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FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT GUIDELINES 2020

Erasmus Mundus Master's in Public Policy (Mundus MAPP)

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I. GENERAL INDICATIONS (FROM THE 2018-2020 STUDENTS' GUIDE)

Thesis (20 ECTS)

Building on the thesis report, students continue their project in year two and submit a thesis at the end of the academic year. The thesis is individually supervised; is supported by the workshop that is assessed through an oral presentation; and is designed to assess more advanced skills of independent research.

The thesis is a 12,000 word long paper (including all references, footnotes, bibliography, appendices, and abstract) with all the attributes of scholarly work presented in accordance with IBEI or York thesis guidelines (depending on student track). If a significant change in the topic occurs in the course of the work (as compared to the thesis report), the student needs to secure approval from both supervisors. If the changed topic falls outside the expertise of the original supervisors it will not be approved.

Students will be supported throughout the process of undertaking their thesis by supervisors from their year 1 and year 2 institutions. Both supervisors will be involved in shaping the thesis report, with communication between supervisors occurring in advance to ensure that there is broad coherency.

The thesis is due by **July 15**. In order to complete the thesis requirement, students also need to pass an oral final examination (defense). The defense will take place during the first half of September (final date TBC) and provide the opportunity to students to summarize their core argument, and for members of the defense committee to ask questions, thereby testing student's oral presentation and argumentation skills. The defense is graded with Pass or Fail only, which will be communicated to the student on the day of the defense.

The thesis will be jointly examined by the two institutions the student studies in with their chosen mobility track and jointly graded by the two supervisors each contributing half the final grade.

Students receive detailed comments from the graders, and a single grade allocated in the York/IBEI grading schema. A passing grade is required both in the oral defense and for the thesis itself for fulfilling the thesis requirement as a whole.

The thesis will be marked in the York/IBEI marking system, using the following assessment criteria:

- **Problem specification:** Is the research question well-specified in the abstract and introduction? Does the thesis provide a convincing rationale for the project undertaken? Do the abstract and introduction effectively outline the candidate's position in response to the question (e.g. in a thesis statement) and the main concepts and evidence that will be used to support the argument?
- **Argument, Structure and Level of Analysis:** Does the thesis develop a clear argument? How clearly is the argument expressed? Does the structure of the thesis allow the argument to be developed effectively? Is the conclusion convincing and well supported by the analysis?
- **Analytical Content:** Is the theoretical and/or empirical material used accurate (or does it contain errors or mistakes in factor interpretation)? Does the thesis make good use of appropriate evidence to answer the research question? How strong and relevant is the analysis? How well does the student interpret theory and/or data and use his or her analysis to answer the research question, and to present his or her own evaluation of the matter at hand?

- Research design and methods: Does the thesis have an appropriate research design, including, where appropriate, hypotheses and case study selection? Are the chosen research method/s well justified?
- Presentation and referencing: Is the report neatly presented and clearly structured? Is the language clear and correct? Is the report within (and not significantly shorter than) the expected 12,000 words? Is the use of literature and sources competent? Is referencing in line with good scholarly standards?

For students whose mobility track involves CEU the electronic version of the entire thesis must also be uploaded into the CEU Electronic Thesis Database (ETD). Upon submission, students will be asked to accept the terms of the ETD Electronic License Agreement.

II. SPECIFIC INDICATIONS FOR IBEI STUDENTS

i. Aims of the dissertation

The main goal of the dissertation is to carry out independent research on a topic related to international affairs. This implies an effort to develop an original analysis of a political, economic, social or cultural issue. More precisely, the Master's thesis is aimed at:

- Allowing students to deepen their knowledge of a particular issue of their interest within the area of international affairs.
- Promoting students' familiarity with the research process.
- Enhancing students' capabilities to use different research methods, both qualitative and quantitative.
- Helping students set out a coherent and focused argument.
- Enhancing students' skills to search and review relevant literature.

ii. Format/Style

a) General aspects and parts of the dissertation

The final project must include a well-defined research question, together with the justification of its relevance. In addition, students must demonstrate an awareness of existing research in their chosen area (the 'literature') and by surveying it draw reasonable expectations about likely answers to their question (i.e. hypotheses). Care should be taken to justify the methods used, and the final project should aim to be an outstanding contribution to a scientific debate or theoretical discussion, in terms of originality, systematization or reflection.

Typically, each year at IBEI, dissertations are submitted utilising a wide range of theoretical approaches. What is common to all are the principles taught in the Advanced Social Research Methods class regarding the centrality of developing a problem statement and a research question, the need to think through and formulate expected answers to the question, the role of concepts and theories in this process, and moving from concepts to empirical research. While many of you will base your research on empirical observations about the world to support your arguments, a number of you will adopt the assumptions of critical theory, post structuralism, 'thick' constructivism or interpretive scholarship drawing on sociology, history, philosophy or political theory.

These approaches to understanding the world are non-positivist (specifically seeking hermeneutic understanding or the application of post-positivist theory) and often find it awkward to use terminology such as ‘hypothesis’ and ‘independent and dependent variables’, although this does not imply that they do not conduct research using similar ideas regarding questions, expectations (hypotheses) or key concepts (variables). If in doubt, consult your supervisor about how to frame your methodological presentation. With regard to using alternative theoretical approaches that span the positivist – non-positivist gap, this is perfectly acceptable provided you demonstrate awareness of the different epistemological and ontological assumptions underpinning them.

Where relevant, students should gather and present original data and information or rely on data published in primary sources. In addition to primary sources, and where such are not available, students can draw on empirical data provided in the secondary literature (e.g. the World Bank or IMF statistical data, the Eurobarometer surveys, etc).

Qualitative and quantitative research is equally acceptable and there is no obligation to use one or the other approach. Dissertations are assessed on the basis of how well they answer the question and justify the theoretical framework used and methods chosen.

Since the assessment of the dissertation stands or falls on its quality (not the amount of time or the effort devoted by students), its structure is crucial. Although each dissertation needs to be presented in a unique and appropriate manner, the following sections should always be included in your dissertation.

- Abstract (in English): this part should be included after the “signature page” of your dissertation and its length should not exceed 250 words. The abstract should provide a synthesis of your dissertation, detailing its main arguments(s) and conclusions.

- Contents: this should be included right after the abstract and should detail the different parts, chapters and sections of the dissertation. The *usual* structure includes the following chapters: Introduction (including the problem statement and research question, aims of the paper and an outline of its structure); Literature review (providing the theoretical framework, identification of hypotheses); Methodology; Empirical discussion; and Conclusion. Page numbers need to be indicated for each chapter and section.

- More specifically about the introduction: **What is the nature of the puzzle you have chosen to explore?** In essence, it will be to learn something about the world. It may be about explaining why something happens, or understanding how various factors interact to bring about certain outcomes. There can also be an element of surprise in a puzzle – something that one would expect to happen, not happening, or the emergence of an unexpected outcome. These may be rooted in longer processes or series of events, and deviation from normalcy is the subject under investigation. **What reasons are there to devote time to studying the problem outlined?** The justification should identify why the investigation is worth doing. One common reason is that there is a gap in the literature, i.e. that a particular case, or the application of a theory to a given issue, has not been done before. Further value can be added if the new work can demonstrate weaknesses in previous scholars’ work. Justifications can also take the form of ‘exploratory work’, i.e. under-researched areas where a dissertation can provide new insight and suggest new avenues for research.

- More specifically about the literature review: **Firstly, it provides an overview of existing research that you think is relevant to help answer your question(s).** It establishes what work has already been done, what are the core debates in the subject of your dissertation, which theoretical approaches are preferred, and what are the arguments for and against their use. They can also identify independent and intervening variables where necessary. It must be long enough to show that you have carefully

consulted relevant work, but not so long that it steals space from you making your own argument. **Secondly, it generates expectations about what you are likely to find out.** Commonly we refer to these as the hypotheses – causal statements about the relationship between identified variables, although some non-positivist scholarship avoids these terms. If in doubt, your supervisor can help you on these issues.

- More specifically about the conclusion: this part should highlight the main insights and implications of the dissertation, as well as some indications for further research. In so doing, it must clearly state all sources of remaining uncertainty in the results. Note that this part needs to be consistent with the previous content of the manuscript.

- References: the dissertation should contain an alphabetical list of references at the end. This list needs to be consistent with the reference model used throughout the manuscript. Remember that it is often better to list a few cutting-edge, relevant, and carefully-read works than providing extensive lists of mediocre, indirectly relevant, and glossed-over titles.

In addition to these sections, students may also include one or several appendices and an index of maps, charts and figures.

Please note that students should discuss the structure of their dissertation with their supervisor and get their approval before submitting their final manuscripts.

b) Language and length

The dissertation can be submitted in English. All dissertations need to include an abstract with a maximum length of 250 words.

The dissertation should not exceed 12,000 words in length, including headings and footnotes, acknowledgements and references, and a word count must be provided on the “signature page”. Dissertations that are below or over the indicated length may be penalized. Annexes are *not* included in the word count, provided that they are relevant and necessary to the presentation of the project. It is at the discretion of dissertation examiners to decide whether annexes fulfil the criteria of ‘relevant and necessary’ and in cases when they are deemed superfluous, a penalty for exceeding the stated word limit may be incurred.

c) Formal aspects

Dissertations should be type-written in either Times New Roman or Book Antiqua style using a font size 12, 1.5 line spacing and with 2.5 cm. upper, right, left and lower margins. Dissertations should also be printed double- or single-sided on A4 paper. Notes need to be included at the bottom of the corresponding page (footnotes). Printed copies of the dissertation need to be bound using spiral binding with plastic covers.

As for pagination, the page number can be positioned at the bottom right, centre or left of the page. The placement of page numbers in the preliminary pages and the main body of the manuscript must be consistent throughout the dissertation.

1. Do not count or number the title page and the signature page.
2. Number preliminary pages (table of contents, a dedication, a list of figures, tables, symbols, illustrations, or photographs, a preface and acknowledgments) using lower case Roman numerals beginning with the number “i” and continue in sequence to the end of the preliminary pages (i, ii, iii, iv, v, etc.).

3. Number the page including the dissertation's abstract with the number "1" and continue in sequence (1, 2, 3, etc.).

iii. Submission

Submission for the Master's dissertation consists of an electronic version. ***Emails must be sent by 15 July 2020.***

The electronic copy of the dissertation needs to be sent (either in ".pdf" or ".doc" format) to both first-year and second-year supervisors and the following e-mail address: mmapp@ibei.org

iv. Assessment: additional marking Criteria

The marking criteria included at the end of this document provide an indication of the decision-making process which underpins the marking schemes used by the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI).

It is not possible to use homogenous assessment criteria for all dissertations submitted, given their diversity. There may be different requirements for different types of essay or project work, and for the different disciplines represented within IBEI (e.g. economics, politics, security studies, International Relations, etc.). However, the set of marking criteria gives a good idea of the standards IBEI aims to apply across the board.

Students should also note that members of the evaluation committee will pay special attention to the following aspects:

- Clarity and concision of expression
- Coherence and balance in the organization of the dissertation
- Correct and consistent presentation of references
- Conforming with the formal requirements (length, format, pagination, etc.) described in these guidelines
- Relevance of the chosen topic and its justification
- Clarity of the research question and/or dissertation goals
- Quality of the literature survey
- Adequacy of the chosen methodology
- Thoroughness of the analysis
- Critical appraisal and originality
- Proper identification of research shortcomings and adequate discussion of further research

v. References

There exist several models to present bibliographic references in dissertations. One of the most popular ones is the one described in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, a copy of which can be found in the UPF library. This is not, however, the only existing manual. Students can freely choose the model they want to follow in their dissertations, but they should pay attention to two basic criteria: 1) inclusiveness: references need to provide all relevant information (author/s name/s and last name/s, work title, year of publication,

location and date of publication, edition, volume, etc.); and 2) consistency: students should use the same model for referencing throughout the whole dissertation.

The following examples follow the indications of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

i) Books

a) Single author:

Bull, Hedley. 1977. *The anarchical society*. New York: Columbia University Press.

b) Several authors (please note the change between the first and the second author):

Coulombis, T.A. and J. Wolfe. 1996. *Introduction to International Relations. Power and Justice*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 5th ed.

ii) Articles in Academic Journals

Giardina, A. 2001. The international recognition and enforcement of arbitral awards in the country of origin. *Rivista de Diritto internazionale privato e processuale* 18 (2): 265-278.

iii) Daily Journal and Magazine Articles

a) Known author:

Kelley, Kitty. 2005. Bush's Veil Over History. *The New York Times*, October 10, op-ed. contributors.

b) Unknown author:

Le Monde. 2005. Séisme au Pakistan: le bilan dépasse 30 000 morts, les sinistrés reçoivent aide et secours. October 10, International.

iv) Book chapters

Kegley, Ch.W and G.A. Raymond. 1995. Great-Power Relations: Paths to Peace in the Twenty First Century. In Ch. W. Kegley and E.R. Wittkopf. *The global agenda. Issues and perspectives*, pp.154-169. New York: McGraw-Hill.

v) Internet sources

Suzuki, Hideyuki. 2005. Distributor's margins and GDP. Economic and Social Research Institute, Government of Japan. ESRI Discussion Paper 131.

http://www.esri.go.jp/en/archive/e_dis/abstract/e_dis131-e.html (last access: October 5, 2005).

Students are encouraged to check one of the following manuals for further information:

Gibaldi, Joseph. 2003. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th edition. New York: Modern Language Association of America.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 2003. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 15th edition.

vi. Footnotes and Citations

a) Footnotes

When an argument is attributed to a source, the source should appear in the footnotes. When a specific rather than the general argument of a work is referenced, the pages of the work where the argument is made should be provided as well.

b) Citations

When a citation from a source is included in the thesis text, the footnote reference should indicate the page from which the citation comes.

“The starting point of international relations is the existence of *states*”

fn: Bull, Hedley. 1977. *The anarchical society*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 8, emphasis in original.

vii. Plagiarism and Multiple use of Coursework

Plagiarism (or submitting material that in part or whole is not entirely one's own work) is strictly prohibited, as is the multiple use of coursework for different degree programmes, *with the exception of cases where an IBEI dissertation fails and is revised and resubmitted the following year.*

Members of the IBEI community have an obligation to bring misconduct to the attention of both the Masters' Coordinator and the Director of the Institute. In the case of plagiarism or multiple use of coursework, misconduct proceedings will be confidential, impartial, transparent and urgent.

In the event of an accusation of plagiarism proceedings will begin when a member of the IBEI community reports the event in question, and they will conclude with student notification of the decision of the hearing committee.

Except where the programme of studies indicates otherwise, the procedure will follow these three steps:

Step 1: a case of misconduct is to be reported to both the Coordinator and Director of the programme. The member of the community who observes a case of plagiarism or multiple use of coursework must notify IBEI with all due haste. If considered appropriate, the student in question will also be notified. The Masters' Coordinator will inform the student that misconduct proceedings have been initiated and will take whatever measures are necessary to guarantee the confidentiality of such proceedings.

Step 2: the presentation a defense by the student. The student will have three calendar days to file written arguments and any supporting materials considered suitable. These documents must be submitted to the Director and the Coordinator of the Master's programme. They, together with the faculty member concerned, will determine the appropriate sanctions to impose. If applicable, they will prevent the student from sitting the examination session of the course in question.

The next step will only be taken in cases where the student opposes the accusation of plagiarism, multiple use of coursework or the sanctions imposed in Step 2.

Step 3: a hearing committee will be convened. Within five calendar days from the initiation of proceedings, the Director will convene the hearing committee, having

previously notified IBEL's Scientific Council. The hearing committee will be made up of at least three members and it will decide on the case. The hearing committee must hear the allegations of the faculty member concerned if the faculty member requests being heard. The hearing committee is also to notify the student of its decision through the Director or Coordinator of the programme within a period of two calendar days from the hearing date.

viii. Sample cover page

Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals
Academic Year XXXX – XXXX



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DISSERTATION'S TITLE
Dissertation's subtitle

Dissertation submitted by

STUDENT'S NAME AND LAST NAME

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTER IN PUBLIC POLICY

SUPERVISORS: Supervisors' names and last names

ix. Sample signature page

I hereby certify that this dissertation contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I hereby grant to IBEI and the Mundus MAPP Consortium the non-exclusive license to archive and make accessible my dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this dissertation.

Name: XXXX XXXXXX

Signature:

Location and Date: XXXX, XXXX XXXX

x. IBEI's grading scale

The following marking criteria are designed to give you an indication of the decision-making process which underpins the marking schemes used by the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI).

Mark Range		Key features applicable in the assessment of examination essays and dissertations
9-10	<i>Overall</i>	Outstanding answer: exceptionally well structured and theoretically informed, showing striking personal insight and originality.
	<i>Understanding</i>	Authoritative; full understanding of relevant material; highly original analysis; highly independent and critical judgment; high degree of precision.
	<i>Selection & Coverage</i>	Unusually extensive range of sources, applied with outstanding insight; exceptionally effective use of evidence to support argument.
	<i>Structure</i>	Excellent structure, focus, presentation and writing style, contributing to a highly compelling argument.
8-9	<i>Overall</i>	Highly thoughtful answer informed by wider reading, showing clarity of thought, personal insight and originality.
	<i>Understanding</i>	Thorough understanding of relevant material; insightful discussion; evidence of independent and critical judgment.
	<i>Selection & Coverage</i>	Extensive range of sources applied insightfully; very effective use of evidence to support argument.
	<i>Structure</i>	Very good structure and focus; clear and fluent writing style; compelling argument.
7-8	<i>Overall</i>	Thoughtful answer informed by wider reading, showing clarity of thought and personal insight.
	<i>Understanding</i>	Thorough understanding of relevant material; insightful discussion and analysis.
	<i>Selection & Coverage</i>	Extensive range of sources applied insightfully. Effective use of evidence to support argument
	<i>Structure</i>	Well-structured and focused; clear and fluent writing style; persuasive argument.
6-7	<i>Overall</i>	Good understanding of relevant material; coherent and logical argument.
	<i>Understanding</i>	Good understanding of important facts and concepts; substantive analysis of key issues.
	<i>Selection & Coverage</i>	Good use of relevant sources/literature; employment of a range of evidence to support argument.
	<i>Structure</i>	Coherent and logical presentation.
5-6	<i>Overall</i>	Sound understanding; limited analysis.
	<i>Understanding</i>	Generally sound understanding of relevant material but limited range or depth; more descriptive than analytical.
	<i>Selection & Coverage</i>	Appropriate but limited use of sources/literature; attempts to support argument, but these are awkward and/or unconvincing.
	<i>Structure</i>	Generally clear presentation but awkward structure and/or limited development of argument.
4-5	<i>Overall</i>	Basic understanding and analysis.
	<i>Understanding</i>	Some general knowledge but little detail; minimal demonstration of analytical thought.
	<i>Selection & Coverage</i>	Sparse coverage of basic material; generally unsuccessful in using evidence to support argument.
	<i>Structure</i>	Adequate structure and presentation, but unclear or disorganized in places.
0-3	<i>Overall</i>	Unsystematic, incomplete and/or inaccurate.
	<i>Understanding</i>	Little or no knowledge demonstrated; numerous inaccuracies; meaning unclear; little or no analysis.
	<i>Selection & Coverage</i>	Inappropriate and/or inaccurate use of sources/literature; poor or no use of evidence to support argument.
	<i>Structure</i>	Disorganised and unclear presentation; consistently poor spelling and grammar; incoherent argument or none discernible; unacceptably brief.