

The American University of Central Asia (AUCA)

International and Business Law (IBL) Department

Senior Project Policy

A senior project in the AUCA IBL Department is an original, individual, intellectual, and creative activity that rounds out and caps each student's program of study. It is a student-driven and teacher-guided project that demonstrates and celebrates the knowledge and skills acquired during their four years of liberal arts education at AUCA.

Before completing the senior project make certain that you fully understand what is expected and needed to complete it. It is critical that you carefully read this policy. The policy defines the project, its form and format. If you fail to follow the format and structure as set out in these guidelines, this will negatively impact your overall grade for your senior project.

I. Senior Project Forms

The senior project shall be in the form of either a senior paper or an honors paper. Students with a GPA of 3.5 or higher, at the start of the Fall Semester¹ of their senior year, may pursue the honors paper, as this is one of the pre-requisites for graduating with honors. Students, whose GPA is below 3.5 shall pursue the senior paper. Both papers are research works in which students are expected to present their critical and independent analysis and cover the relevant statutory and doctrinal sources on the chosen subject. Students may focus on a comparative or theoretical legal subject or concentrate on the analysis of concrete practical legal issues. In particular, students may choose to expand on a problematic legal issue that has arisen out of their case in the AUCA Legal Clinic or internship. While both papers should be analytical in nature, the difference between the senior paper and the honors one is in the depth of the intellectual analysis. Students writing the honors paper should demonstrate a more advanced development of discussion, reasoning, argumentation, quality of evidence and a deeper level of analysis.

II. Proposing a Senior Project

A senior project is an opportunity for students to complete an extended, significant intellectual work that will be a culmination of their undergraduate experience at AUCA. Thus, students normally choose to work on a topic that has generated their interest during their undergraduate years at AUCA.

During their junior year students propose senior projects in consultation with a faculty member of the IBL Department. The proposal, submitted to the program chair, should include:

- a tentative project topic and the approval signatures of project supervisor and the student,
- a two-page description of the proposed project, including assessment of importance, feasibility of the project and key research questions.

This preliminary proposal is due the last week of February of junior year. Students are not required to complete extensive research before proposing a topic, but they are expected to demonstrate genuine interest in the topic and outline preliminary ideas for the senior year research.

After completing Legal Research Methods (LRM) course, student must prepare literature review on a topic they developed during Legal Research Methods course. The literature review shall be submitted to Senior Thesis Seminar class by the first week of Fall semester of the senior year. Based on students' research made during LRM course and summer, students shall finalize and defense their senior project topic during September of senior year.

¹ Students whose GPA raises to 3.5 or higher at the start of the Spring Semester of their senior year will gain eligibility to write the honors paper.

III. Senior Project Courses

The IBL Department offers two mandatory courses for students that aim to facilitate the process of completing the senior project. The “Legal Research Methods” course is taught in the spring semester of junior year, while the “Thesis Research Seminar” or “Diploma” course is held in the fall semester of senior year. The “Legal Research and Methods” class meets twice a week and “Thesis Research Seminar” meets once a week to discuss important research-related themes, demonstrate the progress of student projects and provide the exchange of constructive feedback.

IV. The Role of a Supervisor

The senior project is an individual student-driven endeavor. At the same time, the IBL Department faculty members are expected to provide the best possible guidance and support to students. Students may choose any IBL faculty member as a supervisor, given the consent of the latter. Normally, project supervisors are the faculty members with interest in the topic of the given senior project. A faculty member may only have up to three students for senior project supervision. Project supervisors are expected to provide guidance to students in selecting and formulating the senior project, regularly discuss the project progress and comment on drafts of the work.

The priority for project supervision is given to the IBL faculty members. However, students may also have supervisors from other academic programs as well as from outside AUCA with the consent of the proposed supervisor and approval of the IBL Department chair. It is highly recommended that students choose an English speaking professor as the final paper submission must be in English.

An external supervisor will be expected to stay in close contact with the student’s department. In this case, the chair of the program assumes responsibility for ensuring that the external supervisor is aware of academic regulations and expectations related to the senior project.

V. Senior Project Format Requirements

A. Format:

The senior paper should have a minimum of 11,000 words. The honors paper should have a minimum of 17,000 words. This does not include the cover sheet, table of contents and references. The final paper **MUST** be typed and double-spaced with one-inch (2.54 cm) margins. The font size must be 12, the font type – Times New Roman. All pages should be consecutively numbered and should appear in the upper right hand corner of the pages. All citations should be in footnote (not endnote or in-text) format. Footnotes should be numbered consecutively with Arabic numerals. The title page, acknowledgements and table of contents should not be numbered.

B. Structure Requirements

The project should contain the title page, table of contents, an abstract, introduction, project body, conclusion and bibliography. All headings and subheadings used in the text must correspond to the table of contents. The introduction must include a general overview of the topic, the topic significance, key research question(s), thesis statement, general overview of research problems and the research methodology which was utilized. Chapters should be balanced in content and volume to the maximum extent possible. In most cases, papers should contain between 2-3 chapters. Exceptions to this may be made on a case by case basis.

C. Citation:

One of the basic requirements of the senior project is the citation of source material used in the project. Failure to do it may make you vulnerable to a charge of plagiarism in which case your grade will be lowered. If the committed **plagiarism** offense is serious, you may not be permitted to graduate.

Not observance of the plagiarism policy of International and Business Law Department in writing and/or submitting student's thesis paper will impact student's final grade of senior paper. Students are expected to read and abide by the rules in the Student Academic Dishonesty section of the AUCA Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct.

Direct quotes from the work of another and paraphrased text should always be cited. Information that is basic, such as important dates, facts, or opinions universally acknowledged need not be cited. When using information that is not widely known, whether fact or opinion, it should always receive a citation. When in doubt, it is safer to cite the material.

The citation should be in accordance with *The Bluebook: A Uniform Style of Citation* (The Harvard Law Review Association ed., 16th ed. 1996). Students should also consult *The Chicago Manual of Style* (University of Chicago Press, 14th ed. 1993) for grammar and word usage purposes. All citations should be placed in the bibliography, even if the authority is mentioned in the text and footnotes.

VI. Deadlines

Successful completion of the senior project is a prerequisite for student's graduation from AUCA. To ensure smooth and effective work on the senior project, students are expected to meet the following major deadlines (deadlines are subject to change each year due to changes of Academic Calendar):

- Submission of a tentative topic for a senior project proposal: **last Monday of October of the junior year**
- Submission of preliminary proposal: **last week of February of junior year**
- Submission of final Senior Thesis topic: **September 29 of senior year**
- Departmental approval of topics selected: **last two weeks of September of senior year**
- Preliminary departmental defense: **last week of March and first week of April of senior year**
- Submission of the final project: **April 30, 2014²** (by 4 pm electronic version to law@mail.auca.kg and 3 hard copies to office-manager of IBL department)
- Senior project defense: **to be announced close to May of a senior year to be determined within AUCA academic calendar**

Students shall submit three bound hard copies of their senior projects and one electronic copy in PDF format to AUCA library at library@auca.kg subject to the deadline of submission of final project.

VII. Senior Project Assessment

A. Grading Criteria

The final grade for the written project shall be based upon the following criteria:

- Research topic choice and its theoretical or practical value
- Structure: focus, relevance, clarity, coherence and logic
- Analysis: depth and development of discussion, reasoning, argumentation, claims and quality of evidence
- Research design and methodology
- Compliance with formatting requirements
- Use of sources and bibliography
- Writing style and grammar

² To be confirmed with Registrar office and academic calendar.

B. Grading Process

Students shall participate in the Departmental pre-defense of their senior projects in the first week of April. IBL faculty members will evaluate students' performance. Senior students writing the honors paper shall have 10 minutes for the oral presentation and 20 minutes for questions and answers. Students working on the senior paper will have 10 minutes for the oral presentation and 15 minutes for responding to questions. Students who do not pass the pre-defense cannot qualify for the defense and, therefore, will not be eligible for graduation from the University. The pre-defense will be graded and the grade received will constitute 10% of the final grade of the senior paper.

Following the pre-defense students shall submit the senior project in the written form and present it orally during the defense. The final grade is determined based on the following:

- evaluation of the written work by the Senior Project Assessment Committee members– 70% (35% - faculty member who is not advisor of the paper; 35% - external evaluator and/or member of the State committee as an expert who is not advisor of the paper),
- oral presentation – 30% (10% of which is allocated to a pre-defense)

Before an actual oral defense students' works must already be evaluated and graded by the Senior Project Assessment Committee members (also referred to as a State Attestation Commission) and supervisor. Committee members develop a tentative grade based on their assessment of the submitted piece of work. The final grade for each senior project is decided by the Committee immediately after the senior project defense.

To graduate, students must produce and defend the senior project with a grade of no lower than C. Students who defend the senior project with a grade lower than C cannot graduate. Students who wish to receive a diploma with honors, among other university requirements, should have the following grades for their senior projects:

- Summa Cum Laude - A
- Magna Cum Laude – at least B+
- Cum Laude – at least B.