



American University  
of Central Asia

Department of International and Comparative Politics

## Senior Thesis Rules and Regulations

The Senior Thesis is ICP students' leading independent research to be completed by the end of their fourth year. The Senior Thesis needs to be written based on independent research into a particular (research) question(s) and/or theoretical/empirical puzzle(s), which students formulate in consultation with the supervisor. It requires a high level of commitment, discipline, initiative, and organization on behalf of the student. The final product (senior thesis paper) should demonstrate originality and effort by the student, and their research ability.

ICP Senior will be allocated a thesis supervisor among full-time AUCA faculty. The student is responsible for ensuring they have a regular schedule of meetings with their supervisor. However, it is highly recommended that each student should meet with their supervisor at least once in two weeks. In these meetings, the student should submit the written piece of the thesis three working days before the scheduled meeting. It is highly recommended that the student create a Google Drive and share it with the supervisor. The student should collect all data and draft versions of the thesis in this folder. The precise structure, methods, and overall success of a thesis paper will depend on the regular meetings of the student supervisor.

For these reasons, all senior students will take **Senior Thesis Seminar I and Senior Thesis Seminar II** courses in their fourth year and successfully pass them to defend the thesis. It is a year-long course designed to help (strongly encourage) the students to develop a workable topic for their research project and complete their major parts. The course assignments are all designed to push the students to devote regular thinking and writing time to their research projects/topics.

By the end of Senior Thesis Seminar I, ICP Seniors should have a clear idea of their research projects (the research design) and precisely how they would carry it out (methods and methodology section). At the end of the Fall Semester, the work process should culminate in a well-written **Introduction** and **Chapter One** of the Senior Thesis – the chapter that outlines the core of the research project, which will then be written up with the data analysis during the Spring Semester. This part of the thesis should include **5,500-6,000 words**, and the supervisor determines what to include in this chapter, depending on the thesis project. The supervisor will grade final papers in each semester.

In this vein, ICP Seniors will need guidance with the following

- Identifying a thesis within a manageable topic and title.
- Identifying appropriate research tools and methods; contacting ICP faculty member(s) with related areas of expertise.
- Evaluating the relevance of published sources and preparing a focused, current bibliography and literature review.

- Devising a schedule for the completion of specific stages of the thesis. This should include regular meetings.
- Organizing and editing the final paper according to the departmental rules.

ICP Seniors and Supervisors should come to a clear understanding of the supervisor's expectations regarding the student's responsibilities and the time commitment involved for the student. Regular meetings (at least bi-weekly) should be scheduled so that the student can obtain continuous guidance, feedback, and support from the supervisor. Although it is primarily the student's responsibility to meet the specified deadlines, the supervisor should provide a degree of supervision to allow the student to complete the thesis research on schedule. Supervisors should be informed about the Senior Seminar course schedule and requirements and know what is expected from the student.

To that end, senior students will sign a Supervision Agreement with their supervisor. **All senior students must have a complete and signed Supervision Agreement Form** before they proceed with the substantive supervision process. **A copy of the Supervision Agreement Form must be submitted to the ICP Manager in Room 210 and via email at the end of the second week of the semester.**

Although it is not possible to give an exact figure for the time required for a successful thesis, the student should plan on spending, on average, about 5-7 hours per week on the Senior Seminar course and thesis.

ICP Seniors are also expected to complete their thesis research by the end of February so that there will be ample time to analyze the data and complete the written document by the deadline (April 30). Students sometimes run into difficulties because they do not begin the work early in the academic year or pursue it diligently throughout the year and, as a result, leave too much for the end of the term.

Occasionally, there may be disagreements between the student and supervisor concerning the thesis work. For example, a student may think that he/she is not getting sufficient access to the supervisor to deal with questions concerning data collection or the preparation of the thesis document, or the supervisor may think that the student is not fulfilling his/her obligations concerning the research. The student and/or supervisor must bring such disagreements to the attention of the course coordinator and department chair as soon as possible. It is too late to deal with such problems when it is almost time to submit the completed thesis document.

ICP Seniors should check whether their research needs IRB approval by visiting the e-course.auca.kg in the "university academic activity" section and checking IRB's procedures. For more information, please see the following link: [https://www.auca.kg/en/res\\_irb\\_home/](https://www.auca.kg/en/res_irb_home/)

## Senior Thesis Rules and Regulations:

The thesis must be an original work by the student (that is, not the same as one of the course papers, not a previously published project, and not a project that was completed with other co-authors for some other purpose).

The thesis topic must be within the scope of your major field of specialization (so, a thesis about new methods of raising cotton in southern Kyrgyzstan would be challenging to accept in the ICP department; however, it is complicated for a student to come up with an unsuitable topic – the scope of political science is so broad that virtually any topic of social relevance can have a political aspect to it).

As with any other written academic work, rules concerning academic honesty, plagiarism apply and AI policy (so, any bit of plagiarism or other manners of dishonest completion of the thesis are sufficient for automatic dismissal of the thesis as unacceptable; further administrative actions of punitive kind are stipulated in AUCA rules). Please also see other relevant policies.

The thesis must be between **12,000-15,000** words long. Word Count does not include footnotes, bibliography, and appendices. The **font size is 12 (Times New Roman), one-and-half space. Margins: Normal margin** – Top: 2 cm; Left: 3 cm; Right: 1.5 cm, and Bottom margin: 2 cm.

All references must use the **American Political Science Association (APSA)** style manual. APSA is a variation of the Chicago style. APSA uses the author-date format, but footnotes are allowed in some instances. For more information, please see the link below:

<https://connect.apsanet.org/stylemanual/>

Before submitting the final draft, the senior thesis must be proofread for typographical errors, correct grammar, and proper citation. The senior thesis must be written in a grammatically accurate language and be bound, however, no AI programs such as Grammarly should be used.

Please note that the deadline for comprehensive changes in the topic and change in supervisor is September 30. Supervisors may be changed only when the student or supervisor encounters systematic issues associated with their supervision. Such changes are subject to the availability of another supervisor already enlisted in ICP and must first be confirmed by the ICP Department Chair. Students must sign a new Supervision Agreement with their new supervisor.

The deadline for submission of the Senior Thesis paper is **April 30**.

The final grade for the Senior Thesis is 67% for the written work and 33% for the oral defense.

## Senior Thesis Defense

ICP Seniors who complete Senior Thesis Seminars I and II and other requirements for graduation will be allowed to defend their thesis against the State Examination Committee consisting of external academics and a few ICP faculty members.

### **Successful defense of the thesis is a requirement for the fulfillment of the degree.**

The Senior Thesis Defense procedure consists of a student presenting the thesis, followed by cross-examination/questions from the members of the State Examination Committee. The duration of each part will be specified in Senior Thesis Seminar II. However, the students should not expect to have more than fifteen minutes of presentation.

During the defense, students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their research project and its scope, implications, significance, and limitations. They should also successfully demonstrate that they have conducted research independently and in ways that comply with AUCA rules and regulations on academic honesty, integrity, and ethics.

The State Examination Committee reviews and evaluates the written paper, the presentation, and the cross-examination/questioning section according to the AUCA academic rules and regulations. The Committee may invite an individual student after their presentation to ask questions or request additional information. Usually, students are invited for additional questions if the Committee remains in doubt (or cannot reach a consensus) about the integrity of the research project or the quality of its scholarship.

Senior Thesis Defense welcomes other faculty, students, and seniors' friends and family on the condition that they do not interrupt, disrupt, or distract the defense procedure at any point. To avoid unnecessary distractions, nobody can enter or leave the venue during the student presentation. All participants and attendees must always follow the instructions and requests of the Chairperson of the State Examination Committee.

Students may request their supervisors to be present on the Senior Thesis Defense. However, to ensure fairness and equity, supervisors may not offer comments or ask questions that create an unfair advantage for individual students. If a supervisor is part of the Committee, they also cannot evaluate both the written part and oral presentation of their supervisees.

Students and supervisors must refrain from any attempts to hold an individual conversation with the members of the Committee about individual students for the entire duration of the Senior Thesis Defense. Should an exceptionally compelling reason arise, the Chairperson of the State Examination Committee may authorize individual contact with the student supervisor.