

REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION THESES AT THE FIRST AND SECOND LEVEL OF HIGHER EDUCATION, PROCEDURE OF FORMING THE DEFENCE COMMITTEE AND THESIS DEFENCE PROCEDURE IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Adopted based on clause 74 of the Study Regulations by the Council of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Resolution no. 18 of 11 September 2024

1. Requirements for graduation theses

1.1. A bachelor's thesis is a research-based graduation paper that can serve as a preliminary stage for a future master's thesis. The task of the bachelor's thesis is to address a problem in the specialisation, using appropriate materials and methods and reliable, relevant scientific literature. The requirements for the length of the thesis are as follows: the body text of a bachelor's thesis (6 ECTS) is approximately 20–30 standard pages (36,000–54,000 characters, including spaces).

1.2. A graduation thesis in professional higher education (15 ECTS) may be of empirical, applied or creative research nature, and its body text is approximately 15–30 standard pages (27,000–54,000 characters including pages).

1.3. A master's thesis is a research-based graduation paper which provides a scientific solution or innovative approach to a professional problem, based on previous studies. It can be a precursor to a future doctoral thesis. The thesis can be theoretical, empirical, applied, or creative. The requirements for the length of the master's thesis are as follows:

1.3.1. The body text of a theoretical, empirical or applied-research master's thesis (15–18 ECTS) is approximately 30–50 standard pages (54,000–90,000 characters, including spaces);

1.3.2. The body text of a theoretical, empirical or applied-research master's thesis (24–30 ECTS) is approximately 40–80 standard pages (72,000–144,000 characters, including spaces);

1.3.3. The body text of a written part of a creative master's thesis (30 ECTS) is approximately 30–50 standard pages (54,000–90,000 characters, including spaces).

1.4. A master's project (15 ECTS) is a practically oriented research-based graduation paper aiming at solving a particular problem or topic using specialised knowledge and leading to an applied result. The master's project consists of three parts: a) a practical part, b) a theoretical-methodological part, c) documentation of the project work process. The practical part is an independent whole, and its form and volume must correspond to the objectives of the master's project. The body text of the theoretical-methodological part is approximately 20–30 standard pages (36,000–54,000 characters, including spaces).

1.5. An article-based master's thesis consists of a peer-reviewed research paper written and accepted for publication during the studies and an accompanying text describing and analysing the research process. The scope of the research must correspond to the volume of the master's thesis.

1.6. A graduation thesis can have more than one author, but the volume of work will be correspondingly larger. The contributions of different authors must be described in detail in this case. The permission to write a collective thesis is granted by the head of the institute or director of the college managing the curriculum or, in the case of multiple managers, the head of the coordinating institute or the director of the coordinating college.

1.7. The precise requirements for the content and format of the graduation theses (“thesis guidelines”) are approved by the council of the institute or college managing the curriculum or, in the case of multiple managers, by the council of the coordinating institute or college, and published on the institute’s or college’s website and, to the extent necessary, in the thesis course syllabus in the Study Information System.

2. Procedure of forming the thesis defence committee

2.1. According to clause 74 of the Study Regulations, the date of defence and the composition of the defence committee(s) are approved by the head of the institute or the director of the college managing the curriculum or, in the case of multiple managers, the head of the coordinating institute or the director of the coordinating college no later than the beginning of the semester. If a professional qualification is granted to the person completing the curriculum, the composition of the defence committee must be coordinated with the professional qualification committee.

2.2. The defence committee comprises at least three members with voting rights. If the supervisor of a graduation thesis is a member of a committee, the supervisor does not have voting rights during the assessment of this thesis.

3. Thesis defence procedure

3.1. According to clause 72 of the Study Regulations, completion of all other courses in the curriculum is the prerequisite for allowing a graduation thesis to be defended. Completion of the curriculum is monitored by the academic affairs specialist of the institute or college managing the curriculum or, in the case of multiple managers, by the academic affairs specialist of the coordinating institute or college. The thesis defence is preceded by a preliminary defence if stipulated in the thesis guidelines.

3.2. The graduation thesis is submitted to the academic affairs specialist electronically, in a format specified in the thesis guidelines, no later than one week before the date of defence. The council of the institute or college managing the curriculum or, in the case of multiple managers, the council of the coordinating institute or college may set an earlier submission deadline and require the submission of the thesis also on paper.

3.3. The defence committee has the right to check the graduation thesis using a plagiarism detection system.

3.4. The thesis submitted for defence must include the following parts: a) in a separate document at the end of the thesis, a non-exclusive licence granting the university permission to reproduce the thesis for preservation and electronic publication of the thesis and to publish the thesis electronically via the university’s online environment in accordance with clause 77 of the Study Regulations, b) an annotation of up to 100 words and 3–5 keywords in the same language as the thesis.

3.5. According to clauses 80 and 81 of the Study Regulations, the graduation thesis is published electronically in the digital repository of the University of Tartu Library. If electronic publication of the graduation thesis is not possible due to the economic rights belonging to other persons, due to the Personal Data Protection Act, state or trade secrets or other classified information, the author submits a reasoned application to the vice dean for academic affairs to establish restrictions on the publication of the graduation thesis one week before submitting the graduation thesis for defence.

3.6. Before the graduation thesis is submitted for defence, the supervisor in charge confirms to the academic affairs specialist, in a form that can be reproduced in writing, that the thesis meets the requirements and is allowed to be defended.

3.7. The programme director and the defence committee chair are responsible for appointing a reviewer for the thesis. The reviewer must have a qualification at least at the same level of higher education and be competent in the relevant field of research.

3.8. According to clause 76 of the Study Regulations, the reviewer submits a written review to the committee and the defender of the thesis no later than one working day before the defence. The review must allow for discussion with the student defending the thesis, characterise the thesis in both content and form, and give a reasoned assessment of the thesis.

3.9. According to clause 78 of the Study Regulations, the graduation thesis is assessed at a public defence. To protect personal data, state or business secrets, or the secret of a technological solution, the vice dean for academic affairs may declare the defence closed for the public based on the student's reasoned request.

3.10. According to clause 78 of the Study Regulations, the student's supervisor(s) and the reviewer must participate in the defence, except if they cannot attend for a valid reason. If the reviewer or supervisor is absent from the defence, their opinion on the thesis will be read out. In justified cases, the chair of the defence committee may allow participation in the defence via real-time two-way audio-visual communication.

3.11. The main stages of the thesis defence are: a) a presentation by the student defending the thesis, outlining the main points of the thesis; b) an academic discussion between the defender and the reviewer; c) public discussion and questions; d) the defender's closing remarks; e) deliberation of the defence committee and deciding on the grade. If necessary, the supervisor(s) are also given the floor to express their opinion during the defence.

3.12. The final grade for the graduation thesis is given by the defence committee, who take into account the grade proposed by the reviewer, the defence committee members' assessment of the thesis and the opinion of the supervisor(s). According to clause 79 of the Study Regulations, the defence committee has a quorum for assessment if more than half its members are present.

3.13. According to clause 79 of the Study Regulations, the result of the thesis defence is announced immediately after the thesis defence records have been completed but no later than one working day after the defence takes place.

3.14. A repeat defence can take place at the earliest in the following semester. The repeat defence is conducted based on this procedure established by the faculty council.