

MASTER'S PROJECT HANDBOOK

For Candidates in the Departments of:
Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) and
Language, Learning and Leadership (LLL)

Effective Fall 2011

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Introductory Letter to Graduate Candidates in Literacy

Dear Master's Project Writer in Literacy

Welcome to the Literacy Programs at SUNY Fredonia and the opportunity to inquire into the exciting and rapidly changing field of Literacy. Today, we not only consider the “Big Five” from the National Reading Panel (2000), but also new literacies that are multi-modal, digital, diverse, promote critical thought, and engage people in life-long learning. Therefore, we, the Literacy Faculty, invite you to explore topics of interest that enable you to “re-envision” literacy practices (Tierney, 2009) and to share new knowledge with colleagues, teachers, and members of the community. In so doing, we hope that you will develop a research stance that incorporates “intentional, systematic inquiry” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) and enables you to become a reflective practitioner.

All graduate candidates enrolled in the College of Education at SUNY Fredonia take three research courses referred to as the *Research Sequence*, which culminates in a Master's Project. In Literacy, the three courses are EDU 570 Using Educational Research to Inform Practice, EDU 651 Issues and Research in Literacy, and EDU 659 Master's Project in Literacy. In EDU 570, candidates learn how to become critical “consumers” of literacy research and begin to focus on a topic of interest. The purpose of EDU 651 is specifically to identify an issue or area of interest in literacy and write a research proposal for the Master's Project. Candidates select empirical research or the creation of a Professional Development Project. During EDU 659, candidates conduct the research and finalize the writing of the project. In addition, those enrolled in EDU 659 will also share their new knowledge with their peers, other teachers, and members of the educational community.

Both EDU 651 and EDU 659 also include components that meet requirements for the International Reading Association *Standards for Reading Professionals* (2010) and especially for those for reading specialists and literacy coaches. These include demonstrating an understanding of theory, research, and practice as well as demonstrating the ability to work in a collaborative nature with literacy colleagues.

While considering your research topic of interest, please refer to this *Master's Project Handbook*. We hope it will serve as a guide that will aide in your intentional, systematic inquiry. Your professors will serve as your mentors -- assisting, encouraging, and sometimes nudging you along your research journey. We welcome you and look forward to the contributions you will make to the field of literacy and your own professional growth.

Sincerely
Members of the Literacy Faculty

Introductory Letter to the Candidates in C&I and TESOL

Dear Prospective Master's Project Writer

Welcome to the graduate research sequence in the College of Education at SUNY Fredonia. The primary goal of this sequence is to prepare professional educators who can understand the multiple functions of research in education; design master's level research projects that address important educational questions and problems; conduct projects in an orderly manner; and generate conclusions that advance research and/or practice. This handbook provides general guidelines for successfully completing the research sequence of courses. The ultimate program goal is to prepare educators who are wise consumers and producers of educational research and, more importantly, professionals who value research and see the important roles that it can play in improving educational outcomes for children and youth.

Research is a systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information to increase understanding of the phenomenon about which we are interested or concerned (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Although research projects can vary in nature, complexity, and duration, the research process itself is quite predictable

- 1 Research starts with a question or problem.
- 2 Research requires clear articulation of a goal or purpose.
- 3 Research requires a specific plan or methodology for proceeding.
- 4 Research requires the collection and interpretation of information (data) in an attempt to resolve the problem or question that originated the research.
- 5 Research is, by its nature, cyclical.

Your research experience begins as soon as you enter the graduate program. It is nurtured through coursework, independent readings, and applied teaching experiences. There are thousands of unanswered educational problems and questions about children, curricula, teachers, schools, and communities that must be addressed, and there may be no more opportune time to do so than now. The key is to select questions and problems that are educationally important and that interest YOU as a professional educator. Use this *Master's Project Handbook* as a guide for becoming a better researcher and practitioner.

This handbook:

- (a) describes required research-related coursework for TESOL, Curriculum and Instruction, and Literacy candidates,
- (b) highlights intended learning outcomes for each course of the Research Sequence,
- (c) offers a variety of master's project options,
- (d) provides some project outlines, and
- (e) includes links to completed research projects in the College of Education.

Remember, "Anything worth doing is worth doing well.

Anything not worth doing is not made worth doing, by doing it well"
(Baer, 1998).

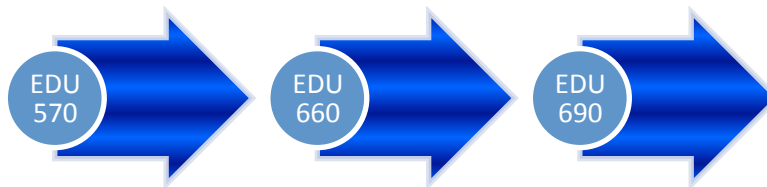
The Role of the *Research Sequence* of Courses

Graduate Programs in the College of Education at SUNY Fredonia are designed to prepare teachers to deliver effectively the P-12 curriculum through a process that includes ongoing data collection and analysis followed by innovations/changes in practice for the purpose of improving student outcomes. The skills necessary to engage in this process are addressed in three separate courses, collectively known as the *Research Sequence*. Because development of these skills is cumulative, no two courses in the sequence may be taken at the same time; each course must be successfully completed before the next course may be taken.

C&I and TESOL candidates are required to take the EDU 570/660/690 Research Sequence.

Literacy candidates are required to take the EDU 570/651/659 Research Sequence.

C&I and TESOL Graduate Programs Research Sequence of Courses



Literacy Graduate Program Research Sequence of Courses



Course Descriptions (Links to University Catalog)

[EDU 570: Using Educational Research to Inform Practice](#)

[EDU 651: Issues in Research and Literacy](#)

[EDU 659: Master's Thesis/Project in Literacy](#)

[EDU 660: Conducting Educational Research](#)

[EDU 690: Master's Thesis/Project](#)

Each course in the Research Sequence is designed to support the development of skills and ideas that will be necessary to complete the Master's Project. The Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are integrated into each course in the [Literacy Sequence](#) and the [TESOL/C&I Sequence](#), and are designed to lead to the completion of a Master's Project. The Research Sequence is designed to scaffold candidates into becoming scholarly teachers, reflecting on core educational values, and answering important and relevant questions and problems within the school context. In addition to the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), candidates enrolled in TESOL or Literacy will also be required to meet professional organization requirements and should see ILOs in course-specific syllabi.

Master's Project Options

Research studies, curriculum projects, and professional development projects are forms of inquiry designed to address issues/problems related to schools. It is very important for candidates to reflect on a meaningful topic (often explored in Master's coursework completed prior to EDU 651/EDU 660) first before considering what Master's Project option will best fit the question or problem articulated in EDU 651 or EDU 660.

Regardless of program, all Master's Projects will involve asking a question (or stating a problem), collecting and analyzing data to answer the question, drawing conclusions (or creating a curriculum), sharing findings with the educational community, and reflecting on the process to improve schooling and the profession. This handbook contains project options for [Literacy](#) and [C&I/TESOL](#). Your professors during the Research Sequence courses will advise you about appropriate and valid methods to pursue your question or problem of interest. In addition, a thorough review of the literature will provide insight into how other researchers and curriculum developers have addressed similar problems. If the Master's Project involves the use of people of any age for data collection, then the candidate, with the support of a faculty sponsor (usually the EDU 660 or 651 professor), must submit a Human Subject Review (HSR) Proposal to the Office of Sponsored Programs. Because of this additional requirement, candidates should be mindful that both EDU 651 and EDU 660 are time sensitive courses. A current HSR proposal form can be downloaded from [SUNY Fredonia Office of Sponsored Programs](#) website.

Instructions for Manuscript Preparation of a Master's Project

Electronic – Prepare the final document to be submitted electronically as a PDF file on a CD to the Thesis Project Advisor along with a printed copy of the Cover page, Project Certification Page, and Abstract. Candidates may submit a complete paper copy of the entire project for signatures and to be returned to the candidate for personal binding and keeping.

Style – The manuscript must adhere to the editorial style of the 6th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) in matters of preparation, format (tables, figures, charts, graphs), appendices and mechanics.

Type face and size – Use 12-point font in Times New Roman. Use the same font and size throughout the manuscript. Deviation from this is permissible for tables, figures, charts, graphs, and appendices (this adheres to APA format).

Line spacing – Use double-spacing throughout manuscript except where long quotations (*i.e.*, block quotes) are used. These should be single-spaced (this adheres to APA).

Margins – Use 1 inch margins for all margins in the electronic copy; any paper copies should have a left margin of at least 1.25 to allow for binding. Non-textual material (*e.g.*, photos, illustrations, etc.) must be within these margins. Left justify text, but right margin may be justified or unjustified.

Pagination – Cover page is not counted. All preliminary pages (abstract, certification page, table of contents, and list of illustrations/tables/figures) are to be numbered using lower case Roman numerals centered in the footer of the page. Abstract is page “i”. Text pages, beginning with first page of Introduction, are to be numbered with Hindu-Arabic numerals (*i.e.*, start with “1”). Page numbers should be top right inside of the header.

Running head -- Use first 2 or 3 words of the title in all caps starting at left margin in header.

Master's Project Organization of Sections

Cover Page	(see Template)
Project Certification Page	(see Template)
Abstract	(refer to <i>APA Manual</i>)
Table of Contents	
List of Tables and Figures	(optional)
Introduction	
Literature Review	
Methodology	
Results	
Discussion	
References	
Appendix	(optional)

Cover Page Template

TITLE
(IN ALL CAPS CENTERED)

by

Jane Q. Student

A Master's Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education
[Insert Program Name]
Department of [Insert Department Name]
State University of New York at Fredonia
Fredonia, New York

Month Year (completed)

Project Certification Page Template

State University of New York at Fredonia
Department of [Insert Department Name]

CERTIFICATION OF PROJECT WORK

We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled [INSERT PROJECT TITLE] by Jane Q. Student, Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, [INSERT PROGRAM NAME], is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.

Master's Project Advisor
[Insert EDU 659/690] Course Instructor
Department of [Insert Department Name]

Date

Department Chair [Insert name]
Department of [Insert Department Name]

Date

Dean Christine Givner
College of Education
At SUNY Fredonia

Date

Additional Notes For Final Project

These final considerations are included as a courtesy to Candidates to assist with completion of the final Master's Project.

- ⇒ Satisfactorily complete the two prior research sequence courses (the third one will be completed upon evaluation of the Master's Project).
 - ⇒ Prepare an abstract (no more than 250 words) according to APA guidelines to be included in the final Master's Project.
 - ⇒ Prepare an electronic version (PDF) of the final Master's Project according to the manuscript instructions provided in this handbook.
 - ⇒ Print a paper copy of the Cover page, the Project Certification page, and Abstract.
 - ⇒ After the Project Advisor signs off on the Project Certification page, submit the following:
 - the signed Project Certification page
 - a completed Reed Library Archives Permission Packet
 - a print of the Cover page
 - an electronic version of project in PDF(Portable Document Format) on CD to the Department Chair for signature, then to the Dean of the College of Education.
- NOTE:
- The Candidate should submit all requested Master's Project paper and digital materials for signature in a 8" x 11.5" clear page protector.
 - Label for the CD should include the following:
 - Project Title
 - Name and F #
 - Date of Submission of the Completed Project to Department
 - Program
-
- ⇒ After submission to the Chair, the Department secretary will prepare a receipt for the Candidate to verify the time and date of submission.
 - ⇒ An electronic copy of the Cover page, the completed Project Certification page without signature, and Abstract will be stored with the final electronic copy of the Master's Project on a server as part of the Reed Library archives.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for C&I and TESOL Research Sequence

First Course	Second Course	Final Course
EDU 570	EDU 660	EDU 690
Student will be able to (SWBAT)	Student will be able to (SWBAT)	Student will be able to (SWBAT)
read and interpret recent and historical research in their field of education	reflect on core educational values and relate to a Master's Project topic. Identify a problem statement or question related to the topic.	implement proposed research study or curriculum product
extract a variety of research and related articles from the SUNY Fredonia library databases	review current research on Master's project topic and find credible, relevant, and similar research articles on the topic	collect data to answer a research question or create curriculum product to address problem
discriminate between more and less credible research	synthesize research on Master's project topic	analyze data to answer research question or create curriculum product to address problem
write a literature review (synthesis of research results) organized by topic using APA format and writing style.	articulate a research question or curriculum problem	reflect on the research process, the product created or the research question answered, and future direction
compare and contrast popular research methodologies within a topic of interest.	write a proposal for the Master's project including a literature review, articulated research question or curriculum problem, and articulated methodology (see Section VI).	write a Master's Project document articulating the research process and in accordance with the Master's Project Handbook
become familiar with the regulations governing research on human subjects and complete the required Human Subjects Certification Training	write and submit a proposal for Human Subjects review (if applicable)	

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for Literacy Research Sequence

First Course	Second Course	Final Course
EDU 570 Understanding Educational Research	EDU 651 Issues and Research in Literacy	EDU 659 Master’s Project in Literacy
SWBAT (student will be able to)	SWBAT	SWBAT
read and interpret recent and historical research in the field of education and literacy	identify curricular needs or research problems/issues that are based on the major components of reading and writing, and/or language development	select a topic for personal research and study that is relevant to current literacy foundations or literacy learning or instructional practices for literacy
extract a variety of research and related articles from the SUNY Fredonia library databases	critically analyze and critique literacy research in terms of theory, design, and content (including psychological, sociological, and linguistic foundations of literacy)	provide a coherent rationale (including relationship to IRA Standards and NYS ELA Standards) for that selection
discriminate between more and less credible research	design a research study, or Professional Development Project, that demonstrates a clear understanding of the research process and addresses key issues in the foundations of literacy	understand major empirical research that describe the cognitive, linguistic, motivational, and socio-cultural foundations of reading and writing development, processes, and components
write a literature review (synthesis of research results) organized by topic using APA format and writing style	demonstrate knowledge of the ethics and procedures for conducting research with human subjects	collect data to answer a research question
compare and contrast common research methodologies within the field of literacy	write a proposal for the Master’s Project including a literature review, articulated research question or issue and articulated methodology	reflect on the research process, the product created or the research question answered, and future direction
become familiar with the regulations governing research on human subjects and complete the required Human Subjects Certification Training	demonstrate knowledge of the ethics and procedures for conducting research with human subjects	produce a Master’s Project that articulates the research process and is in accordance with the Master’s Project Handbook
		Disseminate knowledge to literacy educators, other teachers, and/or other members of the educational community.

Examples of Master's Project Options for C&I/TESOL Graduate Programs

Research Options				Curriculum Project
	Research to Practice	Single Case Design Studies	Qualitative and Quantitative Research (other than Research to Practice)	
definition	Research to practice (sometimes called Action Research) is one where practitioners look systematically at ways to deal with issues they are close to. (e.g. instructional practices, social issues of schooling, behavior modification)	Single case research designs are a rigorous, scientific methodology used to define basic principles of behavior and establish evidence-based practices (Horner et al., 2005).	Quantitative Research describes with numbers and can include: survey, co-relational, causal-comparative, experimental, or descriptive. Qualitative Research describes with words and can include: Ethnography or Historical Research. Historical research may include artifacts. Books, periodicals, diaries, videotapes, and transcripts of face-to-face discussion.	A Curriculum Project contributes to the field of teaching by enhancing communication of a subject matter. (e.g. a teacher's guide, and instructional manual, the development of supplemental teaching methods)
purpose	To investigate and improve the author's practice	To solve school-related problems related to academic, behavioral and/or interpersonal performance of children and youth	To investigate meaningful questions surrounding schooling	To solve school-based problems by improving curriculum
use	Improve classroom instruction, improve school conditions	Improve classroom instruction, enhance pupil performance, and/or solving naturally occurring educational problems	Inform schooling related to school factors inside or outside the classroom.	Increase professional knowledge in area of expertise
example titles	Does the Jigsaw Method Increase Student Enjoyment among Third Graders? Effects of Strategic Recess Scheduling on Student On-Task Behaviors among First Graders .	<i>Effects of a Self-Monitoring Intervention Package on Special Education Students' Organizational Skills in an Inclusion Classroom</i> <i>Effects of Group Contingencies and Mystery Motivators on 7th Grade Students' Homework Completion and Accuracy</i>	<i>Parent's Attitudes toward Bilingualism and the role of School in Promoting Bilingualism</i> <i>Attitudes of Middle School Personnel Toward Heritage Language Maintenance for Language Minority Students</i>	<i>Creating Web Quests in Alignment with NYS History Standards to Encourage Higher Order Thinking</i> <i>Calculator Use as Replacement Units for Students with Special needs Learning Algebra</i>
Suggestion for dissemination	Improve instruction, present and use at school site, publish in teacher-researcher journal	Improve instruction, enhance classroom behavior, and/or improve interpersonal relationships in school	Publish in educational journal, evidence of scholarship for entrance to doctoral program	Improve curriculum and instruction, present at use at school site

Examples of Master’s Project Options for Literacy Graduate Program

Aspect	Option 1 Empirical Research	Option 2 Professional Development Project
Definition	an inquiry into a literacy-related problem/issue where researcher generates own raw data through experiment, observation, survey, etc.	an inquiry into a literacy-related problem/issue where researcher gathers data from the findings of previously completed research studies
Purpose	To investigate a literacy-related problem/issue through direct and personal means	To investigate a literacy-related problem/issue through understanding and synthesis of previous research
Use	To increase the knowledge in the field of literacy and/or directly apply the knowledge to practice (including the “action” of the researcher as practitioner in the classroom)	To increase the knowledge in the field of literacy and apply the knowledge to the professional development of practitioners in the field
Sample Titles	<i>Differentiated Instruction Implemented in a Grade 10 English Classroom: A Case Study</i> <i>The Impact Of Interactive Whiteboard Instruction Compared To Chalkboard Instruction For First Graders</i> <i>Pigeon Talk: How Picture Books Teach Students To Write Interactive Digital Storybooks</i>	<i>What Research Shows About Using Prediction Strategies With Technology as Pre-Reading Activities</i> <i>The Application of What Research Says About The Effect of Dramatic Play on Preschool Learners: A Literacy Coaching Project</i>
Dissemination	Distribution of knowledge through making Masters Project available in campus library; presenting research in oral presentation to colleagues, literacy educators, and teachers via conference presentations or workshops.	Distribution of knowledge through making Masters Project available in campus library; presenting research in oral presentation to colleagues, literacy educators, and teachers via conference presentations or workshops.

Sample Outlines of Master’s Projects in C&I/TESOL

In general, research and curriculum options for the Master’s Project will follow the outline below. However, the course instructor will have the final authority to approve any modifications to this outline. Because of this, guidelines may vary by instructor.

<i>Research Options</i>		<i>Curriculum Option</i>
Content Required	Name of Section	Content Required
Introduce the problem Explore importance of problem	Introduction	Introduce the problem Explore importance of problem
Describe relevant scholarship State research question State purpose of research study State theoretical framework	Review of Literature	Describe relevant scholarship State curriculum problem State purpose of curriculum project State theoretical framework
Detailed account of how the study was conducted Conceptual and operational definitions Section describing participants and setting Description of procedures used in study Description of interventions used (if applicable) Description of instruments used (along with psychometric properties) Description of research design Validity considerations	Method	Detailed account of how the curriculum was developed Conceptual and operational definitions Section describing intended audience for use of this curriculum Description of all steps taken to design the curriculum Description of the scope and sequence of the entire curriculum including a detailed standards alignment Validity considerations
Summarize the collected data and the analysis performed Present enough data to justify the conclusions Present all data, including those that run counter to expectation and missing data	Results	Insert completed curriculum
Evaluate and interpret the implications of results Draw inferences and conclusions from results Emphasize theoretical or practical consequences of results Similarities and differences between your results and the work of others should be used to contextualize, confirm, and clarify your conclusions.	Discussion	Reflect on curriculum development. Did your final curriculum project match your research question and design? How so? What are the limitations of the curriculum project? How would you do it differently next time? What are the implications of it? How will you use and disseminate this curriculum project? Future plans?
APA format	References	APA format
CITI certificate, HSR approval memo, etc.	Appendix	CITI certificate, etc.

Sample Outlines of Master's Projects in Literacy

Option 1: Empirical Research

Project is a research study that generates its own data on a topic relevant to literacy. If the project requires that the researcher work with people, then research will require approval by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Cover Page

Project Certification Page

Abstract

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of Problem

Background

Terminology

Theoretical Framework

Rationale

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Review

Subheadings (the sections/categories the review divides into)

Summary of the Review

Chapter 3: Methodology

Design of Study

Subjects (or Participants --whichever term applies to the study)

Procedures:

Data Collection

Data Analysis

Chapter 4: Results and Interpretation

Results

Reliability of Data

Interpretation of Data

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Overview of Study and Findings

Significance of the Findings

Limitations of the Findings

Conclusion: Answer to the Research Question

Recommendations for Future Research

(or plans for action—such as using data to influence own teaching practices)

References (APA 6th edition)

Appendix (copies of research instruments or data analysis charts)

Sample Outlines of Master's Projects in Literacy

Option 2: Professional Development Project

Project is an extensive literature review that produces findings that are then made applicable for literacy educators, teachers, and members of the educational community. The typical format for dissemination is some form of professional development project such as conference presentation or workshop.

Cover Page

Project Certification Page

Abstract

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Summary of the Review

Chapter 3: Methodology

Data Collection

Data Analysis (*e.g.*, coding techniques)

Chapter 4: Results and Application

Results of the Review

Application of Results to a Professional Development Project

Design of Professional Development Project

Literacy Coaching Workshop Goals and Objectives

Proposed Audience and Location

Proposed Workshop Format and Activities

Proposed Resources for Workshop

Proposed Evaluation of Workshop

Workshop Ties to Professional Standards (state and IRA)

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Overview of Study and Findings

Significance of the Findings

Limitations of the Findings

Conclusion: Answer to the Research Question

Recommendations for Future Research

(or plans for action—such as using data to influence own teaching practices)

References (APA 6th edition)

Appendix (agenda/outline of coaching workshop; and evaluation of ProfDev)