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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCEDURE FOR PREPARATION, DEFENCE, ASSESSMENT AND STORAGE OF WRITTEN ACADEMIC PAPERS AT VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

CHAPTER I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The Description of the Procedure for the Preparation, Defence, Assessment and Storage of Written Academic Papers at Vilnius University Business School (hereinafter - VU BS) (hereinafter - the Description) establishes the procedures for the preparation, defence, assessment and storage of term papers, final bachelor's and master's theses, which apply to all students of VU BS study programmes.
2. The Description has been prepared in accordance with the Regulations for the Preparation, Defence and Storage of Written Academic Papers of Vilnius University Students, the Description of the Procedure for the Administration of Academic Papers of Vilnius University in the Vilnius University Study Information System, and the Vilnius University Study Regulations. The terms used in the Description shall be understood as defined in the legal acts listed in this paragraph.

CHAPTER II SELECTION AND APPROVAL OF THE TOPIC FOR AN ACADEMIC PAPER

3. Selection and approval of the topics for the term papers:
 - 3.1. The term paper is written in the study semester provided for in the plan of the study programme. The topics/themes of the term papers are offered by the lecturers or researchers of the respective study programmes. Students can also offer the preferred topics for their term papers. The student (s) must coordinate the topic they propose with the potential supervisor (hereinafter – the supervisor).
 - 3.2. The lists of topics/themes for term papers and their supervisors, after being approved by the study program committee, are approved by the Director of VU BS.
 - 3.3. The approved list of topics/themes for term papers and their supervisors shall be uploaded to the Vilnius University Study Information System (hereinafter - VUSIS) no later than by the beginning of the semester for which the term paper is planned.
 - 3.4. No later than during the first two weeks of the semester in which the term paper is written, students must choose the topic of the term paper in VUSIS.
 - 3.5. The titles of the topics and the names of the supervisors of the term papers chosen by the students are recorded in VUSIS and approved by the order of the Director of VU BS.
4. Selection and approval of the topics of the Final Theses:
 - 4.1. The topics for the final Bachelor's and Master's theses (hereinafter - the Final Thesis) are offered by the lecturers or researchers of VU BS. Students can also offer the topics they prefer for their Final Thesis. The student (s) must coordinate their proposed topic with the potential supervisor of the Final Thesis. The lists of topics/themes for the Final Thesis and their supervisors are approved by the Director of VU BS, after the approval of the relevant study programme's committee had been received.
 - 4.2. Bachelor students may, with the consent of the supervisor, continue the term paper as a bachelor thesis if it constitutes one continuous study.

- 4.3. The topics of the Final Theses and the names of the supervisors assigned to them are placed in VUSIS no later than at the beginning of the semester in which the Final Thesis or part of it is written, when the Final Thesis or part of it is written in the autumn semester, the topics for the Final Theses and the names of the supervisors assigned to them shall be placed in VUSIS no later than 15 May of the current year.
- 4.4. The student (s) must choose the topic of the Final Thesis no later than during the first two weeks of the new semester, or when the Final Thesis or part of it is written in the autumn semester, the deadline is May 31.
- 4.5. The list of the Final Thesis topics selected by the students (including the students writing the Final Thesis and the Supervisors of the Thesis) is approved by the order of the Director of VU BS.
5. The students of the Master of Business Administration (hereinafter - MBA) programme can be offered a challenge to carry out an experiential project, which is the counterpart of the final work, by private and/or public sector organizations and the students studying in the programme.
- 5.1. The suitability of the proposed challenges for the implementation of the programme's objectives is assessed by the study programme's committee. With the approval of the study programme's committee, the challenges are presented to the students of the programme no later than during the first month of studies. One challenge is solved by a group of 3-4 students. No later than two weeks after the presentation of the challenges, groups of students must choose one of the challenges offered. The Director of VU BS approves the challenges chosen by the students to be solved.
- 5.2. Students solve the chosen challenge within the period provided in the study programme, it is not possible to change the challenge.
6. No later than 20 working days before the submission of the final version of the Final Thesis to the supervisor, the student (s) may submit a request for clarification of the topic of the Final Thesis.

CHAPTER III

PREPARATION OF WRITTEN ACADEMIC PAPERS

7. All the written academic papers required by VU BS are prepared in accordance with this Description, the VU BS Methodological Guidelines for Writing Master's Thesis, the VU BS Methodological Guidelines for Writing Bachelor's Thesis and Business case research work, as well as the VU BS Methodological Guidelines for Writing Term Papers (hereinafter – Methodological Guidelines). These documents are published on the VU BS website www.vm.vu.lt.
8. Term papers are written and defended by a group of 2-3 students, Bachelor's theses are written and defended by a group of two bachelor students. The introduction of the academic written paper identifies the contribution of each author. Upon a reasoned request from students, one student or a group of three students may be allowed to write a bachelor's thesis. Master's theses are written and defended by individual students. The experiential project is prepared by a group of 3-4 students.
9. The thesis is written in the standard Lithuanian language, except in cases when the study programme is conducted in English or the student (s) is supervised or advised by a foreign lecturer. At the request of the student (s) and with the approval of the supervisor, the academic paper may be written in English, regardless of the language in which the study programme is conducted.
10. The supervisor consults the student (s) at regular meetings held with the student (s). Consultations can also take place remotely by using remote communication tools.
11. The student (s) shall report for individual stages of preparation of an academic paper in accordance with the procedure established by the supervisor. Taking into account the requirements provided in the study programme, separate parts of the Master's theses are reported to the supervisor or defended in the Research Thesis Commission (hereinafter - RTC) approved by the order of the Director of VU BS.

CHAPTER IV

SUBMISSION OF THE ACADEMIC PAPER FOR ASSESSMENT AND DEFENCE

12. The term paper must be submitted for assessment no later than 15 days before the end of the semester in which the term paper is written. Students must submit a properly prepared academic paper written in the correct language to VUSIS. Confidential papers or close defences may not be uploaded to VUSIS. If the student (s) fails to submit the term paper on time, the supervisor has the right to refuse to evaluate the

paper. In this case, the student is not allowed to defend the term paper, and the supervisor enters the entry "Not allowed to defend" in VUSIS. The term paper that the student fails to defend, can be re-defended by the student (s) during the first two weeks of the new semester.

13. Submission of the Final Theses for their assessment and defence:

13.1. No later than 20 calendar days before the beginning of the Final Thesis defence period, the student or students submit to VUSIS:

13.1.1. The Final Thesis together with the student's approved guarantee (hereinafter - the Guarantee).

14. The Final Theses can be defended only by those students who have completed the entire study programme.

15. The Final Thesis may be defended only if the supervisor decides that the Final Thesis has been properly prepared and meets the requirements specified in the Methodological Guidelines. Before making a decision, the supervisor must read the Computer Verification Report for the Final Thesis and all information about the Thesis Computer Verification of the Independence of the Final Thesis. The decision of the Thesis supervisor to allow the defence of the Final Thesis is approved in VUSIS.

16. The supervisor of the Final Thesis, having made a decision not to allow the defence of the Final Thesis, shall notify the head of the Study Service of the reasons for such decision within two days. The student is informed about such a decision of the supervisor by the e-mail address provided by the University.

17. If the supervisor of the Final Thesis has made a decision not to allow the Final Thesis to be defended, the student has the right to apply to the Thesis Defence Commission (hereinafter - the Commission) within two working days by submitting a motivated request for the permission to defend the Final Thesis without the supervisor's consent.

18. The Commission, after considering the student's application (the meeting of the Committee may also be organized electronically), decides whether to allow the defence of the Final Thesis. The decision of the Commission shall be recorded in the minutes. The minutes shall be signed by the President and the Secretary of the Commission.

19. The final version of the Thesis must be submitted by the student (s) to the supervisor no later than 30 calendar days before the beginning of the defence/reporting period. If the student (s) fails to submit the Final Thesis within the set time, the supervisor has the right to refuse to assess the Final Thesis.

20. Not later than within 3 working days from the day of receipt of the final version of the Thesis, the supervisor has:

20.1. to check the Final Thesis using the electronic coincidence recognition system (hereinafter - ECRS);

20.2. to approve the permission to defend the Final Thesis on VUSIS.

20.3. to evaluate the Final Thesis by filling in the feedback of the supervisor of the form approved by the Director of VU BS. If the Final Thesis is written in English, the supervisor's feedback must also be submitted in English. The supervisor must provide feedback to the academic advisor. The student (s) is/are familiarized with the supervisor's feedback during the defence of the Final Thesis.

21. No later than 20 days before the scheduled start of the Final Thesis defence period, the student (s) must submit to the academic advisor an electronic copy of the Final Thesis in the PDF format. It shall contain only the registration number (s) of the student (s) (the names of the supervisor and the author (s) of the Final Thesis are not given).

22. At least 15 days before the start of the Final Thesis defence, the Director of VU BS appoints the reviewers of the Final Thesis. No later than 5 working days before the defence of the Final Thesis, the academic advisor sends by e-mail to the reviewer appointed by the Director of VU BS the review form approved by the Director of VU BS and the electronic copy of the Final Thesis, indicating the student's registration number of the author (s) of the Final Thesis, but the names of the author (s) and supervisor of the Final Thesis are not indicated.

23. The reviewer submits the review of the Final Thesis or sends a scanned copy by e-mail to the academic advisor no later than 2 working days before the start of the defence period. If the Final Thesis is written in English, the review must also be submitted in English. A copy of the review is sent to the student by e-mail provided by the University no later than 24 (twenty four) hours before the beginning of the meeting of the Final Thesis Defence Commission, where the Final Thesis is to be defended.

24. The Director of VU BS, by order, appoints the reviewers of the Final Theses. The academic advisor sends an electronic copy of the Final Thesis to the opponent no later than 8 calendar days before the day of the defence.

25. If the content of the Final Thesis is non-public due to commercial secrets, no later than 10 calendar days before the defence, the student (s) must submit a motivated and documented request to the Director of VU BS to defend the Final Thesis in a closed meeting of the Commission. Such a request must be accompanied by the approval of the head of the company whose trade secrets have been used in the Final Thesis.

26. The defence of the Final Theses can also be performed remotely.

CHAPTER V

DEFENCE AND ASSESSMENT OF TERM PAPERS, FINAL MASTER AND BACHELOR THESES

27. The assessment of an academic paper is based on the Description of the relevant subject of the study programme and the criteria established in the Methodological Guidelines.

28. The term paper is assessed by the Commission in accordance with the criteria specified in the Methodological Guidelines and the subject description. If the term paper was written by several authors, all the authors must be well familiar with the term paper, during the defence each of them must know the content of the term paper, be able to answer the questions asked from any part of the term paper.

29. The participation of the student (s) who wrote the term paper is necessary, unless a group member who has written the term paper together is unable to defend it due to illness or other reasons. A term paper can also be defended remotely.

30. In cases when the study programme provides that the Final Master's Thesis is written and accounted for in stages, its separate parts, depending on the subject description, are defended in the Master's Research defence commission formed by the Director of VU BS or in the presence of the supervisor only.

31. Separate parts of an experiential project shall be assessed by the coordinating lecturer in accordance with the criteria specified in the subject Description and the Methodological Guidelines. The final experiential project is assessed by a commission formed by the Director of VU BS in accordance with the criteria set out in the subject Description and Methodological Guidelines. When defending an experiential project or part of it, the participation of all students who prepared it (participation can also be by means of remote communication) is necessary, unless a member of the group is unable to participate due to illness or other reasons. In this case, the student can defend the same experiential project a year later when the defence of another flow of experiential projects is organized. A student who has not participated in the defence without providing a valid reason, repeats the course and prepares a new experiential project with another group of students.

32. The beginning of the period of defence of Final Theses is determined by the Director of VU BS.

33. The students are allowed to defend their Final Thesis after they:

33.1 have completed the entire study programme and have no debts or academic debts;

33.2. have fulfilled all financial obligations to the University;

33.3. The Final Thesis has been uploaded to VUSIS;

33.4. The supervisor of the Final Thesis has allowed or the Commission has decided to allow the defence of the Final Thesis.

34. On the proposal of the Director of VU BS, by the order of the Rector, commissions for the defence of Final Theses are formed.

35. The list of students who are allowed to defend their Final Theses shall be approved by the Director of VU BS.

36. If due to non-fulfilment of the conditions provided for in Clause 33 the student is not allowed to defend the Final Thesis, he/she shall be expelled from the University upon the proposal of the Director of VU BS.

37. No later than within 3 working days from the day of approval of the list of students allowed to defend the Final Theses, the Director of VU BS shall appoint the reviewers of the Final Theses. An electronic copy of the Final Thesis and the assessment form are provided to each reviewer no later than 5 working days before the defence of the Final Thesis.

38. The Final Thesis is publicly defended in the Commission, except in cases when the student is allowed to defend the Final Thesis in a closed meeting of the Commission due to the circumstances mentioned in Clause 25. The participation of managers and reviewers in the Commission meeting is optional.
39. A meeting of the Commission shall be valid if at least half of the members of the Commission are present. The President of the Commission shall organize the work of the Commission in such a way that the quorum is present throughout the meeting of the Commission.
40. The academic advisor is responsible for submitting all the documents required for the meeting of the Commission.
41. At the beginning of a Commission meeting, the President of the Commission shall:
- 41.1. announce the exact time of the beginning of the meeting;
- 41.2. inform the participants of the meeting that an audio recording will be made during the defence of the Final Theses;
- 41.3. introduce the members of the Commission present at the meeting;
- 41.4. announce the order of defence of the Final Theses.
42. The course of the defence of the Final Thesis is as follows:
- 42.1. The Chairman of the Commission announces the name (s) of the student (s) defending the Final Thesis, the title of the topic of the Final Thesis, the names of the supervisor, reviewer and opponent;
- 42.2. the student (s) briefly (up to 10 min.) presents the Final Thesis, indicating the problem of the thesis, objectives, applied research methods and their reliability, the results obtained, introduces the conclusions and suggestions. The presentation must be illustrated with visual material (tables, figures, models, diagrams, graphs, formulas, etc.) to reflect the essence, value and key results of the work;
- 42.3. after the presentation of the student (s), the reviewer publishes his / her opinion on the thesis. If the reviewer is not present at the meeting of the Commission, his / her written response shall be read. The opponent shall lead the discussions of the members of the Commission with the student.
- 42.4. The supervisor introduces his/ her opinion on the final work. If the supervisor is not present at the meeting, his/her written response shall be read.
43. The Final Thesis and its defence are evaluated in a closed part of the meeting of the Commission (only the members of the Commission and the Secretary of the Commission are entitled to participate in it), which takes place after the defence of all the Final Theses scheduled for that meeting is over. Each student's contribution to the work and participation in the defence is assessed separately.
44. The members of the Commission shall discuss the procedure for the assessment of the Final Theses at the beginning of the meeting of the Commission. The assessment of the Final Thesis takes into account the review of the Final Thesis, the defence of the Final Thesis itself, the answers of the author (s) of the Final Thesis to the questions of the reviewer, members of the Commission, other persons involved in the public defence of the Final Thesis. The members of the Commission evaluate the Final Thesis with a whole number (from 1 to 10). A member of the Commission who has not taken part in the defence of a particular thesis does not evaluate that thesis.
45. The final assessment of the Final Thesis must be approved by the whole Commission collegially. In the absence of consensus, the decision on the final assessment of the Final Thesis shall be taken by the Commission by a simple majority. If the opinions of the members of the Commission on the assessment of the Final Thesis are evenly distributed, the assessment of the Final Thesis shall be determined by the assessment proposed by the President of the Commission. In cases where the President of the Commission or another Member of the Commission is unable to vote because the Final thesis is being evaluated and the views of the Commissioners on the assessment of the Final Thesis are evenly distributed, the assessment shall be based on the assessment proposed by the Vice-President elected by voting.
46. The President of the Commission and the Secretary of the Commission shall derive the arithmetic average of the Final Thesis' assessment proposed by the members of the Commission. This average is the final assessment of the Final Thesis. If the average of the Final Thesis assessment is less than 5.0, the Final Thesis is evaluated negatively.
47. A student who failed to defend his/her term paper, may defend it repeatedly once, during the first two weeks of the next semester, during the period of free retake of examinations.
48. A student who has not defended the Final Thesis within the set time, or has not defended the Final Thesis shall be expelled from the University due academic debts. The same Final Thesis on the same topic can be repeatedly defended by a student a year later.

49. A Final Thesis on the same topic which has been assessed negatively for the second time cannot be defended again. If a person wants to complete bachelor's/master's degree studies, he or she must write a thesis on a new topic, having previously renewed his/her studies and concluded a study agreement.
50. A student who has been expelled from the University due to the disclosed fact of plagiarism and has resumed his/her studies must write a Final Thesis on a new topic.

CHAPTER VI

RECORDING AND STORAGE OF THE DEFENCE OF ACADEMIC PAPERS

51. The supervisors shall enter the scores of the assessment of term papers in VUSIS no later than within 5 working days after the defence, the Secretary of the Commission shall compile the final assessment scores in VUSIS no later than on the next working day and issue a thesis defence assessment sheet, signed by all members of the Commission and the Secretary of the Commission. On the basis of the sheet, VUSIS forms a Final Thesis defence protocol, in which the student is awarded an appropriate qualification degree. The printed minutes of the defence of the Final Thesis shall be signed by the President of the Commission.
52. The thesis defence assessment sheets, the minutes of the meeting of the Commission and the related material (audio recording of the meeting) shall be kept at the Study Service for a period not exceeding 1 year.
53. The Final Theses in electronic form are transferred from VUSIS and stored in the information system of the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library.

CHAPTER VIII

FINAL PROVISIONS

54. Disputes regarding the application of the Description shall be examined by the Dispute Resolution Commission of VU BS.
55. Appeals regarding the assessment of the Final Thesis are not considered, only procedural violations that may have affected the assessment of the Final Thesis may be appealed. The student has the right to apply to the Dispute Resolution Commission of the Division no later than on the next working day after the defence by submitting an appeal in accordance with the procedure established by the Dispute Resolution Commission of the main academic unit of the University. The appeal must indicate the specific violation of the Thesis Defence Procedure and specify the circumstances confirming the fact of the violation.
56. The description may be changed with a new version in line with the resolution of the Council of VU BS.
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