

March 2022

Political science, University of Basel

## Assessment criteria for the master's thesis in political science<sup>1</sup>

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<b>1) Master's thesis topic and research question</b>	
<i>Positive assessment criteria</i>	<i>Negative assessment criteria</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clarity of the research question</li><li>• Research question concepts and the relationships between these are defined and discussed</li><li>• Originality of the research question</li><li>• Topic and research question are theoretically and/or empirically relevant</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research question not clearly defined</li><li>• Several different research questions are present</li><li>• Too many questions have been posed</li><li>• Research question is unoriginal</li><li>• Relevance of the research question and the topic is not discussed</li></ul>
<b>2) Theory</b>	
<i>Positive assessment criteria</i>	<i>Negative assessment criteria</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The literature review incorporates the most important and most recent contributions from the English-speaking literature on the topic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outdated or non-scientific literature used</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choice of theory applied is justified and is meaningful</li><li>• Theory/ies applied is/are appropriate for answering the research question</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reasons for the choice of theory/ies applied not provided</li><li>• Too little reference to theory. Arguments appear to be used on an ad hoc basis</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The most important assumptions, arguments, and concepts of the chosen theory/ies are presented</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explanation of the assumptions, arguments, and concepts missing</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coherent hypotheses (quantitative research) or thesis/es (qualitative research)</li><li>• Arguments and hypotheses are original</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arguments and hypotheses are incomprehensible or ambiguous</li></ul>
<b>3) Research design</b>	
<i>Positive assessment criteria</i>	<i>Negative assessment criteria</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reasons are provided for the case selection</li><li>• Case selection is appropriate for answering the research question</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No reasons given for case selection</li><li>• The case study is described in too much or too little detail</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Method applied is discussed, and an explanation of its utility for addressing the research question is provided</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unclear why the particular method used was chosen</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For statistical analyses, the model selection is discussed and explained</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Missing model specification</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If an empirical analysis is carried out, explanations are provided of how the variables of the hypotheses are operationalised</li><li>• Dataset sources are briefly outlined</li><li>• Collection of own data</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No discussion or presentation of the operationalisation</li><li>• Operationalisation of theoretical concepts is problematic</li><li>• Discussion of the data sources missing</li></ul>

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<sup>1</sup> This translation builds no legal basis; it is unauthorized and only for understanding purposes.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validity and reliability of the data is discussed (particularly when own data is collected)</li> </ul>	
<b>4) Empirical Analysis</b>	
<i>Positive assessment criteria</i>	<i>Negative assessment criteria</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empirical analysis is carried out in a systematic manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis is unsystematic</li> <li>• Analysis lacks transparency</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective visual depiction of results using tables and graphs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation and discussion of the results is too superficial</li> <li>• Too many tables containing too many numbers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results are discussed in relation to the arguments and hypotheses that are presented at the beginning of the work</li> <li>• Discussion section makes clear which arguments and hypotheses can be confirmed or rejected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It remains unclear which hypotheses can be rejected</li> <li>• Results are incorrectly interpreted</li> <li>• Irrelevant findings are discussed</li> </ul>
<b>5) Conclusion</b>	
<i>Positive assessment criteria</i>	<i>Negative assessment criteria</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results are critically reflected on</li> <li>• Results are situated within a wider context</li> <li>• Future potential research questions are roughly outlined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a failure to examine the results</li> </ul>
<b>6) Formal criteria, language</b>	
<i>Positive assessment criteria</i>	<i>Negative assessment criteria</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal criteria are met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues with citations, labelling of tables and figures, bibliography incomplete etc.</li> <li>• Formal components missing such as table of contents etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear language used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many language errors</li> <li>• Unclear formulation of ideas</li> </ul>