



• Project, Thesis and Comprehensive Exam Guidelines •

Master of Arts in Teaching

California State University, Fresno

Originated: Fall 2005; Revised: 08/08, 10/08; Approved 11/08

These guidelines provide an overview of the final culminating experience (project, thesis or comprehensive exam) of the Master of Arts in Teaching, Kremen School of Education and Human Development (MAT-KSOEHD). The guidelines are followed by "Project Policies and Procedures" and several useful templates on the MAT Organization. MAT-KSOEHD graduate students are urged to visit regularly the Division of Graduate Studies Web site for news, information, forms, deadlines, financial aid information, etc.:

<http://csufresno.edu/gradstudies/>

Vision of a Project or Thesis

The culminating experience for the MAT-KSOEHD degree should be a scholarly work that contributes to a master's degree candidate's knowledge and demonstrates an understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that reflects multicultural, social justice education and is informed by ongoing action research. Each project (CI 298, 4 units) or thesis (CI 299, 4 units) include an action research study, requiring at least one cycle of problem identification and rationale, data collection, analysis and action plan.

Definition of a Project

A project:

- involves a significant undertaking in multicultural, social justice education,
- demonstrates originality and independent thinking,
- reflects creative action research related to the candidate's professional goals, and
- is summarized in a written document that includes the project's significance, guiding question(s), methodology, findings or conclusion, and proposed action plan.

~ Adapted from the Division of Graduate Studies Handbook, p. K-3, rev. 5/09

A student has one project advisor. In addition to guiding the course of the project, the advisor is responsible for submitting the following to Maria Elrod (Graduate Technician) in ED 151: (a) approved project proposal form prior to the semester (fall, 2009) in which the student plans to register and enroll in CI 298 and (b) the grade for CI 298 on the Master's Degree Clearance form plus two copies of the project abstract by the last week

of the semester prior to graduation (spring, 2010). For more information, see pp. K-3 through K-5 in <http://csufresno.edu/gradstudies/handbook/secK.pdf>

Definition of a Thesis

A thesis:

- involves a more thorough, systematic study of a significant and “unique problem” in multicultural, social justice education,
- demonstrates original, critical, and independent thinking,
- investigates specific, well-defined questions or issues, frequently forming questions to be tested in a more extensive mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) design,
- relates to an existing body of theoretical or empirical knowledge in the field (includes an extensive literature review),
- is summarized in a written document that clearly identifies the problem, states the major assumptions, explains the significance of the undertaking, sets forth the sources for and methods of gathering information, analyzes the data, and offers a conclusion or recommendation, all consistent with action research methodology and multicultural, social justice education, and
- includes a thesis proposal and an oral defense of the thesis before the candidate’s committee as the initial and final steps in the process.

~ Adapted from the Division of Graduate Studies Handbook, p. K-5, rev. 8/07

A thesis committee has three members. The Committee Chair has primary advising responsibility and verifies that all forms are completed and deadlines adhered to. The completed thesis is due approximately 7 weeks before the last day of spring semester, 2010. The oral defense of the thesis then follows. For detailed information, visit <http://csufresno.edu/gradstudies/thesis/> and see pp. K-5 through K-8 in <http://csufresno.edu/gradstudies/handbook/secK.pdf>

Basic Structure of a Project or Thesis

A typical MAT-C&I project has four chapters and a thesis has five chapters. Depending on the project or thesis, the number of chapters may vary from three to six. Each master’s degree candidate should confer with his or her advisor to determine the appropriate format for the design of the project or thesis. Multimedia projects or theses may require a slightly different format.

The Division of Graduate Studies Web site contains thesis templates that provide useful guidance for word-processing the prefatory pages of a thesis or project (i.e., abstract, title page, acknowledgments, Table of Contents, List of Tables, and List of Figures), as well as formatting the chapters, references, and appendices. See <http://csufresno.edu/gradstudies/thesis/templates.shtml> Note: Projects do not include the thesis approval pages or reproduction authorization page. Few include a copyright page.

However, projects submitted for consideration to be included in the Henry Madden Library may wish to include such a page. For information on library-bound projects, see <http://www.csufresno.edu/gradstudies/forms/frm/Library-BoundProjectsPolicy.pdf>)

The contents of each of the chapters in a typical 4-chapter project or 5-chapter thesis are summarized below:

Project Report Format:

The recommended format for an MAT project is four chapters. An overview of each of the chapters is included below:

Chapter 1 – Statement of Problem/Introduction

This chapter describes the problem and a rationale for the project. It contains a central research question and supporting questions. This chapter answers the question: Why is this project significant and valuable for me and for others, particularly those interested in multicultural, social justice education? (One important criterion distinguishing the project from a thesis is the problem investigated in a project does not need to be unique or totally original, as is the case in a thesis.)

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this chapter, the project is situated in the literature. The literature reviewed should provide a background for the study. Related research, theory, and practical applications provide the rationale for the way the research was designed. The literature selected should be significant and clearly related to the topic. Primary sources are preferred, although a blend of primary and secondary sources is typical. The literature review provides the framework for the design of the research (Chapter 3) and the conclusions/reflections/action plan (Chapter 4). It answers the question: How does this project relate to and build on studies that have already been done in multicultural, social justice education?

Chapter 3 – Action Research Methodology and Results

This chapter describes the details of the project, describing the action research design and details of data collection and analysis. Formal and/or informal assessment instruments should be administered and the results evaluated. This chapter answers the questions: What did I do to design and implement this action research? What did I find out?

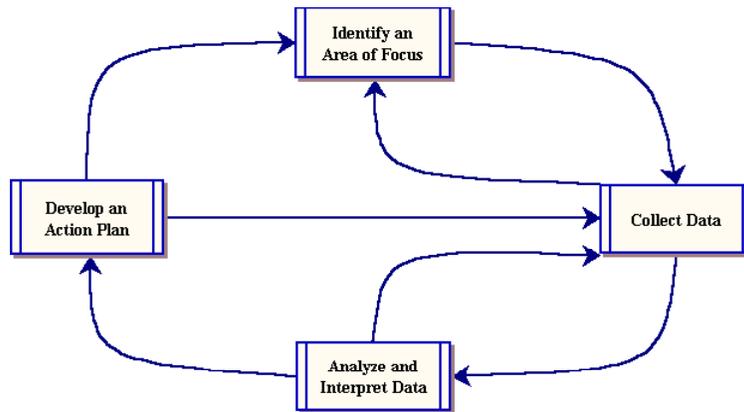
Chapter 4 – Conclusions/ Action Plan

This chapter presents an answer to the research question(s) and is the place to put thoughts, opinions, and conclusions. This chapter evaluates the findings and analyzes what the findings mean in relation to previous studies, as well as discusses the relevance

and impact of the findings on your professional growth, classroom instruction and perhaps social justice outside your classroom. An important component of this chapter is an action plan, describing actions that will be taken as a result of the findings in the next cycle of the action research spiral. It answers the question: How is what I found out important to me and to the larger educational community?

References

All of the articles, books, Web sites, etc., cited in the project report are included in the reference section. The references should be formatted using APA style.



Dialectic Action Research Spiral

[Diagram from p. 20 of Mills, G.E. (2007). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.]

Appendix

The appendix will include a variety of materials. For a project that includes a product, the product may be put here or it may be included in a separate format. Data collection tools, raw data, student work, transcripts of interviews, lists of additional resources, or other relevant materials may be included to contribute to the reader's understanding of the project.

Thesis Format:

The recommended format for an MAT thesis is five chapters. An overview of each of the chapters is included below:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter describes the problem and provides a rationale for the thesis. It answers the question: Why is this thesis significant and valuable for me and for others? Chapter 1 provides a context for the unique problem or issues examined, describes the setting, states the purpose, describes the need for the thesis (why it is necessary and who will benefit from it), and concludes with a summary of the major points covered in the chapter followed by an overview of the organization of remaining chapters. Like all chapters in the thesis, this chapter is written formally in third person. Contractions, informal language, and statements of opinions (editorializing) should be avoided. (This chapter is usually 5-8 pages in length.)

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this chapter, the thesis is thoroughly situated in the literature. The literature reviewed should provide a background for the project thesis. Related research, theory, and practical applications provide the rationale for the way the thesis was designed. The literature selected should be significant and clearly related to the topic. Primary sources are strongly preferred, although a limited number of secondary sources may be cited. Current research from scholarly journals is also preferred. APA style should be followed closely in citing references. Direct quotations should be used sparingly. The literature review provides the framework for the design of the thesis (Chapter 3), the results and findings (Chapter 4), and the implications of the study and resultant action plan (Chapter 5). It answers the question: How does this thesis relate to studies that have already been done and make a unique contribution? (The typical length of this chapter is 20-25 pages. Chapters should begin with a short summary of the previous chapter(s) and conclude with a short preview of the next chapter.)

Chapter 3 –Methodology

This chapter provides details of the action research design, including the research questions, null hypotheses if relevant, description of the participants (demographic data), instrumentation (assessments, etc.), procedure (how the action research design was executed, how data were collected, etc.), and data analysis techniques (a description of the mixed methods, quantitative/qualitative analyses that were conducted). Note: No results are included in this chapter, although it may include a table with participant demographic information. This chapter answers the question: What did I do to design and carry out this action research? (Chapter 3 is usually 8-15 pages in length.)

Chapter 4 – Results/Findings

In this chapter, the results of the study are described. Data is presented, both in graphical (tables and figures) and narrative form. Statistical findings are presented in detail, often

organized by research question (in the case of an empirical study). This chapter only presents the results; it does not include a discussion or an interpretation of the results. This chapter answers the question: What did I find out in my unique action research study?

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Action Plan

This chapter includes a summary of the action research study, as well as the findings. This chapter discusses and analyzes what the results mean in relation to previous studies and in terms of an action plan for a next cycle. Limitations are identified, implications are discussed, and recommendations for further research through an action plan are presented. It answers the question: How is what I found out (or developed) important to me and to the larger educational community? What is my next step or action plan?

References

List all books, journal articles, Web sites, and other sources cited in the project. Do not include materials consulted but not cited, nor documentation of personal communication.

Appendix

The Appendix can include a variety of materials. Data collection tools (e.g., surveys or observation instruments), letters of permission, raw data, student work, transcripts of interviews, lists of additional resources, Web page screen shots, or other relevant materials may be included to contribute to the reader's understanding of the thesis.

Comprehensive Exam Format:

Integration of the multicultural, social justice and action research themes of the MAT and a "test prep" component is included in CI260, Reflective Teaching (4 units) taken the third and final semester of the program by those choosing the comprehensive exam option as their culminating experience. The comprehensive exam will be 3-4 hour, open book short essay exam consisting of case studies, simulations, teaching vignettes video, action research studies, before/after lesson preparation, etc. which reflect multicultural, social justice curriculum/ instruction/learning components and which you will be asked to analyze, critique and perhaps present individually or in groups.

~ Approved by the C&I Graduate Program Faculty on 11/18/08

CI 298 PROJECT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

[Policies and Procedures for KSOEHD Projects, 11/04; updated/adapted for C&I-10/08; Approved 11/18/08]

Note: Refer to the Division of Graduate Studies Web site for updated information and deadlines: <http://www.csufresno.edu/gradstudies/> The graduate student guidebook, "Charting Your Course to a Master's Degree," is available at <http://www.csufresno.edu/gradstudies/epubs/guidebook.pdf>

Procedures

In order to satisfactorily meet all requirements for enrollment in and completion of CI 298, the candidate is expected to do the following:

1. Be a student in good standing at CSU, Fresno, be advanced to candidacy, and have completed a minimum of 24 semester units of program coursework (including ERA 220) with a "B" average or better.
2. Develop a project proposal for CI 298, and complete the Project Proposal form (see page 9). Meet with the CI 298 faculty advisor for a final review the proposal, and obtain his or her signature indicating approval.
3. Register for CI 298. A course number and a permission number can be obtained from the Graduate Technician in the KSOEHD Graduate Programs Office (ED 151) after the signed Project Proposal form has been submitted. Maria Elrod (559-278-0148, melrod@csufresno.edu) is currently the Graduate Technician who provides these registration numbers.
4. Prior to data collection, obtain approval for conducting human subjects research. For details, see <http://www.csufresno.edu/humansubjects> In short, a project summary, description of the research protocol, and copies of instruments, consent forms, and interview protocols need to be included in a letter addressed to the Curriculum and Instruction Department Chair. "Exempt" research is reviewed by the Department Chair, while "Minimal Risk" research needs to be reviewed by a Departmental Committee. With the exception of funded research, "Exempt" or "Minimal Risk" research does not have to go before the Institutional Review Board. Evidence of this process will be required of students wishing to apply for a Graduate Student Research Merit Award (\$1000; see <http://csufresno.edu/gradstudies/financial/gsrma.shtml>).
5. Complete all work in CI 298 in consultation with the project advisor.

6. Receive final editing guidance and then approval from the project advisor that the project is complete and ready for binding. The finished project must include the project report and any accompanying materials (e.g., manual, CD-ROM, etc.).
7. Have the written portions bound. (The Kennel Bookstore provides this service.) Be sure to include the abstract in the bound copy prior to the title page.
8. Give one bound copy of the project to the project advisor. Two additional copies of the abstract should be given separately to the project advisor.
9. Following completion of all requirements, the CI 298 advisor/instructor will do the following:
 - Contact the KSOEHD Graduate Programs Office (ED 151) to record the Project grade on the Master's Degree Clearance form (see the Graduate Technician). (Note: The CI 298 advisor is not to enter a CI 298 grade online.)
 - Submit two copies of the Project Abstract to the Graduate Technician. The Graduate Coordinator's Office will place one copy of the student's abstract in the student's record file and one copy in the KSOEHD Abstract Binder where it will be available for review by students, faculty, and other interested parties.
 - Upon receipt of a project grade and two copies of the project abstract from the CI 298 instructor, the Graduate Programs Coordinator (currently, Dr. Susan Tracz) will sign the Master's Degree Clearance form and forward the project grade to the Division of Graduate Studies (DGS) for processing. The DGS will verify that all requirements have been completed and will recommend that the degree be granted. The candidate will initially receive an "RP" ("Report in Progress") grade on his or her grade report. The actual project grade and the degree will generally not appear on the transcript until 1-2 months following the conclusion of the semester. Students needing to be cleared quickly for employment or pay raise purposes can request priority clearance via the MAE-C&I Program Coordinator (currently, Dr. Carol Fry Bohlin). Note: The degree will generally post on the transcript a week or two before the final project grade is posted. When requesting a copy of a final transcript, "Hold for degree and final grade posting" can be included in the request so ensure that the transcript shows the degree and current grades.
 - The CI 298 advisor will retain the original bound copy of the project report along with any related physical components that are considered to be a part of the project in his or her office for a period of five years from the date of completion. Should the instructor discontinue his or her position with the university during this time, the Project will be held by the MAE-C&I Program Coordinator.

Note: Students who do not complete all project requirements by the end of the semester will need to fill out the **GS Continuation** form located on the following Web site: <http://www.csufresno.edu/gradstudies/forms/frm/zerounitreg.pdf> On the line for "Major," **Education, M.A. - Curriculum & Instruction** should be written. The "Major Code" is **503507MA**. The form and appropriate payment should be mailed or taken to the Dean of the Division of Graduate Studies (currently, Dr. Karen Carey), who will grant permission to register for zero units of continuation credit through the Division of Continuing and Global Education and forward the form and proof of payment to that office.

Note: A **Master's Degree Application** form must be turned in with proof of diploma/fee payment within the first two weeks of the semester in which graduation is expected (even if a form and receipt were submitted during a previous semester). This form is available from <http://www.csufresno.edu/gradstudies/forms/forms.shtml#anchorgrad> during January (for spring graduation), May (for summer graduation), and August (for fall graduation).

Project Report Specifications

1. Format and Style

The report must be developed according to guidelines specified in the 5th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (<http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>)

2. Exceptions to APA Format and Style

- Margins – left side: 1 ½"; top, bottom, and right sides: 1"
- Abstract – The abstract must be single-spaced and approximately one page in length (see template on p. 10). The abstract is placed within the bound report prior to the title page. It is not included in the pagination of the report.
- No running heads are to be placed at the top of project pages (just page numbers).
- References – Hanging indention; single-space within and double-space between references

3. Font Size and Style - The entire report must be in the same font and font size. Recommended fonts are Times New Roman (13-pt.), Century Schoolbook (12-pt.), Bookman (12-pt.), Palatino (12-pt.), and similar serif fonts. (This document uses 13-pt. Times New Roman.) Right margins are not to be justified, and boldface type should not be used.

4. The title page shall be prepared in accordance with the sample provided on page 11 of this document. It is expected to include the title of the project, the student's name,

the semester of completion, and the instructor's name. Although there is no page number typed on the title page, it is considered as Page i.

5. The **paper** required for use in this project must be similar to that currently required for theses. It is to be high quality white paper (at least 25% rag content). Many students select 24- or 28-pound 100% cotton rag paper for their bound projects.
6. One **bound copy** (navy blue hard cover) is required for the project advisor, who is to keep it in his or her office for at least 5 years. Additional copies may be made for the student's personal use. (The Kennel Bookstore offers project binding and gold stamping on the project's front cover and spine. See http://www.auxiliary.com/kbs/printing_guidelines.pdf)

Note: Thesis templates (which can also be used for projects with some minor adaptations) and tutorials are also very useful and can be found on <http://www.csufresno.edu/gradstudies/thesis/templates.shtml> and <http://www.csufresno.edu/gradstudies/thesis/ttt.shtml>

[Semester] [Year] PROJECT PROPOSAL (CI 298)

Degree: Master of Arts in Education (Curriculum and Instruction option)

Student's Name: _____

Telephone: _____ (home); _____ (cell)

Proposed Title:

Rationale for the Project:

Background of the Project:

Anticipated Contribution:

298 Project Advisor: _____

Project Advisor's Signature: _____

ABSTRACT

[PROJECT TITLE: SINGLE SPACE BETWEEN LINES
TYPING IN INVERTED PYRAMID FORM]

[Start typing the abstract text here. The abstract should fit on one page. A blank sheet should precede it and another blank sheet should follow it in the bound project. None of these pages receives a page number. The project title page will follow the blank sheet. The title page doesn't have a page number listed, but it's considered page "i" when numbering the pages prior to the first page of the project's first chapter.]

[Student's Full Name]
[Date (Month, Year)]

[PROJECT TITLE IN CAPS. IF MORE THAN ONE LINE LONG,
USE INVERTED PYRAMID FORM LIKE THIS]

by

[Student's Full Name]

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1" ←

A project submitted to

Dr. [Advisor's Name]

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts in Education, Curriculum and Instruction Option

in the Kremen School of Education and Human Development

California State University, Fresno

[Month] [Year]

