Appendix A. Commented example of graduation thesis plan structure

**GRADUATION THESIS PLAN**

To be approved by the supervisor(s), approximate length without the list of references 2 to 3 pages.

**Author of the graduation thesis:**

**Supervisor’s (and co-supervisor’s) first and last name:**

**Supervisor’s (co-supervisor’s) degree and position:**

**Planned time of defence (with the accuracy of one semester, e.g. spring 2017):**

**Planned title of the graduation thesis:**

The title of the graduation thesis shall be specific and clearly worded, at the same time covering its content and providing understanding of the essence of the research problem. It cannot be a question or a slogan (i.e., avoid journalistic style). The title can be changed and specified later on, it does not have to be final.

**Does the graduation thesis require closed defence or access restriction upon publication?** YES/NO

If the graduation thesis contains a state secret, trade secret, information to be kept confidential on the basis of Personal Data Protection Act, unpublished materials or any other classified information, restriction on the publication and/or closed defence could be necessary. All authors of theses requiring closed defence or access restriction upon publication shall submit such application a week before the pre-defence at the latest.

**Language of the graduation thesis:**

As a rule, graduation theses shall be written in the language of the study programme or in English. Students of the main speciality “Estonian Public and Private Law” in the HAJB and HAJM study programme may write their graduation thesis in Estonian.

**Justification of topic selection and research problem:**

The justification of the topic selection shall contain an explanation to the background and show the importance, relevance and timeliness (topicality) of the topic. The research problem/question to be answered in the thesis should emerge from the explanation. It is possible to investigate either a theoretical contradiction and/or empirical problem based on real data.

Specify and define the problem as precisely as possible. Ask yourself, can I say in one sentence what I intend to investigate or which question I wish to answer with my research? Use keywords and their associations.

**Aim and main research questions:**

The aim should be presented in one sentence. It shall be as specific as possible. The aim should not be to “describe”, “provide an overview” or “analyse” something. The aim focuses on finding a solution to the research problem.

In addition to the aim, the research questions and/or hypotheses (usually up to 3) should be presented. Research questions are always open-ended. Explain which research tasks you intend to perform to fulfil the aim of the thesis. Define your own contribution in the thesis, what additional value does it create. Your contribution should rely on the literature and on what is already known in the field (avoid “reinventing the wheel”).

**Theoretical/empirical background and list of references:**

Describe which theoretical standpoints, which authors, which previous research you intend to base your solution to the research problem on. List the most important scientific articles, databases, etc. you intend to use. The list of references provided in the graduation thesis plan does not have to be final nor exhaustive.

**Methods and data:**

Explain which research methods you will use to carry out the research tasks. Justify their selection. Do you plan to use quantitative and/or qualitative methods? Which ones? (E.g. if you use a survey, then how do you intend to form the sample, what is the structure of the questionnaire, how do you intend to compile, distribute and process it, etc.).

Present the sample and arguments why this sample is appropriate and representative for the problem at hand. Which data do you plan to use to solve the research tasks and where do you intend to obtain it? Explain which problems could emerge in connection to data and how you intend to overcome them.

**Preliminary structure of the graduation thesis:**

Present the preliminary table of contents by chapters and sub-chapters. While compiling the structure, use the research tasks as a basis. The structure has to be as logical and clear as possible. Avoid structuring too much, but also avoid very long (sub)chapters.

**Approximate schedule of thesis preparation:**

Plan time for going through the literature, gathering data, processing and analysing data, interpreting results, putting together the manuscript and polishing it. The schedule should be prepared at a weekly level and enable to prepare the pre-defence version of the thesis by the deadline (all components of the thesis must be there, but may require further polishing).

The schedule should be approved by the supervisor, especially the deadlines when you intend to send your thesis or its parts for intermediate review. As a rule, it is common that a supervisor reads the work 2 to 3 times within the thesis preparation process.