

BA INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
THESIS SEMINARS GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS
2026-2027

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 Bachelor of Arts in International Studies provides students with the tools to investigate regional topics in a global context from a humanities perspective. They study these topics 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 points 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 10,000 words ($\pm 10\%$), excluding bibliography and notes.

3. ENROLMENT IN SEMINARS

In order to get enrolled in a thesis seminar students need to fill out the student survey. Before doing so, please make sure you have studied thesis seminar descriptions in the prospectus for the correct year and semester. The procedure is as follows:

1. On 13 July 2026 (for semester 1) or 11 December (for semester 2) you will receive a message with a link to the survey in **your umail**.
2. Indicate there your first and second choice of thesis seminar, and justify those by providing the topic related to the seminar's theme that you would like to focus on.
3. Fill out the survey, submitting your preferences by 27 July 2026 (for semester 1) or 4 January 2027 (for semester 2).
4. Based on those preferences and spots available per seminar, the Thesis Seminar Coordinator will assign you to a specific Thesis Seminar by 24 August 2026 (for semester 1) or 18 January 2027 (for semester 2).
5. You will then get enrolled in uSis as well as Brightspace for the specific groups by the Administration Office.

Students cannot themselves register in uSis for a Thesis Seminar, or be allowed into a Thesis Seminar in any other way.

4. 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 the research skills and the 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/thesis 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 if 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 thesis should focus on a regional issue and analyse it within a global context. The thesis may instead, if agreed by student and supervisor, tackle this regional issue from the perspective of two disciplinary approaches. 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.

By means of a separate survey, before 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 4-6 classroom meetings for general instruction, discussion and students' peer-feedback, as well as 4 individual meetings of approx. half an hour each (for an indicative timetable, 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 (see Appendix 2):

- a) Thesis proposal: research question and plan (within four weeks);
- b) Literature review (within seven weeks);
- c) Draft of the thesis (within 13 weeks).

Submitting all three assignments is a prerequisite for thesis submission. The assignments provide the only opportunity for you to receive actual feedback on your work (see Appendix 3). The more effort you put into these assignments the more you will benefit from them 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 respective week.

Note that due dates cannot be extended, unless there are personal circumstances that justify delay. Students claiming such circumstances should inform their thesis supervisor beforehand and in serious cases also their coordinator of studies. Under special circumstances the supervisor can extend the deadline by 5 working days. If a longer extension is necessary (2-3 weeks at the maximum), the student needs to inform the supervisor, discuss it with your study advisor and apply to the Board of Examiners.

5. COURSE LOAD

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

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

6. ASSESSMENT METHOD

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

- a) Thesis proposal (approx. 1,200-1,500 words);
- b) Literature review (approx. 2,500 words);
- c) Draft thesis (minimum format to be decided by the supervisor, but including at least a full chapter next to the literature review).

End Grade

- a) 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 *learning skills(process)*.
- b) To successfully complete this course, the grade for the thesis needs to be a 6.0 or higher.
- c) Late submission of the final version (within 5 working days of the deadline), 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. The thesis:

1. contains a clear academic research question;
2. is situated within a relevant academic debate;
- 3a. places the analysis of the regionally defined topic in a global context, or
- 3b. analyses the topic from at least two different disciplinary perspectives;
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;
9. counts 10,000 words ($\pm 10\%$), excluding bibliography and notes.

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.

The final thesis is always checked for plagiarism as well as for Artificial Intelligence-assisted or -generated passages (and so are the obligatory assignments). Please note that we expect original work. **Both plagiarism and the use of AI to generate text for your thesis are**

considered fraud. That may also include other forms of AI-assistance. Each case will be considered by the Board of Examiners.

If the first or the 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 criterion cannot be compensated with sufficient grades for others.

If **all the above knockout 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:

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

If the first and the 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 will likely delay the 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.

The thesis readers have four weeks for the assessment. Once the readers complete the assessment forms in the online assessment system, an automatic message is sent to the readers, the administration and the student with the grade and the assessment/feedback. **Be aware that if you have received a deadline extension, that can result in a clash with the first or the second reader's agenda and in an additional delay in the assessment process.**

Students who score an insufficient grade for the thesis (5.0 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 the feedback. The revised thesis is assessed by the same first reader and second reader, who again have four weeks for the assessment of the revised version. The grade for the resubmitted thesis will be lowered as a consequence of the longer process of completion, but that should not result in a failing grade for an otherwise passable thesis.

The procedure is as follows:

- The supervisor will provide the student with final instructions, preferably in an individual meeting. In case of a failing grade having been awarded the deadline for

resubmission is 10 working days after receiving the grade for the thesis and the feedback.

- Students without an extension (from the supervisor or the Board of Examiners) who fail to hand in their thesis on or before the original deadline, but still within 5 working days of that deadline, will receive a grade and feedback on their thesis. This will be considered a first submission of the thesis; however, the grade may be lowered as a consequence of the longer process of completion. This is to the lecturer's discretion.
- Students who fail to hand in their theses on or before the original deadline may hand in a first version of their thesis within 10 working days, counting from the original deadline. However, this first version will count as a resubmitted thesis with consequential lowering of the grade, and there will be no option afterwards 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 Education of the Faculty's academic institutes. Under no circumstances should students themselves approach faculty members for this task. Second readers are not supposed to be involved in the thesis research and writing process – only in the final assessment.

7. THESIS SUBMISSION

To submit their thesis, the student needs to:

1. Upload the file via a Brightspace assignment, **or** email it directly to the supervisor – **depending on what the supervisor asks for**;
2. Email the file to bathesis@hum.leidenuniv.nl on the same day, **or** include the latter address cc: in the email sent to the supervisor. The date of this message will be the thesis grade date.

Once the thesis has been evaluated with a passing grade, the student needs to:

3. Upload the file in the university's Thesis repository:
<https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/>

The thesis grade may only be registered in uSis after the thesis has been uploaded in the Repository. Please note that the repository accepts only one upload per student. Consequently, revised versions will not be accepted.

Leiden University's Student Repository is an online archive that makes Bachelor and Master theses easily searchable and, in the case of Master theses, publicly available. In the case of a bachelor thesis, the author, the supervisor, the study programme, the title, the subtitle and the

(optional) abstract will be publicly available and visible for search machines. Please keep this in mind when writing about a politically, culturally or socially sensitive topic, and discuss it with your supervisor.

For more information and an FAQ, please see the [Student Repository Website](#).

APPENDIX 1: TIME SCHEDULE

For class and individual meetings, check the timetable for time and location as well as the information share by your supervisor in the Brightspace module of your seminar. The exact timing of all class and individual meetings is subject to adjustment by the thesis seminar leader, except for the submission deadline of the final version of the thesis.

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

Fall semester 2026

week	date	deadline
40	2 Oct.	submission of thesis proposal
44	30 Oct.	submission of literature review
49	4 Dec.	submission of the draft
1	8 Jan. 2027	submission of definitive version

Spring semester 2027

8	26 Feb.	submission of thesis proposal
13	2 April	submission of literature review
17	30 Apr.	submission of the draft
22	4 June	submission of definitive version

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.

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, or at least discussed, in class.

Literature review (approx. 2,500 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 (or perhaps of the entire 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 supervisor/seminar's teacher may in fact reformulate the Literature review assignment and, for instance, require an Introductory chapter or the Theoretical Framework chapter, if that fits the topic or the disciplinary tradition better.

The literature review is to be submitted via the seminar's Brightspace module.

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, the literature review, and the 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 quality of their own work as well as the supervisor's specialisation and the focus of the seminar. 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 sub-questions); relevance; methodology; provisional outline of chapters; timeline/planning; and key sources. The feasibility of the intended research will also be an important subject of discussion.

Literature review: The supervisor will focus on the relevance of the consulted studies in connection to the research proposal, either as the state of the art or as a representation of a theoretical framework. The supervisor may also ask students to turn in a draft of an extensive introduction or a chapter on the historical background within the same word limit, instead of a literature review chapter, if this is more common in their subdiscipline of humanities.

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 for plagiarism, referencing style, and language, as well as the incorporation of earlier feedback. Original work is expected. The final thesis is therefore always checked for plagiarism as well as for Artificial Intelligence-generated passages.

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

Contact

Board of Examiners	bais-examinationscommittee@hum.leidenuniv.nl
Administration	osz-admin-thehague@hum.leidenuniv.nl
Study advisers	bais.stuco@hum.leidenuniv.nl
Student thesis repository	https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/

Useful links and literature

Thesis seminar guidelines for students (= this document online):

<https://www.student.universiteitleiden.nl/en/your-study-programme/thesis-and-papers/humanities/international-studies-ba?cf=humanities&cd=international-studies-ba#tab-3>

Writing Lab:

<https://www.student.universiteitleiden.nl/en/vr/humanities/writing-lab?cf=humanities&cd=international-studies-ba>

Brightspace page, 'Thesis' folder: Bachelor International Studies, 5_BINTS_OM_2020_9:

<https://brightspace.universiteitleiden.nl/d2l/home/16589>

International Studies' Subject Guide 'How to write your thesis':

<https://www.library.universiteitleiden.nl/subject-guides/international-studies-how-to-write-your-thesis>

POPcorner The Hague:

<https://www.student.universiteitleiden.nl/en/vr/general/popcorner-the-hague?cf=humanities&cd=international-studies-ba>

Student psychologists:

<https://www.student.universiteitleiden.nl/en/support/health-and-well-being/where-to-turn/student-psychologists/humanities/international-studies-ba?cf=humanities&cd=international-studies-ba>

Chicago Manual of Style:

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

Response paper (literature review), among others:

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

Literature review, among others:

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

Methodology books, among others:

- Uwe Flick, Katie Metzler and Wendy Scott eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, London: Sage, 2014 (online).

- Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath, *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Second ed., Oxford [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 2017 (online).

- Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the study of religion*, London/New York: Routledge, 2011.

Survey & questionnaires:

Natasha Mack and Cynthia Woodsong, *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collectors Field Guide*, North Carolina: FLI, 2005 (PDF online).