

## **GUIDELINES: THE MASTER'S RESEARCH ESSAY (MRE)**

Students wishing to pursue an MRE must identify a Supervisory team, take the research methods class (INAF 5015), and complete the research proposal in their first year of study.

Students undertaking an MRE should normally have a minimum A- GPA at the end of the first two terms of study at NPSIA.

### **Supervision**

MREs are supervised by a Supervisory Team consisting of a Supervisor and an Advisor or Co-supervisors.

**Supervisors must be NPSIA faculty members.** Students are responsible for identifying a Supervisor and seeking their approval to supervise. Please familiarise yourself with NPSIA's Guidelines for Graduate Student Research Supervision (available on the website), as well as the [Responsibility and Expectations Policy](#) developed by Graduate Studies.

**Co-supervision requirements:** MA/JD students must have a **co-supervisor** from University of Ottawa Law School; Latin American Studies and African Studies Specialisations require a co-supervisor from these respective programmes.

In consultation and with the approval of their supervisor, students may bring on a non-NPSIA faculty member to be a co-supervisor. For further information, please consult the [guidelines for nominal co-supervisors](#) and the Graduate Studies' [Supervision Appointments Policy](#).

For MREs with co-supervisors, advisors are optional.

**Advisors** should be identified in consultation with the Supervisor and their participation should be finalised early in their research process, during or after the Research Proposal is submitted.

Advisors are recognized experts in the subject area and can be any of the following:

- Faculty members at NPSIA, other relevant departments at Carleton, or another university;
- NPSIA fellows or senior fellows or adjunct professors;
- Government officials such as analysts, diplomats in any department or agency relevant to the work;
- Experts at non-governmental organizations, including think tanks.
- A retired person or expert outside of the above list who is identified in consultation with the Supervisor.

### **The Proposal**

**Proposals are due on May 1 using the Research Proposal Form.** Proposals are approved jointly by the Proposed Supervisor and MA Associate Director.

The Proposal format should include the following information:

1. TENTATIVE TITLE
2. PROBLEM AND QUESTION. Describe the problem/puzzle/issue you are investigating, its relevance, and identify the research question or hypothesis you will be analyzing.
3. RELATED RESEARCH. Provide a brief overview of the literature that addresses or is directly relevant to the research question. The overview should specifically identify the gaps or shortcomings in the literature that the paper plans to address.
4. BASIC APPROACH. Describe what you plan to do in your research and how you plan to do it, i.e. the methods you will employ to collect and analyze information and evaluate your research question or hypothesis.
5. TENTATIVE SECTION HEADINGS

### **Research and Writing Process**

**MRE Prerequisite:** Students must take INAF 5015 Research Methods (for Data Science students DATA 5000) in their first year of study.

**MRE Course Credit:** Students must register in the MRE course (INAF 5908 – MA/JD INAF 5906) continuously until the MRE is completed, per Article 8.2 of Graduate Studies regulations.

**MRE Length:** Unless otherwise agreed to by your supervisory committee, research essays must be no longer than **15,000 words**, inclusive of all notes, figures, and bibliography. Formatting requirements are less strict than for theses and should be discussed with your Supervisor.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** Students are subject to and should be familiar with [Carleton's Academic Integrity Policy](#).

**Generative Artificial Intelligence:** Students should agree on the use of GenAI with their supervisor, in accordance with Carleton's [Artificial Intelligence Framework](#).

**Research Ethics:** Research involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved by Carleton's Research Ethics Board (CUREB-A). Applications for ethics approval must be submitted prior to the commencement of the research. Students should familiarise themselves with the processes outlined by the [Office of Research Ethics](#), including the frequency of CUREB-A proposal reviews. Students need to plan sufficient time for the review and revision of their Application for Ethics Clearance.

### **MRE Structure**

The research essay should include the following components:

- A. Clearly identified, well-motivated, and focused research question that undertakes:
  - a. Theory testing: test or clarify existing theories or address a current policy debate.
  - b. Explanation: explain a particular policy outcome or event.
  - c. Evaluation: evaluate outcomes of a policy.

- B. An argument that clearly answers the research question.
- C. A methodology and conceptual framework that identifies the key factors influencing the outcome of interest. For example, empirical analyses may take the form of a focused case study, comparative case study, or large sample statistical analysis.
- D. A structured, focused, comprehensive, and coherent literature review that briefly describes the important literature associated with their research problem and identifies the gap or debate in the literature that is addressed in the paper.
- E. The body of the argument and the analysis.
- F. Conclusions. Students are strongly encouraged to draw out the policy implications and relevance of their research.

### **Submission and Evaluation**

MREs are evaluated jointly by the Supervisor and Advisor, or if applicable, Co-Supervisors.

When a research essay is completed to the satisfaction of the Supervisor, it is then submitted to the Supervisory team for evaluation. Three submission deadlines exist:

- April 1<sup>st</sup> for Summer Graduation
- August 1<sup>st</sup> for Fall Graduation
- December 1<sup>st</sup> for Spring Graduation

A student may insist on submitting a research essay that the Supervisor has deemed not ready for evaluation. In that case, the Supervisor and Advisor will evaluate the paper according to standard procedures.

**Grading:** The Supervisor and Advisor each evaluate the MRE. Together, they jointly determine the grade as per the normal NPSIA grading system. A minimum grade of B- is required to pass.

**After Grading:** The Supervisor conveys to the student the agreed grade, specifying any revisions required.

The Supervisor must certify that all revisions/corrections have been completed satisfactorily and the final grade submitted to the MA Associate Director prior to Carleton's grading deadlines to ensure graduation in a given term.