

The Description of the Final Thesis Preparation and Defence Procedure at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University

Chapter 1. General Provisions

1. The description of the final thesis preparation and defence procedure (hereinafter – procedure description) regulates the procedures for the final stages of preparing, submitting and assessing the thesis, including the defence, of first and second cycle degrees and integrated studies at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (hereinafter – VGTU).

2. The concepts used in the procedure description:

2.1. **The final thesis** (hereinafter – FT) is student's independent work on the research, applied or creative project performed at the end of the study programme and demonstrating the abilities consistent in the objectives of the programme.

2.2. **The final thesis reviewer** is a researcher and/or an acknowledged artist in a certain field of science and/or a lecturer and/or a social partner who provides a scientific opinion on the FT and assesses and scores the student's FT.

2.3. **The final thesis tutor** is a researcher and/or an acknowledged artist and/or a lecturer working at VGTU, tutoring the preparation of the FT and assisting the student in the preparation in the FT and other methodological and subject-related issues of the FT.

2.4. **The final thesis advisor** is an expert nominated by the FT tutor for providing the student with some specific advice in terms of the FT topic.

2.5. **The Degree Awarding Commission** (hereinafter – DAC) is a commission formed by VGTU to look after the defence and assessment of the Bachelor's (BA) and Master's (MA) theses and to award an appropriate degree.

2.6. **A social partner** is a representative of a company or an organization that represents the labour market interests and problems in all aspects and is interested in giving advice, providing useful information and collaborating with VGTU in the fields of science and studies.

2.7. **Conflict of interest** involves a situation when a person, in the performance of personal duties and responsibilities, is obliged to take a certain action, but the action (activity) taken is related to both personal duties and responsibilities duties and private interest.

Chapter 2. Preparing the Final Thesis

Article 1. Deciding on the Topic

3. In the course of the first month of the ongoing term for the scheduled *Final Thesis I* (on the condition that training takes place at the beginning of the ongoing term, following the first month of training):

3.1. the teaching staff of the Department tutoring the FT formulates and agrees on the topics of the FT with the Head of the Department and announces the topics to the students who:

3.2. decide on the topics of the FT;

3.2.1. proposing the topic on individual basis; in this case, the proposed topic shall be discussed with the potential tutor and, with his/her consent, the Head of the Department or the authorized person shall be informed;

3.2.2. selecting from the topics proposed by the Department or social partners; in this case, the thesis tutor is selected;

3.2.3. agreeing with the thesis tutor on the topic, goal, problems and assignments of the FT, provide a preliminary structure of the thesis and discuss the list of references.

3.3. Provided that students failed to decide on the FT topic and the tutor until the fixed date, the Head of the Department considers tutor workloads and appoints the topic and the tutor within two weeks of the fixed date; the student is informed about the FT topic and the tutor by an e-mail;

3.4. If required, the FT topic may be adjusted following the assessment of the *Final Thesis I* in the course of the ongoing term but no later than one month before FT defence.

Article 2. Topics Proposed by Social Partners

4. On the condition that the student has decided on the topic of the thesis proposed by social partners, for agreeing on the specified topic, social partners shall identify support the company or organization provides for the performance of the FT:

4.1. access for the student to company's data required for research;

4.2. access for the student to technology or equipment required for writing the FT;

4.3. assigns the student a job in a company;

4.4. provides material support required for conducting research, performing an experiment or producing a prototype;

4.5. appoints an advisor-expert in the field from a company or an organization to work on the topic related to the student's FT and designates him/her as the thesis advisor.

5. The tutor, the representative of the social partner and the student shall conclude a free agreement attached to the FT. The agreement shall specify the form and conditions of assisting the social partner in writing the FT as well as

5.1. discussing confidential conditions for data or technologies used in the research paper;

5.2. discussing conditions for using the name and logo of a company or an organization and for protecting the publicity of FT results;

5.3. assessing the need for a company to acquire or otherwise commercialize the products developed within the FT preparation process, research results, etc., and, in the case of the need, to agree on conditions for such actions.

Article 3. Appointing the Tutor and Approving the Selected Topics

6. The preparation of the FT is supervised by the tutor appointed by the Head of the Department. For appointing the FT tutor, the student's preference may be considered. The FT tutor shall meet the following requirements:

6.1. for preparing the bachelor's FT, the tutor shall have at least a master's degree and one year of pedagogical work experience in a higher education institution as well as conducting research in the same field of science;

6.2. for preparing the master's FT, the tutor shall have at least a doctor's degree and one year of pedagogical work experience in a higher education institution as well as conducting research in the same field of science. For preparing the master's FT in the field of art studies, the tutor may be an acknowledged artist working at VGTU, having higher education and at least one year of pedagogical work experience in a higher education institution.

7. In the same academic year, a lecturer may start tutoring a maximum of 10 students preparing the bachelor's FT and a maximum of 5 students writing the master's FT.

8. The lists of FT topics and tutors are approved by the Dean's decree at the end of the term that includes the planned *Final Thesis I* (prior to the session).

9. The administrator of the Department uploads the names of students and tutors and FT topics to the FT database of the study subsystem of the University Information System (hereinafter - UIS).

Article 4. Preparation of the Final Thesis

10. The final theses are prepared in the course of the terms planned in the structure of the study programme.

11. The FT shall be straightforwardly related to the direction of the student's study programme.

12. The preparation, defence and assessment of the FT are arranged by the Head of the Department or the authorized person appointed by the Head of the Department supervising the study programme or specialization.

13. With the permission of the Head of the Department, the FT may be prepared by 2-3 or even more students (The Final Thesis is called the Final Project). In this case, the subtopics of each planned student's thesis are clearly identified, and individual goals and objectives of the thesis are formed. Each student reports on the subtopic individually. The completed thesis is submitted as a single research paper highlighting the contribution of each student. Similar requirements apply to preparing both the subtopic and the final thesis.

14. The FT may be tutored only by a lecturer, researcher or artist working at the University. At the proposal of the FT tutor, the student may have the FT advisor working outside the University. The FT advisor is presented in the introduction or other part of the FT.

15. The student or a group of students prepares the FT independently and receives advice from the FT tutor and or the advisor if required.

16. The student and the FT tutor shall agree on the frequency and forms of tutorials that cover monitoring the progress of preparing the FT, solving the encountered problems, making comments and proposals and discussing the presentation of the completed FD. When preparing the FT, the student considers advice and comments of both the tutor and the advisor.

17. The FT tutor assists the student in developing the FT preparation plan and provides the student with feedback on FT places to be corrected.

Chapter 3. Requirements for the Final Thesis

18. The completed FT shall meet the following requirements:

18.1. The FT shall be written in Lithuanian language in line to the current record-keeping rules. With the permission of the Head of the Department and the Dean of the Faculty, the thesis may be prepared in a foreign language, which shall be specified approving the FT topic by the Dean's decree. The students of study programmes in English prepare the FT in the English language.

18.2. The FT shall be prepared conforming to the recommended structure provided in the Supplement to this description.

18.3. Specified requirements for FT preparation, execution and presentation are set by the faculties the subdivisions (departments) of which prepare methodological guidelines.

18.4. The topic covered by the FT shall be relevant and new. Relevance means that there is a specific need for investigating a certain selected problem that shall be considered in consonance to the actual issues of the modern world.

18.5. The goal and objectives of the FT shall be formulated clearly and correspond to the selected problem.

18.6. The content of the FT shall correspond to the selected problem, respond to the goal and objectives set in the introduction and examine the formulated scientific problem.

18.7. The FT shall formulate conclusions and proposals (recommendations) proving that the established goals and objectives have been achieved.

18.8. The FT shall meet the volume recommended by the Department and other requirements.

18.9. The FT shall be prepared honestly and independently, in line to the Law on Copyright and Related Rights of the Republic of Lithuania, the VGTU Code of Academic Ethics, this description and other legislation.

Chapter 4. Defending the Final Thesis

Article 1. Procedures Required for Authorization to Defend the FT in the Assessment and Defence Commission for the Final Thesis and in the Degree Awarding Commission

19. On the condition that the FT is continuous and consists of several components, the first parts are assessed giving a credit or grade in the commissions formed by the Department. The assessment is entered in the roll by the Head of the Department or the authorized person appointed by the Head of the Department.

20. In the last term of studies, only one continuous part of the FT is accepted, and the interim credit earned in the commission formed by the Department is a permission for defending the thesis in the DAC (the roll is entered records 'passed' or 'failed'). The final credit is earned defending the FT in the DAC.

21. Prior to the approval of the FT in the commission formed by the Department on granting a permission for defending the thesis, the FT tutor shall be familiar to the FT and submit individual comments and proposals to the student.

22. The permission for defending the thesis is approved by the commission formed by the Department in the last term of preparing the FT but no later than 10 working days before the defence of the FT in the DAC. Information about the decision on whether the FT meets requirements and whether the FT may be defended in the DAC is recorded in the report of the meeting of the Department commission.

23. Provided that the commission of the Department decides on minor corrections to the FT, the student shall correct the thesis within 5 days and submit the corrections made to the FT tutor responsible for reviewing corrections:

23.1. on the condition that corrections are appropriate, the FT tutor informs the Head of the Department, and the FT is defended in the DAC;

23.2. on the condition that corrections are not made or are inappropriate, the FT tutor informs the Head of the Department, and the student shall repeat the course.

24. Provided that the commission of the Department decides on major corrections to the FT, or the FT is not fully prepared and is not allowed to be defended in the DAC, the student shall repeat the course.

25. On the condition that the student leaves for a foreign higher education institution under the student exchange programme in the course of the first stage of preparing the FT, the student signs a mobility contract for 27 credits and shall report on the first stage of preparing the FT at the home higher education institution before the start of the following FT preparation stage.

26. At least one month before defending the FT, the Head of the Department or the authorized person appointed by the Head of the Department uploads the schedule of FT defence to the FT database of the study subsystem of the UIS and submits the schedules of FT defence and/or final exams to the Dean's Office.

Article 2. Reviewing and Submitting the Updated Version of the Final Thesis to the Department

27. The student shall submit the final printed version of the FT to the Department 5 working days before defending the FT in the DAC. The Department specifies the required number of the printed copies of the final theses and announces information on the website of the Department at the beginning of the academic year.

28. The student shall upload the FT submitted to the Department to the manovGTU information system.

29. 3 days before public defence in the DAC, the FT tutor shall:

29.1. provide the Department with a certificate of the FT containing the tutor's feedback to the FT;

29.2. approve the FT uploaded by the student to the manovGTU information system.

30. The Head of the DAC Department appoints reviewers no later than 5 working days before public defence. The FT reviewer shall be awarded at least a master's degree and have at least one year of pedagogical work experience in a higher education institution and/or conduct research in the same field of science. A social partner having higher education and at least five years of practical work experience may also be a reviewer of the bachelor's FT.

31. The reviewer examines the FT, forms an opinion on the FT, makes a conclusion of thesis compliance with requirements for the FT and proves FT suitability for public defence.

32. The reviewer shall submit feedback on the FT to the Department at least 1 working day before defence in the DAC.

33. The student may become familiar with tutor and reviewer feedback at the Department.

Article 3. Establishing a Degree Awarding Commission

34. The appointed bachelor's degree awarding commission consists of 5 competent specialists – scientists and/or recognized artists and practitioners-professionals. At least three members of the

commission shall have academic degrees or pedagogical titles. At least one commission member representing the other field of study (science) shall be included in the commission. The Chairman of the commission shall be a practitioner-professional working outside VGTU.

35. The appointed master's degree awarding commission consists of 5-7 competent specialists in the field(s) of study – scientists / artists, practitioners-professionals and representatives of social partners. One member of the commission may represent the other institution of science or study. The Chairman and at least two other members of the commission shall have academic degrees and/or pedagogical titles. The commission shall include the FT tutor of the master's degree student and one of the reviewers of the master's thesis.

36. The structure of the DAC is approved by the Rector's order. The structure of the DAC includes the administrators of the Departments of a certain Faculty and is sent to the Directorate of Studies no later than 5 weeks before the beginning of defending the FT. The Directorate of Studies checks, prepares and coordinates the Rector's order on appointing the DAC in the required Faculty.

37. All chairmen or members (including those not working at VGTU) of the DAC shall be officially employed and paid for their work done.

38. No later than one month before the beginning of defending the FT, the Departments shall submit to the Academic Affairs Office the summaries of the planned hourly work of the DAC chairmen and/or members and documents required for concluding the employment contract. The Academic Affairs Office forwards the agreed documents to the Department of Personnel.

39. The Head of the Department instructs the newly hired chairmen and members of the DAC to follow requirements at work in line to the procedures established by VGTU.

40. The Head of the Department introduces the procedures for assessing VGTU student achievements, earning credits and submitting appeals for the DAC chairmen and members.

Article 4. Defending the Final Thesis in the Meeting of the Degree Awarding Commission

41. The FT is defended in the public DAC meeting.

42. In the exceptional case of the students with reduced mobility, FT defence may be organized remotely.

43. A maximum of ten first-cycle degree students and a maximum of seven second-cycle degree students may defend the FT at the same DAC meeting.

44. The Chairman and members of the DAC shall avoid conflicts of interest. Provided that the DAC member is likely to have a conflict of interest, s/he shall notify the Chairman of the DAC; provided that the Chairman of the DAC is likely to have a conflict of interest, s/he shall notify the Head of the Department. In both cases, the Chairman or member of the commission shall abstain from voting on the assessment of the final thesis.

45. The DAC meeting is accepted to be valid when at least the two thirds of the DAC members are present. The Chairman of the DAC shall attend the DAC meeting. In addition to the members of the commission and the student, the tutor, the reviewer, the Head of the Department and the Vice-Rector for studies may be present in the DAC meeting.

46. The final thesis may also be defended in the pre-announced non-public DAC meeting provided that the FT tutor, the Head of the Department, a social partner or the student put forward persuasive arguments. The DAC meeting is announced private by the DAC Chairman.

47. Following the presentation of the FT, the student is introduced review(s) and asked questions by the reviewer. The student first responds to the questions of the reviewer, and later – to the questions of the members of the commission. The questions shall be related to the FT. The assessment(s) of the reviewer(s) shall not be made public.

48. On the condition that the student granted the right to defend the thesis, for convincing reasons such as illness, injury, death in the family, etc. is not able to attend the DAC meeting, s/he informs the Head of the Department and the Dean of the Faculty who make a decision on the possibility of defending the thesis at the following DAC meeting.

49. The prepared FT shall be defended only once.

Article 5. Failure in the Final Thesis

50. On the condition that the student has failed to defend the FT, a new thesis on a new topic is prepared. The new FT shall be defended no earlier than following half a year.

51. For the students who failed to prepare or defend the FT for convincing reasons until January 23 and for those completing the study programmes in January, the defence of the FT may be postponed by the Dean's decree until June 23. For the students who failed to prepare or defend the FT for convincing reasons until June 23 and for those completing the study programmes in June, the defence of the FT may be postponed by the Dean's decree until August 29.

52. The students who have completed a theoretical course but failed to defend the FT by the deadline specified in the study schedule shall be removed from the student lists or may be included in the list to prepare and defend the FT in the next academic year paying the tuition fee charged by VGTU. On that condition, the students seeking a permission for re-preparing and/or defending the deferred FT shall submit a request to the Dean who, in line to the payment procedure established by VGTU, determines the size of the tuition fee for the re-preparation and defence of the FT. Subject to the volume of the previously done FT, the Dean may reduce the fee for FT re-preparation. The student pays the set tuition fee within 1 month from the beginning of the term.

Chapter 5. Assessing the Final Thesis

53. Each member of the commission assesses the FT on individual basis considering the reviewer's conclusion of the FT and feedback provided by the FT tutor. The final assessment of the FT is equal to the arithmetic mean of assessments performed by all members of the commission.

54. Upon the assessment of the FT, the DAC may increase the final positive assessment by one point provided that the student has prepared a scientific report and presented it at a scientific conference or seminar. Participation in a conference or seminar is evidenced by a publication, a protocol on the conference (seminar) material and a copy of the publication or report provided in the Supplements to the FT (or attached to the FT). The students of art study programmes, instead of preparing a scientific report, may be involved in creative contests and exhibitions the confirming documents and copies of works done of which are provided in the Supplements to the FT.

55. The course of the DAC meeting is recorded. The chairman and members of the DAC provide individual assessments in the protocol of FT defence. The protocol is signed by all DAC members on the list of the meeting.

56. Sound recording equipment may be used in the course of FT defence. The recordings produced may be applied for investigating appeals. The chairman shall inform the DAC about the use of sound recording equipment at the beginning of the meeting. Audio recordings are stored on VGTU network disk for 45 days following the DAC meeting.

57. Audio recording is included in the protocol, and the detailed course of the meeting is not recorded. Only the part of the protocol containing decision making is completed. Valid arguments shall be included in the protocol on the condition that:

- 57.1. defence involves problematic situations;
- 57.2. the student fails to respond;
- 57.3. health disorders have an adverse effect on presenting the thesis;
- 57.4. student's FT is given a negative assessment.

58. Student assessments are performed in the closed part of the DAC meeting in the presence of the Chairman and members of the commission. The Head of the Department and the Vice-Rector for studies may be involved in the discussion about thesis assessment. When the closed part of the DAC meeting is over, the Chairman declares a public meeting again, presents all parties of the meeting with summarized information about the final theses and the course of defence and announces whether all students are / not awarded a bachelor's or master's degree. Family names are not identified. On the condition that there are students who have received negative assessments, the students are informed personally by inviting them individually to the closed part of the DAC meeting.

59. The decision made by the DAC commission on assessment is final and not subject to appeal.

60. Appeals for the violations of procedures shall be approved pursuant to the *Description of Procedures for the Submission and Examination of VGTU Student Appeals for Knowledge Assessment*.

61. The student's final thesis is given a negative assessment on the condition that the DAC meeting:

- 61.1. detects plagiarism;
- 61.2. identifies that the final thesis contains serious errors.

62. Provided that the student has failed to attend the DAC meeting without a sound reason, a 'P' is entered in the roll and the student is considered to have an academic debt.

63. The results of defending the FT shall be uploaded to the learning progress database of the UIS no later than within one working day following FT defence.

64. The students who have defended the FT in a foreign higher education institution are given a credit as reported by the *Description of Procedures for Recognition of Achieved Learning Outcomes at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University* approved by the Senate of VGTU.

Chapter 6. Concluding Remarks

65. The defended FT is stored pursuant to the *Description of Procedures for Storing the VGTU Students works*.

66. All other issues not provided in this procedure description shall be decided by the Vice-Rector for Studies of VGTU.

The Recommended Structure of the Final Thesis

1. The first title page
 2. The second title page, including the signature(s) of the tutor and/or advisor
 3. The assignment of the final thesis, including the tutor's signature (shall be filled in by computer in both the paper and electronic FT version)
 4. Annotation in Lithuanian (to be attached to the paper version of the thesis printed from manoVGTU information system; the electronic version shall contain the uploaded annotation of the specified form)
 5. Annotation in English (to be attached to the paper version of the thesis printed from manoVGTU information system; the electronic version shall contain the uploaded annotation of the specified form)
 6. Contents
 7. Abbreviations
 8. Introduction presenting the problem and describing all main parameters of the conducted research: object, goal, tasks, hypotheses (bachelor's FT)
 9. Descriptive part
 10. Conclusions and proposals
 11. List of references and other information sources
 12. Supplements (drawings, sketches, diagrams, etc.)
 13. Bachelor's FT includes
 - 13.1. certificate of the final thesis and tutor's feedback;
 - 13.2. review(s).
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