MA THESIS PROTOCOL 2020-21
Program in Asian Studies
Leiden Institute for Area Studies
Leiden University

- By October 1st (sem 1) or March 1st (sem 2) new students in the MA60 and MA120 all submit a supervisor distribution form including the option to identify preferred supervisors to the program chair, along with a separate description of their research interests. The form should be submitted electronically. The submission link for Autumn 2020 is here.

- By the end of October, the chair of the program pairs students up with supervisors based on who appears a good fit and who is available in terms of workload. The latter is decided in consultation with the LIAS Education Director (OD), who is meant to approve the appointments unofficially. Upon approval the chair then consults the prospective supervisors for their agreement, and finally submits the list of supervisors to the MA Board of Examiners, which is responsible for making the appointment official. In a Session Seven of the Introduction to Asian Studies course, they receive a lecture on the thesis proposal and its preparation. Ideally within roughly two-three weeks following this session, students will receive word of the identity of their thesis supervisor and schedule a first meeting with them to discuss their interests and plans and to receive guidance on sources, the state of the field, appropriate research questions, etc.

- Following this meeting and on the basis of the supervisor's guidance, students then spend the rest of November and December (sem 1) or April and May (sem 2) preparing a draft thesis proposal (approximately 1500 words, including a bibliography, a clear research question, and a proposed approach). *The draft proposal should be submitted by email to the supervisor for feedback no later than the first workday back after the New Year's holiday (sem 1) or June 1st (sem 2).* Supervisor should confirm receipt.

- To allow students sufficient time for revisions, *all supervisors should provide written feedback on this draft to the student by email by January 15th (June 15th in sem 2) and <u>no later than January 20th (sem 1) or June 20th (sem 2).</u>* Although not strictly required, supervisors are encouraged to meet with supervisees to discuss the proposal draft before the final submission.

- After receiving feedback from the supervisor, the final thesis proposal must be submitted directly to the supervisor by email by the **January 31st** (for February intake **July 1st**). Students must submit their final proposal directly to the supervisor. The supervisor then has approximately two weeks to return the proposal to the student with an assessment and a final grade (pass/fail basis). The grade should also be registered separately with the course coordinator of Introduction to Asian Studies (see below for details). Students who fail this assignment may resit the assignment and submit a revised proposal but <u>no earlier than two months after a previously failed submission</u>. For students who submitted their final proposal on January 31st, resubmission is allowed from April 1st.

- As of Sept 2020, the thesis proposal is included as an assessment component of the required course Introduction to Asia Studies. Students must therefore successfully complete the thesis proposal assignment before a grade for the course will be issued, and all final grades for Introduction to Asian Studies will therefore not be registered in Usis before submission of the result to the course coordinator, Ethan Mark. An *online form*

will be made available to supervisors for this submission. The program will distribute the link to this form to supervisors in a timely manner.

- Assuming the proposal is passed upon its first submission, there is roughly three months between the time of the approval of the thesis proposal and the deadline for the rough draft of the thesis. *During this period, supervisors should correspond or meet with their supervisees on a minimum of least two occasions* to advise, make and discuss interim (outline/chapter) assignments, and keep abreast of progress. The specific form of such correspondence and associated assignments are up to the discretion of the individual supervisor.
- Submission of the MA thesis: the procedure works with a *two-deadline* system. The first (draft) submission deadline is **May 15th** (or **November 1st** for the February intake). Students submitting a thesis draft or part thereof to their supervisor on or before the first deadline have a right to receive feedback on their work, and will receive their papers back, with commentary, with a minimum of two weeks remaining for revision and resubmission by the second deadline. Students who do not submit a draft by the first deadline forfeit the "right to a rewrite." They retain the right to submit a final version of their thesis by the final deadline without further penalty. All thesis drafts submitted *after* the first submission deadline of May 15th (November 1st) and before the final submission deadline of 1 July (15 December) will automatically be considered to represent the *final version,* with no further changes or adjustments allowed.
- The second and final submission deadline is **July 1st** (15 December for the February intake). Supervisors and second readers have a maximum of 6 weeks from this date (4 weeks for December submissions) to complete and register the assessment.
- **All** MA theses to be assessed in the current academic year must be submitted by the final deadline above. Theses submitted after this date will not be assessed or receive feedback until after the start of the first semester of the following academic year, i.e. from September (February for theses submitted in December).
- The final version should be no longer than 15,000 words and no less than 12,000 words, including footnotes and references, but excluding appendices. The student should use an established format for the references according to the standards of the discipline (see for example *Journal of Asian Studies* for social science*, The American Historical Review* for history, etc) and should do so consistently and correctly throughout the thesis. There is no single standard format regarding the layout (font, font size, margins, spacing, footnotes or endnotes, etc.), so please consult with your supervisor about her or his preference.
- **The final version of the thesis must be submitted to the common Brightspace Site** established for this purpose and accessible to all supervisory staff. They will thereby automatically be checked by Turnitin.
- The *submission of the thesis to the Student Administration Office*, as required in the Graduation Form, should only be done AFTER the final submitted version has received a passing grade and has thus been approved definitively as the final version by the supervisor and second reader.
- **All final theses** submitted by 1 July (15 December) **will be simultaneously made available to, read, and assessed by, both the primary supervisor and a second reader**, who each prepare and submit a separate thesis assessment form, which is combined into a single final form by the first reader for distribution to the student and registration in the

academic record. Under normal circumstances, the verdict should be reached—and a final grade issued—by mid-August (end of January).

On the next page please find the standard criteria against which the MA thesis is assessed in this faculty.

Standard Thesis Assessment Criteria

Knowledge and insight (contents, relation to the field)
Dublin descriptor: Has demonstrable knowledge and insight, based on the knowledge and insight at the Bachelor level and surpassing and/or expanding this, as well as offering a basis or an opportunity to make an original contribution to the development and/ or application of ideas, often in the context of research.
E.g.
• *the research question is based on a problem that reflects insight into the key discussions and methods of the field;*
• clarity, relevance, and definition of the problem;
• embedding in the existing literature;
• originality.

Application knowledge and insight (methodology)
Dublin descriptor: Is capable of applying knowledge and insight and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar circumstances within a broader (or multidisciplinary) context which is related to the specialisation; is capable of integrating knowledge and to handle complex matters.
E.g.
• *critical analysis of primary material/ primary sources (quality of the analysis);*
• putting into practice and usage of complex concepts;
• usage complex and effective research methods;
• usage secondary sources which are meant for an advanced academic audience;
• description and justification of the adopted method;
• *application of knowledge and insight into (unfamiliar) circumstances within a broader (or multidisciplinary) context.*

Reaching conclusions (interpretation, argumentation, conclusion)
Dublin descriptor: Is capable of reaching conclusions based on incomplete or limited data and with that taking into consideration social and ethical responsibilities which are connected to the application of the own knowledge and opinions.
E.g.
• *logical and consistent reasoning; conclusions are well-founded and follow logically from the presented material;*
• degree to which the thesis question is actually answered;
• degree to which results are connected to other and future research;
• *social and ethical aspects taken into consideration in reaching a conclusion;*
• *critical reflection on own role as researcher (social and ethical responsibilities).*

Communication (writing skills, structure)
Dublin descriptor: Is capable of clearly and unambiguously conveying conclusions, as well as the knowledge, grounds and considerations that form the basis of these conclusions, to an audience consisting of specialists or non-specialists.
E.g.
• *language use (language of instruction and/ or target language of the programme: degree of linguistic competence, readability, style, spelling, grammar, use and explanation correct terminology);*
• *structure and layout of the thesis (division into chapters and sections, table of contents, used illustrations);*
• *apparatus including annotations (correct use of reference guidelines, completeness of references, bibliography, etc.).*

Learning skills (process)
Dublin descriptor: Possesses the learning skills necessary to proceed in studies which require a high degree of autonomy or self-regulation.
E.g.
• degree of independence;
• planning and time management;
• handling feedback supervisors;

- If applicable: participation in thesis group.

Formal requirements

E.g. Number of words