

American University of Armenia
Political Science and International Affairs
PSIA392 Master's Essay/ PSIA395 Master's Thesis
Guidelines for Students

For the capstone for the MPSIA degree, student must choose between:

- A. PSIA392 Masters Essay. 3-credits, Spring semester, 8,000-10,000 words OR
- B. PSIA395 Masters Thesis. 6-credits, across both semesters, 20,000-25,000 words.

Students will complete their capstone in their final year of studies. The goals of the capstone project are to provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their learning throughout their studies and contribute to knowledge in their area of interest.

The essay is based on substantial original research and analysis related to a specific topic. Students will work with a faculty member who will supervise the project. Students should think about a topic of interest and then discuss with a faculty member with the appropriate expertise the possibilities of supervision. Faculty members work with only a limited number of students and students should therefore be ready to find alternative topics and/or faculty if their preferred choices are not possible. The minimum and maximum word-lengths of the capstones excludes the bibliography.

Proposal

Thesis: Students who wish to do a thesis should submit to the Capstone Coordinator a proposal and nominate potential supervisors by the first week of Fall.

Essay: Students who wish to do an essay should submit to the Capstone Coordinator a proposal and nominate potential supervisors by the end of the final week of the Fall semester. Students may if they wish, beginning in October, prepare their proposals earlier and discuss with potential supervisors, particularly if the nature of the research requires more time.

Proposals should describe the research question, hypotheses, or topic to be studied, some brief background discussion, and how the topic will be addressed. Thesis proposals should be 3-4 pages. Essay proposals should be 1-2 pages.

PSIA faculty will meet to allocate students/ topics to faculty members. Students then work closely with their faculty supervisors. Faculty have different working styles so students should be prepared for flexibility and for different practices across supervisors. Students will work on their essays and receive feedback from their advisors.

Faculty Specializations

Dr Vahram Ter-Matevosyan: Turkish domestic and foreign policy, Regional Security, Conflicts in the post-Soviet Space

Dr Donald Fuller: Public Administration, Political Economy, Public Policy

Dr Simon Clarke: Political Theory, History of Political Thought, Ideologies, Global Justice

Dr Jenny Paturyan: Democracy and Democratisation, Civil Society, Corruption, Research Methodology

Dr Arthur Drampian: Public Finance, Local Governance, Intergovernmental Finance, Decentralization Policy, Environmental Science and Policy, Development Policy and Practice, Sustainable Development

Dr Hovhannes Nikoghosyan: Human rights and international security, Responsibility to Protect

Dr Vache Gabrielyan: Public Administration, Public Policy

Presentations

Around tenth week of Spring semester, students will present their research at a forum, for feedback from faculty and other students, for further improvements. Guidelines for presentations:

- Presentations should be a maximum of 10 minutes long, plus 5 minutes for questions and discussion from the audience.
- Students may use Powerpoint slides if they wish. Other visual aids are permitted.
- Briefly introduce research question and/ or hypotheses.
- Explain how you have answered these questions/ hypotheses.
- Summary or conclusion.

Faculty and other students will give feedback and then students will have five weeks to finish writing their paper.

Submission

The capstone is to be submitted by the final day of classes of the semester. Students must submit it both in hard copy and electronic copy:

- Two hard copies to be submitted to PSIA administrator (one for the department library, the other for the examiner).
- Electronic copy to be submitted through Turnitin on Moodle.

Formatting

Capstones should be printed in A4 size, 12 point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, page- numbered, and bound. All essays should include:

- Title page
- Table of contents
- Abstract, summarizing the essay in approximately 200 words; single-spaced.
- Six keywords
- Acknowledgements
- Bibliography

The title page should include the following:

- American University of Armenia
- Essay Title
- Student Name
- A Masters Essay/ Thesis Submitted to the Political Science and International Affairs Program for Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Masters of Arts
- Semester, Year

Please see examples of past capstones for more guidance on formatting. These are available in the TCPA Library and electronically through the university library webpage.

Essays may be printed and bound at the university Copy Center. The PSIA program will cover the cost of printing two hard copies in black and white.

Grading

Capstones are read and graded by the supervisor and one other faculty member. The second examiner will be unknown to the student and will not be involved with the project prior to grading. The two come to agreement on final grade by consensus. If agreement cannot be reached, the final grade is a mathematical average of the two examiners independent grades. With permission of Program Chair, a reviewer external to PSIA or AUA may be permitted.

All grades will be submitted by the same date of submission of course grades. Students may not revise and resubmit capstones to improve their grade, but must retake the capstone if the grade is D+ or below (university policy).

After grading, a hard copy of the capstone (usually the second reader's copy) should be deposited in the TCPA library. An electronic copy should be submitted to the AUA Library.

Citations, quotations, references

Proper references are required whenever other people's work is used. A failure to do so, either intentional or unintentional, is an act of plagiarism. Any of the standard methods of referencing, in-text or footnotes, may be used (although please check with your supervisor who may have a preference). Any case of plagiarism may result in an F grade for the essay.

Timetable

Essays:

Fall:

- Beginning in October, students may if they wish prepare their proposals and discuss with potential supervisors.
- Week 15: Students propose possible topics and nominate possible supervisors. Faculty review the applications. Students and topics are allocated to faculty. Faculty members then begin meeting with supervisees and working with them.

Spring:

- Week 10: Students present their essay in a forum attended by faculty and students and receive feedback. Approx 10 minutes per student.
- Week 15: Final date of submission of all essays is the final day of classes. Two bound copies to be submitted. Electronic copy submitted to Turnitin in Moodle.
- Grading. Grades submitted to Registrar. All grades to be submitted by the same date of submission of course grades.

Theses:

Fall:

- Week 0: Students propose possible topics and nominate possible supervisors. Faculty review the applications. Students and topics are allocated to faculty. Faculty members then begin meeting with supervisees and working with them.

Spring:

- Week 10: Students present their essay in a forum attended by faculty and students and receive feedback. Approx 10 minutes per student.
- Week 15: Final date of submission of all essays is the final day of classes. Two bound copies to be submitted. Electronic copy submitted to Turnitin in Moodle.
- Grading. Grades submitted to Registrar. All grades to be submitted by the same date of submission of course grades.

PSIA MASTER'S CAPSTONE RUBRIC

Criteria	Outstanding	Very good	Adequate	Unacceptable
Writing	Writing is clear; themes are well developed; sentences complete; paragraphs are tightly written; no grammatical, spelling or typographical errors.	Most but not all themes are well developed, occasional paragraphs are not tightly written, some sentences ramble or are incomplete	Themes are present but are scattered; paragraphs only occasionally support themes and most sentences support paragraph's main idea	Themes are not presented. Paper is scattered and thoughts are not tightly constructed. Paper has many misspellings, typographical errors, incorrect citations, single sentence paragraphs.
Statement of purpose	Intent is clearly spelled out. Concepts are developed early and are clear.	Intent is not clearly spelled out; most concepts are clarified, but not all.	Statement of purpose is not well developed.	No statement of purpose is developed
Command of literature demonstrated	Well grounded in academic literature; sources used are well structured and used to develop the research question and/or support the argument; good grasp of the main schools of thought, approaches, debatable issues.	Sufficient amount of literature used, but it is not well structured; research questions and/or main arguments are only partially related to the literature; some understanding of what the main scholarly debate in the field is about	Limited and poorly structured literature generally describes the topic of the paper but does not lead to research questions and/or main points of the paper; vague ideas about the main debate in the field	Very poor literature review, disconnected from or very vaguely related to the topic of the paper; no awareness of what are the big issues discussed in respective field
Original contribution to knowledge	Work is original, builds upon the scholarship of others and either fills a gap or adds to our knowledge of the field.	Shows promise of contribution but does not adequately provide supporting evidence	Hints of new insights, but nothing is fully developed.	Adds nothing to scholarship
Research questions/hypotheses	Hypotheses are clear and relevant both to the field and to the study	Most hypotheses demonstrate understanding; some still need elaboration	Few hypotheses demonstrate understanding of the field.	No hypotheses are developed.
Methodology clearly described	Methods are clearly explained and relevance to the study are appropriate;	Methods explained, but lack demonstration of relevance to the field.	Methods are identified but without explanation of relevance.	Discussion of methods is omitted
References	All references done correctly and consistently	Most references done correctly with minor mistakes that allow the reader to identify the source regardless. Minor inconsistencies. Mismatch between in text citations and reference list does not exceed two sources.	Some information on the source provided in an inconsistent manner; some essential information is missing or misplaced. More than two sources mentioned in the text are missing from the reference list or vice versa.	Very limited and/or incorrect information that makes it very hard to identify the sources used