

THESIS WRITING GUIDE

For the students and instructors

of the Department of International Studies, at the Institute of International Studies and Political Science, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Pázmány Péter Catholic University

The faculty members of the Department of International Studies wish to provide assistance to those students who, as graduating seniors, are preparing to write their theses. The purpose of the following regulations is to inform thesis writers about the requirements and tasks related to this academic piece of writing.

I. General provisions

I.1. Every university student, in order to obtain their degree and complete their university studies, is required to write a thesis.

I.2. The thesis must be suitable for evaluation both in content and formal presentation and must prove worthy of earning the degree.

I.3. “The thesis is an independent piece of creative work, which, as the culmination of higher education studies, is intended to demonstrate that the author has mastered the fundamental concepts, essential correlations, methods, and perspectives of the given discipline, and is capable of conducting independent research and analysis. The student should be able to identify and formulate relevant problems, find appropriate analytical tools, gather the necessary professional information, and process and apply it in a value-creating way to analyze the formulated question(s) and solve the problem.”¹

I.4. In addition to the above definition, the Department of International Relation expects its students to demonstrate that, during their university studies, they have acquired sufficient theoretical foundations to be able to address a topic related to the particular fields of international relations in the form of a thesis, employing the available domestic and international literature, adopting an informed viewpoint and supporting it with their own research.

I.5. Plagiarism and Independent work

See the University’s regulations on plagiarism and guidelines to avoid plagiarism.

I.6. Deadlines

The smooth progress of the thesis-writing process partly depends on adhering to deadlines. The three key deadlines for the academic year 2025/2026 are as follows:

- **September 15:** Requesting a supervisor to assist the student in the processes of undertaking the study and writing up the thesis; developing a research topic proposal. The proposal is prepared in the form of a topic plan. Supervisors decide whether to accept or reject the proposal based on the **FINER** criteria², i.e., whether the research

1 Wimmer, Á., Juhász, P. and Jeney, J. *Hogyan írunk...? 101 tanács (szak)dolgozatíróknak* [How to write...? 101 pieces of advice for (thesis)writers]. (Budapest: Alinea, 2009), 13–14. Hungarian-English raw translation performed with the help of DeepL, then checked for mistakes and refined by the author (29 October 2025).

2 Mohanan, S. and Parameswaran, N. ‘FINER Criteria — What Does It Mean?’, *CosmoDerma* 2, no. 115 (2022): 1–3, doi:10.25259/CSDM_123_2022; Hulley, S. B., Newman, T. B. and Cummings, S. B. ‘Getting Started: The Anatomy and Physiology of Clinical Research’, in *Designing Clinical Research*, ed. S. B. Hulley et al. (Wolters Kluwer, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2013), 2–13.

outlined in the plan is (F) *Feasible*, (I) *Interesting*, (N) *Novel*, (E) *Ethical*, and (R) *Relevant*.

- **September 30:** Students whose topic plans are not accepted by any supervisor by September 15 must select a new research topic, modify or rewrite their proposal, then request the assistance of a new supervisor.
- **October 15:** With prior consent from their supervisors, students upload the title of their research topic/thesis to the Neptun system. The research topic selection process officially closes, and the student receives the status of “*thesis writer*.”

I.7. Use of Artificial Intelligence and independent work³

Artificial Intelligence⁴ is a program capable of imitating human intelligence, functioning based on human-created mega-databases^{5,6,7}. Every AI system is a product developed by experts based on previously collected and uploaded data⁸. According to the **Act LXXVI of 1999 on Copyright**, Section 1 (2), “databases that qualify as collective works (...) are scientific creations” and are therefore protected by copyright.⁹

A thesis writer may resort to assistance from any artificial intelligence program (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, LudwigGuru, QuillBot) during the thesis-writing process, **provided the following rules are observed:**

a. Methodology Section Disclosure

The thesis writer must name, in the **Methodology** section of the thesis, the AI tool(s) used, describing **why, how, in which stages, and to what extent** they relied on AI assistance. The report may include, for example:

- The circumstances that led to the decision to use AI;
- The rationale for employing AI tools in the work;
- The benefits of using AI (e.g., *How/why did AI make the thesis more valuable?*) and its limitations (e.g., *To what extent did AI meet expectations? What shortcomings were noticed? What lessons were learned?*).

b. Appendix Section Disclosure

In the **Appendix (Appendices)** section, the thesis writer must list precisely all the **questions and prompts** given to the AI and briefly report **how they guided or controlled the AI's**

3 American Psychological Association, ‘APA Publishing Policies’, Journals Publishing Resource Centre, n.d., <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/resources/publishing-policies>.

4 American Psychological Association, ‘Artificial Intelligence’, *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (American Psychological Association, April 2019), <https://dictionary.apa.org/artificial-intelligence>.

5 University of Chicago, ‘AI and Academic Integrity’, *Library Guides. Generative AI* (blog), n.d., <https://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/c.php?g=1371911&p=10145580>.

6 Sorbonne Université, ‘A New Course on Ethical Issues of AI. Interview with Prof. Anouk Barberousse’, October 2022, <https://www.sorbonne-universite.fr/en/actualites/new-course-ethical-issues-ai>.

7 National College of Ireland, ‘Use of AI in Teaching and Learning: Student Guide’, *Library Guide* (blog), n.d., <https://libguides.ncirl.ie/useofaiinteachingandlearning/studentguide>.

8 Mérő, L. *Új Észjárások. A Racionális Gondolkodás Ereje És Korlátai* [New mindsets. The power and limits of rational thinking] (Budapest: Tericum, 2001).

9 Parliament of Hungary, ‘Act LXXVI of 1999 on Copyright (1999), <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=99900076.tv>.

responses.

This means that for each question or prompt, the AI's answers must also be included.

Citations and references must be handled with full academic rigor.

Failure to comply with rules (a) and (b) will result in sanctions identical to those applied in cases of plagiarism.

(See: [Plagiarism Regulations](#))

c. Declaration

In the **Declaration** section of the thesis, the author must state whether the thesis was written with or without the assistance of artificial intelligence.

II. General information about the thesis

The provisions about the thesis also follow the *Study and Examination Regulations* (TVSZ) and the supplementary and transitional provisions of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (BTK) to the Study and Examination Regulations ([§11–15](#)).

II.1. The Thesis Topic, Topic Approval, and Submission

II.1.1. Choosing the topic

① The student may select their thesis topic from any of the subjects offered within the curriculum.

② The topic may also be chosen from among the thesis topic proposals suggested by the instructors of the program.

③ Additionally, students may propose their **own original topic**.

In all cases, the topic must be **pre-approved** by both the prospective supervisor and the head of department.

II.1.2. The approval of the thesis topic

The thesis topic and title are determined by the student in consultation with the chosen supervisor. For this purpose, the student must prepare a **topic proposal** that includes a **research plan**, specifying what they intend to write about and how they plan to approach the subject.

(See also **I.6. Deadlines**.)

II.2. Requesting a Supervisor's Assistance, the Supervisor's Tasks, and Topic/Supervisor Changes

II.2.1. Requesting a Supervisor's Assistance

The student may choose a supervisor from among the institute's faculty members who hold an academic degree. If the topic requires it, the student may also select a supervisor from another department of the Faculty, or, in exceptional cases, an **external supervisor**.

However, such an external appointment must first be approved by the head of the department.

The supervisor has the **right to refuse** either the student or the proposed topic (see **FINER** criteria in Section I.6).

II.2.2. Changing the Supervisor or the Topic

During the thesis-writing process, the student has the right to **change supervisors**. This requires the **consent of both** the former and the new supervisor. If changing the supervisor also means changing the topic, a **new topic registration process** must begin, which also requires the department head's signature. The latest possible deadline for changing the thesis topic is **three months before submission**. Minor **title adjustments** do not count as topic changes.

II.2.3. the Supervisor's Responsibilities

The supervisor provides guidance to the student on various matters, including:

- how to conduct research,
- which sources and references to consult,
- how to structure the thesis,
- and how to use artificial intelligence appropriately.

The student is required to attend consultations with the supervisor **at least three times**, according to the frequency determined by the supervisor.

II.3. The Submission of the Thesis

The deadline for submitting the thesis is determined by the Faculty regulations:

- **Fall semester:** November 15
- **Spring semester:** April 15

II.3.1. Conditions for Submission

① Thesis writers must submit the completed thesis to their supervisor at least **two weeks before the submission deadline**, allowing the instructor to review the work, correct any errors, and provide feedback.

② The supervisor confirms the acceptance of the submitted thesis by signing it electronically in the **Neptun system's thesis cloud**.

③ The student must upload the final version of the thesis, **in PDF format**, to the **Neptun system** before the submission deadline, in accordance with formal requirements. A **printed (paper) version** of the thesis **is not required**.

II.4. The Evaluation of the Thesis

Only theses **approved by the supervisor** (and properly documented as such) may be forwarded for review.

II.4.1. The Reviewer and Their Tasks

The reviewer (opponent) is a faculty member of the department who is knowledgeable in the topic area. The reviewer must submit both a **written evaluation** and a **numerical grade** by the deadline set by the department.

Additionally, the reviewer may provide **one or two professional questions** related to the thesis that the student must answer during the **final defense** (these questions must be given **at least one week before** the defense).

II.4.2. The Evaluation and Grading Criteria

The main evaluation criteria include the **FINER** principles, as well as:

- appropriateness of topic choice and problem formulation;
- thoroughness of research work;
- implementation and methodological soundness of the research;
- proper use and interpretation of empirical data;
- depth and originality of analysis;
- presence of the author's own thoughts and reasoning;
- coherent and logical structure of content and text;
- use of appropriate academic language;
- quality and quantity of sources and their integration;
- overall formal presentation and consistency of the thesis.

III. Mandatory Formal Requirements for the Thesis

When writing the thesis, the following stylistic and formatting rules are mandatory. Failure to adhere to them may result in a **lower grade** or **rejection** of the thesis.

III.1. Layout and Editing

① **Font:** Times New Roman

① **Software:** Microsoft Word

① **Font size:** 12 pt

① **Line spacing:** 1.5

① **Margins:** Mirror margins, 2 cm from the edge of the page

III.2. Title Page

To ensure uniform appearance across all these, the **first page** of the thesis (not numbered) must contain:

- The word **THESIS**
- The **author's name**
- The **year of submission**

On the **second page** (also unnumbered):

- Top left corner: the full official name of the place of submission (no abbreviations): *Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem, Bölcsészet- és Társadalomtudományi Kar*
- Center of the page: the **title** and **subtitle** of the thesis
- Left side: the **supervisor's name and position**
- Bottom center: the **place and year of submission** (e.g., *Budapest, 2025*)

III.3. The Structure and Table of Contents

Every thesis must include:

- A properly formatted **title page** as described above;
- Followed by a **Table of Contents** (with main and sub-sections numbered using Roman and Arabic numerals, e.g., I., I.1., I.2., I.2.1.);
- And ending with a **bibliography (list of references)**, and
- If deemed necessary, an **appendix** (see also *I.7. Use of Artificial Intelligence*).

III.4. Length Requirements

The total length of the thesis — excluding the table of contents, bibliography, and appendices — must be:

- **Minimum:** 100,000 characters
- **Maximum:** 120,000 characters

Tables, charts, and figures included within the main text **may not exceed one-fourth (¼)** of the total length.

IV. Specific Information about the Thesis

IV.1. Content Elements

It is recommended that the thesis be divided into **chapters, subchapters, and (if necessary) sub-subchapters**.

The structure should correspond to the overall length, with sections following one another in a **logical and coherent order**.

A well-organized **Table of Contents** that distinguishes between chapters and subchapters through clear formatting demonstrates a sound structural design.

The following elements should be included:

The **sections** of the thesis should adhere to the common IMRaD-structure. This structure, however, may be adjusted in consultation with the supervisor to the specifics of the thesis. The mandatory sections of the thesis are the *foreign-language summary*, and the *appendix* (mandatory if AI assistance was used).

IV.1.1. Introduction

The opening part of the thesis should include:

- The identification of the **topic**;

- The **rationale** for choosing it;
- A clearly defined **problem statement**;
- The **objectives** and **motivation** behind the research.

It should also describe:

- The **research field**;
- The scientific **hypothesis** or **research questions**;
- The **overview of existing research** in the chosen field;
- The **connection** of the thesis to ongoing academic discourse, pointing out **similarities and differences** with other works;
- A concise explanation of the **research methods** and the focus areas;
- And finally, a statement of how the thesis contributes to existing knowledge.

IV.1.2. Theoretical Background

This section forms a **substantial part** of the thesis.

Its purpose is to **demonstrate** that the author:

- is familiar with the fundamental academic literature in the field;
- can interpret scholarly works critically and intelligently;
- can formulate meaningful questions and provide thoughtful observations and commentary.

This part must include a **critical review** of (both **Hungarian and** **international**) literature related to the topic, and must clarify which **theoretical frameworks and definitions** the author uses as foundations.

IV.1.3. Methodology

This is one of the most valuable parts of the thesis.

Here, the author must present:

- the **research goals**,
- the **hypotheses** or **research questions**, and
- a detailed account of the **methods** used in the investigation.

The section should describe:

- how the hypotheses and questions were developed;
- what **research methods** and **instruments** were employed (e.g., questionnaires, interview questions, data collection techniques);
- and any **methodological challenges or limitations** encountered.

If AI was employed, the student must **justify its use** here and explain the **specific ways and stages** in which it assisted the research.

IV.1.4. Results/Research findings

This section presents the **results** of the research or investigation — the logical outcome of the research process.

Here, the student should:

- showcase the **results** of their work;
- answer the **research questions** and confirm or reject the **hypotheses**;
- discuss how the findings **fit into** or **expand upon** existing knowledge;
- and, if possible, evaluate the **usefulness**, **applicability**, and **academic value** of the results.

IV.1.5. Discussion/Conclusion

This final section offers the author the possibility to **summarize** the research process and its key outcomes.

The writer should:

- reflect on the extent to which the goals were achieved;
- highlight the **main findings and conclusions**;
- and, ideally, suggest **directions for further research** or **possible improvements** to the study.

IV.1.6. References

At the end of the thesis, the list of references (in alphabetical order) must include **only the sources actually used** in preparing the thesis.

IV.1.7. Appendix/Appendices

If the topic requires, the thesis may include **appendices** such as additional tables, figures – which are not included in the body of the thesis, or any supplementary materials.

If the writer employed **AI assistance**, this section must contain the **exact prompts and questions** given to the AI and the **verbatim responses** received.

IV.1.8. Declaration

In the declaration, the author must affirm that the thesis is their **own intellectual work**, that it has **not been submitted** for any other program, and that only the **specified sources and aids** were used.

The author must also state whether the thesis was written **with or without the assistance of artificial intelligence**.

IV.2. Sources, Citation Management, and Literature Supporting Academic Writing

Thesis writers are obliged to **clearly and correctly indicate** all sources used in the preparation of their thesis.

Failure to cite sources properly constitutes **plagiarism**, which is subject to **strict disciplinary measures**

(see Section I.5 – *Plagiarism / Independent Work*).

Reliable **plagiarism detection programs** are already available in Hungarian. Currently, the most advanced system is **KOPI**, developed by the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. Thesis writers are encouraged to **check parts of their thesis** using the KOPI service before submission.

- Website: <https://kopi.sztaki.hu/>
- Note: KOPI is capable of detecting even **translation-based plagiarism**

IV.2.1. Citation Style

For managing sources, it is recommended to use a **footnote or numerical referencing system**.

This may follow either the **Chicago University Press (Note)** or the **Oxford University Press (Note)** citation style.

The Appendix to this Guide provides a simplified example of a numbered referencing format.

Additional practical notes:

- Reference managers such as **EndNote**, **Mendeley**, and **Zotero** automatically handle citations and bibliographies.
- An English-language guide to the Chicago manual of Style is to be found here: [Purdue OWL — Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Edition](https://owl.english.psu.edu/owl/resource/725/55/)

Using the Numbered (Footnote) System

In this style, a **superscript number** in the text refers to a corresponding **footnote at the bottom of the page**, which provides the full source reference.

For example, if quoting directly from *Joseph Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the reference appears as follows:

Narrative citation: Campbell, writing about the essence of the challenges life faces us, pointed out that "a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder".¹

Footnote citation:

¹Campbell, J. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato, CA: New World Library 2008), 23.

Placement of the note number in text:

- After verbatim quotations, the note number is mandatory.
- It may appear **before or after** the full stop (both are acceptable as long as consistent).
- It can be placed **anywhere in the text** where the author deems appropriate — e.g.,
 - at the end of a quotation,
 - after a statement based on a cited source, or

- after a highlighted term or concept.

To facilitate the **collection, organization, and insertion** of references, the use of a citation management program is **strongly recommended**:

- [EndNote](#)
- [Mendeley](#)
- [Zotero](#)

These tools can be integrated with common word processors (MS Word, Apple Pages, LibreOffice Writer), so that sources need not be typed manually each time—they can be inserted automatically into the document.

IV.2.2. Documenting the Employment of AI in the Preparation of the Thesis

According to the **latest statement of the American Psychological Association (APA)**¹⁰, references to artificial intelligence tools should include the following elements:

1. **Name(s) of the program's author(s);**
2. **Year of release** of the version used;
3. The **program name** in *italics*, followed by the **version number** in parentheses;
4. A brief **descriptor in square brackets** — e.g., [Large Language Model], [Large Action Model];
5. The **publisher's name** (if different from the author);
if the author and publisher are the same, only the **URL** is required.

Examples (for QuillBot and Ludwig.guru):

Gupta, R., Jason, A. & Silin, D. *QuillBot* (Version 1 September) [Large Language Model]. (2025). <https://quillbot.com/app>

Rotolo, A., Pellegrino, R., Papa, F., Monello, S., & Aronica, F. [Large Language Model]. (2014). <https://ludwig.guru>

IV.2.3. Recommended Handbooks for Academic Writing

In addition to the supervisor's guidance, the following works are recommended for learning or improving academic writing skills:

- **Pinker, Steven** (2014). *The sense of style. The thinking person's guide to writing in the 21st century.* (New York: Penguin.)
(Budapest: Osiris.)
- **Sword, Helen** (2012). *Stylish academic writing.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.)
- **Wallwork, Adrian** (2011). *English for writing research papers.* (New York: Springer.)

¹⁰ Huff, C. 'The Promise and Perils of Using AI for Research and Writing', *American Psychological Association. Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning* (blog), October 2024, <https://www.apa.org/topics/artificial-intelligence-machine-learning/ai-research-writing>.

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- University of Chicago. “AI and Academic Integrity.” *Library Guides – Generative AI (blog)*, n.d. <https://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/c.php?g=1371911&p=10145580>
- Waddingham, Anne, ed. *New Oxford Style Manual: The World’s Most Trusted Reference Book*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).