

**Substantial Research Paper Guidelines
For MA Students in
Global Environmental Policy
and
Natural Resources and Sustainable Development**

The Substantial Research Paper (SRP) is the integrative capstone project for Master=s degree students. The purpose of the SRP is to further develop your expertise in a specific issue of concern and demonstrate your ability to conduct theoretically informed but empirically grounded research.

Students must choose a SRP advisor who can best guide their particular project. Supervisors can be core GEP/NRSD faculty—such as Paul Wapner, Judith Shapiro, Christos Kyrou, Rolain Borel or Ronnie de Camino — or any other member of the faculty at American University or (for NRSD students) the University for Peace. Students are encouraged to work with faculty with whom they have studied.

I. SRP REQUIREMENTS

CONTENT: The SRP addresses an important question within the field of global environmental politics, broadly understood. The SRP must demonstrate familiarity with existing scholarly literature. It should also demonstrate a clear argument that engages that literature. The research must be substantiated; you must provide evidence to support the claims you make. Your methods must be explicit -- you should explain the sources you use and the manner in which you use them.

SIS regulations require a paper of about fifty-pages plus a bibliography. The bibliography may include web-based resources, but you must pay careful attention to the quality and reliability of on-line material. It is not acceptable to use only web-based sources. Your review of the literature must include scholarly books and/or articles appearing in print or as e-journals available through the American University library website.

QUALITY OF THE WRITING: Recipients of Master=s degrees at SIS are expected to be skillful writers. Consequently, students writing SRPs are held to a high standard for the quality of their prose. The SRP must be logically organized, grammatically accurate, and stylistically pleasing. Please use spell check and grammar check! There should be an interesting title that hints at the contents and argument, and a table of contents. Use of subheadings is strongly encouraged.

The SRP must follow an appropriate academic format. Many students use *The Chicago Manual of Style* but other citation styles are acceptable as long as there is internal consistency throughout the project.

GRADING: SRP grades will be based on the quality of the research and the quality of the writing. Students must receive a grade of B or better for the SRP to satisfy graduation requirements. Please note that University requirements permit the student to “walk” in graduation even if the SRP is not complete. However, you **MUST** obtain your supervisor’s permission to take an Incomplete.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. **KEEP COPIES OF YOUR SRP, YOUR RESEARCH NOTES, AND YOUR ROUGH DRAFTS** so that you will be able to document the work you have done in case a question is raised about sources for or the originality of your research. More information on academic

integrity can be found at <http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/index.htm>.

II. STEPS IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The substantial research project involves a series of steps.

INITIAL PRESENTATION OF TOPIC: At the beginning of the semester, meet with your faculty supervisor to discuss your topic.

PROPOSAL: It is very helpful to prepare a proposal in the form of a paper of approximately 5-10 pages in which you lay out the question and a discussion of its importance, a review of related literature, an explanation of the evidence you plan to use to answer the research question, your methodology, a preliminary bibliography, and a schedule of expected completion dates for the stages of the research project.

OUTLINE: Consult with your faculty supervisor about the degree of detail he or she wishes in the outline.

ROUGH DRAFT: Students will submit a rough draft to their faculty supervisor for feedback by an agreed deadline. Please discuss whether your professor would like to see chapters as you complete them or would prefer to see the whole thing.

FINAL PAPER: Students must submit the final paper by the deadline specified by the faculty supervisor. Please be aware that faculty need a reasonable time before grades are due to read the paper.

Please note that SIS 663, The Washington Environmental Workshop, provides structure and deadlines to help you with the writing process as well as site visits to area environmental institutions.

TYPICAL STRUCTURE: A typical SRP will have the following elements:

Title

Clear but relatively short Table of Contents

Introduction, including statement of the research question, methodology, importance of the topic, expected findings, review of relevant literature.

Chapter One (often a historical review of some kind)

Chapters Two-Three: The empirical research itself

Chapter Four: Analysis

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Bibliography