

**INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION DIVISION
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**

SUBSTANTIAL RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES

Purpose

The overall purpose of the Substantial Research Paper (SRP) is for Master of Arts students in International Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) to satisfactorily complete serious and sustained research and writing, based on analysis of both secondary and primary source material, that is, existing literature and the collection of data. The SRP is an integrative capstone project and involves the student working closely with a faculty member who provides supervision for the project. The successful completion of the SRP serves to demonstrate students' ability to conduct theoretically informed, analytical research.

SRP requirements and guidelines are available in paper form in the IPCR office and the SIS Graduate Advising office. Each year, there will be a meeting called in the Fall semester to explain SRP requirements and guidelines to all interested IPCR MA students. The SRP research effort must meet the following core requirements:

- Title page should follow layout as shown in attached example.
- The research document should be between 50 and 70 pages in length (all page requirements refer to 12-point font, double-spaced pages and exclude footnotes, endnotes and citations).
- The research focus should demonstrate original investigation based on gathering information, supported by a sufficient review of literature.
- The research should appropriately apply one or more quantitative and/or qualitative research methods in the examination of secondary and primary source material.
- If the research entails the gathering of information from human subjects through interviews, questionnaires, observations, focus groups or other methods, approval must be received from or an exemption from review must be approved by the SIS representative on the University's Institutional Review Board to assure that ethical guidelines are being followed. Information is at: (<http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/provost/osp/IRB.htm>), and instructions and forms are at: (<http://www.american.edu/sis/irb/index.htm>).
- The research should demonstrate substantive analysis of findings, consistent with the research method(s) employed.
- The research paper must include a section that meets the IPCR comprehensive examination requirement.
- The research report should be organized in the quantitative or qualitative research design format explained in this document.

Faculty Supervision

Students should make every effort to familiarize themselves with IPCR Faculty members' main areas of professional expertise. It is the responsibility of each student to contact the appropriate faculty member and request his/her assistance in supervising the student's SRP. IPCR Faculty members are able to accept a limited number of SRP requests each semester. It is, therefore, important that students contact the faculty member at least one semester prior to registering for SRP credit.

It is possible that a student may find a faculty member from another division in SIS or American University, who is not an IPCR Associate Faculty member, to supervise his/her SRP. In this situation, the student should explain the SRP requirements to this "external" supervisor. In these cases, the student is also required to obtain a "secondary" faculty supervisor from the IPCR program to ensure that the research effort reflect the core focus of International Peace and Conflict Resolution and the methodological requirements set out in these guidelines are being met.

Research Design Considerations

One of the main goals of the SRP is to enable students in IPCR to develop and demonstrate graduate level competence in research methods. The IPCR Division recognizes that its MA students are required to take only one methods course, SIS 600: Quantitative Analysis in International Affairs. This course, however, may not be sufficient preparation for undertaking the SRP in terms of meeting the research method requirement. Students are encouraged to enroll in SIS 612, Research Seminar: Peace and Conflict Resolution, which is offered every Fall and is primarily a qualitative methods course, or SIS 680: Qualitative Research Methods, which is offered every Spring. Students interested in policy research should also consider SIS 619: International Policy Analysis, which is offered on a regular basis through the International Politics Division.

In order to assist students in selecting appropriate research methods for their SRP, the IPCR program recommends a number of basic research texts, including: the following:

- Bruce L. Berg (2004), *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Daniel Druckman (2005), *Doing Research: Methods of Inquiry for Conflict Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- John W. Creswell (1998), *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- John W. Creswell (2009), *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Earl Babbie (2006), *The Practice of Social Research*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Lawrence W. Neuman (2004), *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Peter H. Rossi et al (2003), *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ernest T. Stringer (1999), *Action Research: A Handbook for Practitioners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

It is expected that students' selection of research methods is based on the methods and accompanying procedures identified in these and similar books.

Organization of the SRP Research Document

SRP's need to be appropriately organized based on the methodological stance taken by the researcher. The IPCR Division recommends the following two basic SRP formats for organizing the student's research efforts, either alone or in combination as in a mixed methods study.

Quantitative Research Studies

Quantitatively oriented research efforts involve inquiry into a social topic or issue based on the development, testing or application of theory that is operationalized into variables that may be connected by hypotheses with an analysis using statistical procedures. The primary modes of data collection include experiments, surveys using questionnaires or interviews, field/observational research, content and conversation analysis, evaluation research, or action research. The format for presenting results from a quantitative study in the SRP should include:

Chapter 1: Introduction [provides an overview to the research effort]

Context or Statement of the Problem

Purpose of the Study

Research Questions, Objectives or Hypotheses of the Study

Theoretical Perspective

Definition of Terms

Limitations of the Study

Significance of the Study

Chapter 2: Review of Literature [summarizes the relevant, major research studies and writings on the topic]

Subsections are designated in relation to the literature or hypotheses

Chapter 3: Methods [provides a description of the research approach and procedures used in gathering and interpreting data]

Research Design

Sample, Population, Subjects

Variables in the Study

Instrumentation and Materials

Data Analysis Procedures

Chapter 4: Results [presents major findings of the study]

Research Question/Hypothesis # 1 Results

Research Question/Hypothesis # 2 Results

Research Question/Hypothesis # 3 Results

[Continue for each question/hypothesis]

Chapter 5: Discussion [provides an overall discussion of findings through comparison to other research findings and/or literature covered in the review or elsewhere]

Summary of Results

Relation of Results to Literature

Relation of Topic and Results to IPCR Field (Comp Exam Section)

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Significance of Research Findings

Implications for Future Research and Practice in IPCR

Recommendations for Future Research

References

Appendixes

Instruments (Interview Schedule, Questionnaire, etc.)

Qualitative Research Studies

Qualitatively oriented research efforts involve inquiry into a social topic or issue based on a holistic analysis of information that is often gathered in a field setting and is described using methods that provide for the drawing of general conclusions. Primary qualitative methods include: (1) Ethnography (description and interpretation of a cultural or social group by observing the patterns of behavior over time), (2) Grounded theory (derives a general or abstract theory of a process, action or interaction based on the views of participants), (3) Case studies (in depth examination of a program, event or activity over time through detailed data collection involving multiple sources of information), (4) Phenomenological research (describes the meaning or essence of lived experiences as described by individuals about a topic or concept), and (5) Narrative research (studies the lives of individuals through stories they provide) (Creswell, 2008). The format for presenting results from a qualitative study in the SRP should include:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose of the Study

Statement of the Research Question and Subquestions

Importance of the Questions

Limitations of the Study

Significance of the Study

Outline of the Paper

Chapter 2: Review of Literature [summarizes the relevant, major research studies and writings on the topic]

Subsections are designated in relation to the literature or subquestions

Chapter 3: Design of the Study

Type of Design

Assumptions and Rationale of the Design

Role of the Researcher

Information Collection Procedures

Procedures for Analysis and Verification

Chapter 4: Outcomes of the Study

Description and Interpretations (Outcomes) of Phenomena Studied

Relation of Outcomes to Theory and Literature

Recommendations for Future Research, Theory and Practice

Chapter 5: Discussion [provides an overall discussion of findings through comparison to other research findings and/or literature]

Summary of Outcomes

Relation of Outcomes to Literature

Relation of Topic and Results to IPCR Field (Comp Exam Section)

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Significance of Research Findings

Implications for Future Research and Practice in IPCR

Recommendations for Future Research

References

Appendixes

Enrollment and Registration

A student should establish a supervisory relationship with a faculty member the semester prior to their initial registration for SRP credit. Toward the end of their second semester (usually Spring), students are required to meet with the IPCR Graduate Advisor to plan the remainder of their program of studies, including the identification of potential SRP topics and faculty supervisors. In the semester (usually Fall) prior to registering for and completing the SRP, the student should:

- By week 9: Obtain preliminary faculty agreement to supervise the SRP based on the submission to the faculty member a 1-2 page, single-spaced “research description” that includes: (1) one paragraph on the purpose of the research, (2) one paragraph on the research questions/hypotheses being examined, (3) one paragraph identifying the research method(s), and (4) a listing of a minimum of 10 specific references directly relevant to the proposed research topic/focus.

- By Week 14: Obtain formal agreement of the faculty member to supervise the SRP. This formal agreement enables the student to register for SRP credit. In order to obtain this formal agreement, students are advised to submit and obtain approval from the supervising faculty member of a research proposal. This research proposal should be approximately 10 pages (double-spaced) in length and provide a detailed overview to the research effort. This proposal should include a detailed statement of the research purpose, scope and significance of the study, a listing of the specific research questions/hypotheses, a description of the research method(s) the student proposes, an explanation of data analysis procedures, a preliminary statement concerning the manner in which this research study addresses broader themes/topics in the field of IPCR, a substantial list of relevant references to be examined, and a work plan for the semester, indicating stages of preparation and proposed dates of completion, including dates of meetings with the faculty supervisor and deadlines for completion of a preliminary draft and final document. Information in this research proposal is preliminary in nature and should function to assist with planning and designing the research process. Changes to the research proposal may be made, per agreement of the faculty supervisor.

Students are expected to complete the SRP in the semester in which they formally register. A rough timeline for completion is as follows:

1. Week One: Confirm topic and proposal with supervisor
2. Week Three: Design procedures for data collection. Gain IRB approval if necessary.
3. Week Six: Complete collection of data
4. Week Seven: Complete data analysis
5. Week Eight: Provide outline to supervisor for approval
6. Week Ten: Complete first draft for review
7. Week Twelve: Produce final version for grading

IPCR Comprehensive Exam

There is no oral or written comprehensive examination in IPCR. Satisfaction of the University's comprehensive examination requirement is met through the quality of discussion in the SRP that relates the research study conducted by the student with broader themes/topics in the IPCR field. In the case of supervision by a non-IPCR faculty member, the student is required to arrange for an IPCR faculty member to read the section that relates the study to the IPCR field, and to make an assessment for the Comprehensive Exam requirement. A form is provided for this which the student should provide to the faculty member with the final draft of the SRP.

IPCR Full Time Faculty

Mohammed Abu-Nimer

Islam and Nonviolence and Peace
Religion and Peace
Peacebuilding and Development
Middle East, Israel Palestine, Sri Lanka, Philippines

Charles Call

Governance & Reconstruction
Human Rights and Democratization
International Organizations & Peace
Latin America & the Caribbean

Ronald Fisher

Interactive Conflict Resolution
International Mediation and Problem Solving
Applied Conflict Resolution
Cyprus

Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana

Culture and Conflict Resolution
Interfaith Dialogue
Islam and Conflict Resolution
Middle East

Christos Kyrou

Environmental Peacemaking
Environment and Human Rights
Insurgency Movements
Northern Ireland, Greece/Turkey, Colombia

Julie Mertus

Human Rights & US Foreign Policy
Gender and Conflict
Human Rights & the Media
Central and Eastern Europe/ The Balkans

Reina Neufeldt

Peacebuilding
Ethics and Conflict Resolution
Identity and Conflict
Southeast Asia

Abdul Aziz Said

Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam
Conflict Transformation
U.S. Foreign Policy
Middle East

Susan Shepler

Youth and Conflict
Migration Crises and Security
Reintegration of Fmr. Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone
Africa

Anthony Wanis-St. John

International Negotiation
Implementation Problems in Peace Processes
Civil Society and Peace Negotiation
Latin America, Middle East

IPCR Associate Faculty

Carole Gallaher

Division: Comparative and Regional Studies
Political Violence
Role of Paramilitaries in Irregular Warfare
Northern Ireland

Shoon Murray

Division: US Foreign Policy
Role of Public Opinion, the Media, and Interest
Groups in Making Foreign Policy
“Tenacity” of Enemy Images

John Richardson

Division: International Development
Relationship between Population, Resources and
Development
Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution
Sri Lanka

Cathy Schneider

Division: Comparative and Regional Studies
Comparative Urban Politics
Social Movements & Political Violence

Shalini Venturelli

Division: International Communication
Global Knowledge Society
Global Public Media & Innovation

Yael Warshel

Division: International Communication
Role of Communications in Political Conflict
Ethno-political Conflict
Africa and the Middle East

Revised Dec., 2008

[Title]

by

[Student's name]

Submitted to the
School of International Service
of American University
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree
of

Master of Arts

in

International Peace and Conflict Resolution

Course Number: _____

Evaluation and Certification:

Course Title: _____

Grade: _____

Remarks: _____

Credit Hours: _____

Semester of Registration: _____

Comprehensive Examination:

Unsatisfactory: _____

Signature of Faculty Member:

Satisfactory: _____

Distinction: _____

Graduate Office Certification:

Date: _____

Date: _____

International Peace and Conflict Resolution Comprehensive Examination Completion Form

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

I.D. NUMBER: _____

EXAMINER'S NAME: _____

You must be examined by a full-time faculty member in the International Peace and Conflict Resolution Field or an examiner approved by the field coordinator. Your examiner will normally be the supervisor of your SRP or chair of your thesis committee.

DATE: _____

The IPCR comprehensive exam requirement is met through the quality of discussion in the SRP/thesis that relates the research study conducted by the student with broader themes/topics in the IPCR field, i.e. the student's knowledge of the IPCR field as demonstrated in the paper.

EVALUATION:

_____DISTINCTION _____SATISFACTORY _____UNSATISFACTORY

COMMENTS:

COMP EXAM:

Poor Below Average Average Good Very Good

1) DEMONSTRATION OF HOW RESEARCH
FITS INTO THE FIELD OF IPCR

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2) UNDERSTANDING OF IMPORTANT THEORIES,
DEBATES AND SUBSTANTIVE FOCI OF IPCR

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SRP:

3) QUALITY OF WRITING

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4) ANALYTICAL DEPTH

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5) RESEARCH DESIGN

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OTHER:

EXAMINER'S SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

Faculty should return this signed form to the IPCR Graduate Advisor, SIS 12.