Central European University

Department of Economics and Business

M.A. in Economic Policy in Global Markets

Thesis Guidelines

Contents:

Introduction

Please read this document carefully, before you see your thesis advisor. This advice is designed to steer you past the major stumbling blocks encountered in preparing an MA thesis. By paying attention to the simple guidelines below, almost all the misery associated with meeting the requirements of the thesis can be avoided.

Content

What a Good Thesis Looks Like

1. **Your thesis should make a clear policy relevant statement or advocate for or against a particular policy.** The point should clear and well defined. Theses that only review the literature or speculate about overly broad questions are not acceptable.
2. **DO:**
   a. "Does private health insurance affect the healthcare utilization of the elderly?"
   b. "Does the present global regime of Intellectual Property Rights protection stimulate innovation and development?"
   c. "Could a global tax on financial transactions decrease market volatility and increase governments' revenues?"
   d. "The U.S. should allow for more immigration"
   e. "Latin American countries should restrict the inflow of hot money"
   f. "European competition policy uses less economics than U.S. competition policy"
   DON'T:
   g. "The analysis of inflation and growth in Hungary"
   h. "A review of the European integration process"
3. **You should support your point with evidence.** Evidence can include summary statistics, graphs, regression analysis, or detailed case studies. While you should build on prior work, reference to authority (e.g. arguing that a statement is true because some important person said it was true) alone is not considered evidence.
4. **DO:**
   a. cross-country data from the World Development Indicators
   b. time series of the oil price and inflation in Saudi Arabia
   c. case study of BP oil spill
   d. review of the most relevant cases in competition policy
   DON'T:
   e. anecdotes from Thomas Friedman's "The World is Flat"
   f. quote from the prime minister of Britain
5. **All of your thesis should support your point.** Avoid anything that is not necessary towards that goal, such as an overly long literature review or a digression into little related topics.
6. **Prepare a one-page summary of policy conclusions.** This should target a busy policymaker and convey the main message of the thesis. It is also a good check whether you have a clear enough message. If not, go back to (1).

Academic Infractions and Academic Fraud

Please be sure to cite correctly, and to give proper credit to other authors for their ideas and language. An MA thesis which contains plagiarism, other academic infractions or which is in any way the result of academic fraud **will result** in disciplinary action as specified by the university regulations (See section 6 in the Student Rights, Rules and Regulations).

Cheating and plagiarism is not tolerated in the program. In all suspected cases an official process will be opened. Sanctions include failing the course or even being expelled from the university, for details see the CEU Code of Ethics and the CEU Plagiarism Policy.

Grading Standards and Practices for Thesis Research in Economic Policy in Global Markets

A. How your thesis will be assessed

- Your primary advisor and a second reader will evaluate your thesis. The final grade is given by the thesis coordinator based on the suggestions of the advisor and second reader.
- You will receive only the final letter grade and can request copies of all reports without individual grades.

B. Evaluation criteria

1. **Question or Policy Position**. A well-defined policy relevant question should be posed and answered or a clear policy position advocated. The thesis should establish the policy relevance of the question.
2. **Understanding of the Literature.** The author should demonstrate command of the relevant literature and place her/his work in the context of this literature. The references to the literature should help the argument of the thesis.
3. **Methodology and Results.** The analysis should be clear and replicable. The data sources should be clearly given, any statistical calculation should be properly described. Tables and graphs should be precisely described to the point that an interested reader could replicate them.
4. **Presentation:**

   a) Structure. The thesis should have a format that is consistent with the conventions of economics. A reader should be able to identify sections that typically occur in papers in the economics/finance literature.

   b) Style. The writing should be clear and concise. The thesis should read like a typical general-interest journal article in economics (such as in the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*).

   c) Source Citations. A citation style found in the economics/finance literature—for example, the APA style or the style used in the *American Economic Review* should be used.

C. Grading Guidelines

Grade	Description
A with distinction	The thesis either (1) *fully meets* most of the criteria above and has no major deficiencies or (2) has some deficiencies but makes a *novel contribution* to the literature on economic policy.

A- to A	The thesis is adequate or better than adequate with respect to the above criteria.
B- to B+	The thesis represents good, solid work despite some significant deficiencies.
C+	The thesis has major flaws and represents work that is significantly below what is expected.
F	The thesis makes no significant advance along any the criteria above or does not meet the professional standards.

Format Requirements

Please see the department specific format requirements.

Prizes

Each year, outstanding M.A. theses receive a prize. Last year's prize winners may be found on the Department website at economics.ceu.edu. Previous years' theses are stored in the Library; we advise you to look at some prize-winning theses, especially ones related to your research area, to get a better idea of what a good thesis should be.

You and Your Advisor

Advisor/Advisee Assignments

Your MA Thesis Proposal/Advisor Request Form submission deadline is specified in the **MA Thesis Calendar**. The department considers your topic and advisor request when making the final advisor assignments. **Principally because some faculty advise a small number of theses, some students will not be assigned a requested advisor or will receive an advisor who is not an expert in the student's area of research interest. Please understand that a perfect match is not always possible. All faculty advising theses can guide the student through the process of writing a thesis with sound economic reasoning. All students are encouraged to seek advice and information from other faculty members with expertise in their research area.**

Some students develop a working relationship with a faculty member who agrees beforehand to supervise their thesis. If a faculty member agrees to advise you, have him or her send a confirming e-mail to your MA Coordinator, Dominika Dash (dashd@ceu.edu). **These agreements can only be considered if your MA Coordinator is notified before undertaking the advisor/advisee match.**

Your Advisor and Your Schedule

Writing a senior thesis requires neither constant supervision nor complete independence. Avoid these two extremes. Once you find out who your advisor will be, **see him/her as soon as possible.**

The following schedule should give you an orientation for your time management after you have made contact with your advisor. **There will be two intermediate deadlines to which you must adhere: Thesis outline - and**

First Draft submissions (See the <u>MA Thesis Calendar</u> for the dates) . These are literally *deadlines* and it is always a good idea to be ahead of schedule so that you can respond flexibly to unexpected difficulties and problems.

To do list:

1. Submit a proposal / advisor request form
2. Settle on a topic in consultation with your advisor — **ASAP**
3. Read background material
4. Complete a thesis outline (including outline, bibliography, primary sources, methodology etc.) and submit it **to your advisor**
5. Complete the bulk of the data analysis and write a first draft of your results. Submit it **to your advisor**
6. Submit your *final thesis title* by email to the MA Coordinator, Dominika Dash (dashd@ceu.edu). This helps allocate second readers.
7. Submit *three copies* of your thesis (two bound, one unbound - loose with no binding at all and one electronic to the ETD) 4:00 p.m. on the submission day to the main office. The paper and electronic version of the thesis should be identical. (*Allow adequate time for binding.*)
8. All procedural deadlines can be found in the MA Thesis Calendar.

Do not expect your advisor to read drafts overnight. In general, if you give him/her adequate time to read drafts, you will get good turnaround on your work. **Give yourself adequate time to respond to your advisor's comments.** Remember, your advisor is not just a grader but also someone who is willing to help you write a better thesis. Take advantage of this; don't surprise your advisor with the finished work. Make sure you know what she/he thinks of your work long before the final version is due.