

APPROVED

by the Rector's Order of

2019-11-06 No. 01-07-51

ISM UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMICS
BACHELOR, INTERNATIONAL MASTER AND EXECUTIVE MASTER STUDIES'
FINAL THESES DEFENCE AND EVALUATION PROCEDURE

1. The procedure for defending and evaluating final theses shall regulate the defence and evaluation of the final theses of the Bachelor, International Master and Executive Master Degrees at ISM University of Management and Economics.
2. Bachelor, International Master and Executive Master degree studies shall be completed with the preparation of a bachelor or master thesis and its public defence. Only the students who have successfully completed all the assessments provided in the respective study programme, passed all the required exams and have demonstrated sufficient knowledge and skills, are allowed to defend their final thesis.
3. The final theses evaluation commission shall be composed of competent specialists of the study field - researchers, practitioners, professionals, representatives of social partners - according to the requirements of the applicable legal acts for the number and composition of the evaluation commission.
4. The composition of the final thesis evaluation commission shall be proposed by the programme director and approved by the Rector on the proposal of the Commission of Studies.
5. Recommended requirements for the number of members and composition of the final thesis evaluation commission:
 - 5.1. In Bachelor Studies, the final theses evaluation commission consists of at least four members, at least half of them must hold a doctor degree, at least one of them must be an academic staff member of the another higher education institution and / or representative of social partners. One of the members of the commission shall be the chairman of the commission.
 - 5.2. For the International Master and Executive Master Studies, the final theses evaluation commission consists of at least five members, at least three of them must hold a doctor degree, at least one of them must be a professor, at least one of them must be an academic staff member of the other higher education institution. One of the members of the commission shall be the chairman of the commission.
6. At least five days before the public defence of the thesis, the thesis shall be evaluated in a written form by the thesis supervisor and the reviewer. The reviewer is appointed by the programme director.
7. During the final thesis preparation process, the student is allowed to upload the thesis paper to the content matching system and access the content similarity report. Deadlines for uploading thesis paper to the system are set by the Bachelor and the International Master or Executive School Commission of Studies.
8. Supervisors, Reviewers, and Programme Directors must perform due diligence in detecting the occurrence of plagiarised material, and report suspected plagiarism cases to the Committee on Ethics.
 - 8.1. The Committee on Ethics is the exclusive and final arbiter of whether a thesis contains plagiarised material; of the type, degree and severity; and of the sanction to be imposed.
 - 8.2. The Committee on Ethics will engage in a parallel verification and oversight process:
 - 8.2.1. The Committee on Ethics has the authority to spot-check all theses for plagiarism at any stage of the grading process.
 - 8.2.2. The Committee on Ethics will alert the Rector of ISM University of Management and Economics if it learns that i) a Programme Director has neglected to forward a complaint by Supervisors or Reviewers to the Committee on Ethics; ii) a Programme Director has neglected to file a complaint when there is sufficient evidence to have clearly warranted a complaint of plagiarism; and iii) a Committee on Ethics decision is unduly undermined.

- 8.3. The process for identifying and reporting plagiarism is as follows:
- 8.3.1. Upon final submission of theses, Programme Directors must review the 'similarity index' — generated by the plagiarism-detection software that ISM University of Management and Economics employs — of each and every thesis in their programme within two working days.
 - 8.3.2. As a general guideline, any thesis that is identified by the software as containing > 10% of similar material must subsequently be closely examined for plagiarised material by the Programme Director. Note that a thesis containing < 10% of similar material should not automatically be presumed to lack plagiarised material.
 - 8.3.3. After closely examining such theses, if a Programme Director suspects that a thesis contains plagiarised material, the Programme Director must prepare and submit an official 'complaint of plagiarism' to the Committee on Ethics within two working days of the original submission date. The Programme Director should also inform the Supervisor of the issue.
 - 8.3.4. An official 'complaint of plagiarism' is a written report, consisting of a pro forma, a description of the suspected case, and includes supporting evidence, such as the plagiarism-detection software report, excerpts from the thesis, a list of the primary sources plagiarised, etc.
 - 8.3.5. The Committee on Ethics will screen all of the complaints of plagiarism that it receives in order to identify whether each of the complaints warrant an investigation. Both the relevant Programme Director and the Vice President of Studies / Dean of Executive School will also be copied into emails from the Committee on Ethics that invite the relevant students.
 - 8.3.6. The Committee on Ethics will convene a meeting no more than five working days after the original submission date to investigate the complaints of plagiarism. The Committee on Ethics, directly after the meeting, will alert the relevant Programme Director and the Vice President of Studies / Dean of Executive School of its decisions.
 - 8.3.7. Upon receipt of complaints of plagiarism after the initial stage, the Committee on Ethics will convene a second meeting to investigate more recent complaints of suspected plagiarism. The meeting will take place no later than 5 working days after all of the Programme Directors have received all of the grades from Reviewers and Supervisors.
- 8.4. Only after these steps may the Studies Committee approve theses for defence.
9. The supervisor, reviewer, and / or members of the evaluation commission may initiate a thesis plagiarism check on content matching system or request a content similarity report at any time during the preparation or evaluation of the thesis.
 10. The supervisor of the final thesis shall submit a written feedback in accordance with the evaluation criteria for the thesis, defined in the requirements for the final theses of the Bachelor, International Master and Executive School study programmes, respectively. The supervisor may refuse to evaluate the work if the work was prepared without the supervisor's participation.
 11. The reviewer, when submitting a written review, shall follow the criteria for the evaluation of the final thesis specified in the requirements for the final theses of the Bachelor, International Master and Executive Master study programmes, respectively. The final thesis review contains a written comment, indicating the main strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, evaluation of the thesis according to the specified criteria, and provides at least three questions.
 12. The programme director may appoint a second reviewer if:
 - 12.1. The evaluation of the supervisor or reviewer is not sufficient (less than 5).
 - 12.2. The evaluations of the supervisor and the reviewer are sufficient but differ by two points or more.
 13. Having read the written evaluations of the supervisor and the reviewer, the programme director shall make a recommendation to the Commission of Studies regarding the suitability of the work for public defence (i.e. allow defence / refuse defence).
 14. The Bachelor and the International Master or Executive School Commission of Studies shall make a decision on the eligibility of a thesis for public defence.
 15. Final theses, approved by the Bachelor and International Master Commission of Studies or by the Executive School Commission of Studies, recognized as eligible for public defence, are defended publicly.

16. The Commission of Studies meeting may decide to deny the right for the defence of the final thesis if at least one of the following points can be applied to the thesis or its preparation process:
 - 16.1. Thesis topic or research proposal was not approved by the programme director.
 - 16.2. The submitted thesis is not based on a theme that has been defended and approved.
 - 16.3. The student did not meet the deadlines for work preparation;
 - 16.4. The student fails to submit the thesis in due time (the student loses the right to defend it in the current semester);
 - 16.5. The work is negatively evaluated by the supervisor and / or reviewer (s).
 - 16.6. Violations of academic ethics have been identified by the Committee on Ethics, in which case the Studies Committee is not permitted to contradict the decision of the Committee on Ethics;
 - 16.7. The thesis does not comply with the formal requirements (structure, scope of the thesis or its parts, data of the empirical research are not included in the appendices, etc.).
17. If the student fails to comply with the set deadlines for writing the final thesis, the process of preparation of the final thesis may be suspended by the decision of the Commission of Studies.
18. The written comment of the reviewer shall be made available to students by e-mail not later than two days before the scheduled defence of the thesis. The reviewer's comment is provided solely for the student and his / her self-preparation for the thesis defence; the reviewer's comment may not be discussed with the supervisor, ISM academic staff, or other members of the evaluation commission. The questions provided in the review and the identity of the reviewer are only revealed during the defence of the thesis.
19. During the defence of the thesis the author presents the work briefly, specifying the research problem, aims, objectives, analysis of the situation and / or literature review, research methodology, obtained results, reliability of the applied methods, introduces and justifies the conclusions, makes recommendations. After the summary of the reviewer and / or the supervisor comments, the student answers the reviewer's questions, questions of the members of the final theses evaluation commission and other persons participating in the defence and fulfils other requirements for the defence of the final thesis. If the reviewer and / or supervisor of the thesis does not attend the defence meeting, their feedback is read by one of the members of the thesis evaluation commission.
20. The members of the final thesis evaluation commission shall follow the same criteria as in the final thesis review when assessing thesis and its defence. In addition, the completeness and validity of the answers to the questions, demonstration of the knowledge of the topic, methods, results, practical applicability, limitations, fluency and clarity of the language are assessed in the defence. A member of the evaluation commission shall provide a single grade summarizing the evaluation of both the thesis and the defence. Final evaluation mark may be specified to one decimal point.
21. After the public defence of the final theses, the final theses evaluation commission shall evaluate the final theses in a closed meeting. Only the members of the final theses' evaluation commission participate in the closed meeting. In exceptional cases, persons invited by the chairman of the evaluation commission (e.g. a representative of the Ethics Committee) may attend. Only members of the theses' evaluation commission (including the chairman) have the right to evaluate the thesis. A member of the final theses' evaluation commission, if he / she is also the supervisor of the final thesis, shall withdraw from that student's evaluation as a member of the commission.
22. The Bachelor thesis and its defence is evaluated by the final mark, which is calculated using the weighted average formula of the final thesis supervisor, reviewer and final theses evaluation commission, where the evaluation of the final thesis supervisor is equal to 25% of final thesis mark, reviewer's evaluation is 25% of final thesis mark, evaluation of final theses commission - 50% of final thesis mark:

$$G = 0,25 \times SG + 0,25 \times RG + 0,5 \times CG, \text{ where:}$$

G - final grade;

SG - Thesis supervisor grade (not rounded)

RG - Final thesis reviewer grade (not rounded)

CG - Final thesis evaluation commission grade (not rounded).

23. International Master and Executive Master thesis and its defence is evaluated by the final grade, which is calculated using the weighted average calculation formula of final thesis supervisor, reviewer and final theses evaluation commission, where the evaluation of final thesis supervisor is equal to 20% , reviewer's grade - 20% of final thesis mark, final thesis evaluation commission grade - 60% of final thesis mark:

$$G = 0,2 \times SG + 0,2 \times RG + 0,6 \times CG, \text{ where:}$$

G - final grade;

SG - Thesis supervisor grade (not rounded)

RG - Final thesis reviewer grade (not rounded)

CG - Final thesis evaluation commission grade (not rounded).

24. If the work was evaluated by two reviewers, the arithmetic mean of the evaluations of both reviewers shall be considered when calculating the final mark.
25. The final grade of the final thesis shall be rounded according to the evaluation system established in the Regulations for Bachelor, International Master or Executive Master Degree Studies, respectively.
26. The members of the commission shall have the right to adjust the calculated final grade of the final thesis in the following cases:
- 26.1. Not more than one point higher or lower when the commission unanimously decides that the student's final thesis and its defence are worth more or less than arithmetic average, depending on the overall level of the final theses and their defence.
- 26.2. Positively arithmetically evaluated work is evaluated negatively when there are reasonable doubts during the defence about the thesis originality, or significant ethics violations.
- 26.3. Significantly downgrade evaluation where formal components of the thesis are missing or do not meet the requirements, but the reviewer or supervisor did not take this into consideration.
27. On the decision of the programme director, the final theses defence results are announced at the end of one-day defence or at the end of all study programme semester defence. The results of the final thesis are announced to the students individually on my.ism.lt system and / or personally, with advance notice of the publication procedure.
28. The decision of the final thesis evaluation commission is collegial, final and not subject to appeal.
29. The decisions of the final thesis evaluation commission shall be approved by the minutes, which shall be signed by the chairman of the commission. The minutes of the final thesis evaluation commission are stored in the Bachelor, International Master and Executive School departments respectively. The evaluations of the final thesis supervisors, reviewers, commission and final evaluations are provided in the appendix to the minutes. The appendix to the minutes shall be signed by all the members of the commission.
30. After the defence, the final theses are returned to the Bachelor, the International Master and the Executive School study departments respectively, where they are stored following the prescribed procedure.
31. The evaluation commission may recommend placing the thesis in the eLABa information system. With the consent of the student, thesis storage and access statuses are determined in accordance with the ISM Procedure on Uploading ISM Electronic Documents to the Information System of eLABa.