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# MASTER PROGRAMME IN EUROPEAN URBAN CULTURES – POLIS

## GUIDELINES LITERATURE REVIEW PAPER, RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND MASTER'S THESIS

### GUIDELINES LITERATURE REVIEW PAPER

One week before the Manchester thesis meeting, students are required to hand in a paper on the topic of their master's thesis. This paper should take the form of a literature review. The aim of the paper is to provide an overview of the relevant academic literature with regard to the topic of the master's thesis, leading to a conceptual framework and problem statement, that can serve as a starting point for an individual research proposal and master's thesis.

By writing the theoretical paper, students demonstrate their ability to:

- translate European urban cultural issues into researchable themes, open to academic reflection and empirical research;
- find, survey, and critically assess relevant and current literature and research findings related to a chosen theme;
- develop an original theoretical perspective, conceptual framework and problem statement for the chosen theme;
- write an academic paper at master level.

### Outline and size of the paper

The paper, which should be between **2500-3000** words in length (literature list, appendices, etc. not included), has to contain at least the following elements:

- introduction (aim, first indication of research problem, outline of the theoretical paper)
- table of contents
- presentation of academic literature and research findings relevant to the chosen theme
- development of a conceptual framework
- a problem statement and/or hypotheses
- a first outline of the type of empirical research that could follow from the perspective developed (qualitative/quantitative, sample, type of research instrument)
- reference list

The paper is a critical presentation of literature and existing research that is relevant for the conceptual framework that is needed to carry out an empirical study of the problem at hand. A good paper aims to be interdisciplinary and engages with perspectives from a variety of methods and disciplines.

## Assessment criteria

The following criteria are used to assess the theoretical paper:

- the breadth, and relevancy of the literature and research findings surveyed;
- the level of critical reflection of the literature surveyed;
- the clarity and coherency of the argument developed;
- the originality of the conceptual framework and the problem statement;
- the linking of problem statement, literature survey, conceptual framework, and empirical research envisaged;

Students who do not pass are required to resubmit their paper within two weeks after the Manchester thesis meeting. A fail will be taken into account when deciding the final mark of the thesis.

## GUIDELINES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL THESIS PROPOSAL

One week before the Tallinn theses meeting, students are required to hand in an individual thesis proposal (ITP) in which they state how they envisage to carry out their research for the master's thesis. The ITP is written in order to develop relevant research questions, an introduction to theory, an outline for the fieldwork and a plan for the subsequent analyses.

The ITP should be between **3000-3500** words in length. It should contain the following elements:

| MAIN ELEMENTS                      | SUB ELEMENTS   | ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST   |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Object of your study               | -Problem definition<br>-Research goal<br>-General research question                                      | -Is the question clear and can it be answered through scientific research?<br>-Will answering the research question fulfill the research goal?<br>-Has the (scientific/social) relevance of the research question been outlined?   |
| For whom                           | -Brief description of the organization or field for whom/what the study is being conducted               | <i>If applicable</i>   |
| Theoretical background             | -Conceptual model / research model<br>-Description of central concepts from the model                    | -Have you been sufficiently selective in your choice of theories?<br>-Have you synthesized theories rather than just summed them up?<br>-Is there a logical order in your theoretical work, have you evaluated the available theory, pointed out 'missing links' etc?<br>-Have you referred to literature properly?<br>-Are all the central concepts depicted in the model?<br>-Has theory been properly translated into a systematic research design?<br>-Does the research model cover the theoretical frame of the project? |
| Practical approach                 | -Specific research questions<br>-Operationalization of central concepts                                  | -Have your research questions been formulated clearly and unambiguously?<br>-Have they been logically derived from the problem definition?<br>-Can they be tested, or have they been formulated in such a manner as to make the answers to them contain optimal information?   |
| Specification of data and analysis | -Population / sample<br>-Research strategy / - design<br>-Gathering of the data<br>-Research instruments | -Have in- or exclusion criteria (who will [not] belong to the sample) been specified if necessary?<br>-Are enough respondents available to answer the research questions adequately? (And what about non-response?)<br>-To what extent does the sample offer a good representation of the population to which you want to generalize?  |

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|                              |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-If applicable, is there a good balance between the different subgroups in the sample?</li> <li>-Are strategy and design clearly outlined and underpinned?</li> <li>-Do strategy and design logically fit the research problem?</li> <li>-Are measurement instruments used valid, reliable, are you using standardized or validated existing scales?</li> </ul> |
| Use of analytical techniques | Which analyses will be used in what manner in order to answer the specific questions or test the expected relations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Are techniques discussed in close relation to the specific research questions for which they will be used?</li> <li>-Do the techniques match the type of data (qualitative / quantitative, measurement levels, sample size) on which they will be applied?</li> </ul>  |
| Time planning                | Planning of the subsequent phases of the entire trajectory  |  |

Each thesis is motivated by a certain central question or problem. This problem has to be formulated at the start of your proposal by means of a problem definition, research goal, and general research question. Within the problem definition, the reason and relevance for/of the study is outlined. This elaboration leads to the goal of the research: providing (partial) solutions for the problem at hand. From the research goal it can be deduced which question(s) needs to be answered through your study. These subsequent steps need to be consistently followed throughout the ITP as much as possible. Each of the abovementioned elements logically follows from the previous step and logically leads to the next one.

Students who do not pass are required to resubmit their paper within two weeks after the Tallinn thesis meeting. A fail will be taken into account when deciding the final mark of the thesis.

## GUIDELINES OF THE MASTER 'S THESIS

The thesis of the master programme in European Urban Cultures should be between **15,000 – 20,000** words in length (literature list, appendices, etc. not included), word processed and bound.

The thesis has to contain the following elements:

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Front-page & title-page              | Title, name, date, supervisors, institutions  |
| Preface                              | Personal motivation, word of thanks   |
| Table of contents                    | Numbered paragraphs with page numbers   |
| Summary / abstract                   | Outline of the most important components of the thesis  |
| Introduction (chapter)               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Problem definition: rationale or background of the study, introduction of central concepts (related to the general research question), brief references to the theory</li> <li>-General research question</li> <li>-Research aim &amp; scientific and practical/societal relevance of the study</li> <li>-Description of the organization or field for which the study is being conducted</li> <li>-Outline of the thesis</li> </ul>  |
| Descriptive chapter (optional)       | Background or developments related to the central subject of the thesis   |
| Theory (chapter)                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Theoretical background/frame and description of central concepts</li> <li>-Conceptual model / research model</li> <li>-Specific research questions and/or hypotheses</li> </ul>   |
| Method (chapter)                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Research strategy / research design</li> <li>-Population / sample size</li> <li>-Research instruments (survey, item list)</li> <li>-Operationalization and measurement of central concepts</li> <li>-Data collection (e.g., how and where were interviews conducted; the data collection process), number of cases and non-response</li> <li>-Data processing and analysis: processing of the interviews/surveys (tape recording, anonymity), which (statistical) techniques have been used in what manner, to answer the specific questions</li> </ul> |
| Results (chapter)                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Description of the sample (optionally)</li> <li>-Description and interpretation of the results with reference to the specific questions or hypotheses (on the basis of tables, figures, graphs, quotations, etc.)</li> </ul>  |
| Discussion and conclusions (chapter) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Recapitulation of the results in relation to the research questions</li> <li>-Reflection on the general research question, the research aim and the scientific/social relevance</li> <li>-Reflection on the research process (i.e., methodology, theory, conceptual model)</li> <li>-Recommendations (e.g., further research, policy interventions)</li> <li>-Final remarks</li> </ul>  |
| Reference list                       |   |
| Appendices                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Questionnaire / item list of the interviews, etc.</li> <li>-Background information</li> <li>-Additional results of analyses: tables, figures, data matrices, etc.</li> <li>-transcripts of interviews should not be included, unless stated otherwise by your supervisor. The transcripts do need to be available upon request.</li> </ul>  |

At the Green Light meeting, the supervisor list will be finalized. From this date onwards you know who your supervisors will be. Please keep in touch with your supervisors during summer to update them on your progress. Keep in mind that some supervisors will be absent during summer, so make sure to arrange a contact schedule. Of course you are always allowed to contact the other board members as well, if you have any questions, or if you would like to discuss thesis issues with them.

The master's thesis needs to be submitted on Friday 31st August at the latest. The pdf-document needs to be sent by e-mail to all board members, not just to your supervisors. After this date, no alterations to your thesis are allowed anymore: you will be marked on the basis of this document. The pdf you send will be used for the digital archive as well. For the thesis defence, you need to bring five copies (bound): one copy for each institution (4), and one for the library (1).

The thesis defence and graduation ceremony are scheduled in Brussels, in the second or third week end of September. Details about the date will be announced later. During summer, or at the start of September, you will be informed about the programme for the thesis defence (presentation, what to bring) and graduation ceremony.