

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM
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 demonstrate understanding and application of serious and sustained research, based on analysis of both secondary and primary source material. The SRP is an integrative capstone project that entails a student working closely with a faculty supervisor. The SRP can take an academic or practical approach. The successful completion of the SRP serves to demonstrate students' ability to conduct theoretically informed, analytical research.

The SRP research effort must meet the following core requirements:

- The SRP must take the form of:
 - A 50-70 page paper. The recommended format for the 50-70 page paper can be found starting on Page 3 of this document.
 - OR*
 - A comprehensive creative project, including, but not limited to, videography, photography, and visual or performing art, with an accompanying reflection. Students seeking to complete a comprehensive creative project for the SRP must obtain direct permission from the IPCR Program Director prior to registering the SRP.
- A proposal, along with faculty approval, is required for both the 50-70 page paper and the comprehensive creative project.
- The research should demonstrate original investigation and requisite review of pertinent 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 (or an exemption from review) must be given by the University's Institutional Review Board to assure that ethical guidelines are followed. Pertinent information may be found at: <http://www.american.edu/irb/index.cfm>. Students should consult the "SRP and IRB" guidelines to help determine if they will need to submit their research proposal to the IRB. <http://www.american.edu/irb/upload/SRP-and-IRB.pdf>
- The research should demonstrate substantive analysis of findings, consistent with the research method(s) employed.

Faculty Supervision

The student should establish a supervisory relationship with a faculty member the semester prior to his/her initial registration for SRP credit. A list of approved IPCR faculty members may be found on Page 7 of this document.

Toward the end of their second semester, students are encouraged 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.

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 supervision of 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.

A student may find an American University faculty member from outside IPCR to supervise his/her SRP. In such an event, the student is required to obtain permission from the IPCR Program Director to work with this external supervisor. The student must also explain the SRP requirements and provide this document to the external supervisor.

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. IPCR students are required to take a second methods course that aligns with his/her proposed SRP methodology. For a list of approved second methods courses for IPCR students, use the following link: <http://www.american.edu/sis/gradadvising/second-methods.cfm>. Be sure to find the IPCR subsection.

To assist students in selecting appropriate research methods for the SRP, the IPCR program recommends several 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 the research methods employed will be based on those identified in these and similar books.

Organization of the Research Paper

SRPs need to be appropriately organized based on the methodological stance taken by the researcher. The IPCR Program 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

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 Sub questions

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

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Significance of Research Findings
Implications for Future Research and Practice in IPCR
Recommendations for Future Research

References

Appendixes

Enrollment and Registration

In the semester prior to SRP registration, students must contact their intended faculty advisor to discuss their SRP topic and confirm the faculty member's intent to supervise the SRP. The student then must register the SRP using the appropriate paperwork, found through the SIS Graduate Advising website: <http://www.american.edu/sis/gradadvising/independent-study.cfm>

Students are expected to complete the SRP in the semester in which they formally register. If at any time a student anticipates that he/she will not be able to complete the SRP in the semester of registration then the student should immediately contact the IPCR Academic Advisor.

Students are encouraged to meet the following benchmarks for progress during the semester in which they are completing their SRP:

Week One: Confirm topic and proposal with supervisor

Week Three: Design procedures for data collection. Gain IRB approval, if necessary

Week Six: Complete collection of data

Week Seven: Complete data analysis

Week Eight: Provide outline to supervisor for approval

Week Ten: Complete first draft for review

Week Twelve: Submit final version for grading

IPCR FACULTY

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Peacebuilding
Conflict Management &
Transformation
Mediation

Mohammed Abu-Nimer

Islam & Nonviolence and Peace
Religion & Peace
Peacebuilding & Development
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Human Rights
Humanitarian Law
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Governance & Reconstruction
Human Rights & Democratization
Int'l Organizations & Peace
Latin America & the Caribbean

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War-to-Peace Transitions
International Development
IO & INGO Behavior

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Peace Education
Youth
Monitoring & Evaluation
Intercultural Competence
Identity
Conflict Transformation
South, Central, & Southeast Asia
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Environment, Conflict, &
Peacebuilding
Water Conflict & Cooperation
Social Movements & Contentious
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International Dialogue Facilitation
Culture
Human Rights
Collective Memory
International Development
Democratization
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Carole Gallaher

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Role of Paramilitaries in Irregular
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Philip Gamaghelyan

Politics of Memory
Human Rights & Conflict
Justice & Reconciliation
Mediating History
Post-Soviet States

Hrach Gregorian

Violence Prevention
Art and Trauma Healing
Conflict Management &
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Claudia Hofmann

Rebel, Insurgent & Organized
Criminal Groups
Drug Trafficking & National
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Political Islam
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Iranian/American Relations
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Ethno-nationalism
Truth Recovery
Public Forgiveness

Elizabeth Thompson

Political Movements
Democratization
International Intervention in the
Middle East

Anthony Wanis-St. John

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

Works Cited

Cresswell, J. W. (2008). Research design: *Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.