

Федеральное государственное бюджетное образовательное
учреждение высшего образования
«РОССИЙСКАЯ АКАДЕМИЯ НАРОДНОГО ХОЗЯЙСТВА И
ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ СЛУЖБЫ
ПРИ ПРЕЗИДЕНТЕ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ»

Институт общественных наук



Утверждена Ученым советом
Института общественных наук
Протокол от «10» декабря 2019 г. № 36

ПРОГРАММА ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ ИТОГОВОЙ АТТЕСТАЦИИ

по направлению подготовки

38.04.02 Менеджмент

(код, наименование направления подготовки)

«Международный бизнес. Международная англоязычная магистратура»

(направленность (профиль))

Магистр

(квалификация)

очная

(форма обучения)

Москва, 2019 г.

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РАССМОТРЕНА И РЕКОМЕНДОВАНА для использования в учебном процессе кафедрой
Стратегического предпринимательства и инноваций
Протокол от 18 ноября 2019 г. № 3

Заведующий кафедрой Стратегического предпринимательства
и инноваций, д.э.н., к.и.н.



Д.А. Стапран

Federal State-Funded Educational Institution
«THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL ACADEMY OF NATIONAL ECONOMY AND
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION»

School of Public Policy

PROGRAM OF STATE FINAL EXAMINATION

38.04.02 Management

(code and name of educational program specialization)

«International business. International English-speaking master's degree»

(professional direction)

Master of Science

(vocational qualification)

Full-time

(mode(s) of study)

Moscow, 2019 г.

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THE THESIS FOR MASTER'S PROGRAM

During Year 2 students undertake an individual research project which will be supervised by an appropriate member of staff. The project forms a substantial part of the study leading to the award of a Master's degree and gives students the opportunity to consolidate their learning into something of real value to themselves and their organisations.

The philosophy of Master's project and aims and objectives

The basic idea behind a Master's project revolves around the identification of a business issue that the student wishes to investigate. The issues under investigation should, preferably, relate to the student's own current or potential working environment. Students should, on the basis of existing theories and/or principles, collect and analyse original data or analyse existing data in an original way. Based on the findings of the research the project should provide both a contribution to the specific area of research as well as actionable recommendations as to future plans and/or actions. An implementation plan, discussing how the recommendations are to be implemented (by whom, when, how, problems, costs etc), must be included.

The project will be expected to display clarity of problem definition, a carefully argued case for the methods employed, intellectual rigour, and sensitivity to the organisational context within which any action or recommendations are being made. Hence the project will enable the student to develop intellectual interests and demonstrate an ability for individual research. The project will draw on the intellectual skills acquired from the core subjects and the specialist skills and knowledge developed in the electives. Accordingly, a high standard of achievement will be expected in the project.

Prior to embarking on the project, students are required to prepare a formal project proposal.

Project Choice

There are many factors which will influence a student's choice of project, such as issues and problems arising from the student's employment experience, employer's preferences, student's post Master's program goals etc. However, even with these there will probably be considerable scope.

It may be worth reflecting that students pursue a master's program for a variety of reasons some of which are to broaden their management skills and improve current performance; to be in a position to move into general management with their current company or a different company; to gain confidence in areas other than their own technical specialism etc. Often it is necessary to convince others (such as your own company management) that you have acquired the necessary skills and are in a sense a 'different' person, in order to overcome previous perceptions.

Choosing a project in your current area may reinforce beliefs that you are good at what you do (which is expected!) whereas selecting a project, which is not in your immediate work area,

allows you to promote yourself to a wider audience as a person capable of delivering from a broader position. People will then find it easier to accept the change since they can associate it with you. It may be impossible to move entirely outside a current work area but a judicious project choice will allow the coverage of a broad range of management areas achieving a similar impact.

Confidentiality of projects

Projects that are deemed to be commercially or organisationally sensitive can be treated as confidential and dealt with in a number of ways which will be determined by the student or student's organisation:

1. after assessment, all copies will be returned to the student; OR
2. a copy will be retained at RANEPa (concerned faculty) but with certain data suitably altered or deleted, so that confidentiality is maintained, but the general theme and development of the project is accessible to future students.

A form will be provided by the office, showing the various options. This form should be submitted with the project indicating the level of confidentiality desired. The approval of project topics will be contingent on the availability of suitably qualified supervisors though, given the broad range of expertise within the Faculty there is a wide choice of topics available.

Important Note:

When planning your project timetable, you might find it useful to think in terms of:

First 3--weeks

Next one month

Final period (4-8 weeks):

Literature Search Problem Clarification Identification of Aim and objectives Methodology Selection

Update literature and Methodology Research Data Collection and Analysis

Conclusions, Recommendations, Implementation, Write up (ongoing from Day one)

Introduction to the manual

This manual has been created as a guide to help you in preparing, doing research and writing your thesis. Submission of this document is the final step in a program leading to conferral of a graduate degree.

Your thesis is an original scholarly publication reflecting the results of your own research and academic pursuits at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration. As such, your document makes a statement about you and the quality of your research, your department, and the standards of excellence upheld by the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

What is a master's thesis?

The master's thesis is a carefully argued scholarly paper of no less than 12,000 words (roughly 50 pages). It should present an original argument that is documented from both, primary and secondary sources. The thesis must have a substantial research component and a focus that falls within the curriculum of the master's program. It must be written under the guidance of an advisor. As the final element in the master's degree, the thesis gives the student an opportunity to demonstrate expertise in the chosen research area.

When should I start thinking about the thesis?

You can start it, if only abstractly, as soon as you enroll in the RANEPA Project Management program. At the latest, you should have a clear idea of your topic and have found an advisor by the end of the semester before the one in which you will complete the thesis.

What is a good topic?

A good topic is based on a research question to which the student brings an original and well argued answer. A good topic is most often the topic you are personally interested in. The broad subject of your thesis should preferably be interdisciplinary and it should fall into the wide field defined by history of reforms in contemporary Russia, and/or public policy and administration, and/or change management as sub-discipline of management.

A good thesis explores one or more research questions or tests a hypothesis. It is important that the thesis be conceptualized and structured so that the following aspects are explicit:

The problem and question(s) being pursued
The theoretical base and the literature within which the question(s) has been framed
The process or method of investigation
Findings or observations
Conclusions relevant for academic community and external constituencies

Having successfully completed the first part of the Master's and passed the examinations, many students find the transition to Part 2 of the programme difficult. There are several reasons for this:

□□ The project requires you to stop and think, in depth, about a business problem. This is a change from the action-oriented first half, where one assignment is followed very quickly by another, and from the professional situation that many students are in - where activity and action are the key.

□□ The project also requires you to investigate the intellectual frameworks that you might be able to apply to your business problem. This means reading around a subject area, and identifying and understanding relevant authors to use. This too is a change for many students.

□□ A requirement of the project is primary research, supported by a clear methodological rationale. This may be new to many students.

□□ The schedule of the project is up to the student to develop and manage. Many students miss their first opportunity to submit their project because THEY don't push themselves as hard in the second year as they were pushed in the first!

□□ The project is an individual piece of work. However, you will have an academic supervisor and, wherever possible. Study groups can also be very valuable as support (peer pressure).

□□ Time management between taught subjects and the project is difficult. You are advised to have an organised schedule.

Clearly your personal style will have an impact on how you resolve these difficulties e.g. what you are interested in, how you approach problem solving, how you like to learn. Here are some suggestions, gathered from other students and lecturers who have been involved in the process themselves, which might be of help.

□ Use your study group. Although projects are individual, using your group for motivation and as a sounding board can be invaluable in ensuring completion of the project on time. Also liaise with other students in a similar research area (these will be distributed soon after project methodology).

□□ Use Business Research Methodology to launch yourself into the project. We have redesigned it to be more demanding, in order to get students off to a flying start. The earlier you get started, the more likely you are to finish on time. Past experience suggests that students who arrive ill prepared for project methodology have greater problems with their projects.

□□□□□ Don't pre-judge what methodology you are likely to use and please don't turn up your nose at methodologies just because they are not the way you are used to doing things!

Things that you have not tried before may bring you and your organisation the biggest gains, simply because they are new!

□□ Use your supervisor to help bring some scheduling discipline to your project; set dates for deliverables, and push yourself to meet them.

□□ In between jumping into action, agreeing schedules, and producing project proposals, take the time to think. In particular, try to be open-minded and to think in lateral or unusual ways. This is a worthwhile activity, and may make the difference between a mediocre and a very good performance on all the elements of part 2. Repeat – thinking hard takes TIME.

ANTI PLAGIARISM REPORT

Academic misconduct is defined as any attempt to gain unfair advantage in assessment and examinations. In simple terms, it amounts to any form of cheating. The representation by any student of another person's work as his or her own is plagiarism, and an example of academic misconduct. Similarly, a student who aids and abets a fellow candidate to commit academic misconduct - for example, by allowing his/her work to be plagiarised - is also guilty of academic misconduct. Taking crib sheets into an unseen examination without permission can be another.

Master's programme students are encouraged to study co-operatively. There is a clear distinction between learning this way and cheating by copying another student's work. If you are ever in doubt you are urged to seek the advice of your Course Director.

There are times when work or personal pressure make borrowing someone else's work appear attractive. However, the penalties associated with academic misconduct include failing the MSc. outright, and there is always an alternative and honest way of completing a thesis.

Material submitted for assessment must represent the student's own efforts and must be his/her own work. Brief quotations from the published or unpublished works of another person may be used, but must always be attributed. Extensive or unacknowledged quotations, close paraphrasing or copying from the works of another person, without attribution, constitutes plagiarism, which is an examination offence and shall be dealt with according to University Regulations. Before the final submission the thesis should be taken to the library in the 5th building and churned through the anti plagiarism soft ware. A report of that showing the originality should be provided to the Course Director with hard copies of the thesis.

DEADLINE- PLEASE NOTE:

1. If you do not complete your MSc. project by 10 June 2020, you will not be allowed an extension.
2. The emphasis on the project in the second year does not devalue the second year's subjects. The second year subjects allow you to pursue areas of interest in greater depth than was available in Part 1 and to develop deeper into areas of current interest or to broaden your education by studying areas which are currently outside of your experience. This may be one of your last opportunities to study an academic subject for pure interest.

Project Proposal

During the Business Research Methodology sessions and immediately afterwards, students will prepare, in conjunction with their supervisor, a formal research proposal setting out the objectives, providing a literature review, methodology and timetable of the proposed project. The proposal should consist of the following:

□□ Title (see appendix №1) □□ Introduction/Background to Project - The context in which the project is set, the organisational reasons for the project, the perceived problems and the academic area, with key writers/ideas in the field identified. (About 8 pages) □□ Aims and Objectives □□ Literature Review and any secondary research (About 14 – 18 pages minimum) □□ Methodology (About 4 – 5 pages) □□ Resources Required - A brief estimate of your time, information sources, data processing requirements, travel costs and any other costs/needs. (About 2 – 3 pages) □□ Bibliography □□ Action Plan - A chronological pathway spanning the period of the project, identifying milestones that can serve as useful targets and check-points with your supervisor. □□ Signatures - Normally three signatures - yours, as an act of commitment; your supervisor's - to indicate approval of the proposal; and a key executive with sufficient authority to authorise your work on the project within the host organisation. If the project is not sponsored by a particular organisation then only two signatures are required - your own and that of the RANEPА supervisor.

Passing the project proposal is a prerequisite to passing the project.

Interim Project Proposal submission

We advise you to submit the final draft of your project proposal to your supervisor for comments before your final submission. This is advised as 10th May 2020.

Guidelines for Master's Projects submission

The following represent some general guidelines/criteria which might be helpful in structuring and/or assessing the merits of a Master's project. In listing these criteria the comments made by both internal and external examiners have been taken into account.

□□**Definition of the Issues Under Investigation:** The driving forces (being opportunities, threats, problem areas etc.) behind the research should be defined. The overall aim of the research and the related hypotheses or objectives to be addressed need to be clearly stated in specific observable outcomes as well as the potential value or relevance of the expected outcomes to the student's work environment. Any limiting factors should also be stated.

□□**Company/Market/Industry Overview/Structure:** In order for the research to be placed in an overall business perspective an analysis of the environment within which the study is undertaken must be included. Important forces that shape the environment and their influence on future actions should be included in the analysis.

□□**Relevant Literature/Body of Work:** The research should be based on or draw upon existing theories and recent empirical studies. Therefore, a critical (as compared to a simple presentation) evaluation of the body of work related to the business area under investigation must be provided.

□□**Methodology:** The student must demonstrate clear understanding of the different methodologies and techniques available. Justification and systematic evaluation of the chosen data collection method(s) must also be provided. The analytical techniques to be employed and their interrelationship with the data collection method to be employed must also be made clear.

□□**Analysis of the Collected Data:** The analysis of the data should substantiate or refute the objectives or hypotheses set above. The student should demonstrate competence in the analytical techniques employed and a critique of any limitations of the analysis should be included.

□□**Conclusions, Recommendations and Implementation Plan:** The discussions and findings presented in the above points should be brought together to a coherent plan of realistic future actions. The hypotheses and/or objectives must be addressed. Further research needed to support and/or extend the research would be beneficial to the study. A feasible and costed plan of implementation is essential for the project. This, in a sense, is the final, business driven element of the project.

□□**Layout, Presentation and Support Materials:** The project should be written in a coherent manner and should be structured in a logical and sequential way. Well defined conventions in terms of visual presentation, referencing, indexing, paging etc. should be adhered to. When necessary, support materials in the form of appendices, glossaries etc. must also be present.

No relative weights are provided for the above criteria. This reflects the fact that the above are meant to be indicative rather than prescriptive and individual tutors are free to use their own approaches to such projects. It is furthermore appreciated that not all projects need to follow or adhere to the above criteria and special needs of individual projects should be taken into consideration.

Requirements for Submission

□□ Submission Deadline: 10 June 2020

□□ Two hard copies of thesis should be submitted duly signed with feedback from your supervisor, review sheet (рецензия) from a company or specialist and antiplagiarism report □□ Provide a short Abstract of your thesis □□ Project Defence date: 25 & 27 June 2020 □□ Graduation Day: 18 July 2020 (it may change so it is to be confirmed)

BIBLIOGRAPHY (INDICATIVE):

Core Text(s)

Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2012) *Research Methods for Business Students*. 6th ed. Harlow, FT Prentice Hall.

Recommended Reading

Fisher C. (2010) *Researching and Writing a Dissertation: A Guidebook for Business Students* (3rd edition) Harlow, Prentice Hall.

Easterby-Smith, M; Thorpe, R and Lowe, A (2012) *Management Research: An Introduction*, London: Sage.

Joe F. Hair Jr.; Celsi, M; Money, A; Samouel, P (2015) *The Essentials of Business Research Methods* Paperback

Project Style Guidelines

□ The typical length of the final project report will be 15,000 words. The word count must be included at the front of the report. This is whatever Microsoft Word counts, up to but not including the appendices i.e. from title page up to references (not including references). If you exceed the 15,000 word limit by a large amount - the project will fail. No less than 12000 words are accepted as a project. □ If quoting, please give the page number as well as the book/journal reference. □ The bibliography should be included at the back of the project rather than at the end of each chapter.

□ A footnote reference should be put at the bottom of the page at first appearance. □ Reports should be typed, with 1.5 line-spacing, leaving approximately 1" (2.5cm) margins on the left hand side of the page for binding and preferably use Times New Roman font. □ You must submit two complete copies of your project with all references to the author and supervisor. □ If you have a large number of appendices this may result in having two volumes - one for your project and one for your appendices. In this case, the bibliography must be bound with the main project. All other appendices can be bound (ring binding is fine for this) in a second volume. □ A signed copy of your original project proposal must be included as an appendix to each copy of your project (remember to opaque all signatures in the anonymous copy). If your project has had to be changed considerably since the proposal was marked, clarify the changes in the introduction to the project. □ You may choose to have some or all of the copies of your project book-bound. If the project is confidential, you may wish to have all two copies returned to you. Otherwise, your supervisor will retain one copy, one will go to you. □ There are no hard and fast rules about how the project should be book-bound, i.e. it can be done in the colour of your choice and you can choose what lettering appears on the cover and spine. □□ You must also supply an

electronic version of your project via email to our office, including all appendices and the bibliography.

Note: You would be amazed at how some students let themselves down with poor layout, proofreading and even spell checking. Please think carefully about presentation (layout, use of white space, bold, centring, etc.) And give yourself time to proof read – out loud is quite useful.

Who can be my advisor/supervisor?

Any regular RANEPa faculty member can be your thesis advisor, although individual faculty are not required to advise master's theses. It is your responsibility to find an advisor. Your advisor will provide general guidance, and will help you refine your topic and develop your argument. Most students choose faculty members they have worked with in courses, and you can also any relevant specialist with a PhD or the degree of Kandidat nauk. Thesis advisors must be formally approved by the Program (along with the thesis topic). Advisors will be contacted by the administration of the faculty to confirm their role and inform them about the Program's expectations from the thesis.

DO NOT STOP WORKING ON YOUR PROJECT WHILE YOUR PROPOSAL IS BEING MARKED.

Policy for Supervision

Policy for Supervision of Postgraduate Master's Dissertations and Projects

What students can expect from academic staff

What academic staff expect from you

- Allocation of a personal supervisor for regular scheduled meetings during term time. They will inform you of their availability at other times
- An initial discussion of up to 1 hour of supervisory time to agree a research topic and prepare an outline research proposal
- Up to 6 further hours of supervisory time (to include reading of draft chapters, telephone and email correspondence as well as face-to-face meetings if appropriate).
- Feedback on drafts within a reasonable period (normally within 15 working days)
- Your final dissertation/project will be marked by your supervisor and another member of academic staff. There will be an agreed final mark.
- You own the copyright of your work.

- If your supervisor proposes submitting any part of your work for publication or public presentation, it will be only with your prior written consent, and with your contribution or authorship acknowledged appropriately.
- You will take responsibility for initiating contact with your supervisor, and will adopt a professional approach to dissertation and project preparation involving regular scheduled meetings whenever appropriate and communication (late requests for supervisory support may not be met).

- You should keep a diary/log of supervisory meetings/discussion and retain files of all materials used in the preparation of your dissertation/project.
- Reasonable notice when requesting supervisory meetings, and when cancelling them
- Preparation in advance for supervisory meetings
- Serious consideration of your supervisor's advice
- Full participation in the Research Methods Module and reference to the Project Methodology Text
- Authenticity in all your work. The contribution of all others must be appropriately acknowledged, and in accordance with University policies, especially those relating to Research Ethics and Student Misconduct