

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

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**SUBSTANTIAL RESEARCH PAPER (SRP) GUIDELINES**

Preliminary Activities:

1. Read carefully the SRP Guidelines provided by the IPCR Program.
2. Decide whether your education and interests predispose you to conduct a quantitative or a qualitative study.
3. Provide chosen faculty supervisor with an unofficial transcript of your academic record, a resume, and a representative sample of your writing (class term paper, project proposal, etc.).

Enrollment:

1. Provide faculty supervisor with a 1-2 page research description (single spaced) as outlined in the SRP Guidelines.
2. Based on discussion of the research description, provide faculty supervisor with a research proposal (approximately 10 pages, double spaced) as outlined in the SRP Guidelines.
3. Obtain faculty supervisor approval to register for the SRP (3 may precede 2 if necessary, but not 1).

Ongoing and Completion:

1. Provide faculty supervisor with progress reports in person or by email approximately every two weeks of the semester.
2. If your study involves gathering information from human subjects, review the procedures and criteria of the AU Institutional Review Board (IRB) to see if you require approval of your study, or whether you can request an exemption from review. The appropriate form needs to be completed and forwarded to the SIS IRB representative for approval before you can collect any data.
3. Submit a detailed outline of your SRP draft once you have completed data collection.
4. Submit one or more drafts of your SRP for feedback and revision as required.
5. Submit the final copy of your SRP following SIS format requirements with a cover page for grading purposes and the Comprehensive Exam Completion Form to your faculty advisor.

**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. 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 to explain SRP requirements and guidelines to all IPCR MA students. This SRP research effort must meet the following core requirements:

- Cover sheet 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, evidenced by 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.
- The research should demonstrate substantive analysis of findings, consistent with the research method(s) employed.
- The research paper must include a chapter 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.

### **Research Design Considerations**

One of the main goals of the SRP is to enable student's in IPCR to develop introductory level competence in research methods. The IPCR Division recognizes that its MA students are required to take one research methods course (SIS 610: Quantitative Research Methods). This course, however, may not be sufficient preparation for undertaking the SRP in terms of meeting the research method requirement. In order to assist student's in selecting appropriate research methods for their SRP, the IPCR program designates the following core research methods text for in-depth review: John W. Creswell (1994) *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. The IPCR Division further designates the following book for in-depth review if the student is considering more quantitative research methods: Earl Babbie (1992) *The Practice of Social Research*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. The IPCR Division designates the following book for in-depth review if the student is considering more qualitative research methods: John W. Creswell (1998), *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. For students interested in completing an evaluation research or action research project, the following books provide useful further guidance: Peter H. Rossi (1999), *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Also recommended is Ernest T. Stringer (1999), *Action Research: A Handbook for Practitioners* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. It is expected that student's selection of research methods are based on the methods and accompanying procedures identified in these 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 designates the following two SRP formats for organizing the student's research efforts.

#### Quantitative Research Studies

Quantitatively oriented research efforts involve inquiry into a social or human problem based on the testing or application of theory that is operationalized into variables and analyzed with appropriate statistical or social scientific analytic procedures (Creswell, 1994). Primary modes of observation include experiments,

survey and/or interview research, field/observational research, content and conversation analysis, and evaluation 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]

**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
- Research Question/Hypothesis # 4 Results
- [Continue for each question/hypothesis]

**Chapter 5: Discussion** [provides an overall discussion of findings through comparison to other research findings and/or literature; Articulates relevance of findings to broader themes/topics in the IPCR field]

- Summary of Study
- Discussion of Findings
- Recommendations for Future Research, Theory and Practice

**Chapter 6: The Research Project** [In the context of IPCR as a Field]

- How the Topic Relates to IPCR Research Field-Wide
- How the Research Findings Add to IPCR Field Literature Themes
- Implications for Future Research and Practice in Future Research in the IPCR.
- Demonstration of Knowledge of Major IPCR Authors and Emerging Research Findings

**References**

**Appendixes**

- Instruments

## Qualitative Research Studies

Qualitatively oriented research efforts involve inquiry into a social or human problem based on a holistic analysis of the topic that is typically undertaken in a natural setting through an analysis of words and/or nonverbal behavior that presents the detailed views/perceptions of selected individuals/informants (Creswell, 1998). Primary qualitative methods include (1) Biography (study of an individual and his/her life experiences as told to the researcher or found in documents and archival material), (2) Phenomenological study (research that describes the meaning of lived experiences for several individuals about a topic or concept), (3) Grounded theory (approach that generates or discovers theory related to the context of the phenomenon studied), (4) Ethnography (description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system by observing the patterns of behavior, customs and ways of life; focus on the behavior and meanings of a culture group), and (5) Case study (examination of a case or multiple cases over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context) (Creswell, 1998). The format for presenting results from a qualitative study in the SRP should include:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

- Statement of the Problem
- Purpose of the Study
- Grand Tour Questions and Sub-questions
- Definitions
- Limitations of the Study
- Significance of the Study

### **Chapter 2: Design of the Study**

- Type of Design
- Assumptions and Rationale
- Role of the Researcher
- Data Collection Procedures
- Procedures for Analysis and Verification

### **Chapter 3: 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

### **References**

### **Appendixes**

## **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. 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 to supervise his/he 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 are being met in terms of the IPCR program requirements.

## **Enrollment and Registration**

A student must “pre-enroll” with the supervising professor the semester prior to their initial registration for SRP credit. Specifically, the student should:

- By week 9 (of the prior semester): 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 (of the prior semester): Obtain formal agreement of the faculty member to supervise the SRP. This formal agreement enables the student to formally register for SRP credit. In order to obtain this formal agreement, students must 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.

## **Additional Information**

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.

[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: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Faculty Advisor:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**International Peace and Conflict Resolution  
M.A. Comprehensive Examination  
Completion Form**

**STUDENT'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **AU ID#:** \_\_\_\_\_

**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.

**COMP RESULT:**

\_\_\_\_\_DISTINCTION    \_\_\_\_\_SATISFACTORY    \_\_\_\_\_UNSATISFACTORY

**COMP EVALUATION:**

Poor    Below Average    Average    Good    Very Good

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


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

**SRP/THESIS EVALUATION:**

3) QUALITY OF WRITING

4) ANALYTICAL DEPTH

5) RESEARCH DESIGN


**COMMENTS:**

**EXAMINER'S SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Faculty should return this signed form to the IPCR Graduate Advisor, SIS 12 (x1733).*