Ealdormere Judges' Research Paper Guidebook

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1) Why this guidebook?

This guidebook was created to help judges embrace the diverse nature of research papers and the written word as an Arts and Sciences (A&S) entry.

The well-researched written word entries that we receive in A&S competition are not always the traditional 'thesis stated, then thesis proved' style research paper.

This document hopes to clarify what judges should expect from several different styles of research paper, in order to aid them in recognizing the many very different ways of presenting research, and, however different, show that they also have many attributes in common.

This guidebook was put together by a collection of people with a great deal of combined experience with in-depth research projects, grading papers, writing books, and entering A&S tournaments.

2) The Importance of A&S Competition in Our Society

The Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. (SCA) is an educational not-for-profit organization devoted to the study of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Our "Arts & Sciences" are the crafts, skills, and technologies recreated for use within the SCA or purely for historical interest. Participants research, study, and practice these skills and then share their results with others. You will see them in use and on display at our events - the recipes used for a feast, the armor worn in combat, the scrolls presented in Court, the costumes (garb) we wear, and the other artifacts we engage with.

Part of our mandate as a not-for-profit organization is to confirm the validity of research presented to the membership.

3) What each written work has in common

Put simply, written works are completed and submitted in advance to judges, in order to give them the opportunity to examine written works and provide feedback to entrants.

Written works, regardless of format or type, should show proficiency in language skills, a proper bibliography, proper citations, and have basic document formatting.

Specifically, written submissions should show:

A. Relevance. Written works should cover topics relating to the SCA time period of pre-1600 history, or are somehow aimed to improve aspects of the SCA.
B. Logic. Written works should have a logical flow, and the topic should be logical. Author clearly states the subject matter and intent of their paper.
C. Proficiency in language skills like spelling and grammar. A good word processor will have both a spell checker and a grammar checker built in to help any author. However, a compassionate judge will use their judgement and recognize that if the autocorrect consistently changes a term, they will not remove points for every instance.

    D. Bibliography. A proper bibliography should contain examples of strong research sources, and not rely on 'wikipedia.org' pages or 'google it'. There shouldn't be any padding or fake sources to make a bibliography longer. All references should be meaningful to the logic of the paper. Pictures and other images should be properly accredited.

    E. Citation. Citation examples for references:

        a. https://www.englishclub.com/writing/plagiarism-citation.htm

        b. http://www.umuc.edu/library/libhow/apa_examples.cfm

        c. http://www.umuc.edu/library/libhow/mla_examples.cfm

    There is no prefered citation format for the references over others, (e.g. APA over MLA) but it must be possible to look up the references listed given the information provided, and the author should remain consistent in style. "Google 'Bone Objects', Second Item" is not adequate.

    F. Document formatting should add to understanding and clarity. E.g.: Experiments should be in listed in order of steps, or a series of of images should be grouped by place or by time.

The focus for judging a written project should be on tight editing, focus and staying on-topic. Projects that are insufficiently edited can be padded with irrelevant details which can damage the clarity of the written work. However, more concise writing that provides a focused narrative of the topic should be the aim for written works. For more information, see the detailed descriptions below for specifics of what to look for in different types of written entries.

A written entry should not have to be a PhD thesis or a potential manuscript submission intended for publication to do well in competition. Yet, it should use some scholarly sources where appropriate (again, see below, as this is dependent on the paper type) with consistent use of an acceptable citation format. Plagiarism should be assumed to be not willful, and discreetly brought to the attention of the KMoAS.

Many of the papers you read will be couched or drafted for an SCA audience, not for an academic one. This is a perfectly acceptable research focus to take as long as the underlying or related research is solid. An author should take into consideration their audience when writing a paper. It is not a lesser work if the author has pointed out the relevant SCA applications to their research, and a judge should not remove points if they do so.

4) Types of research papers identified so far

The following subcategories of written works are merely those identified by this committee at the time this handbook was published. Given that creativity and ingenuity are at the heart of the SCAdian scholar we expect this list will not be exhaustive, and should be expanded upon by future committees.

A. ***Narrative Essay Paper***

Loose definition: The paper discusses a fairly specific subject and what we know about it. Can be a written research summary or showcase a number of photos from museums.

Larger definition: This is a paper that is meant to explain or elucidate a larger concept or idea, or to be a survey. These are papers that are not particularly focused on proving a thesis statement, but still would make use of footnoting and critical secondary literature, at least in their advanced form. The advanced variety of these papers often does have an implicit thesis statement, but it may not be stated as such and still be a good paper.

Examples:
- Research that presents a volume of visual evidence of a particular style (of clothing, of painting, of construction) over time, perhaps with some commentary pointing out key elements.
- Biographical research, such as a paper on the life of Eleanor of Aquitaine
- Historical summary, such as the key events of the defeat of the Spanish Armada

B. **Thesis Style Paper**

Loose definition: Typical university-type paper that examines evidence (typically written, but could also be visual) to prove a point or thesis. Format is 'Introduction' + 'Body' + 'Conclusion.'

Larger definition: The paper will address the W5s + 1: Who, What, Where, When, Why and How, linked in a logical fashion to cover what is known about the chosen topic. Finding something new, linking sources in a new way, or also elaborating a new interpretation (supported by evidence) pushes the paper into excellence. The classic 'thesis statement' paper which usually takes the "if this then that" form is actually a theory testing task. It must compare and contrast as part of its exposition and argumentation and then it also has to eliminate all other possible answers so that only the original hypothesis remains. Good papers of this type often read like a detective novel, including a literature review to trace the current path of the research on the topic. The paper then discusses the clues in the source material, related literature to persuade the reader of their argument on the topic. This paper may also include research questions, which provide a focus for the narrative.

Examples:
- A paper on the relationship between the increased trade in silk from the East and the development of the bliaut in the 12th century
- A paper on the role of Eleanor of Aquitaine's heritage in her later political choices
- A paper on the role of weather in the defeat of the Spanish Armada

C. *Experiment Research Paper*

Loose definition: Experiment-based papers seek to demonstrate or prove something by attempting it, and then recording what happens.

Larger definition: With the experimental paper, an experiment is performed to support a hypothesis. This hypothesis is often developed by doing extensive research (e.g. literature review) on the topic before performing any experiments. This style of paper looks critically at a number of sources, and then an idea is presented by the author of how they think things work. The experiment is designed to try out this idea and prove or disprove it. The difference between a standard research paper and this type of paper is the experimental aspect.

The paper will include:
- a background section;
- a clearly stated hypothesis to be challenged through experiment, supported by the background information;
- a design section, which discusses how or why the experiment is designed the way it is, including what materials, techniques, processes, etc. the author will use;
- an experiment section, in which the experiment as it was performed by the author is described, stating what the results were, as well as any evolution or changes made as the experiment proceeded;
- a conclusion section to re-address the hypothesis: was it proved or not? Or is more work needed?

For these papers, sources and critical work are going to be in the background part of the paper, and will be referred to when the author discusses their results. The important thing to remember when judging a paper of this type is that should an experiment prove that the initial hypothesis was wrong, *it is not immediately a failed experiment, and shouldn't be grounds for judging the paper poorly*; rather, an "experiment" type paper should be judged on the thought process that goes into structuring the experiment, whether good methods or research was used to test the hypothesis, whether the testing went into sufficient depth with regards to the materials available, whether the conclusion the writer makes from the experiment is valid, or at least well argued for, given the experiment and testing the writer went through, and on the significance of the experiment conducted. As a judge, ask yourself how much does the experiment help support, refute, or in some way bring more light to the material already out there on its topic? Is it original? Does it add a unique contribution to the existing knowledge base? Some experiments will have statistical analysis to support the conclusions, but the math we are looking for needn't be complicated. If the math is confusing the judge-reader please seek additional help from the KMoAS.

Examples:

- Exploring how water from different sources changes outcome in a dye colour
- Hypothesising that Titanium White could be substituted for Lead White in oil painting
- An attempt to use cow dung as a bleaching agent for linen

D. ***Translations or Redactions***

Loose definition: The paper quotes a section of medieval text and translates it into modern English.

Larger Definition: Redactions or translations should be assessed along similar lines to a historiographical paper. At the core of the paper there should be a properly cited quote, and a reasonable translation or interpretation.

An excellent paper might also contain:
- The basis for their interpretation.
- Thoughts on the effect of this particular interpretation. Are there other interpretations that shift meaning?
- Historical background and context to support the redaction or translation. The socio-political environment is important to understanding a source document.
- An introduction and conclusion that ties in a central theme. What are they attempting to 'prove'?
- Other possible redactions/translations besides the author's, which includes a critique of those other translations. Alternate versions of the translation/redaction could include exaggerations, extraneous detail not found in the earliest version, propaganda to suit local interests, etc. Bias creeping into a translation is excellent material for a research paper.

For direct translations, from one language into English, the writer should be able to discuss the two languages involved, problems with dictionary sources/usages, and reflect whether multiple contemporary versions of the source exist and key differences.

For literary translations (e.g. translations of poetry) there should be some discussion as to whether the translation approach is literal (meaning) or one that attempts to preserve other literary techniques such as metre or literary devices such as alliteration.

An excellent translation paper will show comfort with the nuances of the language appropriate to the subject area, moving between languages or how language has changed since quote was originally written. Examples of this style of work include bards translating Welsh poetry from Gaelic to English, or Cookbooks with multiple dishes.

Papers that address linguistics might have key sections of translation using at least an attempt at inter-linear glossing: (http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php). This formating-exercise would make a more impressive paper.

Examples:

- Apple pie experiments using several different recipes
- Translating "The Song of Roland" into English, straight translation with context
- Translating a Norse Saga into English while keeping a poetic form
- Medieval sheet music translated into modern notation

E. Research presented in a period style

Loose Definition: Reproductions of medieval research methods with a crossover into prose literature composition.

Larger Definition: The format of this paper presents like a literary or fictional work, but is actually an example of how research was conducted in period. For instance, someone might write on a topic in the form of a medieval university mathematical or rhetorical discourse or debate. This approach requires research not only into the topic at hand, but also into the form the paper will take, so it can be fairly advanced work.

For example, an entrant wants to write a treatise on the 'Seven Virtues'. If they were to do this as a period "research paper," in the scholastic tradition, they would first identify the time and place in which they are setting the work. Then they would pose a series of questions about each virtue, and then cite appropriate sources for that time period (e.g Augustine, Peter Lombard, Albertus Magnus, etc.) that would help answer those questions. A more secular version of this is the *compilatio*, a treatise meant for a prince on specific virtues applicable to him and what herbs might be helpful. Again, the emphasis is in bringing together the ideas from a number of period authors (cited by name and sometimes by work) and using them to put together ones' own treatise. So this style of written work is a literary work, but also a great example of how "research" was conducted in period. The judge assigned this style of paper will still examine how well the entry uses cited sources to draw a conclusion.

Examples:

- A treatise on the Seven Virtues
- A *compiliatio* in honour of the Prince
- A mathematical treatise

F. ***Technical research paper***

Loose definition: Paper that explores a topic using statistics, chemical analysis, or other technical study of a topic, as derived from museum material culture research.

Larger definition: This paper is similar to a Narrative Essay Paper, but what makes a technical paper "technical" is that it deals primarily with analysis of numerical data -- measurements, chemical composition analysis, various sorts of statistics, etc. -- rather than textual evidence, which might be introduced as additional background, but isn't the focus of the paper. Data provided can come from the author's own analysis, studying museum records or reproducing an object. In contrast, the Narrative Essay Paper (above) is not so much concerned with analysis or proving a hypothesis, as with telling a "story." An object may be produced using the analysis in the Technical Research Paper to justify the construction.

Examples:

- Creating a knitted purse from grave site fragments
- Creating a Viking bead from a survey of many found colours
- Creating pigments for painting from analysis of extant artworks

G. ***Technical design papers***

Loose definition: Paper explores a topic and then presents a formal design plan.

Larger definition: The thought behind the design paper is also a technical approach, but comes from a different realm than the technical research paper. The resultant outcome of the Technical Design Paper will be a technical drawing, or set of technical drawings, in place of a material object. Plans are presented based upon solid research, and an understanding of the requirements for the specific design subject (e.g. landscape or architectural design, stage design, pattern drafting, etc). This provides an opportunity for designers to use research to present ideas beyond the usual scope of a hobbyist's practice, supported by the same level of sources, citations, and argument expected from other research formats. Similar to the Narrative Essay Paper, the advanced variety of these papers often does have an implicit thesis statement, but it may not be stated as such and still be a good paper. A well-executed design, clearly drawn from critical sources, takes the place of a traditionally proved thesis.

Examples:

- Designing a Florentine city house using Palladian architectural style
- Designing a Tudor garden with plants available in the 16th century
- Designing authentic stage sets for a Shakespearean play

H. **Journalistic endeavours**

Loose definition: Focused research papers on a single topic, event, or location. Includes one main resource focus with robust fact checking.

Larger definition: This type of research paper has many similarities to the narrative essay and may overlap in definition. This paper must cover the 5Ws (who, what, where, why, when and how), and must fact check every claim, but can be without a thesis-prove thesis model to follow. The SCA has supported newsletters and journalistic formats for research since its conception. The Blackfox Awards[1] recognize outstanding articles from Kingdom newsletters for an example of this style of research paper.

Examples:
* Articles for SCA publications like *Tournaments Illuminated* and *The Complete Anachronist*.
* Blog entries.
* Diary Entries
* Newspaper style articles
* Newsletters or articles for newsletters
* Magazine style articles
* In-depth interviews

5) Judges Research Paper Feedback Sheet

Entrant:
Title of Paper:
Point Total (50 max): _____
Judge:
Contact Info of Judge (voluntary):

1) Topic (is subject appropriate to the SCA context, is it well defined, original?)
5 points _____
Comments:

2) Technical writing skill (grammar, spelling, writing structure, use of citations, etc.)
15 points _____
Comments:

3) Logic, Flow and Comprehension
5 points _____
Comments:

4) Complexity/Difficulty dependent upon the style of written project presented
10 points _____
Comments:

5) Research/Documentation – Appropriate to skill level (Quality of Reference Materials & citation use)
10 points _____
Comments:

6) Overall Impression – Includes quality of finished work, presentation, use of photographs/charts (where applicable), ability to link evidence to support thesis (where applicable), how engaging, etc. Judge's discretion.
5 points _____
Comments: