



Boston University Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies

MA Paper Handbook

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A. MA Paper Process

With the exception of students in the MGP and MAIR programs, all BU Pardee School MA students complete a master's paper and orally defend that paper before a panel of three professors. The BU Pardee School allows students to choose between writing a traditional master's research paper or a policy paper.

All forms referenced in this manual can be found in Graduate Student Services section of the BU Pardee School website: <https://www.bu.edu/pardeeschool/academics/student-affairs-and-services/graduate-student-services/>

Getting Started

Start early! The sooner you start thinking about your paper topic, the more time you will have to find something that you are truly happy with, and the more time you will have to research and write your paper. Every student's path to finding their topic will be different, but the steps outlined below can help guide you:

1. Figure out a general topic. Consider both your interests and your career goals.
2. Find a potential advisor. Talk with him/her to explore the topic and refine it.
3. Do some initial, exploratory research. Ask yourself the following:
 - a. Is the topic sufficiently interesting to you?
 - b. Can you say something that has not been said many times already?
 - c. Is there sufficient evidence available?
 - d. Is this project manageable within the available timeframe?

If the answer to any of the above is 'No', go back to step 1 or 2.

4. Finalize your advisor selection and paper topic. Decide on whether you will do a policy or research paper (this decision will be heavily informed by your choice of topic).
5. Dive in and start researching and writing!

The timeline that a student will follow varies depending on your expected graduation date. But regardless of your program, students are urged to start early.

Some students find it useful to conduct research for class papers on issues related to aspects of their MA papers. However, while students may use much of the same research, they **cannot** reuse actual text from term papers in their MA Paper. The MA Paper must be a new, discrete piece of work.

MA Paper Steps/Paperwork

Once your topic and advisor are in place, it's time to roll up your sleeves and dig in! The paperwork process for completing your MA Paper and graduating is described below. All forms are available via the [Graduate Student Services page](#) of the Pardee School website.

- **Paper Proposal & Proposal Approval** – *Submit your complete proposal and proposal approval form signed by your advisor*
- **Intent to Graduate Form** – *This is an online form to submit by the deadline posted on the GRS website*
- **Progress Check-In** – *This is a formalized time to meet with your advisor to discuss your progress – no form is needed*
- **Defense Authorization Form** – *A form, signed by your advisor, which signifies your MA Paper has been approved for Oral Defense*
- **Final Paper** – *Submit an electronic copy of your final paper to the Graduate Office*
- **Oral Defense**

Dates vary from year to year – be sure to check current term deadlines found on the MA Paper Checklist for your semester of graduation. For any questions regarding forms or deadlines, email the Graduate Office at psgsgrad@bu.edu.

Paper Proposal

The Paper Proposal is typically submitted about six months prior to your oral defense. However, this date can vary depending on your expected graduation date. Please consult the MA Paper Checklist for the month you will be defending for the exact date your Paper Proposal is due.

While the Paper Proposal is the first written documentation you will be submitting, you are expected to have already identified your topic and advisor and begun your research well before the proposal is due.

Your Paper Proposal consists of the following five parts:

1. **Statement of Purpose:** A short statement (half of a page to a page) laying out, in the case of a policy paper, what policy is under consideration, why changes to a current policy or initiation of a new policy is warranted, and why this policy is relevant to current international relations issues. In the case of a research paper, the Statement of Purpose should follow a similar pattern, presenting the specific topic to be investigated as well as explaining the importance of this topic.
2. **Statement of Research Methods:** Establish how the research is to be undertaken, how the data will be collected and analyzed, and how it will be presented.
3. **Working Outline:** An annotated and detailed outline of the layout of the paper.
4. **Primary Sources:** Identify the source materials, where they are being obtained from, their limitations and accuracy of translations (for non-English sources).

5. **Bibliography:** Identify the principle sources for your research in proper bibliographic format.

The BU Pardee School recognizes that the outline and bibliography will change during the course of the research, but students should be as accurate and comprehensive as possible.

The Paper Proposal must be submitted together with the Paper Proposal form signed by your advisor.

Intent to Graduate

The Intent to Graduate form signifies to the university that you intend to finish your degree and graduate. There is a link to this form from the Graduate Program Forms section of the BU Pardee School website.

All students must submit the Intent to Graduate form. The university will not graduate a student who has not submitted this form by deadline.

Deadlines for submission of the Intent to Graduate form can be found on the [GRS website](#) in the GRS Forms, Policies, & Procedures section. Deadlines are typically far in advance of the graduation date, normally around the start of the term in which the student plans to graduate.

The Intent to Graduate form includes a question asking if the student will be completing a thesis as part of the requirements for graduation. Please answer ‘no’ to this question. The BU Pardee School MA Paper is not technically a thesis. Answering ‘yes’ to this question will cause you to be put on an email distribution list for students completing a formal thesis and you will receive extraneous directions/information.

Progress Check-In

For students graduating in May, the Progress Check-In is always due on the last Friday of January. Students with other graduation dates should refer to the MA Paper Checklist for the month of their paper defense for the Progress Check-In date.

For the Progress Check-In, students must meet with their advisor to discuss the progress they are making toward their MA Paper. There is no form to complete or turn in.

Defense Authorization

The Defense Authorization form lets the Pardee School know that a student’s advisor has given approval to conduct the Oral Defense. It is normally due 2 – 3 weeks prior to the start of the Oral Defense period. The Defense Authorization form must be signed by the student’s advisor **prior** to submission to the Graduate Office. **Additionally, the Defense Authorization form must include the *final*, not to be changed, title of the MA Paper.**

The Defense Authorization is always due 1 – 2 weeks prior to submission of the final paper. In order to be approved for the Defense Authorization, the student’s paper should be essentially complete, needing only minor editing to reach its final form. The time between submission of the Defense Authorization and the submission of the Final Draft should be spent polishing the MA Paper into a finely crafted work of which the student can be proud.

The BU Pardee School begins scheduling Oral Defenses promptly on the morning after the Defense Authorization forms are due. **The school will not schedule an Oral Defense for a student until a signed Defense Authorization form has been submitted.**

Final Paper

Students submit electronic copies (Word or PDF) of the final version of their paper by email to the Pardee School Graduate Office and their three panelists.

The due date for the Final Draft is normally 1 week prior to the start of the Oral Defense period. Please refer to the MA Paper Checklist for the exact date.

Oral Defense

Oral Defenses, the final step in the MA Paper process, are held every year in September, December, and April/May. Details can be found in the Oral Defense section.

In order to defend and graduate, students must be registered at BU for the term in which they are defending. **Students must complete all other components of their degree program prior to defending (except, of course, their final term coursework).**

Extension of Program Requests

Students should plan to graduate within the established timeframe for their degree program (consult the BU Pardee School MA Student Handbook for details). In the event that a student requires an extension, the student should submit an extension request (form available on the BU Pardee School website) by the established deadline listed on the MA Paper Checklist.

Only one extension is allowed and the student must provide good reason for why an extension is required. Additionally, the student’s advisor must support the extension.

Official Graduation Dates

Below are the official graduation dates for students who defend in the given month.

- September – September 25
- December – January 25 (of the following year)
- April/May – Varies yearly. The date of Boston University's Commencement ceremony is typically around May 15.

B. MA Paper Oral Defense

The paper defense is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge and the quality of their thinking. Since the defense is meant to be an important step in students' professional development, it is appropriate to approach it as a professional situation – i.e. in professional attire.

Defense Panel

Oral Defense Panels consist of three professors, each with expertise relevant to the paper topic. One of the professors – the chairperson of the panel – will be the student's advisor. The other two professors are chosen by the Associate Dean for Studies.

Oral Defenses are open to the public, so there may be other people in the room as well. Students are welcome and encouraged to invite friends and family to come to their defense. Once the defense has started, however, no one may enter or leave the room until the defense is completed.

Scheduling the Defense

Defenses are held three times each year, in September, December, and April/May; students may defend during any of these three times, depending on their date of graduation. Defenses are held Monday through Friday (excepting university holidays), from 8:00am to 5:00pm.

Defense scheduling begins promptly on the morning after the Defense Authorization form is submitted. The BU Pardee School will **NOT** schedule a defense for a student who has not submitted this form. Students are notified of their Oral Defense date via their BU email account.

Scheduling the defenses is always a difficult project. Professors tend to be very busy, particularly toward the end of the semester when two out of the three Oral Defense Periods fall. Due to the difficulty of finding a time when all three of the professors on the panel are available, we need students to be flexible with their schedules. **We expect students to be available to defend at any time during the Oral Defense period.** The BU Pardee School will do its best to provide students with one week prior notice of their defense date, and will provide them with a minimum of three days prior notice.

Students may make scheduling requests for serious reasons. The following are examples of justified reasons for scheduling requests: religious holy days observed by the student; marriage of a family member or close friend; job interview which cannot be scheduled for another day; class meetings or final exams which fall during the defense period.

Such requests must be made in writing (email) by 5:00pm on the day on which the Defense Authorization form is due. Requests made verbally or after that deadline will be disregarded.

Students may also make requests for media equipment, such as a projector for a PowerPoint presentation. Finally, students may request specific professors for their defense panels; however, students should keep in mind that it is the Associate Dean for Studies, not students and not paper advisors, who has final say on the composition of defense panels. All such requests must be submitted in writing (email) by 5:00pm on the Defense Authorization form deadline. **Any requests not submitted by the deadline or not submitted in writing will be disregarded.**

Presentation

Defenses begin with a presentation by the student. Students should talk with their advisor about their presentation! Each advisor will have his or her own ideas about how this should be done. In general, the presentation should run about 10-15 minutes, and should follow a few simple guidelines:

1. Don't read the paper! The defense committee has already read the paper; the presentation should be a summary, not a complete reiteration.
2. Pose the problem. Lay out briefly and clearly what the problem is that the paper addresses and why it is important.
3. Map out the dimensions of the problem. Having posed the basic problem, give relevant details or external factors.
4. Recapitulate the solution or explanation that the paper proposes and the main points of evidence that support its conclusions.

Question & Answer Session

After the presentation, the remainder of the defense will be given over to questions from the faculty and responses from the student. This phase usually comprises the majority of the defense, and typically lasts about forty-five minutes. Committee members may ask students to defend specific arguments or analyses in the paper; they may ask questions based on the presentation; and they may try to draw students out on related issues that did not appear in either the paper or the presentation. In general, the better the paper, the more smoothly the defense will go.

In answering committee members' questions, students should be brief, direct, and to the point. Students should have the facts at their fingertips, and should be prepared to extrapolate or extend their argument. Stating that an issue is outside the scope of the current project is an acceptable answer, although students should be prepared to justify the fact that they did not include the issue in the investigation.

Some advisors may invite audience members to ask questions of the presenter, so be prepared to field those questions as well.

After the Defense

Once the Question & Answer session has finished, the chairperson will ask everyone but the committee members to leave the room. At this time, the members of the panel will discuss whether to pass the MA Paper/Oral Defense. This decision is based on both the paper itself and the performance at the Defense. One decision is made which encompasses both components – there are no separate decisions for the paper and the defense. When the panel has made their decision the student will be asked to return to the examination room and the decision will be announced. For students who took IR799, the MA Paper will be assigned a letter grade, and that grade will serve as the primary basis for the grade in IR799.

Most students pass their Oral Defense, but a small number, about 5% each year, do not. Students who do not pass need to try again during the next Oral Defense period. There is no need for such students to redo their Paper Proposal (unless they choose to change substantially the topic of their paper). Students in this situation will need to do the following:

1. Register as a continuing student for the next term.
2. Submit a new Intent to Graduate form to GRS (Intent to Graduate forms are valid for the term for which they are submitted only).
3. Submit a Change of Defense Date form by the Paper Proposal deadline for the term in which they plan to defend.
4. Submit a Defense Authorization Form and electronic copy of the revised paper by the appropriate deadlines.

When a student does not pass the Oral Defense, the Report of Exam form is filed in the student's record in the BU Pardee School. However, no record of the failed exam will appear in the student's official university record or on the student's transcript. There is normally no penalty for failing the first defense. However, after a failed oral defense, the policy of the BU Pardee School is that students are permitted only one extra term/defense in which to pass the oral defense and graduate.

C. General Guidelines

The MA paper is expected to be a model of careful research, rigorous investigation and terse, incisive writing. Leading scholarly journals such as *World Politics*, *Political Science Quarterly* and *International Security* provide excellent models for writing in this area.

Deadlines

Students must strictly observe all deadlines set by the BU Pardee School. Current term deadlines are distributed each term via the weekly newsletter for BU Pardee School graduate students and can always be obtained from the Graduate Student Affairs Administrator.

Most advisors will require at least a few days to review students' paper proposals or paper drafts before they will be ready to give their approval. Students must coordinate with their advisors to ensure that the advisors will have sufficient time to read, comment on, and approve changes to students' various drafts by the relevant deadline. Students should confirm with their advisors that they will be available (i.e., not out of town) to sign necessary forms before the various deadlines.

Note: Because the MA Paper is not technically an MA Thesis, graduate students in the BU Pardee School are not subject to the thesis deadlines set by GRS. Follow the deadlines set by the BU Pardee School.

Page Limits

Students should restrict themselves to the page limits established by the Pardee School.

- Policy Papers: 30-35 pages
- Research Papers: 60-65 pages

These limits assume double-spaced pages. The page limits do **not** include appendices, bibliographies, and endnotes. With regard to appendices, students should note that the same rule applies to the defense panel members as to actual policy makers – they will only go over the material in appendices closely if they are really interested in it. Students should not use appendices as a means of expanding their paper past the page limits, and should not include critical material only in an appendix.

Quality Standards

It is difficult to discuss paper standards in the abstract, but students should have two general goals in mind regarding the quality of the paper:

1. The paper should be of publishable or near-publishable quality. In other words, students should think of their papers as the penultimate draft of a paper that a policy institute would be willing to offer to the world.
2. The paper should be a writing sample that will help students to get a job or to go on to further graduate study. If the paper is not something that you would be proud to show to a potential employer or to a PhD application committee, then the paper is not meeting proper quality standards.

Formatting

Students submit electronic copies of the MA Paper in its final form to the BU Pardee School, observing the following formatting standards:

- The paper should include a title page.
- Margins should be set at one inch or one and a quarter inch.
- The font size should be set at 11 or 12.
- The paper should be double-spaced.

The information on the title page should be clearly visible through the front cover. The title page of the paper should include:

- The full title of the paper
- The student's full legal name
- The name of the advisor
- The date of submission
- The student's degree program and (if applicable) specialization
- The student's certificate program(s), if applicable

Students should talk with their advisor about the issue of formatting style and follow the advisor's recommendations. If the advisor does not have preferences, students are recommended to use the Chicago Manual of Style formatting guidelines, particularly for issues of grammar and citation.

Advisor Relationships

Every advisor-student relationship is unique. The most important factor in the relationship is communication. Students should make sure that they understand clearly the specific standards and expectations that their advisor has for their paper and for them. Students also need to be very clear on schedules – most advisors will not be able or willing to turn around drafts in the space of a day or two, and students should know just how long it will take to get comments back. This is

essential information in putting together a feasible, mutually acceptable schedule for submitting drafts and final copy.

There are no BU Pardee School requirements for how the advisor-student relationship should work in terms of number and frequency of meetings, draft submission schedule, or anything else. However, the school does strongly recommend that students meet with their advisors relatively often, once per month *at a minimum*. Students' advisors are their greatest resource when writing the MA paper! Students should plan to talk with their advisors regularly about the progress they are making, especially in regard to any areas in which students are struggling or are unsure of the strength of their arguments.

If students feel they are having a problem in communication or other aspects of the advisor relationship, they should discuss it as soon as reasonably possible with their advisor. If still concerned, students should see the Graduate Student Affairs Administrator or the Associate Dean for Studies immediately. Resolving such issues becomes more and more difficult as the final deadline approaches.

Students must obtain written authorization from the Associate Dean for Studies in order to use an advisor from outside of the BU Pardee School.

The MA Paper & Term Papers

The MA Paper should be written on a subject that the student is passionate about, and should also serve as a capstone of the student's accomplishments here at the BU Pardee School. As such, students are welcome and encouraged to draw on research work done for class term papers when writing their MA Paper.

However: Students may not reuse actual text from any prior papers in composing their MA Paper. The MA Paper must be a new piece of work, composed from the ground up.

Similarly, students in dual degree programs may NOT use the same paper to fulfill both the MA Paper requirement for the IR portion of their program and any writing requirements for the other portion of their program.

Human Subjects Research

Students who plan to conduct original research involving human subjects may need to obtain approval for their research from BU's Institutional Review Board (IRB, see www.bu.edu/irb), which reviews any research involving human subjects. Make sure to check their policies and/or contact them to find out if you need to submit your research for their approval.

If IRB approval is required, students should be sure to submit their proposals to the IRB early in their paper writing process. **In particular, students planning to conduct research involving persons who are not public figures in a non-US setting should expect the IRB process to be lengthy, and should contact the IRB as early as possible.**

Students who require IRB approval need to include a copy of their IRB approval letter as an appendix in the submitted copies of their MA Papers.

International Travel

Any students conducting research toward their MA Papers outside of the United States **must** register with BU's [International Travel Registry](https://www.bu.edu/globalprograms/manage/international-travel/registry/) (<https://www.bu.edu/globalprograms/manage/international-travel/registry/>) prior to departure. The purpose of this is to enable BU to help to ensure students' safety while travelling abroad.

Sample Papers

Past papers which were successfully defended can be viewed at Mugar Library. All papers from 1998 – 2019 are in the Mugar Reserve Room indexed under the course title: IR Masters Theses, and instructors: David E. Clark or Professor Erik Goldstein. They may be loaned from the library for 24 hours.

Electronic copies of MA papers since spring 2020 can be accessed from the Mugar Library website.

To search the library catalogue:

1. Go to http://buprimo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?vid=BU&lang=en_US&sortby=rank
2. Choose 'Advanced Search' (to the right of the large white search bar at the top of the page)
3. Click 'Course Reserves' in the grey bar at the top of the search portal
4. There are a variety of ways to search, but perhaps the easiest is to select 'Instructor Name' as the category and then input 'Goldstein' as the search term.

D. Policy Paper Guidelines

What is a Policy Paper?

- The issue addressed should be a legitimate contemporary policy issue within which the current policy is clearly discernible.
- There should be clear alternatives to the current policy.
- There must be sufficient data present to provide the target audience (i.e. the decision-maker) with information to make a decision on the policy proposal.

Examples of Policy Issues

The following are some examples of general policy issues that can be explored in a policy paper. Students are in no way limited to or restricted by the following examples.

- **Economics:** Initiation of trade agreements; support for or opposition to protectionist legislation; restrictions on or relaxation of technical transfer restrictions; relaxation or tightening of immigration or customs laws in a particular country or region.
- **Legal Issues:** Adherence to or rejection of new facets of international law, space law, maritime law, intellectual property rights, etc.; jurisdictions of international courts; implications for acceptance of or rejection of a proposed treaty or agreement.
- **Political Issues:** Matters pertaining to recognition (e.g., after a coup or revolution); participation in international conferences; a newly elected leader's policy issues; initiation of a new policy involving human rights, environmental standards, etc.
- **Security Issues:** New arms transfer control initiatives; security assistance changes or new recipient candidates; renegotiations or an initial negotiation of case rights agreements.

What is *Not* a Policy Paper?

- An historical analysis is *never* an appropriate topic for a policy paper. A policy paper must focus on a *current* policy issue. For example, an analysis of what George W. Bush should or should not have done in response to the Sept. 11, 2001 attack could work well as a research paper, but it would not be acceptable as a policy paper.
- Comparative or case studies normally fit better as research papers than policy papers. For example, a comparative study of conflict resolution in South Africa and Northern Ireland, although certainly providing an analysis with contemporary relevance, would work far better as a research than a policy paper.
- An analysis of how something works should be a research paper. For example, a study of the political economy of the Ivory Coast would not work as a policy paper. Similarly, an analysis of development efforts in Guatemala would not in itself be a policy paper, although one could make a policy paper on a similar topic by analyzing U.S. development policy toward Guatemala.

Format for the Policy Paper

Below are the guidelines for writing a policy paper. Some variation may occur depending on the topic of the paper and the research methods being used. Policy papers should be approximately 30 to 35 pages in length. Follow all of the guidelines on formatting given in the General Guidelines section.

Executive Summary

At the beginning of the paper in telegraphic style, explain who the target audience is (i.e., the decision-maker for your policy proposal) and the main points that the decision-maker should know. It may be best to write this section last because it will serve as a summary of the entire paper.

At a minimum, the summary should include the following:

1. A statement of current policy
2. Reasons for initiating changes
3. Policy options to be considered
4. Pros and cons of each option
5. Recommended course of action
6. Reasoning for selecting that course of action

Body of Paper

The main portion of the paper should be dedicated to establishing the background and discussing the reasoning behind the policy recommendation. Students should include all of the basics from the executive summary, but fully elaborate on each point that the paper is making. The following is an outline describing what the main body of the paper should include.

Overview / Background

- Statement of purpose – Why is the decision-maker being asked to consider a policy change at this time?
- Review the Current Policy – What are we currently doing, why are we doing it this way, what is the public's perception of the policy? Assess how well it is or is not working.
- Statement on the Necessity for Change – What circumstances (e.g., changes in government, leadership, stability, etc.) have changed that make a new approach advisable or necessary?

Discussion

- Discuss the alternatives to the current policy option by enumerating and explaining each policy option in turn.
- Pros and cons of each policy option should be discussed next. Identify the political, economic, and security implications for each option. Each policy option should be compared and contrasted to the other options as well as to the current policy. This is the most important part of the paper.

Recommendation

- Clearly identify which option will be recommended and which options will be discounted.
- Clearly lay out the argument for why that option is better than each of the others.

Implementation

- Write a detailed recommendation for specific steps on how and when to implement the recommended policy option.

Appendices

The following items should be included as appendices to a policy paper.

1. Annexes, if there are any.
2. Endnotes, if end notes are used rather than footnotes.
3. Tables, charts, maps, etc. Maps can also be placed within the body of the paper, if appropriate.
4. Bibliography

Policy Paper Content and Analysis

Viable Alternatives

Policy papers must present several policy alternatives, and they must be serious alternatives. As a general rule, three options should be presented. One serious alternative will often be to maintain the status quo. Even if the status quo seems dangerous and stupid, students should take it seriously because in the real world it will often be a likely outcome. Students should check with their advisers to see if the status quo should be included as one of the policy options.

The alternatives presented must not be strawmen that are so ridiculous they only serve to make the recommended policy look good. Of course, it is fine to go deeper into the preferred alternative than into the other options, but the other options must be given a fair presentation and analysis.

Cost-benefit analysis

Policy papers should be based on clear cost-benefit analysis. This analysis may be either quantitative or qualitative. In either case, the student should be certain to think through all possible outcomes clearly and thoroughly. The cost-benefit analysis should seriously consider the feasibility of implementation, not only in terms of economic or strategic implications, but also in terms of political feasibility. Moreover, the analysis of likely effects must not be completely one-sided. There are always going to be some benefits and some costs to any policy proposal.

Clear Criteria

Students should present clear criteria for evaluating the problem at hand and the policy alternatives to be considered. This will involve prioritizing among a variety of possible values. Trade-offs are the heart of the policy process – if solutions were easy or obvious, the problem would not be around for the student to analyze. Determining clear criteria from the start will greatly aid the development of a cost-benefit analysis.

Clear predictions

What are the likely results of the various alternatives? Be specific and reasonably detailed. What level of certainty can one have about them? And what middle-run indicators would demonstrate success?

E. Research Paper Guidelines

What is a Research Paper?

A research paper is much like the papers that students write as part of their coursework in disciplines such as Political Science, History, or International Relations. Students choose a topic, work with their adviser to refine the topic and develop an argument, and then compose a compelling analysis of the issue. Students should avoid purely historical papers and aim for topics which have clear relevance to the current day.

Research papers should concentrate on analysis rather than policy prescriptions. The goal of the paper should be a rigorous examination of the causes and effects of important international events, trends, and/or policies.

Examples of Research Issues

Following are examples of topics of recent research papers done by our graduates. Students are, of course, in no way limited to the following examples.

- The Cost of High Remittance Prices in Southern Africa: Policy and Priority in Post-Apartheid South Africa
- Politics and Historical Memory: The Patriotic Education and the Rise of Victimhood Towards Japan in China
- Against the Monarchy: Dissent in Saudi Arabia
- Citizenship, Ideology, and Foreign Policy: The Case of Pakistan
- Building Resilience in Changing River Basins: A Comparative Analysis of Management Practices in the Colorado and Okavango River Basins
- Counterintelligence in the Kingdom and States: A Historical Comparison of the FBI and MI5
- The Islamic Republic of Iran: The Efficacy of Media Censorship Since 2005
- Sitting with Politics: Vipassana Meditation and the Ritual Public Sphere in Burma
- Allende, the CIA, and the Limits of Covert Action

Format for the Research Paper

For the most part, the structure of the research paper is up to students and their advisers. There are, however, a few firm format requirements, as follows.

1. The paper should be approximately 60-65 pages in length.
2. Follow all of the guidelines on formatting in the General Guidelines section.
3. Include an abstract prior to the body of your paper. Students should talk with their advisers about how to write an abstract.
4. Be certain to provide complete documentation of the sources of all facts and referenced analyses.

Although not firm guidelines, the following recommendations will help in researching and writing the paper.

- Start the paper with a review of existing analyses. This is often called a literature review in academic papers, but it is relevant to policy-oriented research papers and presentations as well. The purpose is to show the various ways in which other people have already approached the problem
- Consider alternative hypotheses. Without considering counter-arguments, it is impossible to say that this synthesis is the best. Having the literature review at the beginning makes this easier, because the paper can regularly compare its interpretation against existing ones, whether implicitly or explicitly.