
GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MASTER'S THESIS OR PROJECT PREPARATION

Department of Education and Human Development



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**STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT**

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INTRODUCTION

A requirement for the successful completion of the graduate programs in the Department of Education and Human Development is the production of a thesis or project representing original research that contributes to your discipline. Therefore, it is essential that you conform to the guidelines established in this document and construct a well-presented thesis or project.

Theses or projects in the Department of Education and Human Development include action research, curriculum projects, and analytic reviews. They also include a wide variety of topics and approaches. Therefore, candidates should seek the guidance of their advisor for specific program requirements. All theses or projects should reflect originality, creativity, and rigor.

This document will help you organize your culminating activity. You should seek the guidance of your thesis or project advisor throughout the entire process of writing your thesis or project. If you are in the Special Education, CIMP, Bilingual, or Interdisciplinary Arts for Children program, you should also seek the guidance of your second reader throughout the process. It is the responsibility of each candidate for a master's degree to follow the guidelines established in this document. Again, the format of every thesis or project should be consistent with these guidelines.

OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA FOR COMPLETION OF THE THESIS OR PROJECT

Objectives:

- To develop a deep understanding of research specific to work in one's field.
- To do a thorough review of the literature about a topic in one's field (past 5 years).
- To explore, develop and refine a piece of original and creative scholarly work.
- To further one's understanding of the scholarly process.
- To determine the impact of research on P-12 learning.

Criteria:

A candidate's thesis or project may take one of many forms including but not limited to the following:

- Research, design and teach an innovative curriculum, learning experience or technology-based learning experience that you will teach to your class, including assessing the impact on the learners. Data must be gathered and analyzed to determine the impact on student learning. The design of the curriculum must be based on current best practice in the field. Your work should reflect your theoretical framework.
- Summarize, synthesize and apply existing knowledge about some aspect of education theory, methods, or practice. For example: Development of a curriculum to enhance social studies education through the use of museum visits. Data must be gathered and analyzed to determine the impact on student learning.
- Research, investigate, and document the impact of education change on a school or district. Data must be gathered and analyzed to determine the impact on student learning.
- In the Childhood Curriculum Specialist program, it is required that the graduate student complete an action research study as the culminating thesis. Action research is defined by Stringer (2004) as, "...careful diligent inquiry, not (necessarily) for the purposes of

discovering new facts or revising accepted laws or theories, but to acquire information having practical application to the solution of specific problems related to (one's) work.” (p. 3)

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT THE CRITERIA FOR COMPLETION OF THE THESIS OR PROJECT:

Is the thesis or project basically a paper?

The thesis or project is more than just a paper. It is an active exploration/creation on your part of a product that will/may be implemented and evaluated, which will add to the body of work in your field of expertise.

Do I need a review of literature and when should it be completed?

Every thesis or project must have a thorough, current review of the literature included in the document. A strong draft should be completed as you begin to do your creative work but you will continue to refine it and add to it as you work. Any draft you submit should be good quality writing. You should do all proofreading and editing before you submit the draft. (See section addressing the format of the paper).

What should be in the literature review?

The literature review should include your theoretical framework, published research related to your work from the past five years, or other related research.

What is the writing process like?

Writing of the final product of the thesis or project will be a multiple-draft process. Don't plan to turn in a first draft and have it accepted.

What constitutes a draft and how do I get one to my thesis or project advisor?

Some thesis or project advisors may have specific criteria for submitting drafts of the thesis or project. In general, a draft may be the entire paper or it may be a portion of the paper. It isn't necessary to wait until the paper is complete before you begin sending drafts. In fact, it is a more efficient use of time to have completed portions in for review as soon as you have a strong draft ready. Be sure you take care of editing prior to submitting the draft. Your thesis or project advisor will instruct you as to whether drafts should be hard copies with a return address included with the copy or electronic copies. You can mail the draft to your thesis or project advisor, bring it by his or her office, or put it in the appropriate mailbox.

How long will it take to get feedback on a draft?

Any drafts you turn in during the semester will require approximately a three-week turn-around. If one of those weeks is the first or the last week of classes at SUNY Brockport, add another week to the process.

What publication style do I need to use for the final paper?

Every thesis or project must be in the proper style- Chicago, MLA or APA, 5th Ed. It is the responsibility of the author to assure that *all style requirements are met*. The thesis or project advisor will indicate which style is appropriate for your paper.

What is a good timeline for scheduling work on my thesis or project?

Completion of the thesis or project is a self-managed process. You should make weekly progress on your thesis or project in order to have your work completed by the end of the time frame. If you cannot devote time on a weekly basis it will be very difficult to complete the thesis or project. Your thesis or project advisor cannot catch you up if you fall behind on your work.

When should I have my thesis or project completed?

You will be actively working on your thesis or project during the semester in which you register for Seminar. Ideally, your thesis or project should be completed by the end of the semester following your registration or by the subsequent semester.

If you are seeking to graduate during the semester in which you complete your thesis or project, please note the following deadlines for submission of the final thesis or project to the Coordinator for Graduate Advisement:

<u>Degree Posted</u>	<u>Deadline for final thesis or project</u>
August	August 1
December	December 1
January	January 1
May	May 1

If I do not complete the thesis or project in the semester in which I registered for Seminar, what do I have to do to continue my registration?

Candidates, who matriculated in the Fall 2003 term or later, must register for one credit of thesis or project continuance each semester (except summer) until the thesis or project has been completed and approved by the Department Chairperson. Candidates who do not complete the thesis or project during the term of the seminar course will be given a grade of PR (in progress) in the Seminar course and must register for TCC 707 in the following semester (except summer). Candidates who do not register for TCC 707 every subsequent semester after the Seminar course (except summer) will be assigned a failing grade for the thesis or project and must re-register for the three credit hour Seminar course.

How often should I plan to meet with my thesis or project advisor during the process?

You should be meeting with your thesis or project advisor at least 2-3 times per semester during each semester you are working on the thesis or project. Faculty are only guaranteed to be available during the spring semester and the fall semester. If you plan to work with your advisor at other times, contact the advisor to ask when he or she is available. There is no guarantee that the person will be available at times other than during the semester.

Can I drop by to have the meetings?

Do not plan on instant access to thesis or project advisors. They teach other classes, sit on many college committees, and have other professional duties—and a personal life. You need to plan to work and meet with them during the semester and to provide them time in order to schedule meetings.

Can I collaborate on my thesis or project with another graduate student?

The Department of Education and Human Development supports intellectual collaboration among students working on a thesis or project. Students who collaborate must meet the following criteria to gain department approval:

- Each student will have his or her own research question.
- Each student will conduct his or her own study.
- Each student will write his or her own thesis or project paper.

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS:

SUNY Brockport has anyone working with human subjects- even your own students- file an IRB proposal. Go to <http://www.brockport.edu/etc/forms/grant/IRBapp.html> to get the form to submit to the compliance officer in order to file that you're doing the project with human subjects.

In addition you will go through a mini-course on-line. It doesn't cost anything but you need to do it before you submit your proposal. The website for doing the mini-course is: <http://www.miami.edu/citireg>.

THESIS OR PROJECT PROPOSAL

Proposal: In consultation with the project or thesis instructor/advisor, candidates will develop and submit a proposal. The proposal includes the following:

Chapter I: Introduction, problem statement, significance of the problem, rationale and definition of terms.

Chapter II: An outline of the literature review with references.

Proposals will be submitted using the appropriate form, which can be obtained from the thesis or project advisor or online at <http://www.brockport.edu/ehd/Programs/Graduate/Forms.htm>. No candidate will be given a grade—even PR—in the seminar course without completing the proposal. The candidate must submit four copies of the proposal to the thesis or project advisor. Once the proposal has been approved by the department, the candidate will receive a signed copy and written notification of approval to proceed with the thesis or project.

PARTS OF THE THESIS OR PROJECT

Title Page

The title page of the thesis or project must include your full legal name, your department's official name, the title of your work, a thesis or project submission statement, and the name of the degree you are seeking. Be sure to double-space all portions of your title page. Refer to **Figure 1** as an example.

Figure 1 Sample Title Page

<p>Full Title of Thesis or project (centered in top quarter of page)</p> <p>by</p> <p>Full name of author Date of degree award</p> <p>A thesis or project submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of the State University of New York College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education</p>

Copyright Page

If you would like to copyright your thesis or project, the copyright page follows the title page. Include a statement of copyright, your full name, and the year centered above the bottom margin of the page.

To register a copyright for your thesis or project visit the Library of Congress Copyright Office’s Web site at <http://www.loc.gov/copyright/> or write to the Library of Congress Copyright Office, Washington D.C. 20599.

Signature Page

Your thesis or project must include a signature page with the **original** signatures of your readers. That is, do not include a photocopy of the signature page with your thesis or project. Print out multiple blank copies of the signature page and have each copy signed so that each official copy of your thesis or project includes original signatures. Signature pages should be on the same cotton bond paper as the remainder of your thesis or project, should be double-spaced, and should follow the prescribed margins (see page 11). Your advisor should sign the top line. Include the title of your thesis or project and your full name typed on the signature page. Refer to **Figure 2** as an example.

Figure 2 Sample Signature Page

Title of Thesis or project	
by	
Your full name	
APPROVED BY:	
_____ Advisor	_____ Date *
_____ Director, Graduate Programs	_____ Date

* If you are in the Special Education, CIMP, Bilingual or Interdisciplinary Arts for Children program, include a second line for the second reader, including a date line.

Readers

For the following programs, a 2nd reader is involved in the process: Special Education, CIMP, Bilingual or Interdisciplinary Arts for Children. All theses or projects are, however, submitted to the Graduate Director who indicates departmental approval of the thesis or project by signing off at the completion of the thesis or project.

Dedication

A dedication page is optional. If you choose to include one, it must be on its own page.

Acknowledgements

An acknowledgement page is optional. If you choose to include one, it must be on its own page.

Table of Contents

A table of contents is **required**. Place the table of contents immediately before the text of the thesis or project and any lists of illustrations, charts, etc. that you include (see below).

Include all chapter names and main subdivision names in the table of chapter titles are left justified and page numbers are right justified with a dot leader preceding them. Subdivision names should be indented. Make sure to be consistent in the numbering form for chapter or section titles used in the table of contents and in the text. In other words, do not use Roman numerals for chapter titles in the table of contents and Arabic numerals in the text. Do not write out numbers as words in the table of contents, but use an Arabic or Roman numeral in the text. Refer to **Figure 3** as an example.

Figure 3 Sample Table of Contents

Chapter One: Title	1
Chapter Two: Title	16
Subheading Title	22

Lists of Illustrations

If you are including illustrations, you must include a list of them. Illustrations include pictures, photographs, tables, figures, charts, and graphs. Use a separate list for each type of illustration and format the list exactly as you would format the table of contents. Additionally, each list must be on a separate page. Use the appropriate convention as determined by your advisor.

Abstract

An abstract of your thesis or project may be **required**. The abstract should be brief (no more than 350 words) and double-spaced on its own separate page

Writing and Citations

Citations should follow one of the conventions below. The convention will be determined by the thesis or project advisor, based on what is appropriate for the field of study.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 14th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 5th ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 1999.

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 5th ed. Washington, DC: The American Psychological Association, 1994.

The above list of standard style guides is available on the Drake Library website at <http://www.brockport.edu/library/>

Text

The text of your thesis or project represents the body of your research work. Be sure to cite quotations and ideas borrowed from others in a style that is appropriate to your discipline. Your thesis or project advisor will determine the appropriate style for your work. A consistent style is required throughout the work.

Body of thesis or project

The body of the thesis or project paper is usually divided into chapters. Where appropriate, each of the following sections should be included:

Chapter 1 Introduction:

The introduction serves to state the problem and coordinate that problem with the literature that has been published. The problem is described, a rationale for the thesis or project is presented, including the goals of the thesis or project which are formed from reviewing the relevant literature. Definition of terms is part of the introduction.

- a. Problem Statement
- b. Significance of the Problem
- c. Purpose
- d. Rationale
- e. Definition of terms
- f. Summary, transition into the next chapter

Chapter 2 Literature Review: is intended to give an understanding of what was studied previously and what remains to be studied. The relevant information is synthesized to justify the questions and methods of the present study. The writer uses mainly primary sources to support the previously stated hypotheses or research question. A typical literature review is, at minimum, 15 pages of narrative text which critically reviews all relevant research related to one's topic. The general themes to concentrate on include:

- a. what previous theories or constructs are relevant to the problem
- b. what studies have been reported and/or evaluated in the literature
- c. what empirical findings have directed the present thesis or project
- d. what research methods, procedures, and measurement instruments have been used previously

For Thesis:

Chapter 3 Applications and Evaluation: The method section includes a description of how the study was performed so that the goals and objectives could be achieved. The general components include:

- a. introduction: target group, goals, objectives
- b. participants
- c. procedures of study
- d. instruments for study

Chapter 4 Results: the data are reported in text and tables

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Recommendations: Discussion and conclusions reached in the thesis. The discussion should relate the recommendations to the existing theoretical and empirical literature on the subject, provide suggestions for future research, and conclude with a brief summary of the entire work.

For Project:

Chapter 3 Application: A description of the project, curriculum, etc.

Chapter 4 Conclusions and Recommendations: Discussion and conclusions reached by the project. The discussion should relate the recommendations to the existing theoretical and empirical literature on the subject, provide suggestions for future research, and conclude with a brief summary of the entire work.

Endnotes

Place endnotes at the end of the chapter or at the end of the text before the references. Consult the style guide you are using for appropriate use of notes. Again, unless your advisor tells you otherwise, the appropriate conventions should be used.

References

The list of references follows the body of the thesis or project and precedes the Appendices. Be sure to use the citation style that is approved by your thesis or project advisor.

Appendices

Use an appendix or appendices to include materials that are not an integral part of the text, but that contribute examples or supporting evidence to your research. Include the appendix/appendices after the last page of the text and the references.

Vita

You may include a brief vita with your thesis or project. A vita tells the reader basic facts about your educational and professional experiences. If you choose to include a vita, it must be the last page of your thesis or project and be numbered. It must be written in the third person. That is, avoid the use of the pronoun "I". You can search for sample vitae on-line.

PHYSICAL FORMAT

Prepare your manuscript using a word processing program.

Paper

Use only one side of high quality 25 percent or 100 percent cotton bond paper. Check the watermark on the paper to ensure that it is 25 percent or 100 percent cotton bond. Paper must be white and unlined and must be the standard 8-1/2" by 11" size.

Type Size, Font, and Print

Use of a 10 or 12-point standard font such as Times New Roman, Helvetica, Garamond, Geneva, Courier, or Palatino is required. Theses or projects done using fonts other than those listed above will not be accepted, as they are difficult to read and are not appropriate for a thesis or project. Use the same font throughout the document. Some elements of the thesis or project may deviate from this requirement with regard to the design of classroom materials or for special effects. Thesis illustrations may be in color but should use only black type in the caption.

When printing your thesis or project, use a high quality ink jet or laser jet printer. Make sure the type is uniformly dark and crisp throughout the document. It is preferable that you print

multiple copies of your work, but you may also take your manuscript to be professionally photocopied. Make sure that you request your thesis or project be photocopied on 25 or 100 percent cotton bond paper and not on regular photocopier paper. Do not photocopy your thesis or project unless you can insure high quality duplication.

Corrections

The final draft of your thesis or project should represent a carefully proofread document and be free of grammatical and spelling errors. However, if you do need to make a correction to the final draft do not use correction fluid as it can flake away. Instead, make corrections in black ink directly on the manuscript.

Pagination

Sequentially number **ALL** pages of your manuscript with the exception of the title page, signature page, and the copyright page. Begin numbering the pages with the dedication page or the acknowledgements page (if included). Otherwise, begin numbering with the table of contents. All numbered pages preceding the text of your thesis should be numbered with lower case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, ...). The text of your thesis should be numbered with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, ...). Numbers should be centered in the footer, or bottom margin, of the page and should not be preceded by your last name, a file name, etc.

Spacing

Indent every paragraph and double-space your manuscript, including the title page. Long quotations, footnotes, and the table of contents should be single-spaced. Do not add extra spaces between paragraphs or sections. Check the style manual you are using to determine whether your references section should be double- or single-spaced.

Margins

To facilitate binding, the left margin of your thesis or project must be 1-1/2". The remaining margins should be 1-1/4". Page numbers and illustrations must fit within the specified margins. If an illustration is too large to fit into the margins, reduce it so that it will fit.

Illustrations

Tables, figures, graphs, etc. must be numbered. Numeration can be consecutive (Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, etc.) or can have double numbers according to their placement within specific chapters. For example, Table 5.1 would be the first table in chapter five of your thesis or project.

High-quality photocopies of photographs are preferred to actual photographs. However, you may affix original photographs using paper cement. Photographs should be mounted on the same cotton bond paper that you are using throughout the thesis or project. All illustrations, including mounted photographs, must fit into the prescribed margins.

CHECKLIST

1. Is your thesis or project correctly edited and proofread?
2. Is your thesis or project paginated correctly?
3. Did you use your full and official name on the title page, copyright page, signature page, and vita?
4. Are the titles on the title page, signature page, and abstract, if required, exactly the same?

5. Are your margins correct?
6. Is your signature page on cotton bond paper?
7. Did you submit three to four copies as indicated below?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Required Number of Copies

Thesis

5 copies to include: 2 unbound copies for the library and 1 bound (usually spiral bind) copy each for advisor, department, and candidate. Usually the candidate wants one or more signed copies for his or her own files. Candidates may arrange with the library for hardbound copies at their own expense.

Project/Analytical Review of the Literature

3 copies to include: 1 bound (can be spiral or some other soft binding) for department, 1 bound for advisor, and 1 copy (bound or unbound) for candidate

Time Limits And Deadlines

Culminating activities should be completed in the semester in which the candidate enrolls in the seminar course. When this is not possible, candidates who matriculated in the fall 2003 semester or later will be required to register for 1 Thesis Continuation Credit (TCC 707) for each additional semester required to complete the project or thesis (with the exception of summer). TCC credits do not count toward the total credits needed to complete the graduate program. Candidates who do not complete the project or thesis during seminar will receive a grade of PR which will carry forward for one year. At the end of 1 year, should the candidate need additional time to complete the project or thesis, the candidate and thesis or project advisor will submit an incomplete contract. Incomplete contracts are valid for no longer than 1 year. Should the candidate not complete the project in that time frame, the grade will be changed to unsatisfactory or failing and the candidate will be required to re-enroll in the 3 credit seminar course.

Theses or projects are due in the office of the Coordinator for Graduate Advisement on January 1 for January Graduation, on May 1 for May Graduation, on August 1 for August Graduation, or on December 1 for December Graduation. It is recommended that the candidate plan the completion and submission of the thesis or project in the semester preceding the semester of anticipated graduation. It is critically important to confirm due dates for your thesis or project with your advisor to insure availability of the advisor.

Policy for Collaboration on thesis or project paper for the EHD Graduate Student:

The Department of Education and Human Development supports intellectual collaboration among students working on a thesis or project. Students who collaborate must meet the following criteria to gain department approval:

- Each student will have his or her own research question.
- Each student will conduct his or her own study.
- Each student will write his or her own thesis or project paper.

*Originally prepared by Natalie Sommerville, Assistant Librarian,
Drake Memorial Library*

This version has been edited by the Graduate Committee for the Department of Education and Human Development's use.

Guidelines adapted from the University at Buffalo's Guidelines for Graduation and Theses and Dissertation Preparation available at <http://www.grad.buffalo.edu/grad-docs/adobe/pdf/thesesguide.pdf>, the University of Texas at Austin's Format for the Master's Thesis and Report available at http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/pdn/pdf/format_guidelines-m.pdf, and the University of Rochester's The Preparation of Doctoral Theses: a Manual for Graduate Students available at <http://www.rochester.edu/Theses/index.html>. The Checklist is adapted from the University of Texas at Austin's checklist, which is included with their guidelines.

Stringer, E. (2004) *Action Research in Education*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall

Revised by the Department of Education and Human Development, Spring 2006.