



*International Relations and Political Science Department*

## **IRPS Guidelines for Master Dissertations**

December 2019

This document is a demonstration that the student is knowledgeable about the broad aspects of a particular body of scholarly literature or an important subject, and that s/he has the ability to ask and answer a research question relevant to that literature and to noteworthy aspects of international relations and/or domestic politics. Concretely, students are expected to submit a document the body of which is between 15,000 and 25,000 words (excluding notes, bibliography and appendices), well documented and cited, of potentially publishable quality, and covering the following points:

- **Introduction**
- What is the real-world phenomenon of interest and what is its significance?
- What precisely is the question that one wishes to ask about the phenomenon and why is it important?
  
- **Literature Review**
- What does the existing scholarly literature say about the question and in what ways do the contributions of that literature fall short of a satisfactory answer?
- How does the literature help define and operationalize core concepts?
  
- **Theoretical Framework**
- What is a better way of potentially answering the question?
- What specific arguments (hypotheses, mechanisms, ideal-types, meanings, elements of discourse, etc.) are suggested by this potentially better way of answering the question?
  
- **Research Design/Approach and Methods**
- How are you going to conduct research on this topic? In particular:
- How will you demarcate the scope of your research; define the unit(s) of analysis; justify the case or selection of cases (if appropriate); discuss and justify the methods of analysis (e.g.: detailed case or comparative cases, large-N, interpretive, post-structuralist, discursive, ethnographic, survey, experimental, multi-method, etc.).
- Specify what evidence (or measurement strategy) would support or negate a particular argument, and whether the same evidence may be explained by a different theoretical perspective, etc.
  
- **Presentation of Original Research and Analysis**
- What does the evidence suggest for the argument being made?
  
- **Conclusion and Discussion**
- What are the broader implications of the evidence and conclusions for future research and for substantive issues?

More specific discussion on the elements and expectations of the thesis should be conducted *with the primary thesis advisor*.