

Q and A Master's Thesis

Thesis Supervisors

Does my supervisor have to be a Sciences Po faculty member?

We strongly recommend that Sciences Po faculty or faculty based in Paris supervise your Master thesis. We have full confidence in the fact that Sciences Po faculty will provide students with the best supervision, and this is why we give them priority. But, provided the faculty you have in mind is willing to do so, we will consider all suggestions on an exceptional basis.

Who is a Sciences Po full-time faculty member?

A Sciences Po full-time faculty member is a professor who is based full-time at Sciences Po, in a teaching and research, or strictly research, capacity.

Do our thesis supervisors necessarily have to have a PhD?

The research project is conducted under the direction of a faculty. Again, exceptions may be considered on a case by case basis. The supervisor is approved by your academic advisor.

Can the thesis be supervised by two supervisors?

No. There is only one supervisor. However, students/supervisors can suggest a second expert who will then sit on the thesis defense, upon approval by PSIA's administration. Please refer to the jury composition indications on PSIA's website; <http://www.sciencespo.fr/psia/content/masters-thesis>

Is there a maximum of contact hours students are entitled to have with their supervisors? All

Sciences Po faculty supervisors will follow their usual practice with regards to this. Should students feel the supervisor is not available enough, they are welcome to notify their academic advisors who will ensure regular follow-up.

Gap Year, Internship, and Study Abroad

If I intend to take a gap year between the first and the second year of the program, should I submit my proposal before or after the gap year?

We strongly recommend students submit their proposals after the gap year given that the latter usually helps students to better focus their projects. In some cases, students change their mind when it comes to academic/research interests during the gap year. Finally, the gap year may also provide you with primary data for future research.

Can I do a study abroad semester whilst preparing my master's thesis?

No. Students need to choose one single option for their third semester: internship, exchange semester or master's thesis. All three options are full-time commitments and cannot be cumulated.

Can I cumulate an internship whilst preparing my master's thesis?

No. Students need to choose one single option for their third semester: internship, exchange semester or master's thesis. All three options are full-time commitments and cannot be cumulated. Rare exceptions may be made if the internship is done in a research center and if its content is very closely linked to the thesis topic and the aim of the internship is to prepare the Master's thesis.

Submitting a Proposal

Can I still submit a proposal if I haven't taken the two Methods courses at PSIA?

Any student is free to submit a proposal according to the requirements indicated online. Those who have not taken the two methods courses will be at a disadvantage compared to those who have. PSIA ensures that Methods courses are available to all students in all programs and all concentrations. Students who have not taken these courses should highlight any compensatory background in research in their cover letters.

Can I do my thesis on a topic relevant to one of my concentrations rather than my core program (master)?

Yes, your field of research is your decision.

Can I submit a proposal that is not directly related to my master's or concentration?

Yes, yet you need to find a supervisor who is willing to support your proposal even though it is not closely linked to fields you specialize in within your current course of study.

Can I change my research topic after submitting my proposal?

You cannot change your research topic after your proposal. You may redefine the topic with your supervisor, but you cannot completely change topics once it has been approved.

Can dual degree students do a thesis at PSIA?

Some dual degrees require students to do a thesis during the second year in our partner university. For others, given that you spend the second year abroad, you will not be in residence at PSIA. If you want to do a Master thesis, we recommend that you work this out with our partner institution.

Writing the Master's Thesis

Can I write my thesis in French?

Yes. The thesis can be written in English or in French.

Do I have to be in Paris during the third semester whilst I'm preparing my master's thesis?

No. As a matter of fact, you may decide to do field work abroad for your master thesis.

Does PSIA offer funding opportunities for field research for the Master's thesis?

No, PSIA does not offer any funding in this context. However, KSP offers mobility grants to Sciences Po students enrolled in the eligible programs, at the College and Master level, who plan to study, intern or do field research in the Middle East. Mobility grants of up to 5,000 Euros per project will be awarded. See:

http://www.sciencespo.fr/psia/sites/sciencespo.fr.psia/files/KSP_Visting_Faculty_2015-2016.pdf

Whilst preparing my thesis during the fall semester (third semester), can I take courses at Sciences Po?

No. Students are enrolled in courses in Semesters 1, 2, and 4. They are not supposed to take courses during their semester 3, which is a semester "hors les murs" per Sciences Po rules. On an exceptional basis, academic advisors may allow students to enroll in a methods class.

Can I turn one of my final papers into a master's thesis?

A final paper may indeed be a good start for a master thesis.

After Submission and the Thesis Defense

Who decides on who sits in the defense jury?

You may discuss with your thesis supervisor about this, but ultimately the jury is their final decision, and must follow the lines of composition described on the PSIA website.

Does PSIA reimburse supervisors and jury members for transport expenses?

No, PSIA does not cover any transport costs incurred for participation in the defense jury. It is possible for one member of the defense jury to participate by Skype, but the two other members must be physically present at the defense.

Will the thesis grade weigh in the final average grade for the degree?

If you pass your Master's thesis, you will be awarded 30 ECTS. However, only courses are taken into account for the final average grade. The master's thesis and its grade will show on the transcript, but the grade will not be used for the calculation of your final average.

Is there a difference between the "Grand Oral" and the thesis defense.

Yes. There is no link between the two of them. Please refer to information on the Grand Oral at Sciences Po if needed.

Can I publish my thesis (or part of it) before the defense?

This is your decision, we would recommend though that you try to include the comments you will benefit from during the defense.

Am I eligible for a PhD at Sciences Po's doctoral school after having done a master's thesis at PSIA? Just like any doctoral school, Sciences Po's doctoral school is free to admit or refuse candidates based on their application forms. Please refer to the website of Sciences Po's doctoral school for any information.