal: the supervisor concentrates on the components mentioned in the proposal form: provisional title; research question (and subquestions); relevance; methodology; provisional outline of chapters; timeline/planning; and key sources. The feasibility of the intended research will also be subject of discussion.

Literature review: the supervisor will focus on the relevance of the consulted studies in connection to the research proposal, either as state of the art or as a representation of a theoretical framework.

Draft: the more complete a draft is, the more feedback supervisors can give, e.g., on the argumentation, structure, etc. It is advisable to hand in a complete first version of the thesis, which can then be improved upon based on the feedback. A draft version should however include at least one complete chapter next to the literature review, as well as a framework of the other chapters to allow the supervisor to get better insight in the student's approach and furnish adequate comments and suggestions.

Depending on the priorities and preferences of the supervisor, each assignment can also be checked on plagiarism, referencing style, and language, as well as the incorporation of earlier feedback.

Students are not only expected to submit their assignments in time, and be present at the meetings, but also to be well prepared for the individual meetings as part of their own time management. They are encouraged to reflect in advance on the matters they intend to discuss with their supervisor, the questions they have, and the difficulties they experience. Students are strongly recommended to take notes during the individual meetings to enable them to incorporate the feedback in the next assignments to be submitted.

APPENDIX 4: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Student repository

In the Student Repository, Leiden University programmes are building an online archive that makes Bachelor and Master theses easily searchable and publicly available in the case of Master theses. This is also a useful tool for future graduates. Uploading your thesis to the student repository is part of the graduation procedure. Please note that you will have to upload the final graded version (in PDF) of your thesis yourself after it has been assessed and been deemed sufficient. For more information and an FAQ, please see the Student Repository Website.

Please note that the repository accepts only one upload per student. Consequently, revised versions will not be accepted. The thesis grade can only be registered after a copy of the thesis has been uploaded into the Repository.

<https://www.library.universiteitleiden.nl/research-and-publishing/scholarly-publishing/upload-your-ba-or-ma-thesis>

Contact

Board of Examiners	bais-examinationscommittee@hum.leidenuniv.nl
Administration	osz-admin-thehague@hum.leidenuniv.nl
Study coordinators	bais.stuco@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Useful documents

Booth *et al.*, *The Craft of Research*, esp. pp. 49-52:

http://www.studentofferingsupport.ca/portal/OutreachProjects/PreDepReadings/E1_The%20Craft%20of%20Research_choosing%20topic+questions.pdf

Chicago Manual of Style:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Response paper:

<https://twp.duke.edu/sites/twp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/response-paper.original.pdf>

Literature review:

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/literature-reviews/>

Thesis writing:

<https://www.student.universiteitleiden.nl/en/study--studying/study/educational-information/thesis-and-paper-writing/humanities/international-studies-ba?cf=humanities&cd=international-studies-ba#tab-1>