

Procedure for supervising, reviewing and defending graduation theses at the School of Business and Governance

1. General provisions

1.1. This procedure defines the principles for supervising, reviewing, and defending professional higher education theses, Bachelor's theses, and Master's theses; the rights and obligations of graduates, tasks of the Programme Director, supervisor, Student Counsellor, and support personal at departments in connection with graduation theses at the School of Business and Governance.

1.2. In this procedure:

1.2.1. graduation thesis – an independent research paper required for graduation and written by the student under a supervisor's guidance, the aims and learning outcomes of which are specified in the study programme;

1.2.2. graduation thesis Moodle course – a graduation thesis, Bachelor Thesis Seminar or Master's Thesis Seminar course created in Moodle environment with the aim of transmitting information related to graduation theses and for providing e-support for activities related to graduation theses;

1.2.3. graduate – a student or an extern wishing to write/defend or a student or an extern writing/defending a graduation thesis.

2. Tasks of the Programme Director and department in connection with graduation theses

2.1. The Programme Director shall:

2.1.1. ensure that the study programme as a whole or its main specialities have a graduation thesis Moodle course, respective information has been forwarded to potential supervisors and to the Student Counsellor of the Programme;

2.1.2. decide the necessity, procedure, and deadlines for thesis plan submission and create a thesis plan template according to the example provided in Appendix A;

2.1.3. decide the use of pre-defence on the study programme, decide the requirements for the work to be pre-defended, the procedure and deadlines of the pre-defence for the study programme, considering that the pre-defence shall take place at least one week prior to the submission of the defence application;

2.1.4. ensure that the information listed in points 2.1.2. to 2.1.3. is available to the Student Counsellor of the Study Programme and ensure its availability in the graduation thesis Moodle course by Friday of the second study week of the semester;

2.1.5. help to solve problems related to the assignment of graduation theses submitted for defence to the Defence Committee of the thesis topic field.

2.2. The Programme Director has the right to set, in addition to the deadlines specified by the Dean of the School of Business and Governance in "School of Business and Governance Academic Deadlines", intermediate deadlines for submitting parts of the graduation thesis in the study programme. The latter deadlines shall be available on the graduation thesis Moodle course by Friday of the second study week of the semester.

2.3. The Department shall ensure the creation of an up-to-date list of graduation theses example topics/keywords and potential supervisors.

2.4. Questions, proposals and problems related to supervision of graduation theses which are not the responsibility of the Programme Director are the responsibility of the Director of the Department.

3. Rights and obligations of graduates

3.1. A graduate shall:

3.1.1. follow the main speciality of the study programme while selecting a graduation thesis topic;

3.1.2. obtain an approval from the supervisor for the planned graduation thesis topic;

3.1.3. register the planned graduation thesis topic and the name of the supervisor(s) on the graduation thesis Moodle course the latest by the Friday of the second week of the semester when the graduation thesis is planned to be defended (in case of selecting a supervisor outside of the School, point 4.3. shall also be followed);

3.1.4. initiate the signing of a confidentiality agreement prior to the start of the graduation thesis writing if the graduation thesis uses confidential data and the institution/company providing the data requires the signing of confidentiality agreement;

3.1.5. compile and submit the application for a closed defence and/or for obtaining access restriction for the graduation thesis if it contains a state secret, trade secret, information to be kept confidential on the basis of Personal Data Protection Act, unpublished materials, or any other classified information, by following point 6.4.;

3.1.6. compile the graduation thesis plan, get it approved by the supervisor, and submit it in accordance with the procedure and deadlines specified in the study programme if the thesis plan is required in the study programme;

3.1.7. submit finished parts of the graduation thesis to the supervisor for reading by following the deadlines specified in the study programme and agreed with the supervisor;

3.1.8. follow the "Requirements for student papers at the School of Business and Governance" guideline approved by the Dean of the School of Business and Governance while compiling and formatting the graduation thesis;

3.1.9. submit a paper that is in line with pre-defence thesis requirements by following the procedure and deadlines of the pre-defence of the study programme if a pre-defence is required in the study programme;

3.1.10. submit the defence application by the deadline established in the academic calendar;

3.1.11. submit one copy of the graduation thesis on paper (with comb binding or hardbound) and a graduation thesis in PDF format, including the non-exclusive licence. If access to the graduation thesis is restricted, the student shall submit, in addition to the above, also a summary of the graduation thesis. These shall be submitted to the department organising the defence by the deadlines specified by the Dean of the School of Business and Governance in "School of Business and Governance Academic Deadlines".

3.2. A graduate has the right to:

3.2.1. turn to the Programme Director for help in matters related to finding a supervisor or in case of supervision problems;

3.2.2. dispute the grade of the thesis in line with the conditions and terms stated in the Academic Policies.

4. Supervision of graduation theses

4.1. As a rule, the graduation thesis shall be supervised by an employee of the university. The supervisor of a Bachelor's and Master's thesis shall have at least a Master's degree or equivalent qualification. The supervisor of a professional higher education thesis shall have acquired at least higher education.

4.2. If needed, the graduation thesis may have two supervisors at least one of whom shall, as a rule, be the employee of the university. No separate compensation is foreseen for supervision, unless approved by the Director of the Department.

4.3. If the supervisor is outside of the School of Business and Governance or outside of the university, the graduation thesis topic with the name of the supervisor shall be approved by the Programme Director prior to the start of graduation thesis writing. In order to obtain the approval, the graduate shall forward a written application containing the data listed in 4.1. to the Student Counsellor of the Study Programme.

4.4. Tasks of the supervisor:

4.4.1. provide feedback and recommendations to the graduation thesis plan compiled by the graduate, incl. the aim of the planned graduation thesis, its structure, theoretical frame, and methods;

- 4.4.2. read the completed text or its parts, draw attention to the strengths and weaknesses of the graduation theses written/being prepared;
- 4.4.3. evaluate whether the thesis follows the "Requirements for student papers at the School of Business and Governance" and is ready for submission to the defence, and approve it by signing the reverse side of the title page and by approving the defence application;
- 4.4.4. provide his/her evaluation of the graduation thesis in the Supervisor's Opinion (see Appendix B) and forward it in writing to the Secretary of the Defence Committee and to the graduate at least 3 working days prior to the defence. If the thesis has two supervisors, both supervisors shall provide the evaluation.
- 4.5. Tasks of the supervisor do not include:
 - 4.5.1. wording the research problem;
 - 4.5.2. finding necessary theoretical or empirical literature for the graduate;
 - 4.5.3. helping the graduate to a significant extent in the implementation of the methods;
 - 4.5.4. supplementing and adjusting a half-finished graduation thesis;
 - 4.5.5. correcting writing, spelling, grammar, formatting, and referencing mistakes.
- 4.6. If the graduate has not followed the deadlines agreed with the supervisor or other deadlines prescribed for the graduation thesis, the supervisor has a right to refuse further supervision of the graduate.

5. Reviewing graduation theses

- 5.1. The Head of the Defence Committee shall determine the necessity for reviewing Bachelor and professional higher education theses. If these are not reviewed, the Head of the Defence Committee shall ensure that at least one Defence Committee member, who is present at the defence, has read the graduation thesis thoroughly prior to the defence.
- 5.2. Master's theses shall be reviewed.
- 5.3. As a rule, the review of the graduation thesis is written on the review form (see Appendix C).
- 5.4. The Head of the Defence Committee shall assign the reviewers. No separate compensation is foreseen for reviewing, unless approved by the Director of the Department.
- 5.5. The reviewer:
 - 5.5.1. forwards the review in writing to the Secretary of the Defence Committee at least 3 working days prior to the final defence;
 - 5.5.2. participates at the graduation thesis defence, if possible.

6. Graduation thesis defence

- 6.1. The members of the Defence Committees are assigned with the Dean's order in every September for the full academic year based on the proposals of the Directors of the Departments. The Dean's order shall also determine the Head of the Defence Committee, Deputy Head of the Defence Committee who replaces the Head of the Defence Committee, if needed, and the Secretary of the Defence Committee.
- 6.2. The defence of graduation theses shall be organised by the Head of the Defence Committee. Regular defences are carried out during the period specified in "School of Business and Governance Academic Deadlines".
- 6.3. The defence of graduation theses shall be open, unless the defence has been declared closed.
- 6.4. The Dean shall decide the use of a closed defence and access restrictions on the graduation thesis based on graduate's justified application, including, in case of need, the documents on which the application is based, and that has been previously approved by the supervisor(s) and the Head of the Defence Committee. In order to submit such an application, the graduate shall proceed as follows:
 - 6.4.1. compile the application using the form in Appendix D;
 - 6.4.2. forward the application signed by him/her and his/her supervisor(s) to the Student Counsellor of his/her study programme by the deadline for submitting the defence application. If the study programme requires a pre-defence, the respective application shall be submitted at least one week prior to the pre-defence.
- 6.5. The Dean may, upon the graduate's justified application in free format that has been previously approved by the supervisor(s) and the Head of the Defence Committee, allow the

participation of the graduate at the defence through communication device enabling two-way communication with picture and sound in real time.

6.6. The applications mentioned in points 6.4. and 6.5 shall be submitted to the Study Counsellor who forwards these for approval to the Head of the Defence Committee and, thereafter, to the Dean's Assistant for approval to the Dean. The Study Counsellor sends the fully signed application back to the Head of the Defence Committee, to the Secretary of the Defence Committee and to the graduate.

6.7. In case of a closed defence, the obligation to maintain confidentiality lies with all Defence Committee members.

6.8. On the next working day following the deadline of graduation theses submission, the Secretary of the Defence Committee shall submit a list of graduation theses, submitted for the defence, to the Study Counsellor(s) of respective study programme(s) using the form in Appendix E.

6.9. The Head of the Defence Committee shall check whether the topics of the theses submitted for defence match the topic field of the Defence Committee. If a mismatch is discovered, he/she shall immediately contact the Programme Director of such graduate's study programme for assigning the graduation thesis to the Defence Committee of the thesis topic field.

6.10. The Head of the Defence Committee shall decide whether the thesis is eligible for the defence prior to the disclosure of the final defence schedule and shall confirm it with his/her signature on the reverse side of the title page. The Head of the Defence Committee has the right not to permit a thesis to the defence if it does not comply with the requirements approved by the Dean's order "Requirements for student papers at School of Business and Governance". In such a case, the Head of the Defence Committee shall:

6.10.1. submit to the graduate in writing an explanation to why the thesis was not allowed to the defence;

6.10.2. not allow the graduate to correct the thesis and re-submit it during the same semester it was submitted for defence the first time, however, he/she shall inform the graduate of the subsequent possibilities to defend the thesis;

6.10.3. immediately forward the information about the exclusion of the work from the defence to the Study Counsellor of the study programme of the graduate and to the Secretary of the Defence Committee.

6.11. All graduation theses submitted for defence shall go through a plagiarism check. As a rule, the latter shall be performed by the Secretary of the Defence Committee a workday following the submission of the electronic versions of the theses and he/she shall forward the results to the Head of the Defence Committee.

6.12. In case of a graduation thesis containing plagiarism, the Head of the Defence Committee, in addition to activities listed in point 6.9.:

6.12.1. shall present in the explanation the most important plagiarised sources (those with highest match rates);

6.12.2. shall not forward to the graduate the full plagiarism check report, however, he/she may forward the full plagiarism check report to the thesis supervisor under the condition that the full report will not be forwarded to the graduate.

6.13. At least 3 working days before the defence, the Secretary of the Defence Committee shall forward to the graduates and to the Student Counsellor(s) of the study programme(s) the final defence schedule, using the form in Appendix F. The schedule shall be disclosed on the School's webpage.

6.14. The defence procedure shall be determined by the Head of the Defence Committee based on the following principles:

6.14.1. the defence shall take place if at least 3 members of the Defence Committee, including the Head of the Defence Committee or the Deputy Head of the Defence Committee, are present;

6.14.2. as a rule, defence language is the language of the graduation thesis;

6.14.3. the defence starts with the graduate's defence speech which lasts, in the case of Bachelor's and professional higher education thesis for 8 to 10 minutes, and in the case of Master's thesis for 10 to 15 minutes;

- 6.14.4. as a rule, the defence speech shall be followed by the introduction of the review and answers to the questions of the reviewer;
- 6.14.5. the former shall be followed by the general discussion, during which questions can be asked by the members of the Defence Committee and, thereafter, by defence attendants;
- 6.14.6. the general discussion is followed by the introduction of the supervisor's opinion;
- 6.14.7. the defence ends with the graduate's closing remarks which enable the graduate to thank the people who contributed to the finalisation of the thesis and who participated in the defence discussion;
- 6.14.8. the results of the defence shall be announced in OIS on the next working day following the defence at the latest.
- 6.15. As a rule, during the defence, every member of the Defence Committee shall assess the graduation thesis on a separate grading sheet (see Appendix G) and only the overall grade is added to the grading sheet of the Defence Committee. The individual grades awarded by the Defence Committee members shall not be disclosed and, in the event of a dispute, all possible dissenting opinions of committee members shall remain anonymous.
- 6.16. When determining the final grade for the graduation thesis, all individual grades assigned by the Defence Committee members who were present will be taken into account together with the grade of the reviewer. The grade of the supervisor will be considered indicative.
- 6.17. If the graduation thesis is graded "0", the graduation thesis can be defended again based on the conditions determined by the Defence Committee (the student is required to supplement the existing graduation thesis, submit a new graduation thesis, etc).
- 6.18. If the final grade of the graduation thesis is disputed, the Head of the Defence Committee is obliged to explain the reasons behind the final grade.
- 6.19. The Secretary of the Defence Committee shall ensure that not later than 3 months after the defence, all defended graduation theses or their summaries have been added to the digital collection of the library.

Appendix A. Commented example of graduation thesis plan structure

GRADUATION THESIS PLAN

To be approved by the supervisor(s), approximate length without the list of references 2 to 3 pages.

Author of the graduation thesis:

Supervisor's (and co-supervisor's) first and last name:

Supervisor's (co-supervisor's) degree and position:

Planned time of defence (with the accuracy of one semester, e.g. spring 2017):

Planned title of the graduation thesis:

The title of the graduation thesis shall be specific and clearly worded, at the same time covering its content and providing understanding of the essence of the research problem. It cannot be a question or a slogan (i.e., avoid journalistic style). The title can be changed and specified later on, it does not have to be final.

Does the graduation thesis require closed defence or access restriction upon publication? YES/NO

If the graduation thesis contains a state secret, trade secret, information to be kept confidential on the basis of Personal Data Protection Act, unpublished materials or any other classified information, restriction on the publication and/or closed defence could be necessary. All authors of theses requiring closed defence or access restriction upon publication shall submit such application a week before the pre-defence at the latest.

Language of the graduation thesis:

As a rule, graduation theses shall be written in the language of the study programme or in English. Students of the main speciality "Estonian Public and Private Law" in the HAJB and HAJM study programme may write their graduation thesis in Estonian.

Justification of topic selection and research problem:

The justification of the topic selection shall contain an explanation to the background and show the importance, relevance and timeliness (topicality) of the topic. The research problem/question to be answered in the thesis should emerge from the explanation. It is possible to investigate either a theoretical contradiction and/or empirical problem based on real data.

Specify and define the problem as precisely as possible. Ask yourself, can I say in one sentence what I intend to investigate or which question I wish to answer with my research? Use keywords and their associations.

Aim and main research questions:

The aim should be presented in one sentence. It shall be as specific as possible. The aim should not be to "describe", "provide an overview" or "analyse" something. The aim focuses on finding a solution to the research problem.

In addition to the aim, the research questions and/or hypotheses (usually up to 3) should be presented. Research questions are always open-ended. Explain which research tasks you intend to perform to fulfil the aim of the thesis. Define your own contribution in the thesis, what additional value does it create. Your contribution should rely on the literature and on what is already known in the field (avoid "reinventing the wheel").

Theoretical/empirical background and list of references:

Describe which theoretical standpoints, which authors, which previous research you intend to base your solution to the research problem on. List the most important scientific articles, databases, etc. you intend to use. The list of references provided in the graduation thesis plan does not have to be final nor exhaustive.

Methods and data:

Explain which research methods you will use to carry out the research tasks. Justify their selection. Do you plan to use quantitative and/or qualitative methods? Which ones? (E.g. if you use a survey, then how do you intend to form the sample, what is the structure of the questionnaire, how do you intend to compile, distribute and process it, etc.).

Present the sample and arguments why this sample is appropriate and representative for the problem at hand. Which data do you plan to use to solve the research tasks and where do you intend to obtain it? Explain which problems could emerge in connection to data and how you intend to overcome them.

Preliminary structure of the graduation thesis:

Present the preliminary table of contents by chapters and sub-chapters. While compiling the structure, use the research tasks as a basis. The structure has to be as logical and clear as possible. Avoid structuring too much, but also avoid very long (sub)chapters.

Approximate schedule of thesis preparation:

Plan time for going through the literature, gathering data, processing and analysing data, interpreting results, putting together the manuscript and polishing it. The schedule should be prepared at a weekly level and enable to prepare the pre-defence version of the thesis by the deadline (all components of the thesis must be there, but may require further polishing).

The schedule should be approved by the supervisor, especially the deadlines when you intend to send your thesis or its parts for intermediate review. As a rule, it is common that a supervisor reads the work 2 to 3 times within the thesis preparation process.

SUPERVISOR'S OPINION

Title of the thesis:

Author:

Supervisor:

1. Research problem, aim of the graduation thesis, research questions, hypotheses

Clarity, justification and topicality of research problem, aim and research questions. Interconnection between the aim and research questions. Presence of clear hypotheses matching the problem. Conformity of the contents of the thesis to the problem and aim. Logic and articulation of the thesis structure.

Failed Poor Satisfactory Good Very good Excellent

2. Theoretical/empirical background

Conformity and suitability of chosen theoretical approaches for solving/addressing the research problem. Sufficient coverage of theoretical/empirical literature for understanding and explaining the research problem. Sufficient count of appropriate, timely (field-specific) references and proper interpretation of sources.

Failed Poor Satisfactory Good Very good Excellent

3. Research methods and data

Sufficient and clear introduction of chosen quantitative or qualitative research methods and their suitability for achieving the aim and answering research questions. Appropriate use of data collection methods. Compliance and sufficiency of empirical material/data/sample for solving research problem, reliability of data.

Failed Poor Satisfactory Good Very good Excellent

4. Solving the research problem/analytical quality of the research

Quality of analysis/discussion: ability to analyse the data and link the results of the analysis with theoretical/empirical standpoints. Conformity of results with the aim and research questions: clarity, relevance, timeliness and factuality of discussion; association between conclusions, proposals recommendations and analysis; validity, legitimacy and consistency of conclusions.

Failed Poor Satisfactory Good Very good Excellent

5. Formatting quality

Formatting conformity to valid requirements, incl. language use, quality of referencing.

Failed Poor Satisfactory Good Very good Excellent

Supervisor's comments/ assessment of the process of thesis writing
(independence, development, co-operation with the supervisor, etc.)

Strengths of the thesis:

Weaknesses of the thesis:

Grade suggested by the supervisor:

Signature:

Date:

Assessment scale:

- 5 ("A") - "Excellent"
- 4 ("B") - "Very good"
- 3 ("C") - "Good"
- 2 ("D") - "Satisfactory"
- 1 ("E") - "Poor"
- 0 ("F") - "Failed"

REVIEW

Title of the thesis:

Author:

Supervisor:

Hint: Please mark the assessments with a cross. If desired, you can add more specific comments to the boxes below the assessments.

1. Research problem, aim of the graduation thesis, research questions, hypotheses

Clarity, justification and topicality of research problem, aim and research questions. Interconnection between the aim and research questions. Presence of clear hypotheses matching the problem. Conformity of the contents of the thesis to the problem and aim. Logic and articulation of the thesis structure.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Failed	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very good	Excellent

2. Theoretical/empirical background

Conformity and suitability of chosen theoretical approaches for solving/addressing the research problem. Sufficient coverage of theoretical/empirical literature for understanding and explaining the research problem. Sufficient count of appropriate, timely (field-specific) references and proper interpretation of sources.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Failed	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very good	Excellent

3. Research methods and data

Sufficient and clear introduction of chosen quantitative or qualitative research methods and their suitability for achieving the aim and answering research questions. Appropriate use of data collection methods. Compliance and sufficiency of empirical material/data/sample for solving research problem, reliability of data.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Failed	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very good	Excellent

4. Solving the research problem/analytical quality of the research

Quality of analysis/discussion: ability to analyse the data and link the results of the analysis with theoretical/empirical standpoints. Conformity of results with the aim and research questions: clarity, relevance, timeliness and factuality of discussion; association between conclusions, proposals recommendations and analysis; validity, legitimacy and consistency of conclusions.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Failed	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very good	Excellent

5. Formatting quality

Formatting conformity to valid requirements, incl. language use, quality of referencing.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Failed	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very good	Excellent

Strengths of the thesis:

Weaknesses of the thesis:

Questions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Grade suggested by the reviewer:

Signature:

Date:

Assessment scale:

- 5 ("A") – "Excellent"
- 4 ("B") – "Very good"
- 3 ("C") – "Good"
- 2 ("D") – "Satisfactory"
- 1 ("E") – "Poor"
- 0 ("F") – "Failed"

APPENDIX D. APPLICATION FORM FOR GRADUATION THESIS

To the Dean of the School of Business and Governance at Tallinn University of Technology

Application for closed defence and/or access restriction for publication of the graduation thesis

Name _____
Student code _____
Programme code and specialisation _____
Supervisor(s) _____
Title of the graduation thesis _____

- Please declare my graduation thesis defence closed based on the following reason(s):
- Please **do not publish** my thesis until (date) _____ for the following reason(s):

- Trade secret (written requirement from the owner of the trade secret or confidentiality agreement).
- The graduation thesis will be published as an academic paper in the future (if the student is part of a research group).
- State secret or information the publication of which could harm the external relations of the state.
- The thesis contains personal data the disclosure of which would require approval from the person.
- Proprietary rights belonging to another person (confidentiality agreement, incl. transfer of author's proprietary rights to a company).
- Other reason (e.g. information on technological solutions that in case of disclosure would harm the interests of the university).

Explanation

(justification why closed defence and access restriction are applied for and why for that period):

Appendices added to the application

(to be completed in case the application includes appendices, e.g. written requirement from the owner of the trade secret, confidentiality agreement, application form the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for obtaining Access restriction, etc.)

- 1.
- 2.

Date and student's signature:

/do not add when signing digitally/

I agree with the application:

Date and supervisor's signature:

/do not add when signing digitally/

I agree with the application:

Date and signature of the Head of the

Defence Committee:

/do not add when signing digitally/

I approve the application:

Date and signature of the Dean:

/do not add when signing digitally/

_____ **THESES DEFENCE AT THE DEFENCE COMMITTEE OF** _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Defence time	Closed	Graduate		Study programme	Graduation thesis title in the language of the thesis	Supervisors(s)		Reviewer
		First name	Last name			First name	Last name	

Head of the Defence Committee: text
 Deputy Head of the Defence Committee: text
 Members of the Defence Committee: text
 Secretary of the Defence Committee: text

Appendix G. Grading sheet form for a Defence Committee member

Grading sheet

Assessed parameters	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Research problem, aim of the graduation thesis, research questions, hypotheses				
Theoretical/empirical background				
Research methods and data				
Solving the research problem/analytical quality of the research				
Formatting quality				
Defence				
Overall grade 0 to 5				

Assessment scale:

- 5 ("A") - "Excellent"
- 4 ("B") - "Very good"
- 3 ("C") - "Good"
- 2 ("D") - "Satisfactory"
- 1 ("E") - "Poor"
- 0 ("F") - "Failed"