

June 2022

Political science, University of Basel

Master's thesis information sheet¹

1. General information

The goal of the master's thesis is for students to show that they are capable of coming up with their own piece of empirical and/or theoretical research, carrying it out in a scientific manner, and presenting their work appropriately. Please pay attention to the guidelines for the political science master's program ("Wegleitung Masterstudienfach Politikwissenschaft"), which can be found via <https://philhist.unibas.ch/de/studium/dokumente-merkblaetter/>. It is advisable to start considering potential topics for the final thesis early on in the programme.

2. Roadmap / schedule

The following procedure is recommended, starting in the second semester:

2.1. Spring semester (2nd semester)

Searching for a suitable topic: you should consider different topics that are of interest to you, and which are relevant to political science. When looking for a topic, make sure that you base it on the current state of research, and ensure that you identify an analytical (i.e. not a purely descriptive) research question. Reach out to a potential academic supervisor and co-supervisor at an early stage (a list of potential supervisors can be found at the end of this document) in order to establish whether supervision is possible and to discuss the topic. It is best to do this by sending an email with a first outline of the work (max. three A4 sides).

This outline should contain the following: a research question, a reason for selecting the topic, an explanation of its relevance, information on the case selection and period of investigation, the data and methods that you expect to use, as well as key bibliographic references.

Once a topic has been settled upon, a first meeting must be held with the supervisor (during the supervisor's office hours). In this meeting, you will discuss the outline you submitted, as well as how you will proceed with your work. Please inform your supervisor in advance of any relevant events you have attended, and of whether you have the necessary knowledge of the methods selected to carry out this research. Before your first meeting, you should also provide your supervisor with a list of the topics you have already covered in your seminar papers. **A master's thesis cannot be written on exactly the same topic as that of a previous seminar paper.** Master's theses can be written in German or English.

Possible second preliminary meeting: If necessary, a second meeting with the supervisor can take place to discuss (1) the topic and (2) the quality and comprehensiveness of the outline.

During this meeting, you should discuss ways to improve the proposed research plan and the general time schedule for the thesis. A deadline for the submission of the revised research design should also be set. The deadline for submission of the finished master's thesis is set by the university.

Research design: After the first meeting, a research design is to be submitted to the supervisor by email. The deadline for this submission is to be agreed upon with the supervisor.

The research design should be no longer than ten sides and should contain the following:

¹ This translation builds no legal basis; it is unauthorized and only for understanding purposes.

- Research question and reason for selection this research question;
- explanation of the social and theoretical relevance of the topic, presentation of the current state of research and the specific contribution of this piece of research;
- theoretical approach resp. theoretical argumentation, as well as hypotheses which have been derived from the theory on this topic;
- operationalisation / measurement of the variables;
- case study and applied criteria; type of study (ex. quantitative analysis, case study, comparative analysis etc.) and timeline;
- the levels of analysis: for example, at the level of individuals, parties or other organisations, regional or country-level comparisons, multi-level analysis etc.;
- necessary data and sources;
- methods for data collection and evaluation (multivariate regression analysis, QCA, interviews, discourse analysis, qualitative or computer-based text analysis etc.) and if needed the software used for the analysis;
- expected results;
- bibliography.

Second meeting: After the research design has been submitted, a second meeting with the supervisor takes place in which the research design will be discussed (and if appropriate, also regarding how the thesis will be presented in the MA colloquium). Students have the opportunity to revise their research design once.

2.2. Spring semester, May (2nd semester)

Registration: The University of Basel sets a fixed registration time window for the master's thesis and the master's examination.

In order to complete the master's program within the standard period of four semesters, students **must** register for their thesis in the spring semester of their first year - i.e. in their second semester - in April / May. The master's thesis submission deadline is set for nine months after the exact date of registration within the registration time window (February of the following year).

If the registration deadline is missed, or students do not wish to complete their studies within the standard timeline, the next possible registration window is in the autumn term (3rd semester) in December.

Current forms, dates for time windows and further information can be found here:

<https://philhist.unibas.ch/de/studium/studierende/master-pruefung-abschluss/>

2.3. Further procedures

Presentation in the MA colloquium: it is highly recommended that students attend a MA-colloquium in the autumn semester (3rd semester) alongside their MA thesis work. This colloquium is intended to offer students the opportunity to present their research design and receive feedback from other MA students, doctoral students and scientific staff. This enables students to further improve their research design.

Supervision: If necessary, outstanding questions can be discussed with supervisors during the third semester. Please discuss and agree in advance on precisely how the supervision should take place (frequency and number of consultations, procedure in the case of uncertainties etc. On average two

consultations are needed). Before meetings, please email the supervisor a list of questions that you wish to discuss. The thesis is to be submitted on time.

Assessment: Assessment is carried out by the supervisor and the co-supervisor on the basis of the final version of the thesis. The thesis resp. the topic of the thesis will not be assessed during the oral master's examination. Please note that **the topics of the master's examination cannot be the same as those of the master's thesis.**

3. Potential master's thesis supervisors

- Prof. Stefanie Bailer (stefanie.bailer@unibas.ch)
- Prof. Laurent Goetschel (laurent.goetschel@unibas.ch)
- Prof. Ralph Weber (ralph.weber@unibas.ch)
- Prof. Denise Traber (denise.traber@unibas.ch)
- Dr. Daniel Höhmann (daniel.hoehmann@unibas.ch)
- Dr. Maria Thürk (maria.thuerk@unibas.ch)
- Dr. Silvana Târlea (s.tarlea@unibas.ch)
- Dr. Sara Hellmüller (sara.hellmueller@unibas.ch)
- Dr. Edina Szöcsik (edina.szoecsik@unibas.ch)
- Dr. Dana Landau (dana.landau@unibas.ch)

At least one of the supervisors (main or co-supervisor) must hold a professorship at the University of Basel's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. In exceptional circumstances, assessors not specialized in your subject, or external assessors can act as supervisors or co-supervisors. Please make sure to discuss this with your political science professors first, however.

4. Formal specifications

The master's thesis should be max. 50 to 80 pages long. Specific formal requirements are to be discussed and set with the master's thesis supervisors.