

RULES OF AWARDING DIPLOMAS FOR THE AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, SECOND CYCLE STUDIES (MA STUDIES)

I. DETAILED RULES OF PREPARING AND GRADING A DIPLOMA THESIS

1. Rules and procedures for choosing a thesis supervisor

- 1) Students shall independently choose their Master thesis supervisor, in accordance with their research interests, by registering for a specific MA Seminar towards the end of semester II of the program.
- 2) An academic teacher is allowed to supervise no more than 8 Master theses in a particular academic year. In special cases, the Teaching Council may permit an academic teacher to supervise a Master thesis outside of an MA Seminar.
- 3) Should the Teaching Council give permission to supervise a Master thesis outside of the Seminar, the Teaching Council shall recommend that the Director includes it in the supervisor's teaching hours, after the diploma exam, 7 regular hours (as established in the Rules of Employment at UW) for every thesis, settled based on the rules established by a resolution of the IAiE Faculty Council. Supervising a Master thesis outside of the seminar requires the supervisor to be available to the student via email or in person during office hours. They should return the thesis (in its entirety or in parts – in accordance with individual arrangements) with comments and discuss it within three weeks of receiving it.

2. Rules and procedures for choosing a thesis topic

- 1) The topic and content of the Master thesis shall be within the scope of the American Studies program
- 2) The topic of the thesis shall be chosen by the student in agreement with their supervisor.

3. Rules and procedures for accepting the topics of theses

- 1) The topic of the Master thesis shall be approved by the supervisor and by an ASC verification committee established by the ASC Counselor for Students' Affairs consisting of independent academic teachers (full doctors, associate professors, professors) from the ASC, representing various areas of American Studies and the ASC Counselor for Students' Affairs as the committee chair.
- 2) Topics of Master theses shall be approved by the ASC verification committee by 30 January of the academic year during which the MA Seminar had started.
- 3) The list of approved topics shall be relayed by the ASC Counselor for Students' Affairs to Head of the Educational Unit for approval by the IAiE Teaching Council.

- 4) In case when an MA topic needs to be changed, a new one should get approved as quickly as possible by a verification committee member who represents a given discipline and the committee chair and should get approved by the IAiE Teaching Council at its nearest meeting. The deadline for submitting a new topic is 31 March of the academic year in which the MA Seminar had started.

4. Substantive requirements for a Master thesis

- 1) The author of a Master thesis should demonstrate in-depth knowledge of advanced research methods and the ability to use them to solve an academic problem, as well as show independence in finding specialist literature and skill in analysis and assessment of the gathered materials.
- 2) A Master thesis shall prove the author's abilities to conduct academic research.
- 3) To fulfill the substantive requirements a thesis must include the following elements: a research problem, a thesis/hypothesis, reasons for choosing the topic, the aim and scope of the thesis, research methods, a table of contents showing a logical argument and appropriate distribution of material into individual parts of the thesis, a bibliography.
- 4) A Master thesis should verify educational outcomes assigned to the MA Seminar.
- 5) A Master thesis shall not breach the principles of academic honesty. Every thesis at the University of Warsaw is verified using the Uniform Anti-Plagiarism System and discovering plagiarism or the work created employing AI tools disqualifies it from further proceedings. Additionally, the American Studies Center uses a specialized antiplagiarism system Turnitin adapted to verifying materials written in English based on English-language texts. Similarly, to an UAS test, discovering plagiarism by Turnitin disqualifies a thesis from further proceedings.

5. Formal requirements for a Master thesis

- 1) The first pages of the Master thesis shall be compliant with the sample pages presented in Attachment 1 of Ordinance no 16 of the Rector of the University of Warsaw from the 18th of May 2006.
- 2) The thesis shall be written in English or Spanish.
- 3) The thesis shall be written in proper English/Spanish, compliant with academic standards.
- 4) The suggested volume of the thesis is ca. 60 pages of text (a minimum of 15 000 words).
- 5) The thesis shall include at least 25 academic sources and the references to them shall be compliant with standards established by the supervisor.

- 6) The thesis shall be submitted to the ASC Office for Students' Affairs be submitted in electronic form through APD System in accordance with the schedule announced by the ASC Counselor for Students' Affairs.
- 7) First, the supervisor sends an electronic form to the ASC Students' Office and the counselor for students' affairs with a request to appoint an exam committee for a particular student. This equals accepting the final, complete version of the diploma thesis. Then, the student receives information from the Office about the opening of the APD system. The student files the thesis in APD oneself and leaves it for the Supervisor's approval after checking it with the JSA program.

6. Responsibilities of a Master thesis supervisor

- 1) The topic of the thesis shall be a result of cooperation between the supervisor and student and take into account the research interests and competences of both parties.
- 2) The person teaching an MA Seminar shall acquaint the students with formal and substantive requirements for Master theses at the ASC, monitor the process of writing a thesis, be available to students via email or during office hours, and return theses or their fragments (depending on what was agreed upon) with commentary and discuss them within three weeks. The supervisor shall not correct grammatical or stylistic errors, but rather identify problems and point to the types of mistakes made.

7. Grading criteria for a diploma thesis

- 1) In accordance with the Rules of Study at the University of Warsaw, a diploma thesis shall be graded by the thesis supervisor and at least one more reviewer.
- 2) Reviewers shall be chosen taking into account compatibility of their research interests with the thesis topic.
- 3) Reviewers shall receive the thesis for review 10 days before the planned date of the exam at the latest.
- 4) Grading criteria for diploma theses are included in the diploma thesis review form to be found in the University of Warsaw Theses Archive (APD).

8. Timeframe for making theses reviews available to students

Reviews shall be submitted to APD no later than 3 days before the planned date for the MA exam.

9. Grading criteria for a diploma thesis prepared by more than one student

The Teaching Council adopts the principle of evaluating each case like this individually.

II. DETAILED RULES FOR CONDUCTING A DIPLOMA EXAM

1. Rules of forming an examination committee appropriate for the educational cycle and studies' profile

- 1) The examination committee shall include at least 3 people: the committee chair, the thesis supervisor and reviewer.
- 2) Members of the committee shall be appointed by the ASC Counselor for Students' Affairs.

2. Substantive requirements for a diploma exam

The aim of the MA exam is to verify knowledge gained by the student over the course of their studies, as well as their proficiency in topics relevant to the thesis. Questions posed in the course of the exam shall be consistent with the program's educational outcomes and within the scope of the program. The committee shall grade the student's answers based on their substantive content and the proficiency in knowledge, skills, and social competences acquired over the course of studying.

3. Procedures for conducting a diploma exam

- 1) To proceed to the MA exam a student shall first:
 - fulfill all requirements, that is gain the required number of ECTS points, obtain credit for compulsory subjects, pass compulsory exams, and fulfill other requirements detailed in the studies program;
 - submit a Master thesis, approved by the supervisor, which passed anti-plagiarism tests and received positive reviews from the supervisor and reviewer;
- 2) The MA exam shall be conducted in the language of an MA thesis (English or Spanish).
- 3) The exam shall consist of three questions.
- 4) In justified cases, an MA exam may be conducted remotely using widely available internet tools. Both the student and the examiners may participate remotely. All participants have to agree to this form of exam and to record the proceedings.
- 5) To graduate with honors a student has to fulfill the requirements established in the Rules of Study at the University of Warsaw (§ 44, pt. 4).
- 6) The committee chair shall conduct the exam and ensure that exam procedures are followed. The chair may also pose one question to the student.
- 7) The supervisor and reviewer shall pose questions to the student.

4. Scope and form of a diploma exam

- 1) During the exam the student should demonstrate knowledge of the assigned readings for the course Key Readings in American Studies, the bibliography prepared with the supervisor, and the thesis' reviews.
- 2) An MA exam shall consist of three questions:
 - a question concerning issues covered by the assigned readings for the course Key Readings in American Studies – this question shall be posed by the committee chair, who may forgo posing the question and relay it to the thesis supervisor
 - a question concerning the submitted Master thesis – this question shall be posed by the reviewer
 - a question concerning 10 academic texts (books, articles, essays) selected by the student (and approved by the supervisor) from the thesis bibliography – this question is posed by the thesis supervisor.

5. Grading criteria

- 1) Grades for the student's answers shall be assigned unanimously, or if it is impossible, by majority vote.
- 2) A failing grade for one out of three questions shall not automatically result in failing the diploma exam, as long as the answer for at least one of the remaining questions was graded as "good" (4); in this case the final grade shall be decided by the examination committee. The exam automatically results in a failing grade if:
 - a student receives a failing grade for one of the questions and a grade lower than "good" (4) for both remaining questions;
 - a student receives a failing grade for more than one question.

III. DETAILED RULES OF MONITORING THE PROCESS OF AWARDING DIPLOMAS

1. Analysis of the process of awarding diplomas

- 1) At the end of each academic year the IAiE Teaching Council shall conduct an analysis of the process of awarding diplomas in that particular academic year.
- 2) The following shall be subject to analysis:
 - reviews of diploma theses and the awarded grades, especially: compliance with the schedule of making thesis reviews available to students; objectivity, completeness, and accuracy of the justification for the grades awarded by the supervisor and reviewer for the thesis; legitimacy of discrepancies in grades awarded by the supervisor and the reviewer;

- exam questions and grades awarded for the diploma exam;
- remaining within the scope of the assigned material and following procedures for conducting a diploma exam
- results of surveys about cooperation with the supervisor and the process of writing the diploma thesis filled out by graduates when they collect their diplomas.

3) Based on the results of conducted analyses, the Teaching Council shall prepare a report and send it to the University's Educational Council before the end of the semester following the academic year which was subject to analysis.

2. Procedures for implementing corrective actions to improve the process of awarding diplomas prepared based on the result of analyses described in pts. 1 and 2

- 1) The analyses described in par 1 pts. 1 and 2 shall be conducted annually regarding the previous academic year, by the Teaching Council. A report including results of analyses described in par 1 pts. 1 and 2 and information regarding planned corrective actions to improve the process of awarding diplomas shall be sent to the University's Educational Council by the end of the semester following the academic year which was subject to analysis.
- 2) If needed, as part of the report, the Teaching Council shall present recommendations of corrective actions to improve the process of awarding diplomas to the ASC governing body.
- 3) The ASC Director and ASC Counselor for Students' Affairs, in cooperation with ASC Educational Quality Assurance Team, shall be responsible for implementing corrective actions. In case new regulations need to be included in the rules, they shall apply from the next cycle onwards.