

## **ESTONIAN MILITARY ACADEMY**

### **FINAL THESIS GUIDELINES and PROCEDURES**

#### **I GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. These Estonian Military Academy (EMA) guidelines and procedures for final theses lay down the rules of procedure regulating the selection of research topics, supervision, review and defence of final and master's theses.
2. Final/Master's Thesis is a separate subject course under the EMA higher education curricula, and the successful defence thereof constitutes a prerequisite for completing the curriculum in full and graduating from the Academy.
3. The organisation of the Final/Master's Thesis subject course is overseen by the responsible teaching staff (see clause 19) in collaboration with the Chairs of the EMA's academic departments and they are supported by the EMA Planning Section in administrative matters and keeping records.
4. The responsible teaching staff, appointed by the EMA Head of Academic Studies, must hold at least a Master's degree or equivalent qualification.
5. The Final/Master's Theses written by EMA students shall be overseen by the EMA's academic departments.

#### **II The Selection of Research Topics and Supervisors**

6. The students select the topic of research for their final theses:
  - 6.1 from among the research topics put forward by the Academy, or
  - 6.2 based on personal interest in a specific topic related to the EDF and/or national defence.
7. The EMA Planning Section shall be responsible for collecting potential research topics based on guidance from the responsible teaching staff. As a general rule, potential topics are collected from the EMA's academic departments, the Department of Applied Research, the Navy, the Air Force and the specialist schools of the Land Forces.
8. Research topics are presented to students enrolled in professional higher education (PHE) programmes no later than during the third semester, and to Master's students during the first semester.
9. Research topics put forward by the EMA come usually furnished with a brief overview of the research problem and potential research methods, preliminary literature list, potential supervisor(s) and their contact details.
10. Students who wish to research a topic of personal interest, must submit the information outlines in clause 9 to the responsible teaching staff who shall decide, together with the Chairs of EMA academic departments, which department should oversee that particular research and confirm the suitability of the chosen topic.
11. Student must submit a written application regarding their chosen research topic together with approval from the supervisor(s) to the EMA Planning Section in accordance with the procedure and time limits specified in the course syllabus.

12. The same requirements apply for external students, and their progress is monitored by the EMA Planning Section, together with the academic department that oversees the area of research in question. The extern is obligated to partake in activities that support the writing of research if it prescribed in the syllabus and observe relevant deadlines.
13. Final/Master's Theses may have no more than two supervisors (principal and co-supervisor), and one of them must be an EMA staff member.
14. All research supervisors must hold at least a Master's degree or equivalent qualification. The exception is made for final theses of PHE programmes that allow co-supervisors whose qualifications must be at least at the level of professional higher education.
15. The EMA Planning Section shall be responsible for maintaining records of selected research topics and supervisors until the research is presented for thesis defence.
16. Students who want to change their research topic or supervisor(s) must submit an application, with written approval from previous and new supervisor(s), to the Planning Section no later than by February 1 of the last semester. The responsible teaching staff shall coordinate with the Chair of the relevant academic department whether to accept or reject the application.
17. The students are allowed to specify the exact wording of the title of their Final/Master's Thesis until submitting it for thesis defence. However, the specified title must remain within the scope of the original research topic.
18. The budget for conducting research (e.g. laboratory costs) shall be written into the operating expenses of the EMA Department of Academic Studies on the basis of coordination with the Chairs of academic departments. All research costs related to R&D projects shall be covered by the budgets of respective projects.

### **III Responsible Teaching Staff and Supervisor**

19. The Responsible Teaching Staff shall undertake to:
  - 19.1 prepare the syllabi for Final/Master's Thesis subject courses;
  - 19.2 assigning the research topics chosen by students to respective academic departments based on the content and methodology, in collaboration with the Chairs of EMA academic departments;
  - 19.3 organise an informal event for the purposes of introducing research topics put forward by the EMA's academic departments and the Department of Applied Research;
  - 19.4 support the Planning Section in keeping track of chosen research topics and supervisors;
  - 19.5 organise activities to support the writing of research in cooperation with the EMA's academic departments in accordance with the syllabus (e.g. writing workshops, seminars, etc.);
  - 19.6 submit to the EMA Head of Academic Studies a list of final theses up for defence and reviewers, as coordinated with the Chairs of EMA academic departments;
  - 19.7 advise the reviewers on the review process and relevant EMA procedures.
20. By agreeing to supervise a student's Final/Master's Thesis, the supervisor undertakes to instruct the student until the successful defence of their thesis as specified in the EMA Study Regulations.
21. The supervisor undertakes to:
  - 21.1 instruct the student throughout all stages of conducting research and thesis writing (see EMA Guidelines for Written Work);
  - 21.2 give the student guidance to remain within the scope of the chosen topic, observe relevant requirements and good academic practices;
  - 21.3 provide constructive feedback on the student's work.

22. The supervisors retain the right to withdraw from their responsibilities if demanded by exceptional circumstances, e.g. professional obligations or if the student fails to uphold their responsibilities with regard to conducting and writing research.
23. Supervisors can withdraw by submitting a written notification to the responsible teaching staff; in the event of professional obligations, together with the name of the replacement supervisor.

#### **IV Reviewers and the Review Process**

24. Final Theses of PHE programmes shall be reviewed by persons who hold at least a higher education degree, and Master's Theses by persons who hold at least a Master's degree or an equivalent qualification.
25. The Chair of EMA academic departments shall be responsible for furnishing the Planning Section with the names of the reviewers chosen for the theses under their purview. The reviewers of EMA final theses must be experts of respective research areas.
26. The Planning Section shall be responsible for notifying the appointed reviewers about the EMA's review process and related procedures.
27. The reviewers undertake to:
  - 27.1 to give an impartial assessment of the content of the research and observance of the EMA's formatting guidelines for written work;
  - 27.2 submit a review based on the assessment criteria outlined in the syllabus of the Final/Master's Thesis subject course, referring to specific sections and providing examples.
28. The reviewers submit their digitally signed reviews to the EMA Planning Section no later than two working days before the scheduled thesis defence. In exceptional cases, the EMA shall accept reviews submitted on paper.
29. The EMA Planning Section shall ensure that students are able to review the written opinion of the reviewer at least one working day before their scheduled thesis defence.
30. The reviewers play an important role in thesis defence and their attendance is highly welcome for the purposes of ensuring a personal academic discussion with the author. The time and location of thesis defence shall be relayed to reviewers by the EMA Planning Section.
31. Reviewers who are unable to attend the thesis defence due to good reason must notify the Planning Section who shall relay the information to the Chair of the Thesis Defence Committee who shall perform the duties of the reviewer.

#### **V Submission and Defence of Final Theses**

32. The duly formatted Final/Master's Thesis (including the accompanying author's declaration) shall be submitted in the electronic format (PDF) and in a paper version to the EMA Planning Section within the deadline specified in the EMA training plan and course syllabus.
33. The electronic and the paper versions of the Final/Master's Thesis must be identical.
34. Both versions of the Final/Master's Thesis must be undersigned by the supervisor(s). Failure to secure the supervisor's signature will result in exclusion from thesis defence.
35. The thesis defence proceedings at the EMA are usually public, except for research on classified matters.
36. The thesis defence proceedings shall be overseen by Thesis Defence Committees that are specially appointed by the Commandant of the EMA on the proposal of the Head of Academic Studies.

37. The EMA's Thesis Defence Committees shall comprise at least five members and be chaired by an EMA staff member. These committees shall have a quorum if at least half of its members, including the Chair, are in attendance.
38. The members of EMA's Thesis Defence Committees must hold at least a Master's degree or equivalent qualifications, whereas the committee chairs must hold a doctoral degree or an equivalent qualification.
39. The thesis defence procedure comprises the following elements:
  - 39.1 author's presentation of their research;
  - 39.2 academic discussion between the reviewer and the author (in the absence of a reviewer, the discussion will be conducted the committee chair);
  - 39.3 academic discussion between the author and the members of the committee;
  - 39.4 general discussion (questions and answers from the audience);
  - 39.5 the author's concluding remarks.
40. The duration of thesis defence is approx. 30 minutes for PHE students, and 45 minutes for Master's students. The author's presentation should be around 10 minutes for PHE students, and 15 minutes for Master's students.

## **VI Assessment of Final/Master's Theses**

41. The members of the Thesis Defence Committee are obligated to review all Final/Master's Theses in advance. In addition, the committee chair shall assign individual theses to committee members for the purposes of ensuring that all theses receive a thorough second opinion.
42. The Thesis Defence Committee shall conduct its final assessment and grading in a closed session. Committee members who also served as supervisors on one of the theses under discussion must remove themselves from the discussion and grading of that particular thesis.
43. The Thesis Defence Committee shall decide on final grades by consensus taking guidance from the prescribed assessment criteria.
44. The EMA Planning Section is responsible for notifying the students of the results of thesis defence no later than the day following the last day of thesis defence proceedings.
45. Students who fail to appear at thesis defence or receive a negative grade are allowed to defend their thesis again in accordance with the procedure laid down in the EMA Study Regulations.
46. Students may contest their grades in accordance with the appeals procedure laid down in the EMA Study Regulations.

## **VII Suspicion of Plagiarism**

47. If the suspicion of plagiarism arises after the submission of a thesis for defence or in the process of defence proceedings, the issue of plagiarism shall be addressed and resolved by the Thesis Defence Committee. The Thesis Defence Committees are entitled to engage experts from the respective area of research and other appropriate persons in order to resolve the issue of suspected plagiarism.
48. If plagiarism is suspected, students are allowed to thesis defence but the Thesis Defence Committee is entitled to initiate proceedings and deliver its resolution no later than by the end of the week of thesis defence.

**Other Provisions**

49. The students bear the sole responsibility for conducting research and writing their Final/Master's Thesis.
50. The students shall be responsible for marking their Final/Master's Thesis if it contains classified information of any kind.
51. The hard copy versions of successfully defended Final/Master's Theses shall be preserved in the EMA library (except in cases referred to in clause 50), and the in the EDF's e-learning platform ILIAS.
52. All Final/Master's Thesis reviews shall be preserved by the EMA Planning Section in accordance with the EMA Study Regulations.