This guideline does not aim to substitute methodology literature. It provides basic information on the recommended thesis structure, its underlying research and writing process, as well as information on formal requirements and submission procedure.

1. PREPARATORY STAGE

1.1 Topic selection, topic submission, and role of the supervisor

- This thesis guideline encourages, although not strictly prescribes, **works focused on particular empirical topic with an ambition to provide knowledge of general phenomena**.
- For example, the thesis should not address the problem of subsidies in energy policy as such. It should rather focus on a particular case of energy subsidies, use adequate theoretical and methodological framework, and based on data analysis arrive at conclusions that extend beyond the original case.
- In our view, this is productive and manageable approach to an MA thesis research.

- The topic selection should stem out of three considerations: it should be based on your (1) **long-term interest in the topic** and be consistent with your profiling during the study. It must be also (2) **covered by an available supervisor** and (3) **researchable** (see below).
- A good option how to receive feedback on a project that could be further developed as your thesis is to connect a **research proposal in course ESSn4001 Social Science Methodology** with the topic of your thesis.
- In general, it is recommended to use available [methodological courses](#) to enhance your research abilities applicable i.a. to your thesis research and writing.

- There are two regular terms for submitting final theses at all departments of the Faculty of Social Studies, one in Spring and one in Fall semester.
- **Candidates for a degree must register in the information system (IS) one semester before they intend to graduate** – i.e. in Fall for planned Spring semester thesis defense. It is highly recommended to learn about the exact deadlines at the very beginning of the semester in which the students plan to register their thesis topics.
- The information system publishes packages of topics, which individual teachers can supervise. In the ["package"](#) in IS, browse the general package with the topic for EPS students (under "Jiné"/"Others"). **Please, do not register for general topics, they are mentioned for your inspiration.**

- **It is necessary to contact potential thesis supervisor, and consult the topic beforehand**. The supervisors are under substantial time constraints and typically cannot answer in order of days. **Thus, it is strongly recommended to contact potential supervisor 3-4 weeks before the deadline for the topic registration**.
- After the supervisor accepts the topic, submit the necessary information into the university information system (IS) under the headline Master's Theses – Energy Policy Studies via [this direct link to the list of theses](#).
- Apart from the title, you are supposed to enter an abstract of the thesis including the research question and/or problem statement and the list of basic relevant literature.

- The thesis topic is then approved by the supervisor via the information system.
- The thesis topic is valid only after confirmation by the Head of the Department. In case of formal or other drawbacks, the Head of the Department can suggest clarification or change of the topic.
- **The student him/herself is responsible for the correct data in IS.**

1.2 Time management

- **Enough time to write and finish the text is of key importance for the success of the work.** If this is underestimated, complications can arise that might undermine the success of the work – deadline for thesis submission might not be met, or the quality of the thesis compromised.
- **Work regularly**, read the text after you finish each chapter, and reflect on it. Leave some time in the end for final reading of the whole thesis and correction of factually incorrect or unclear parts.
- If you finish early, your supervisor is able to read the whole text and comment on it – which helps you to eliminate the mistakes hitherto unseen.
- The author should also have enough time for the final graphic design of the text, which should keep all formal requirements and reflect the structure of the argument.
- **The good practice is to set realistic milestones for completion of distinct parts of the research and writing process.**
- The whole process relies on consultations with your supervisor. **Regular consultations** will help you to keep the timeline and progress on the thesis, which will result in a more balanced and quality work.
- If the consultations are to be effective, they should be planned and conducted from the very beginning, not only when the deadline is nearing.
- **A good communication with your supervisor presupposes that you give him/her enough time to read and comment on individual chapters, which you send gradually (typically in 1-2 weeks)**. Only thus you will be able to use the opinion and advice s/he can provide.
- In case either you or your supervisor are going to spend a longer period of time abroad or out of Brno, the whole process of consultation can be modified and/or held via skype.

2. THESIS STRUCTURE

2.1 General information (for details see 3. FORMAL REQUIREMENTS)

- **Title page.** Please see the Thesis template.
- **Signed declaration of the authorship.** It covers ethical issues as described in section 4. It might include also author's acknowledgments.
- **Title** needs to be both concise and informative. It should capture the essence of what the research will be about.
- **Abstract** summarizes focus of the thesis, its main theoretical argument(s), and major results in a concise and readable manner. Information in the title should not be repeated. Length should be between app. 150-200 words. It should not include citations or abbreviations.
- **Table of contents**

2.2 Body of the thesis: a recommended structure

2.2.1 Introduction

- **Background and relevance of the research.** The introduction explains and justifies why the diploma thesis has been written. What is the context of the research and why is it relevant? The research question and/or problem statement should logically follow from this background.
- **The research question and/or problem statement specifie(s) the scope of the thesis. It is a path that guides the entire research and writing process.** Its formulation is based on preliminary research on a more general topic – as introduced in the previous step.
- **The research question and/or problem statement** should be (1) **specific** to clearly delineate the scope of the thesis, (2) **non-trivial** in a way that it cannot be easily answered based on available information, (3) **linked to existing body of research**, as well as (4) **"researchable"** in terms of data availability, time constraints, required know-how, and logical consistency.
- **The good practice is to hypothesize how the research question unfolds to subsequent steps of the research design**; esp. theoretical and methodological framework, as well as data sampling, collection, and analysis. In other words, it is advisable to intentionally formulate the research question(s) and/or problem statements in a way that clearly determines the research design.
- **Different types of researches are then guided by different types of research questions which needs to be considered** (for more see Blaikie 2011).
- The research question and/or problem statement **does not** have to be original. After the consultation with the supervisor, it is possible to do a replication research or further explore well-established knowledge.
- In optimal case, **the research should be one of personal interest since the thesis research and writing require substantial personal involvement.** At the same, personal interest/involvement is not a valid justification for pursuing a research project.

- **Examples of poorly- and well-formulated research questions:**
  - **Too general:** "What is the relationship between state regulation and energy efficiency?"
  - **Specific:** "How has the Green Savings program contributed to energy efficiency in Brno municipality?"

  - **Trivial:** "Is the Russian Federation influential energy exporter?"
  - **Non-trivial:** "How does the Russian Federation use energy in its foreign policy towards Baltic states?"

  - **Non-researchable:** "What are the personal accounts of "energy security" in the contemporary German government?"
  - **Researchable:** "What is the government discourse on "energy security"?"

- **Outline of the thesis:** The introduction should also briefly outline the organization of the thesis.

2.2.2 Literature review

- **Literature review** provides **a summarization of a current state of knowledge** that might include substantive, theoretical as well as methodological contributions **directly relevant to the focus of the thesis.** Literature review further specifies the scope of the thesis and locates it in a broader context of relevant research.
- The purpose of literature review is <u>not</u> to provide an exhaustive overview of the research that has been done on the topic. **The focus should be on publications that have a direct connection to the thesis and has been recognized as influential within the field** (i.e. esp. highly cited publications).
- It is advised to search for the relevant literature in well-established scientific databases such as [Science Direct](), [Science Open](), [SAGE](), [Taylor and Francis](), [Willey Online](), [JSTOR](), [Springer](), etc., and through [Google Scholar]() search engine.

2.2.3. Theoretical framework

- **Theoretical framework** (1) briefly **defines a meta-theoretical perspective** of the research; i.e. main assumptions about the nature of social world and knowledge. It further presents (2) **central ideas of a given theoretical approach**, it defines its main concepts and their mutual relations in connection to the research focus.
- If applicable, it clearly and gradually distils (3) **distinct theoretical arguments** which are further operationalized in the Methodology section.
- In other words, theory is a framework for organizing what we know or assume about some more or less specific topic. It captures certain parts of reality that allows us to explain or understand investigated phenomena.
- Thus, **theories offer answers to questions such as "what is happening" and "how, or why is something happening".**
- In a stylized way, **theory can be seen as "a story about how something works".** E.g. Waltz's neorealism assumes that international politics (phenomena to be explained), i.e. prevailing pattern of states' behavior, results from a distribution of material capabilities in international system.
- Depending on a particular research design, **the role of the theory** in the research needs to be further specified (it is not sufficient to merely introduce a theory in this section).

2.2.4 Methodology

- **Methodology** is a general research framework that rests on specific meta-theoretical assumptions and guides us in further decisions in the research process, esp. operationalization (if applicable), case definition and selection as well as data collection and analysis.
- In other words, **methodology connects theoretical expectations, i.e. "how something works", with data in order to obtain answers to research questions**. It specifies a sequence of steps through which we apply or test a theory to/against our data. Most generally, it defines "how the research will be carried on".
- Methodology shall be consistent with the focus of the research as well as with its (meta)theoretical framework. E.g. it would make little sense to use an interpretative methodology to test Waltz's theory that emphasizes role of material structures in the international system, it would, nevertheless, provide an adequate framework for a research that would focus on discursive construction of energy security.
- Thus, the choice of a specific **methodology conditions the role of a researcher** (e.g. to what extent we want to build on personal insights), **the role of a theory** (e.g. are we testing deduced hypotheses or are we using the theory to explore and understand the phenomena), **theory's scope conditions** (are we going to generalize to population or not) as well as a **range of legitimately used methods** (e.g. are we going to use formalized variable-oriented methods or more flexible methods aiming at deeper understanding of the phenomena).
- All these considerations have to be taken into account during formulation of the thesis' research question(s) and/or problem statement.

- **Case selection and data.** The scoping of the research is directly connected to definition of the phenomena to be investigated - i.e. "what are we interested in?". There are several important decisions to be made.
- We need to specify: **what is a case or a unit of analysis?** Case or a unit of analysis is a relatively bounded phenomenon defined by certain properties. Here it is useful to roughly distinguish between variable-oriented and case-oriented researches (Della Porta and Keating 2008). The former seeks to identify generalized relationships between variables in population (e.g. does trade decrease likelihood of interstate conflict?), the latter aims to understand complex units in their context (e.g. how does international trade agreements influence policy-making in U.S. administrative?). The cases in variable-oriented research are defined before the analysis and treated as homogeneous. In a case-oriented research, the cases are instead defined gradually through a dialogue between researcher's ideas and evidence.
- In next step, we decide **based on what criteria we select cases**. There are different strategies for case selection that depend on research objectives, methodological framework and used method(s).
- Lastly, we proceed with **data collection**. Again, there are different ways of data collection such as interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, observational, archival, text-based, experimental, and other techniques.
- The process of case definition, case selection, and data collection needs to be described. The same applies to collected data which is further analyzed.

- **Method(s). Research method is**, in comparison to methodology, a specific, and more or less systematic, **path that enables an investigation of the phenomena**. We can roughly distinguish between the data collection methods and data analysis methods. The former gathers and organizes data, the latter produces a new knowledge and/or integrates the previous one.
- In other words, **methods are particular tools that "help us see what was so far hidden and indistinct"**. It allows us to reduce the initial complexity of the phenomena and obtain a new knowledge about it.
- **They need to be consistent with the methodology and clearly linked to the research objectives.** There should be also a description of the underlying logic of the method - i.e. "what does the method do?" More specifically, in what context and under what assumptions it can be applied, what steps it includes, what kind of outcomes it produces, and what type of questions it can answer?

- **Software (if applicable).** It is common to use software especially in data collection, processing, and analysis stages. If this is the case, the used software needs to be properly cited.

2.2.4 Results and discussion

- The results report the main findings of the thesis in a structured manner.
- **The results not directly related to the research question(s) and/or problem statement should not be included.** The introduction, literature review, and theoretical framework sections should provide any necessary context or background information to understand the results. The information which is not critical to the answering of the research objectives can always be added to the supplementary materials section.
- The good practice is to go through the above mentioned sections and examine whether they provide enough information to clearly understand the results.

- This section further **discusses the most important results in relation to the theoretical framework and presented theoretical and/or empirical arguments**. The results should be interpreted in way how they correspond (or not) with the current relevant literature on the topic.
- **The good practice is to go back to the literature and discuss the results in its context** - this might yield, based on your substantially greater understanding of the topic, in new insights, ideas, connections that have been previously unseen, etc.

- **Different research designs require different ways how to approach the results and discussion section.** E.g., whereas researches using statistical analysis might be centered around the hypotheses and supplemented by tables that summarize statistical models, researches using frame analysis might be centered around schemes of reconstructed frames and supplemented by direct quotations from the corpus.
- In general, **the results should be presented mainly in words**, the tables, graphics or any other ways of presenting the results are of secondary importance.

2.2.5 Conclusions

- **The conclusions are not exhaustive summary of the thesis:** they should be concise and focus on most important results in the context of the research question and/or problem statement.
- If applicable, it formulates practical and/or policy implications or solutions.
- **The conclusions should be comprehensible without reading the whole thesis.** It should avoid disciplinary jargon and extensive citations in order to be understood by diverse audiences including policy makers, policy analysts, and interested publics.
- **It states limitations of the research as well as ideas for future work.**

2.3 References

- **References include all sources referred to in the body of the thesis.**
- Organize the list of references alphabetically by first author surname.
- No particular referencing style is required. However, referencing must be consistent across the whole thesis.
- Using citations managers such as Mendeley is highly recommended.

2.4 Supplementary materials

- Any material which disrupts flow of the text, but which is important to justify or develop the results of the thesis, should be added to supplementary materials.
- E.g. coding schemes, questionnaire templates, source codes, data, etc.

List of abbreviations (optional)
List of other items (optional)
Appendices (optional)

3. FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

- Among the formal aspects that have to be kept is **the length of the thesis, use of quotation and notes, stating of all used sources including internet ones, and the signed declaration of the authorship on 2nd page.**
- Graphic layout of the text should reflect the structure and facilitate easy comprehension of the argument. The text of final thesis can be printed on white as well as recycled paper.
- Double-sided print is acceptable. However, the Title Page and all the initial pages must be printed as single-sided. The thesis has to be bound according to instructions – texts in so called circle binding are not accepted.
- Both copies submitted for defense will be returned back to the student, as the thesis is archived in the information system.

- **The title page should state the name of university, faculty, department and study program, title and type of the thesis, name and UČO (personal identification number) of the author, supervisor's name, enrollment year, place and date of publication** - see the Thesis template).
- For the Master´s thesis 30 standard pages or **9,000 words of net word count with +/- 10% tolerance is required.** The net word count includes everything between the beginning of the Introduction and the end of the Conclusions section. The abstract, acknowledgements, bibliography or supplementary materials are **not** to be included in the net word count.
- Theses accounting for less than 8,100 (9,000-10%) words will be rejected. Theses exceeding the required range (9,901 words and more) will have their scores reduced by one grade.
- Students are required to calculate their theses word counts and insert them into the template's "Bibliographic Record" section.

4. CITATION ETHICS

- **Plagiarism** is a major breach of academic integrity based on the use of material written by another person without referencing the source. Plagiary will receive no points and the final grade will be an F. **The Disciplinary Commission will be notified about any cases of plagiarism.**
- **In order to avoid plagiarism, the reader must be able to differentiate already known findings from new ones** (author´s inputs), direct citations must be highlighted (e.g. quotation marks, italics, etc.). **The reader must be able to track and find the referenced source**, i.e. full references should always be included.
- What should be referenced and what need not be:
  - **Should be:** evidence, data that are not commonly known among the targeted audience, different views on commonly known facts/events
  - **Need not to be:** commonly known facts (e.g. 'WWII ended in 1945')
- Only sources used in the actual text can be referenced.
- Only known reference details can be used.
- Do not translate the language of the source (use English transcription where possible).
- In case of uncertainty about how to avoid plagiarism contact your supervisor.

5. DIPLOMA THESIS SUBMISSION

- Before the very submission of the thesis for the defense, you have to successfully pass the **ESSn4500 Diploma Seminar** first. This basically means the submission of (nearly) completed thesis in the Thesis Seminar and obtaining the credits for the course.

  1. The thesis must be put in the Homework Vault of Thesis Writing Seminar before the deadline stated in the schedule of the Department of IR and European Studies. Student submits the thesis in the file under the name of his/her supervisor.
  2. When submitted to the Homework Vault, **the thesis must have at least 80% of the overall number of words; i.e. 7200 words.**

3. Please note not only you are required to comply with the minimal percentage of the overall number of characters; moreover, the thesis must be coherent in terms of its content and must include all the chapters as agreed with the supervisor (including the conclusions). **It is also expected the research question(s) will already be resolved.**
4. The footnotes may not be completed.
5. The list of references may not be completed.
6. Appendices may not be included.

● Once the deadline for submissions is over, the Homework Vault will be closed. It is the student's responsibility to submitted the thesis in time and in the appropriate folder.
● The supervisors the read the texts submitted, and decide on credit and give feedback via the Seminar's notebook application and/or via e-mail within 7 days.
● Submit the thesis before the deadline set in the department calendar and post it in the information system in STUDENT menu: [Final State Examination and Thesis/Dissertation Archive.](#)
● First, you need to fill in the archive with abstracts (enter the English abstract twice) and keywords and confirm that the printed and electronic versions are identical. Then only you continue to the archive and submit the full text in doc(x) or pdf text form.
● The full instructions of working with theses in IS from the start (topic registration) until the final submission can be found in the Help section under the heading [Theses/Dissertations.](#)
● **Theses submitted later will not be accepted for defense**.
● The thesis submitted in hard copy and the electronic version in IS should be identical, which is the responsibility of the student. The title of the thesis stated in the Thesis Topic list in the information system will be stated in Diploma Supplement, so up-date the title e.g. one month before the final text is due.
● In case of any problems, contact the department secretary.
● **Two printed copies (signed) identical with the electronic copy must be submitted at the department by the deadline given in the departmental calendar.** Both perfect (paperback) and spiral/wire binding is accepted.

6. DIPLOMA THESIS EVALUATION

The thesis evaluation is based on following criteria:

● **Research objectives.** The thesis clearly declares its objectives: description, exploration, theory-testing, theory-building, etc.
● **Research question.** The thesis articulates its research question(s) and/or problem statement in a clear, precise, and transparent manner. The research questions and/or problem statement are theoretically and/or practically interesting and their motivation is discussed in a clear, precise, transparent, and concise manner. The scope of the research is appropriate for an MA thesis.
● **Research Design.** The research design is selected adequately for the chosen research question(s) and/or problem statement, and introduced in a clear and

transparent manner that shows awareness of the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions. The research design is manageable in an MA thesis.

- **Execution of the Design.** Depending on the approach chosen, *theorizing* and/or *data analysis* are well executed, non-contradictory, and reflective.
- **Presentation of the Material.** The thesis is well structured and written. The thesis follows the expected referential guidelines.
- **Communicative Potential.** The thesis shows a good knowledge of the existing literature and engages it in an analytically disciplined way and is opening avenues for further analysis.
- **Overall Impression.** The thesis makes a valuable contribution (provides new findings or does relevant replication research) and can be characterized as intellectually engaging and promising from the academic and/or practice-oriented standpoint(s). It demonstrates analytic ability through the careful and critical use of relevant concepts and approaches.
- **Defense.** The candidate can efficiently and clearly present the material of their thesis and respond to questions and comments.

This evaluation scheme builds on that of the Department of Political Science, Central European University.

The grade is decided by the State Exam Committee that further takes into account reviews by the supervisor and reader of the thesis.

Bibliography

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