

**CARLETON UNIVERSITY**  
**Institute of European and Russian Studies**

**Honours Essay - EURR 4908**

**GUIDELINES**

The writing of an honours essay should be one of the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences in a student's higher education. It gives the student an opportunity to explore a particular topic in depth, to become personally involved in creative research and writing, and to learn the techniques necessary for more advanced work. This guide is designed to help you avoid some of the common pitfalls, as well as to describe the recommended procedures in the choosing, researching, writing and presenting of your paper. It is the **student's responsibility** to be familiar with the specific material contained herein, as well as with the general regulations pertaining to research essays and theses, and regulations as enumerated in the relevant University calendars.

**Honours Essay**

**A. Length**

The honours essay should not exceed 80 double-spaced pages (excluding endnotes and bibliography). Students submitting essays in excess of the page limit may be asked to revise them to within the page limit.

**B. Conceptual framework and originality**

In terms of scope and concept, an honours essay can be conceived of as an extended paper for a research seminar. The essay should deal with a clearly delineated topic, should state a conceptual framework for analysing the topic, should place the study within the context of existing scholarship, and should provide a well-organized approach to addressing the problem in question.

**Choice of Research Topic**

The choice of an appropriate topic is crucial for the successful completion of the paper. Remember that you are engaged in a training exercise. It is better to approach your topic as if you are writing a long term paper rather than a short book.

If you are having difficulty in selecting a topic, do consult individual faculty members for suggestions. It is important that your proposed topic fall within the areas of proficiency of one or more members of faculty in order to ensure adequate supervision, identification of resource people, and guidance to sources. Also, necessary research materials should be available in Ottawa, unless you are able to make special arrangements to conduct research elsewhere.

If you are having difficulty finding a research topic, you may wish to replicate an existing study. This would involve following an existing research design by an established scholar and changing the domain, i.e. a different country, a different institution, (a different data base in any event), and testing whether the same general findings apply.

Students frequently try to take on too large a topic or one that is poorly defined. The research effort can then become frustrating because “The reach exceeds the grasp”. It is best to focus on a general topic, and then cut it down to manageable proportions. Be aware at the outset what the limits of your research project are. Whenever possible, try to build on a seminar paper or related papers for courses which you have already submitted or plan to submit.

## The Research Proposal

Each student must submit a research proposal. Formal approval of the research proposal is required before you begin writing your research paper.

You should select a topic for your honours essay and a research supervisor by the beginning of the first term of the fourth year (see below, Part IV). After your research supervisor approves your proposal, you must submit a copy of it to the institute administrator, along with the “Approval for Honours Research Proposal” from (document A), signed by your research supervisor. The proposal must then be approved by the Undergraduate supervisor of the Institute. You should submit your proposal for approval within the first month of your fourth year.

## Content of the Research Proposal

Your research proposal should include the following:

1. **Statement of your essay or proposition:** A concise statement of the problem or question you wish to explore. The topic of your project should centre around some type of puzzle or question which has interesting intellectual content. In other words, it should normally involve a “why” or “how” question, not simply a “what” question.
2. **Nature of the project:** A brief indication of the nature of existing scholarship on the topic and where your project fits into this context. The proposal should clearly define the scope of the research project in terms of the time period covered, the geographical focus and the subject matter.
3. **Preliminary hypotheses:** A preliminary presentation of hypotheses or propositions which you wish to examine or test as you undertake your research. Since different disciplines require a more or less rigorous approach in this regard, you should consult individually with relevant faculty members in formulating your propositions. But, as a minimum, you should indicate what kinds of findings or conclusions you are hoping to elucidate from your study.
4. **Methodology:** A detailed discussion of how you plan to undertake your research. What kind of research methods and materials will you use? What kind of methodology will you apply? How do you propose concretely to answer the questions you set out in your proposal? What are the advantages and possible problems which might arise in connection with the approach you propose to take? This point should include discussion of the sense in which your project is inter-disciplinary. You should de-limit the temporal, spatial and thematic scope of your proposed research project.
5. **Work Schedule:** A concrete schedule of work, indicating deadlines and goals you have

set for yourself in terms of completion of various stages of work.

6. **Outline:** An outline of chapters to be included in the paper with a brief description of each chapter.
7. **Bibliography and Research Sources:** A preliminary bibliography, including archival materials, serials, or newspapers. A discussion of the availability of required research materials should be included. If they are not available in Ottawa, how will you gain access to them? If you plan to do research outside of the Ottawa area, how will you organize this what will be the purpose?

## The Research Supervisor

Selection of a research supervisor is made in consultation between you and the undergraduate supervisor. You should select and begin consultations with your research supervisor as early as possible in the year. If you have an idea of who you would like to supervisor your work, you may approach him/her on a preliminary basis to discuss the proposal as you are formulating it. Alternatively, you may wish first to seek advice from the undergraduate supervisor, and then approach the individual. It is the faculty member's responsibility to accept, reject or modify in consultation with the student a topic suggested by the student. The faculty member may have doubts about the feasibility of a suggested topic and may ask the student to do some preliminary investigation about availability of sources or to submit a brief outline of the topic before the student is accepted formally. Once you feel you know whom you would prefer to supervise your work, propose the name to the undergraduate supervisor. Once you agree on the proposal, your proposed supervisor will then sign a form entitled "Approval for Research Proposal" (document A) (available from the Institute administrator) indicating that he/she approves your proposal and is willing to supervise the project. If you have drafted your proposal but have not yet found a supervisor, the undergraduate supervisor will assist you in finding one.

## The Inter-Disciplinary Character of the Project and the Second Reader

Your research project should have an inter-disciplinary character. This means that materials or methods should be drawn from a least two disciplines represented in the Institute's program. To assist with realizing this goal, you should, early in the process, agree on a second reader for your project. To do so you should consult with your research supervisor and the undergraduate supervisor of the Institute. The undergraduate supervisor of the Institute must approve your second reader. The second reader can assist you and offer you advice as you carry out your research and as you write your paper. The second reader can be from the same discipline as the research supervisor or a different one, depending on what is appropriate for the particular topic and research methodology.

## Questions of Style, Referencing, and Translation

The honours essay must be presented in a satisfactory literary form, consistent with the disciplines concerned, and must display a scholarly approach to the subject and a thorough knowledge of it. Academic research is not a monologue with yourself; you must communicate effectively with a larger community. There are a number of excellent style guides which you can consult for information about citation form, bibliographies, etc. Especially good is Kate Turabian's **A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations** (University of Chicago Press). Since citation styles vary both in terms of references to the literature, as well

as bibliography, you should select one and adhere to it consistently.

If you use a transliteration system for Cyrillic Sources, it should be applied consistently throughout your paper. We recommend use of the Library of Congress system, as it corresponds to the form citations taken in major libraries. If you prefer to use another transliteration system (or introduce some modifications into the Library of Congress system) please indicate this in your introduction and make use of that system consistently. Alternatively, you may use a software project which allows you to print Cyrillic references in the Cyrillic alphabet.

## Approval of Your Honours Essay

Before you can submit your honours essay for evaluation, your research supervisor must sign the Honour Essay Defence Approval Form (document C) and return it to the Institute administrator. Only at this point will an examination committee be established. Schedules for submitting the essay are arranged in consultation with the supervisor, however, **the final deadline to submit the Honours Essay for defense is the last day of classes in the term in which the student plans to defend (in most cases, at the end of the winter term)**. For oral examinations (see below), please be aware that examiners must be given at least 10 days to read the final version of the essay before the examination. You must also allow sufficient time after the examination to make any revisions or corrections required by the committee before the final deadline for submission. For written evaluations, students should also allow sufficient time to make corrections before filing the final paper.

## The Evaluation and Submission of the Final Paper

### *Evaluation:*

The honours essay is evaluated by a committee consisting of your research supervisor and the second reader. The second reader is chosen in consultation with the research supervisor and must be approved by the undergraduate supervisor. The student will provide each member of the committee with a printed copy of the essay (2 copies total).

For students electing honours essays **before** the 2014-2015 academic year, the evaluation of the thesis will be conducted as an oral examination. Beginning in the 2014-2015, the written paper will be evaluated without the requirement of an oral defence.

### *Oral Examination Procedures:*

**\*\*\* for students enrolled in the Honours essay 2012-13 and 2013-14) \*\*\***

An oral examination is required for the honours essay. The oral examination board for the honours essay includes your research supervisor and your second reader. At the beginning of the examination you will be given the opportunity to make some brief comments about your work. You should not repeat the contents of the essay but explain points which may not be evident to the board, e.g., problems which arose while conducting the research, unanticipated issues, questions relating to source materials or future research suggested by your project. Following this, each examiner will pose both general and specific questions. You will be asked to step out of the room both before and after the examination to allow the examiners to consult. After the end of the examination you will be informed of the committee's evaluation. The committee will determine an overall letter grade for the honour's essay based on both the quality of the written paper and of the oral defense.

### *Evaluation of Written paper:*

**\*\*\* for students enrolled in Honours essay 2014-15 and after \*\*\***

The committee members will mark the honours essay and write written comments that will be circulated to the members of the committee. Together, they will arrive on a final mark for the paper. The mark is based solely on the written paper submitted. Once a mark is agreed upon, the written comments of the examiners will be circulated to the student along with the final mark and a list of corrections and typographical errors.

#### *Corrections:*

For both oral examinations and written evaluations, the committee will provide the student with a list of corrections and typographical errors before the submission of the final copy of the paper to the Institute. The research supervisor must approve these changes before final submission.

#### *Submission of the Final Paper*

Once the corrected copy of the essay has been approved by the supervisor, the student should submit ONE printed copy of the final version of the essay to the Institute administrator. The student may also be required to fill out some forms at the time of submission. The administrator will ensure that the final mark for the essay is processed.

## **Additional Practical Tips for Writing Research Papers**

### **Drawing up of Working Bibliography<sup>1</sup>**

The first task after deciding on a topic is to compile a list of the books, documents and articles you wish to consult. You can save yourself time later on if you use a word processing or data base computer program or individual 3 X 5 file cards on which you carefully note the author's name, the title of the publication, the place and date of publication, and the volume and issue number of the periodical (if appropriate) and relevant page numbers. You should also note where you found mention of this source (you will need this information for Inter-Library Loan requests), whether it is available at Carleton (with call number) and, if not, the date on which you requested it on Inter-Library Loan.

If you access Internet sources, make a careful note of the complete World Wide Web address, the specific name and date of document found, and the date that you accessed the document from the Internet. Always remember that Websites may change frequently, so it is sometimes difficult to find a document later.

The drawing up of a bibliography usually begins with a systematic check of English-language publications. This can best be done by checking the electronic databases relevant to your topic and disciplinary approach (*American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies*, *Historical Abstracts*, *International Political Science Abstracts*, *Sociological Abstracts*, etc.) available at the MacOdrum Library website. The titles of appropriate Russian-language sources can be found by checking the online catalogues of the Hoover Institution, the Robarts Library at the University of Toronto, and the Slavonic Reading Room of the New York Public Library, or the Library of Congress. Your supervisor will probably suggest some specialized bibliographies and periodicals in your field which you should consult. You might also look at the bibliographies and footnotes in a few recent monographs or articles which directly relate to your topic and are available at Carleton to see if they provide additional bibliographic leads.

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<sup>1</sup> A very useful and inexpensive guide to the technique of writing research essays can be found in the Carleton bookstore: Hugh Robertson, *The Research Essay: A Briefing for Students*. Ottawa: Longparish, 1985. Page 46.  
Note also the EURUS and CCSS Bibliographic Guides to certain special subjects.

After compiling a preliminary bibliography and noting which items are available at Carleton, you should show your list to your supervisor and discuss whatever gaps you feel exist in your sources. Remember that books not available at other Canadian universities may require time (a few weeks to a few months) to reach Carleton; some libraries (e.g., New York Public) will not loan anything; others will not loan old or rare items. Journal articles, on the other hand, can currently be obtained quickly and free of charge through the Inter-Library Loan office. Students should be encouraged to order books from the Library's Inter-Library Loan Service.

### **Research**

This is the most time-consuming, but often the most enjoyable part of a thesis. No guidelines can be provided except to recommend that you not put off the most important (and often the longest and most difficult) sources until the end; that you set yourself a cut-off date for completing your research (you never will be able to cover everything, so don't try); and that you take your notes systematically and neatly. You might use 5 X 8 file cards for this purpose or a computer data base system, on which you also note (on one side only) the source and the page as well as whether you are quoting or paraphrasing the author.

### **Outline and Draft**

After completing your research, draw up a detailed (at least two pages), chapter-by-chapter outline of your thesis. Show this to your supervisor who may suggest certain areas to be avoided or others that need expansion. Indicate how many pages you intend to devote to each chapter. Then organize your cards or notes according to this outline. You will find that some of the material you have gathered is irrelevant to your outline. Do not try to force it in or allow yourself to go off on unnecessary tangents.

The writing of your draft will require concentrated and uninterrupted work. Strive for good organization and logical argumentation the first time around. You can always go back and fit in the appropriate facts and quotations, if necessary. Make sure your introduction spells out what you are going to cover (as well as what you are not going to discuss), why you have chosen this particular topic, your general hypothesis and how this related to the prevailing view of your subject, and perhaps mention the major sources of your information. Throughout your paper, make sure you take time to analyze or interpret the data being presented; do not provide just a straight narrative or a string of quotations and facts. It is often helpful to present data in the form of tables, figures or chronologies. It is generally advisable to submit chapters in draft to the supervisor for comment as they are completed.

After you have finished a draft, put it away for a few days; then go back and polish your syntax, eliminate repetitious statements, check questionable facts as well as quotations, and perhaps condense your paper somewhat. Any draft should be typed (double spaced) and submitted to your supervisor with complete footnotes (these may be at the end of the draft as endnotes) and a bibliography. Your bibliography should list all items consulted. Your supervisor may suggest that it be divided into primary and secondary accounts or in some other manner. You may wish to preface it with a bibliographical note discussing your major sources and mentioning pertinent material you were unable to obtain. Be sure to proofread your draft which can include inserts, corrections and excised material as long as it is neat and readable. (Check with your supervisor to see if he/she would prefer that you submit the draft version of your research essay or thesis chapter-by-chapter.)

### **Revision**

Normally it will take your supervisor at least a week to ten days to read your draft if it is submitted during the academic year. You can expect to do several drafts of each chapter, based on

comments from your supervisor. Do not assume that it can be read while final examinations are being marked, during holidays, or while the supervisor is trying to meet personal research deadlines during parts of the summer vacation. Your supervisor may note areas where your organization or argumentation should be improved; where facts or quotes should be checked; or where your mode of expression could be improved. Very often, a chapter or two will be edited stylistically and you will be expected to apply these lessons to later chapters yourself. It is possible that entire chapters should be rewritten and resubmitted. Sometimes a supervisor's remarks will be suggestions only, which the student is free to accept or reject. The student will be evaluated on the basis of the results of his/her writing and research. It will usually take a student a week or two to make the suggested revisions.

**Preparation of Final Draft**

Allow adequate time to prepare your final draft, and for proofreading. Once it is approved by your supervisor, provide the EURUS administrator with 1 copy. Be sure to include a table of contents and of charts (if applicable). An abstract of no more than 150 words must also be included. Number the pages consecutively throughout (including the bibliography); number the footnotes or endnotes consecutively in each chapter and place at the bottom of the page or place endnotes at the end of each chapter. The footnotes or endnotes must remain consistent throughout. The margins should be unmarked and an inch wide on all sides but the left side where 1.5 margins are recommended. Do not punch holes in the paper and do not bind in any way.