

The University of Chicago
THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
Guidelines for the M.A. Paper

The M.A. paper should demonstrate that the student has achieved the level of competence in his or her specialization that is expected of a Master's degree candidate. The paper provides an opportunity to apply disciplined research skills and critical abilities to a piece of research on an original research contribution by the student. The paper should be seen as an integral part of the student's academic program. Some students, for example, submit an M.A. paper that evolved from a course project, which they subsequently wished to explore further.

Possible kinds of M.A. Papers: The paper may be based upon (1) empirical research, testing a social science hypothesis or deploying a specified social science perspective; (2) a theoretical critique of existing social science literature on a chosen topic; (3) a systematic survey or an evaluation of research; (4) any other disciplined inquiry acceptable to both the faculty sponsor and the CIR preceptor. Examples of the various types can be found among the M.A. papers on file in the CIR office, Pick 301 available for student inspection.

Format The M.A. paper should use theoretically informed analysis or interpretation to explore a significant problem, event, issue, process, relationship, or institution in international relations. It should be approximately 35-45 pages in length. Theses over 14,000 words, including footnotes, excluding bibliography, will not be accepted. The Committee strongly recommends Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* and *The Chicago Manual of Style* as guides to the proper format for research papers.

Sponsorship of the Paper: Papers are generally supervised and evaluated by both (1) a regular faculty member on the Committee on International Relations from any department or professional school within the University who has agreed to sponsor the student's research and (2) a CIR preceptor. *Exceptions to this are discussed in the CIR Study Guide.*

Each student makes his or her own arrangements with a faculty sponsor and is responsible for setting a schedule for the completion and evaluation of the paper within the timeframe set out in the *CIR*

Convocation Deadlines with that sponsor and with the CIR preceptor.

Approval of M.A. Paper Topic Proposal: The student works with and must obtain the approval of both a faculty member and a CIR preceptor. The student should submit M.A. Paper Topic Approval Form, signed by the faculty sponsor and the CIR preceptor, along with one copy of the approved proposal to the CIR office, Pick 301, preferably by Friday of *the eighth week of winter quarter.*

A student who makes substantive changes in the approved topic must submit a revised proposal, noting the changes, along with a new Proposal Approval Form signed by both the faculty sponsor and CIR preceptor. A student who fails to complete the M.A. paper within four quarters after obtaining approval should submit an updated proposal and a new Proposal Approval Form to reactivate approval and to ensure that all persons involved with the paper share a common understanding of the proposed paper's subject matter.

Evaluation of the Paper: *Both the faculty sponsor and the CIR preceptor, each of whom submits to the CIR office a signed Evaluation Form for M.A. Papers with written comments and a rating of pass or honors, must approve the paper in its final form.* The Committee on International Relations M.A. papers should fulfill criteria of excellence comparable to those employed in the evaluation of M.A. papers or advanced seminar papers in the individual graduate departments of the Division. Papers are evaluated on criteria of honors, pass, or fail. (See *The CIR Study Guide Committee Honors* for more information on honors.)

If the two readers disagree on the paper's acceptability as a final thesis, the CIR Chair may seek advice from a third reader.

Workshops: All students must enroll and participate in the noncredit *M.A. Thesis Workshop* winter and spring quarters. This workshop will address the selection, formulation, and development of paper topics. Students will discuss the drafts of the developing paper in the workshop.

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Dates Relating to M.A. Papers:

- 1) *By the end of the first quarter of full-time residence*, students should have a conference with their CIR preceptor to discuss possible topic(s) for the M.A. Paper.
- 2) *By the eighth week of the winter quarter*, a copy of the **final** proposal with the **M.A. Paper Topic Approval Form** signed by both the faculty sponsor and the preceptor is due in CIR office (Pick 301). Students then are responsible for setting up, with their faculty sponsor and the CIR preceptor, a schedule for submitting drafts of the proposal and of the M.A. Paper in order to meet the CIR convocation deadlines.
- 3) *By the first day of the quarter of intended graduation*, students must file an **Application for a Degree** form with the CIR office. The thesis proposal must already be approved in order for this application to be accepted.
- 4) *By the Friday of the third week of the quarter of intended graduation*, first drafts of the M.A. Paper are due to both the faculty sponsor and the CIR preceptor.
- 5) *By Friday of the sixth week of the quarter of intended graduation*, the final draft of the M.A. Paper is due to the preceptor and faculty reader. The student should also provide an M.A. Paper Evaluation Form to the faculty member at this time.
- 6) *By Friday of the seventh week of the quarter of intended graduation*, the signed paper evaluations and grades from your faculty sponsor and preceptor are due.
- 7) *By Friday of the ninth week of the quarter of intended graduation*, the **complete and final** copy of your M.A. Paper, inexpensively bound, is due to the CIR office, Pick 301.