BASIC CRITERIA FOR WRITING A PhDr THESIS IN EUROPEAN STUDIES/INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Writing Style

The thesis should be written in a good academic style. This means that

a) the thesis should well-written concerning its grammar, spelling and its writing style;
b) the text should be relatively clearly written and easy to follow;
c) it should contain proper references and citations;
d) the author should know when to use long quotes and when to paraphrase;
e) when you paraphrase, you rewrite the information and arguments yourself; it should not be possible to recognise sentences from another author's text
f) if the author writes in English, then he/she should avoid the passive voice.

Abstract

The abstract is a one-paragraph summary of the whole dissertation and not an introduction. It explains what you have done, and what you found out, and not what you are intending to do. Usually it presents the main research question, states what methods you used to answer the question and then explains what you found out.

Introduction

The author should introduce the topic of the thesis, make the research questions clear and make the topic interesting for the reader, as well as present an outline of the thesis. The following points are especially important:

a) ***the thesis' contribution to the scientific discourse should be clear!*** This is one of the absolutely most important points of the thesis. The author should be able to explain why somebody living in another continent, who might not be interested in the empirical topic of the thesis, should still be interested in this text.
b) the main research question should be clearly formulated.
c) the author should make it clear what this thesis is a case of. For example, if the thesis is about something in Slovakia, then does Slovakia in this thesis represent a case of a typical post-communist country as opposed to a country without a communist background; or maybe it is a case of a northern country as opposed to southern; or a case of a Catholic country as opposed to a Protestant or secular; etc.
d) the author should explain the logic of the make-up of the thesis, so that readers understand the purpose of each chapter as well as the order of the chapters.

Theory

It is extremely important that the thesis apply some kind of theoretical approach or at least relate its findings to social scientific theory. More concretely:

a) the theoretical approach of the thesis should be clear. Is it based on some school of thought? Does it combine theories in its explanation? Does it test competing theories?
b) the author should show that he/she knows the most important texts within that theoretical approach.
c) even if the thesis only uses one type of theoretical approach, it should explain why its approach is more fruitful than other theoretical approaches.
d) The author should make clear how he/she will apply that theory or theoretical approach.

Method

It is not necessary to have a method chapter that is separate from the theory chapter, but it is necessary to fully explain the thesis' methodology. In addition, it is not necessary to have the theory section before the method section. The order of the sections/chapters is not important. What is important is that the thesis clearly shows its methodological and theoretical approach. The most important aspects of the methodological part are that:

a) the choice of methodology should be clear. The author should convince the reader that he/she chose the most appropriate methodology. It should be clear what are the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methodology and what are its advantages over alternative methodologies.
b) it should also be clear how the author applied the methodology. The reader should be convinced that the methodology is solid and not just based on the whims of the author.
c) when describing the methodology, the author should refer to sources that explain the type of methodology being used. Moreover, the author should relate his/her methodology to these texts.
d) the author should explain how he/she collected the data, but the author should also understand that methodology is not only about how to collect data but also about how to *analyze* the data.
e) the author should make it clear how he/she will operationalize key terms (depending on the situation, this part might be better in the theory section)

Empirical Chapters

If the thesis is more normative/philosophical then it will not present empirical data, but still the author will have to develop the arguments based on discussing other texts. The vast majority of theses, however, will be empirical. In this case, the thesis should make it clear how the empirical data relates to the theoretical arguments. It should become clear to what extent the material supports or contradicts the theoretical framework and it should become clear how the theories might need to be modified because of the empirical data. Please note that it is possible to present the empirical chapters without directly relating the empirical material to theory as long as there is a discussion chapter that discusses the links between theory and the empirical material.

Conclusion

The conclusion should explain the final story. It should make it clear how the theory or theories might need to be modified because of these results. It should discuss what this study means for the state of the art in the field and it is advantageous if it discusses how this thesis might make further study available. Most of all, by summing up the results and comparing them to previous studies and theories, the conclusion should make it clear how it contributes to the scientific discourse.