

APPROVED

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of the Senate of Vilnius University
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VILNIUS UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS FOR THE PREPARATION, DEFENCE, AND STORAGE OF THE STUDYING PERSONS' RESEARCH PAPERS

CHAPTER I GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The Vilnius University Regulations for the Preparation, Defence, and Storage of the Studying Persons' Research Papers (hereinafter the 'Regulations') establish the general requirements for the preparation, defence, and storage of research papers of persons studying in the first cycle, second cycle, integrated studies, professional (pedagogy) studies, and minor field studies at Vilnius University (hereinafter the 'University').

2. Terms used in the Regulations:

2.1. **Final thesis (project)** (hereinafter the 'final thesis') is a research paper, independently developed by a person studying in the first cycle, second cycle, integrated studies, professional (pedagogy) studies, or minor field studies that is compliant with the requirements for university studies demonstrating the studying person's ability to apply their knowledge in the study field(s) being studied acquired during their studies, choose scientific literature and use it (present, analyse, interpret, etc.), apply research methods, independently cope with the set-out tasks, provide one's own conclusions and/or recommendations, as well as demonstrating their ability to describe the carried out research in a grammatically correct language, accurately and clearly;

2.2. **The Final Thesis Assessment Commission** (hereinafter the 'Commission') is the final thesis commission which is formed and its chairperson appointed by an order of the Rector of the University or their authorised Pro-Rector upon proposal from the head of the core academic unit of the University implementing the study programme. The Commission shall be composed of competent experts in relevant study fields – academic staff of the University (researchers, teaching staff), practising professionals, representatives of social partners or representatives of other research and study institutions whose education or the activities of the organisation represented thereby are related to the study field of the final thesis being defended. At least one member of the Commission must be a representative of an institution other than the University;

2.3. **eLABa repository** is the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library Information System which stores and provides public access to research and study documents and/or their metadata;

2.4. **Embargo period** is a period of temporary prohibition expressed in months from the successful defence of the final thesis that, at the request of the student, is imposed by the Final Thesis Defence Commission, during which public access to the uploaded thesis documents is limited;

2.5. **Methodological guidelines for the preparation of research papers** (hereinafter the 'Methodological Guidelines') are the rules for the preparation of research papers approved by the Council of the core academic unit of the University that set out the requirements for the content and form (formal requirements, rules for citation, deadlines for submitting research papers for assessment (defence), etc.) of research papers prepared by studying persons, as well as the research papers' assessment criteria and reviewing procedure.

2.6. **Research paper** is a term paper, a scientific research paper, or the final thesis of a major (or minor) study field prepared by a studying person during their studies.

CHAPTER II PREPARATION OF RESEARCH PAPERS

3. A core academic unit of the University (hereinafter the 'Unit'), in accordance with the Regulations and taking into account the specifics of the study fields carried out at the Unit, shall draw up the Methodological Guidelines to be approved by the Council of the Unit. When the Council of the Unit approves the amendments to the Methodological Guidelines, they must be applied from the beginning of the next (following) study semester at the earliest.

4. Research papers shall be prepared in accordance with the Methodological Guidelines and these Regulations. The storage of research papers in the Study Information System of the University (hereinafter the 'VUSIS') is carried out in accordance with the Description of the Procedure for the Administration of Research Papers in Vilnius University Study Information System (hereinafter the 'Description') approved by the Rector of the University or their authorised Pro-Rector.

5. The research paper must be written in grammatically correct Lithuanian language, excluding cases when the study programme is implemented and the research paper is written in a foreign language, or the supervisor or consultant of the research paper is a lecturer, researcher, or practising professional from a foreign country. The Methodological Guidelines may also provide other cases where the research paper may be prepared in a language other than Lithuanian.

6. The studying person must prepare the research paper fairly and independently, in accordance with the principles of academic ethics set out for research activities and the requirements for the preparation of research papers laid down in the Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius University, the Methodological Guidelines, and other legal acts.

7. The studying person must confirm the fact that the research paper has been prepared independently, fairly and in compliance with the requirements of these Regulations and other legal acts by filling in the Warranty of Vilnius University Student Thesis in the VUSIS, prepared according to the typical form approved by the Rector of the University or their authorised Pro-Rector (hereinafter the 'Warranty of Vilnius University Student Thesis'), which the studying person shall submit along with the research paper by uploading it to the VUSIS.

8. The topics of research papers shall be suggested by the lecturers of the relevant course units (modules) or researchers. The studying person shall also have the right to propose a topic for the research paper which must be agreed upon with the prospective research paper supervisor. The topics chosen by the studying persons and the supervisors of the research papers must be approved by an order of the head of the Unit. The research paper supervisor shall consult the studying person preparing the research paper on methodological and subject matters related to the preparation of the research paper. The scope of research papers shall be established in the Methodological Guidelines and/or in the description of the course unit (module).

9. The topics of final theses may be proposed to the study programme committee by prospective final thesis supervisors – lecturers or researchers of the University (if necessary, the final thesis supervisor may be from another Unit). The studying person shall also have the right to propose a topic for the final thesis which must be agreed upon with the prospective final thesis supervisor and the study programme committee. At least 10 working days before the selection of the final thesis topics, the list of final thesis topics approved by the study programme committee shall be made publicly available on the VUSIS and/or the Unit's website.

CHAPTER III SUBMITTING RESEARCH PAPERS FOR ASSESSMENT (DEFENCE)

10. Uploading a research paper and its metadata to the VUSIS must be carried out in accordance with the procedure and deadlines set out in the Description.

11. For the assessment (defence) of the research paper, the studying person must submit a properly prepared research paper written in grammatically correct language along with a filled-in and approved Warranty of Vilnius University Student Thesis to the VUSIS. If the studying person does not

fill in and upload the Warranty of Vilnius University Student Thesis in the VUSIS along with the research paper, the studying person's research paper shall not be assessed.

12. The deadlines for submitting research papers for assessment (defence) must be set out in the Methodological Guidelines.

13. Before assessing a research paper, the research papers uploaded to the VUSIS by studying persons must be checked by plagiarism-detection software in accordance with the procedure and deadlines set out in the Description.

14. After the studying person submits their final thesis for defence, the final thesis supervisor shall indicate their decision on allowing the studying person to defend their final thesis in the VUSIS no later than in three working days after the expiration of the deadline for modification of the final thesis. Before making a decision, the final thesis supervisor must review the final thesis computer check report generated when performing the check referred to in Item 13 of the Regulations and all the information regarding the independence check of the final thesis (except in the case provided for in Item 22 of the Regulations). The studying person shall be informed of the decision of the final thesis supervisor on allowing them to defend their final thesis in the VUSIS.

15. If the final thesis supervisor takes the decision by means of the VUSIS that the final thesis cannot be defended because the final thesis has been prepared in the absence of the thesis supervisor or has been prepared inadequately, the studying person shall have the right to apply to the Commission for permission to defend the final thesis. The studying person must submit a free-form application along with the final thesis to the Commission via the VUSIS no later than in two working days from the date the decision of the final thesis supervisor not to allow the defence of the final thesis was presented to the studying person or from the date of the refusal to accept the final thesis. After reviewing the studying person's reasoning, the Commission shall take a decision on whether to allow the studying person to defend the final thesis in front of the Commission.

16. If the Commission makes a favourable decision, the Commission's decision to allow the defence of the final thesis must be indicated in the VUSIS by the responsible person at the Unit. The final decision on allowing the defence of the final thesis shall be taken by an order of the head of the Unit in one working day after the Commission's decision, authorising the defence of the final thesis of studying persons who meet all the following conditions:

16.1. all the requirements of the study programme have been fulfilled (except for the requirement to have defended the final thesis);

16.2. the final thesis is submitted for assessment together with an approved Warranty of Vilnius University Student Thesis (except in the case provided for in Item 22 of the Regulations) in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Regulations, the Description, and the Methodological Guidelines;

16.3. the final thesis supervisor (or, in the case provided for in Item 15 of the Regulations, the Commission) has decided to allow the defence of the final thesis.

17. The final thesis must be submitted to the reviewer within the deadline and in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Methodological Guidelines, but no later than five working days before the defence of the final thesis. Final theses prepared by studying persons may be reviewed by staff of other Units or other research and study institutions, as well as representatives of social partners.

18. The reviewer shall submit their review of the final thesis to the Unit in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Methodological Guidelines no later than two working days before the meeting of the Commission at which the final thesis will be defended. The studying person shall receive the review of their final thesis in the email inbox provided to them by the University in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Methodological Guidelines but no later than one working day before the defence of the final thesis.

CHAPTER IV ASSESSMENT (DEFENCE) OF RESEARCH PAPERS

19. When assessing a research paper, the criteria set out in the description of the relevant study programme course unit (module) and the Methodological Guidelines must be followed.

20. The assessment and defence of research papers other than final theses shall be carried out in accordance with the following procedure:

20.1. The research paper shall be assessed by the research paper supervisor in accordance with the procedure set out in the Methodological Guidelines. The Methodological Guidelines may provide for cases in which the defence of research papers takes place in front of a commission;

20.2. In cases where a research paper is to be defended in front of a commission, the assessment and defence of the research paper shall be carried out in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Methodological Guidelines, or, in the absence of such a procedure, Item 21 of the Regulations shall apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the procedure for the assessment and defence of the research paper;

20.3. The research paper must be assessed and defended within the deadlines set out in the Methodological Guidelines or, if no deadline is set out in the Methodological Guidelines, by the date set out by the research paper supervisor.

21. The assessment and defence of the final thesis shall be carried out in accordance with the following procedure:

21.1. The defence of the final thesis shall take place at an open (except in the case described in Item 22 of the Regulations) meeting of the Commission, which may be conducted in person, remotely or both, in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Methodological Guidelines;

21.2. The Unit shall submit the final thesis, the reviewer's review, and the request to apply an Embargo period to the Commission in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Methodological Guidelines, no later than one working day before the start of the defence of the final thesis.

22. If the final thesis being defended has used data that are not to be made public (not to be published), the final thesis may be defended in a closed part of the Commission meeting upon an order of the head of the Unit, in agreement with the chairperson of the Commission. A reasoned request for permission to defend the thesis in a closed meeting of the Commission, addressed to the head of the Unit, may be submitted by the final thesis supervisor, the chairperson of the study programme committee, or the institution at which the studying person's final thesis was prepared, at least 10 working days before the defence of the final thesis in front of the Commission. If the request has been submitted by the institution where the studying person's final thesis was prepared, the composition of the defence Commission that will assess the thesis and the nomination of the final thesis reviewer may be coordinated with this institution at its request. In this case, no less than half of the members of the Commission shall be members of the academic staff of the University. In addition to the members of the Commission and the studying person, the final thesis supervisor and reviewer may be present during the closed part of the meeting of the Commission where the final thesis is defended. Persons attending the closed part of the meeting of the Commission shall sign a confidentiality pledge in a form approved by the Rector of the University or their authorised Pro-Rector.

23. During the meeting of the Commission, the studying person defending their final thesis shall briefly present their final thesis, indicating the problem, aim, and objectives of the research, concisely describing the subject of the thesis (research), the results obtained, the methods applied, presenting the conclusions and justifying them, and may propose recommendations. After the studying person has presented their final thesis, in the order set out in the Methodological Instructions:

23.1. the studying person must answer questions from the members of the Commission and other persons present at the meeting of the Commission. During the defence, the Commission may not question the topic of the final thesis approved in accordance with Item 8 of the Regulations;

23.2. the reviewer shall give their opinion on the final thesis (if the reviewer is unable to attend the meeting of the Commission at which the studying person's final thesis is being defended, the reviewer's written review is to be read out loud). The studying person must be given the opportunity to respond to the reviewer's comments and answer the questions raised by the reviewer.

24. The final thesis must be assessed by the Commission in accordance with the criteria for the assessment of final theses approved in the Methodological Guidelines.

25. The Commission shall make a collegial decision regarding the assessment of the final thesis, with at least half of the members of the Commission taking part in the decision on the assessment of the final thesis. If the supervisor or consultant of the final thesis being assessed is a member of the

Commission, they must withdraw themselves from the Commission's assessment process and decision on the final thesis being assessed. The Commission shall take its decision on the assessment of the final thesis by a simple majority of the Commission members present at the meeting. In the event that the votes of the Commission members are equally divided when voting on the assessment of the final thesis, the chairperson of the Commission shall have the casting vote. In cases where the chairperson of the Commission cannot vote because they have withdrawn themselves from the voting process and the votes of the members of the Commission on the assessment of the final thesis are equally divided, the assessment shall be determined by the vote of the deputy chairperson of the Commission elected by the members of the Commission at the meeting. In the absence chairperson of the Commission or when they have withdrawn themselves, the deputy chairperson of the Commission elected by a majority of the members of the Commission present at the first meeting of the Commission shall act as chairperson of the Commission.

26. Following the assessment of the final thesis, an electronic record of assessment must be filled in in accordance with the requirements set out in the Description no later than in one working day after the defence of the final thesis in front of the Commission. The electronic record of assessment must indicate the grade given to the final thesis, the access status of the final thesis in the eLABa repository and the applicable Embargo period (if imposed by the Commission). Minutes of the meeting of the Commission must automatically be generated along with the electronic record of assessment in the VUSIS, on the basis of which the studying person shall subsequently be awarded a qualification degree and/or a qualification. The electronic record of assessment and the minutes of the meeting of the Commission shall be signed by the chairperson and secretary of the Commission; the latter shall be appointed by the same order by which the Commission was set up.

27. The Commission's decision on the assessment of the final thesis is not subject to appeal.

28. In the event of procedural violations in the defence of the final thesis which may have had a significant impact on the final assessment of the studying person's final thesis, the studying person shall have the right to appeal to the Dispute Resolution Commission of the Unit by submitting an appeal in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Regulations of the Dispute Resolution Commission of the Core Academic Unit of Vilnius University no later than in three working days after the defence.

29. A studying person who does not defend their final thesis within the prescribed time or fails to successfully defend it shall be expelled from the University for failing to defend (not defending) the final thesis.

30. The repeated defence of the final thesis shall be allowed after the resumption of studies, no earlier than in the next study semester, or, if the Unit does not provide for defence of the final theses in the next study semester, in the following academic year.

CHAPTER V PUBLISHING AND PUBLICISING THE DEFENDED FINAL THESES

31. All the defended final theses must be published in the eLABa repository unless the Commission decides not to publish the final thesis in the eLABa repository. The Commission, taking into account the studying person's request, shall decide on whether not to publish the thesis in the eLABa repository. A decision not to publish the final thesis in the eLABa repository may be taken if:

31.1. confidential information, as defined following the procedure laid down in the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania, is used in the final thesis;

31.2. the uploading and/or publication of the final thesis would infringe the rights of the author, the eLABa manager, or other copyright holders;

31.3. uploading and/or publishing the final thesis would violate the rights of personal data subjects to the inviolability of private life;

31.4. the studying person requests to establish an Embargo period in the Warranty of Vilnius University Student Thesis.

32. The final thesis information uploaded to the eLABa repository may be corrected in the cases and in accordance with the procedure set out in the Description of the Procedure for Uploading

Documents of Vilnius University to the Information System of the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library approved by Order of the Rector of Vilnius University No. R-435 of 15 December 2021 “On the Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Uploading Documents of Vilnius University to the Information System of the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library”.
