

The thesis in International Studies

The thesis is the individual capstone project of the International Studies programme. In their thesis students show the knowledge and skills they acquired during their studies. Therefore, the thesis is an important element in the International Studies curriculum, and students should be well-informed and well-prepared. Below the procedures regarding thesis seminars, enrollment, topics, setup of the course and grading are succinctly explained.

Thesis seminar

All theses are written within the framework of a thesis seminar. Students get assigned to a seminar and the seminar supervisor is automatically the thesis supervisor for the students in the seminar.

Thesis seminars are categorized by area. Students are enrolled in a seminar for the area they specialize in. The number of seminars per area depends on the number of students in the cohort. Each seminar has a *theme* which is closely connected to the area of expertise of the lecturer.

Enrollment

The enrollment for the thesis seminars is done via a survey. In the survey the students are asked to indicate their two preferred seminars, the topic they would like to write on and the connection between their topic and the theme of the seminar. On the basis of this information, students are divided over the various seminars.

All students who are eligible to do a thesis seminar, receive a link to the survey via email. Students are eligible if they are a third year student with at least 100 credits, and have passed at least one thematic seminar. The survey will be sent in December for the thesis seminars second semester and in July for the first semester.

Topic of the thesis and theme of the seminar

The topic of the thesis is determined together with the supervisor. Students cannot independently decide on a topic for their thesis; the supervisor must agree to the topic. The enrollment survey asks for the connection between topic you would like to write on and the theme of the seminar. This is because it is important to write on a topic on which the supervisor can provide you with feedback. For similar reasons, if the supervisor indicates a certain disciplinary starting point (e.g. a political approach), the student will at least include that approach in the thesis. Of course, International Studies is a multidisciplinary programme, so students are welcome and even encouraged to take a multidisciplinary approach, as long as the connection to the theme is clear.

Setup of the course

The basic setup of the course is as follows: there are a number (normally 6) of joint sessions around the theme of the seminar. These sessions are often used for peer feedback or presentations. In addition to that, each student has 4 individual sessions with the supervisor in which the individual progress is discussed. These sessions are spread out over the semester, to ensure students receive feedback in all the stages of the research and writing process.

Knockout criteria

In the student guidelines there is a section on knock out criteria. These are the minimal criteria a thesis has to meet to be graded. It concerns the following criteria:

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 knockout are rather general and applicable to any English language bachelor's thesis, except for criteria 3a and 3b which basically ensure that the thesis has an International Studies profile. The main characteristics which set International Studies apart from many other programmes are its multidisciplinary and the global perspective it takes on regional issues. Applying both in one bachelor's thesis is a bit too much to ask, which is why the minimal requirement is either a multidisciplinary perspective, or a global perspective. Often, the choice of topic will determine which of the approaches will be most suitable.

Grading and resit

The grade for the thesis seminar consists of the grade for the thesis alone. The other assignments (thesis proposal, literature review and draft thesis) are requirements for handing in the thesis, but are not graded.

After the student has handed in the thesis, the supervisor has some weeks to grade it (4 in the fall semester and 6 in the spring semester). However, the supervisor does not decide on the grade alone, there is a second marker (also referred to as "second reader") involved. In case the grade is a 6, a third marker will check whether the thesis is indeed passable. These rather strict grading procedures are in place to make sure the grading process is as objective and as fair as possible.

When a thesis receives a fail grade, the student has the option to repair the thesis within ten working days, based on the feedback of the supervisor and the second marker.

If a student completely fails to write a thesis, fails to hand the thesis in on time, or if the student receives a final fail grade, he or she will have to enroll for a new seminar. The procedure for enrollment and determining the topic of the thesis is the same as the first time around.

Questions

If you have any questions regarding the Thesis seminar, please do not hesitate to contact your [coordinator of studies](#).