

Philip Seaton's Graduation Thesis Seminar

Grading Guidelines

In your final year, you will receive a single, unified grade for the entire graduation thesis. There are 12 credits in total: 4 for participation in the seminar, and 8 for the final thesis.

The Research Process

It is important to think of your graduation thesis as a **research process**. While the content of the thesis you submit to the university is important, your grade rests heavily on how well you have gone through the research process. As your supervisor, I am not just waiting for you to produce a thesis as if by magic in December. **Your management of the research process from April to December is the key to your grade.**

The standard components of a graduation thesis are as follows:

- **Research question:** This question and its background form the basis of your thesis introduction.
- **Literature review:** By reading academic articles/books related to the research question, you lay the foundations for your thesis. The second component of your thesis typically includes the findings of previous research, definitions/explanations of key concepts, and discussion of your methodology and theoretical framework.
- **Data analysis:** Your analysis of original data (gathered via fieldwork, media surveys, interviews, questionnaires, or from secondary sources such as published statistics etc.) is the third component, and is the true heart of your research project.
- **Conclusions:** You complete your thesis with a final summary of the main findings.
- **Bibliography:** The bibliography should demonstrate that you have read widely in preparation for the thesis. The bibliography itself is a complete list of all references used in the thesis. They must be formatted using a recognized academic style guide.

It is expected that all five components of the thesis have gone through the following **feedback cycle** at least once before final submission to the university:

Draft submission → Feedback (written comments in the draft, *or* discussion at a one-on-one supervision session, *or* comments following a presentation) → Draft revision → Resubmission.

Throughout the year there should be at least eleven opportunities to gain feedback on your work: a minimum of eight individual supervision times (four in the spring, four in the autumn) and three class presentations (spring mid-term, spring end-of-term, autumn mid-term).

The final stage of the research process is the **plagiarism check** in the last class before Christmas. Your completed thesis will be put into the iThenticate website to confirm that there has been no research malpractice (plagiarism, excessive copying etc).

Deadlines

An important part of the research process is meeting two deadlines.

The first is the **seminar deadline**. This is the last class before the New Year break (usually 20-25 December). If your thesis is incomplete by the seminar deadline, then you have not completed the research process properly and this will impact your grade heavily (the maximum grade is B+, see the table below). On the other hand, if you have met the seminar deadline (= you have cleared all

stages of the research process up to and including the iThenticate check by the last class in December), you will be told you have passed with a grade of A- or above.

The second is the **university deadline**. This is early in January (usually 6-7 January). Your thesis must be submitted to the university by the deadline in order to be marked and receive credits. Be careful! Failure to submit properly to the university is a fail, even if you met the seminar deadline (see the paragraph above).

Note that **no individual supervision is given after the seminar deadline**. If you missed the seminar deadline, your thesis submitted to the university will simply be read and marked according to the grading criteria below. You will receive your result (B+ or lower) when the university releases the grades for the autumn term.

Grading Criteria

The grade received depends on three factors:

1. **Research Process:** To get A- and above, you must complete the entire **research process** (see above) by the **seminar deadline** (see above).
2. **Content / Argument:** This refers to the breadth of your reading, the quality of your original data collected, and the quality of the arguments/conclusions.
3. **Citation Style:** This refers to how well the student has met academic standards for citation, including the proper use of in-text citations and a bibliography using a recognised academic citation style.

| Grade | Research Process | Content/Argument | Citation Style |
|-------|--|--|--|
| S | The research process was completed before the seminar deadline. | This thesis could be published | There are no indications of research malpractice. Citations and the bibliography were done properly according to a recognized style guide. |
| A+ | | Excellent | |
| A | | Very good | |
| A- | | Good | |
| B+ | The research process was not completed before the seminar deadline, but a thesis meeting the specifications was submitted to the university. | Excellent | There might be evidence of citations not done properly, but these can be treated as “errors” rather than deliberate research malpractice. |
| B | | Very good | |
| B- | | Good | |
| C+ | There were significant deficiencies in the research process, but a thesis meeting the specifications was submitted to the university. | Good | There might be evidence of citations not done properly, but these can be treated as “errors” rather than deliberate research malpractice. |
| C | | Fair | |
| C- | | Borderline pass | |
| F | No thesis was submitted, or the thesis did not meet minimum requirements for length and format. | The quality of argument was below that expected for a graduation thesis. | There is clear evidence of research malpractice in the thesis submitted to the university. |