

## Surviving Your Master's Thesis/Project

How to find your way to graduation on schedule!



Special Education Department  
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The master's thesis/project is one of the culminating activities of your degree program. It demonstrates two major points: 1) that you are able to manage the complex process of developing the thesis/project and that you are able to use research and writing skills necessary to make you worthy of being a Master of Education, and 2) that you are a master of a specific area of content in Special Education. **The process of developing your master's thesis/project spans the entire time you are in the degree program.**

It is important that you spread the work on your master's thesis/project, over the entire time you are in the Special Education master's degree program. To program you for success, it is highly recommended that you follow the steps presented in this survival guide in order to prevent feeling stressed and overwhelmed later in the program. Managing the work for your thesis/project is similar to the management necessary to be an effective special education teacher. Your thesis/project is a "long-term homework assignment" that is not attached to a specific course. Whether or not you attain your MS degree is solely your responsibility. **It is your responsibility as a graduate student to use initiative and self-management to complete the thesis/project prior to the end of your program.**

This survival guide is designed to be a "Map for Producing Your Master's Thesis/project." Our hope is that it will help you avoid getting bogged down and falling behind. Our goal, that we hope you share, is that you graduate in a timely manner. If events in your personal or work life make it difficult for you to stay on schedule you should discuss your situation with your thesis/project committee chair and master's advisor **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

This survival guide is also designed so that you will not skip over any of the critical steps in the process of developing your thesis/project or important dates and deadlines. **Please bring this survival guide with you to ALL appointments with your thesis/project committee members.**

One's ability to communicate in writing in a clear and organized manner is crucial to completing the thesis or project. It is important to remember that the thesis/project process is just that a process. **You will be writing, rewriting, writing, rewriting, and writing even more. You should expect that you will write and rewrite sentences, paragraphs, whole sections of chapters, and chapters many, many times.** The quality of your writing and analysis is always more important than the quantity of the pages so just having the target number of pages is not the primary consideration—it is the starting point. How you communicate in writing should be of high priority. The quality of your research, your research findings and anything else related to your research study has no significance if you fail to write well enough to communicate this information.

Please keep in mind that you need to turn in a **full/complete** draft of your thesis/project for faculty review **well** before the end of the semester in which you intend to graduate. Important dates and deadlines are posted on the graduate school website ([www.fullerton.edu/graduate/dates.htm](http://www.fullerton.edu/graduate/dates.htm)) and the Department of Special Education website (<http://hdcs.fullerton.edu/Education>). **It is your responsibility to check the websites for the most current information.**

*Courses and Timeline*

The course sequence below is designed to help you see the “big picture,” that is, the courses in which you will learn specific skills related to conducting your research. Many students have not solidified what they want to examine during semester 1 and thus each student’s completion timeline will vary from this example to some degree.

Master’s Degree Completion Timeline

x	Class	Activities	Comments
	501 (prereq. before 510)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Identify topic/project idea</li> <li>❖ Identify a chair &amp; committee</li> <li>❖ Study plan written and submitted to graduate studies</li> </ul>	
	531/2/5 (prereq. before 510)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Ch. 2-Literature review through second draft.</li> </ul>	
	510 (fall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Write proposal &amp; submit to chair</li> <li>❖ Write and Submit IRB                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 595 to instructor only</li> <li>➤ 597 to instructor and chair to be approved</li> <li>➤ 598 to IRB committee (instructor, chair, and IRB office)</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ Write Ch. 3-Methods (597, 598)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 595 Select topics for study</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ Collect data (with IRB approval)</li> </ul>	
	596 (spring) & 599	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Must have IRB approval to enroll 596</li> <li>❖ Ch. 2 literature review final draft with committee chair (599)</li> <li>❖ Finalize Ch. 3 (Methods: 596 &amp; 599)</li> <li>❖ Begin Ch. 4 (Results) &amp; Ch. 5 (Discussion): 596 &amp; 599</li> <li>❖ File graduate check at the end of semester if they are ready to finish next semester (**595 students must submit grad. check a semester before</li> </ul>	

		they graduate	
	597 (project) or 598 (thesis) & 599 (if needed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ All courses must be completed on Masters study plan by end of semester</li><li>❖ Must have draft of all 5 chapters</li><li>❖ Finalize Ch. 4 &amp; 5;</li><li>❖ Add finishing touches (edits, formatting, abstract, figures, appendices, etc.)</li><li>❖ Obtain Signatures</li></ul>	

\*531 & 510 are only offered in the Fall

\*\*596 is only offered in the Spring

\*\*\*599 may be taken up to three times

\*\*\*The above list of courses does not comprise all courses for the MSE but rather the courses in which you learn specific research skills.

## GETTING STARTED WORKSHEET

**Most students will begin working on their thesis/project during their respective Advanced Seminar courses (Sped 531/532/535).**

The focus of this step of the process is on selecting a primary focus to research, organizing your reference materials, and learning about the APA writing format. You should make an appointment with your thesis/project chair and review this section.

### 1. YOUR INTERESTS

Since you have been working in special education, you have identified issues or problems that interest you. You may find yourself talking in the faculty lunchroom or with colleagues about these issues or problems. Working on a thesis/project takes a good deal of effort and concentration so it is wise to focus on an issue or problem that will hold your interest—one that you care about! List the issues or problems that might interest you.

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**2. NARROWING DOWN YOUR CHOICES**

The process of finally selecting the specific research question can be illustrated by thinking of a funnel. They are wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. You are now circling over the top of the funnel with a list of ideas. You need to focus on one idea or a closely related group of similar ideas, problems, or issues. Keep in mind that it is possible to switch topics further into the process; however, unless the topic is closely related to the one you originally selected, you will have to start over at the beginning of the process.

a. OF THE ISSUES OR PROBLEMS YOU PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED, LIST THOSE IN WHICH YOU ARE MOST KNOWLEGEABLE.

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b. OF THE ISSUES OR PROBLEMS YOU PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED, LIST THOSE IN WHICH YOU ARE LIKELY TO GET THE MOST ASSISTANCE?

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c. OF THE ISSUES OR PROBLEMS YOU PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED, LIST THOSE IN THAT ARE MOST LIKELY TO MOTIVATE YOU TO PERSIST WHEN YOU HAVE TO WORK ON IT LATE AT NIGHT, ON WEEKENDS, AND DURING WINTER/SPRING/ AND SUMMER BREAK?

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d. OF THE ISSUES OR PROBLEMS YOU PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED LIST OTHER AREAS THAT MAY OVERLAP WITH THE ISSUES OR PROBLEMS YOU IDENTIFIED.

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### 3. FIND YOUR PRIMARY FOCUS!

During the semester in which you take Sped 531/532/535, you need to have selected a topic that will be the primary focus of your research for the thesis/project. However, in order to choose a suitable topic, you need to READ, READ, READ!!! In order to make an informed decision regarding your topic, you need to know what has already been attempted, what was successful and unsuccessful, or what has not yet been attempted. At this point, the topic you choose will still be broader than your final research question, but knowing the literature will allow you to choose a topic that is sufficiently narrow so that you can move on to the next step. For example, "Learning Disabilities" is far too broad. "Early literacy among students with Learning Disabilities" is narrower, but still too broad. "The effect of phonemic awareness instruction on primary students with learning disabilities" is better. At this point you are now moving into the top of the funnel and beginning the process of narrowing down a specific topic so that you can later develop a research question.

MY PRELIMINARY TOPIC IS:

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(Yes, it has to fit on these two lines, or you are being too wordy!)

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### 4. DEVELOP A LIST OF REFERENCES ON YOUR TOPIC

You must develop a list of sources of information on your topic. We prefer that you have a more robust or healthy list of 20 or more sources. These may be a combination of journals, books, web sites, and reports. However, 95% of your sources should be empirical research studies. Twenty to thirty sources is a good start. From there you will find out what you need, don't need, and how to better narrow your searches when you look for future sources.

TYPE OF SOURCE	Sources
Journals: Empirical Studies	Most Preferred
Journals: Practitioner Based and Books	Preferred
Web Sites, Interviews, Electronic Media & Reports	Least Preferred

## **Library Resources**

Use the web. To answer this question you will need to do a search of the OPAC on-line card catalog for the Pollak Library that can be found at this web address <http://library.fullerton.edu/>. Other databases such as ERIC AND PsychInfo.

Get a Titan Card. If you have not done so already, you need to get a Titan Card (PLS-140, 278-3555) so that you can checkout material. You should also seriously consider purchasing Titan Access, which is an Internet service provided by the University for a minimal cost per month. Any of the full-text items on the many library databases are available from your home computer if you subscribe to Titan Access. If you want to work from home doing research this is a very valuable tool. Go to <http://access.fullerton.edu> for information about Titan Access.

Library Survival Skill. The Library offers Library Survival Skills sessions that will be very helpful in learning how to use many of the electronic resources it offers. Information on session for beginners can be found at: <http://www.library.fullerton.edu/Services/ShowTopic.asp?TopicID=81>.

Research Assistance. The library also offers research assistance on or off campus (via phone or on-line). Information regarding research assistance can be found at: <http://www.library.fullerton.edu/Services/ShowTopic.asp?TopicID=82>.

As a graduate student you may schedule a one hour individual appointment with library research faculty to receive assistance in finding relevant resources. It is highly recommended that you take advantage of this resource if you have weak research skills or are having difficulty finding sources on your topic.

Keeping track of the information. Most students find that making photocopies of the resource materials they plan to use is most helpful because you can make notes directly on the material and you can sort it into categories. Be sure that you note all of the reference information necessary for a complete APA citation. Finding this information later just before you need to turn in your work is difficult and risky.

**Submit your list of references of initial sources you have collected to your committee chair.**

Date turned in \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Given to Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

## **5. DEVELOP A TIMELINE**

You and your chair should establish a timeline for finishing your thesis/project. A timeline is not set in stone and can be adjusted as needed, however, having direction and a goal is helpful when working on such a large and lengthy task.

## **6. GETTING STARTED WORKSHEET**

Complete the Getting Started Worksheet (Appendix B) and place it in the very front of your Survival Guide notebook.

**7. MEETINGS WITH YOUR COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Keep a record of all meetings with your committee chair. (Appendix C).

**8. GRADUATE STUDENT CHECKLIST**

Use the Graduate Student Checklist (Appendix D) and Checklists for Chapters (Appendix E) to help you confirm that you have completed all the necessary paperwork required for graduation and covered all necessary content required for your thesis/project.

**1. MORE NARROWING OF YOUR TOPIC**

Now that you have completed your preliminary reference list, you should have a much clearer idea about the scope of the topic you have picked and which part of the research available in the literature is most interesting and useful. This step requires that you move down the funnel and sharpen the focus of your topic.

Broad Primary Focus:

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Narrowed Primary Focus:

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**2. ORGANIZING WHAT YOU KNOW**

One of the most difficult aspects of the thesis/project writing process for students is that they try to rush past critical steps. One of the most critical is organizing what you have learned from the literature. What you need to do here is create a scheme for organizing all notes and their sources related to your topic.

Now that you are beginning to learn more about this topic, how would you describe all you have learned to a colleague and be sure you covered all the important points? You cannot simply say, “this book said..... and that article was about...” The most traditional way to begin to organize your thoughts is to use an outline. Some experts suggest developing a concept map or flow chart to visually illustrate the major categories of your topic.

To organize your information, start by defining a few main categories. Are there stages that your topic has passed through? Then, you could use a historical approach by period or decade. Are there differing points of view? Then, label each one as a main heading. Suppose you were exploring the topic positive behavior support and students with ADHD. Your headings might be characteristics of students with ADHD, effective behavioral strategies, and pharmacological treatments. You should pick the organizational pattern that best supports your research question(s). You may attach a copy of a graphic organizer, etc. in place of the list below to present to your chair when you discuss your topic.

YOUR MAIN CATEGORIES

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Discuss these main categories with your committee chair. Make sure that you have good coverage of your topic. This is like laying the foundation for a house (your thesis/project). You want the foundation (your key points) to be broad enough for the house to rest on, but you don't want excess foundation spreading out beyond the house, which happens when you write about too many tangential issues.

Demonstrating that you can find information about your topic is the first critical gate to completing your thesis/project.

**3. MAKE A DRAFT OUTLINE OF WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM YOUR SOURCES SO FAR**

Make a traditional outline with your main categories using the Roman numbered items (I. II. III. IV. etc.). You will find that most good word processing programs have an outline function that makes it very easy to create outlines. Fill in supporting information under each main idea. At this point you may find that you have an important main category for which your supporting information is skimpy—no problem, now is the time to find out! You simply need to do a bit more library research on this aspect of your topic.

This is a **DRAFT** outline because you will be changing it and improving it as you move through the process of writing your thesis/project.

**Submit your outline to your committee chair according to the schedule that you and your chair have established.**

Date turned in \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Given to Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **4. APA Format Required**

##### **APA Format Required**

The department requires that you use the citation system of the American Psychological Association, generally referred to as “APA.” We use APA because it is used in most educational writing. The citation system sets the rules for how to format both citations to works in the body of your writing and in the references list at the end. The purpose of a citation system is to give the critical information necessary so that anyone can find the sources you have used. All require information such as the name of the author, year published, publisher, city where published, etc. The advantage of APA is that it is very easy to incorporate citations in the body of your writing. You just have to put the author’s last name and year published (if you are quoting—add the page number too). For example, (Anderson, 2002, p. 19). Regardless of what citation system is used, credit must be give those whose content/ideas have been used and APA format is the accepted format for the field of Education.

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition) is available from the Titan Bookstore or from any of the online booksellers (ISBN 1557988102) and is a required text for many of your SPED classes. Also published by APA is *Mastering APA Style: Instructor’s Resource Guide* by Gelfand and Walker. It is designed as a self-paced, self-teaching workbook that can be used to learn APA style (ISBN 1557980845). You may also want to explore how to format your text and references in APA using the Format Ease program ([www.formatease.com](http://www.formatease.com), ISBN 1572304634, phone 212-431-9800). For help with electronic reference formats recommended by APA go to <http://www.apastyle.org/eleceref.html>. If you choose to use automatic formatting programs such as Format Ease, it is imperative that you make sure you know correct APA format so that you can identify APA errors in your manuscript.

##### **Headings and Subheadings**

Headings and subheadings are key to helping your reader. They divide your writing at logical points and give the reader assistance in knowing the content to be covered. For the primary header you must use the format required by Graduate Studies (see Graduate Thesis Regulations Student Handbook). Subheadings, however, should follow correct APA format.

Using APA heading format ensures consistent appearance, allowing the reader to easily determine the relationships between headings and subheadings. Be sure to consult your APA manual for correct subheading formats.

Some tips about using headings:

- Headings are generally used to indicate the organization of the text. Topics of equal importance should have the same heading level.
- Just as in outlining, there should always be at least two headings in each level
- Do not label headings with numbers or letters.
- For multi-chapter documents, apply heading styles consistently. Determine the heading structure based on the chapter that uses the deepest level heading, and then apply that structure to each chapter.

You must use subheadings to define the major categories of information presented in the literature review. You should begin to define these categories by using the outline you developed earlier. Be sure that you follow the APA guidelines for your subheadings.

### **Citations and References**

An important aspect of using APA format is to assure that every time you use information from a source in the literature or when you quote material directly, you create an “in-text” citation. You also need to create an entry in the reference list at the end of the thesis/project for each source you cite in the body of the thesis/project. You must follow standard APA format.

As you are drafting your thesis/project (especially Chapter Two which will have the most significant number of references), it is a good idea to build the reference list at the same time. Each time you put a citation in the body of your thesis/project take a few moments to create the entry in the reference list for the source. By building the reference list at the same time as the text is written, you avoid the problem of having a citation in the text without a listing in the references.

The reference list contains only listings for those sources that are actually cited in the text of the thesis/project. It is not a bibliography, because you are not listing every source you read.

**Faculty will stop reading your draft if they encounter any inconsistency between text citations and the reference list or if APA format is consistently incorrect.**

Before you turn in any draft, you need to go through it and check to see that there is a reference listing for every citation in the body of the work. Also check to see that only those sources cited in the text are listed in the references. Make sure that the spelling of the names of authors and that the years of publication are the same in the reference list and the in-text citation(s) and that correct APA format is followed. Hint: it helps to get someone to assist you in this process.

## **5. TIPS FOR FORMATTING YOUR DOCUMENT**

### **Computer**

Before you start drafting any parts of your thesis/project, you must set up the document in your word processing program. Follow the guidelines established in the Graduate Thesis Regulations Student Handbook (GTRSH, <http://www.fullerton.edu/graduate/forms.htm>). You may find it difficult to change margins and page numbering once you have written a good amount—**do it now!** You also need to set up a separate computer folder or file where you will save the chapters of your thesis/project. Purchase high quality disks/CDs to **back-up** your data. Make at least 2 other back-ups of your thesis/project. Keep the back-ups somewhere safe (this does not include your chair’s office).

Yes, you need to format your own thesis/project. Working with a “typist” is not advised. They are expensive—better to invest in the hardware and software you need. They also take up more time making revisions than you will have. We also expect that you will do the work of inputting your writing yourself. This will improve your keyboarding and computer skills. This is your thesis/project, not your “significant other’s” part-time job!

You can start creating and formatting a Table of Contents using the guidelines established by the graduate school. The Table of Contents allows the reader to quickly determine the scope and content of a thesis/project. Be sure that you follow **exactly** the sequence of the parts as they are laid out in the

example of a Table of Contents when you write your thesis/project. The GTRSH provides specific instructions regarding how to format your thesis/project.

## 6. TIPS ON WRITING

### Writing

We cannot stress too strongly how important it is that you turn in high quality writing. Faculty members do not have the time, nor should they be correcting simple grammatical errors such as run-on sentences, misspellings, and mistakes using APA format and style. See the 10 Commandments in the (Appendix F). Your chair is responsible for assisting you with the content and organization of your writing. You or your editing buddies should be catching the other mistakes.

**For most successful writers, editing consumes more time than writing. Take editing your work seriously. It will make a tremendous difference.**

If you know that your writing is weak, GET HELP! Contact the Writing Assistance Center on campus (MH-45) 278-3650, or throw yourself into the mercy of someone who will proof read your paper.

We understand that writing is not always a strong skill among graduate students. However, clear writing is a critical skill for professional educators, and you are expected to enter the program with sufficient writing skills to do graduate work.

Clear, graduate-level writing is the second critical gate to getting your thesis/project done (the first gate was demonstrating that you could find information about your topic). The writing style for the thesis/project should be sophisticated enough to do the topic justice, but not so dense that the reader needs a post-graduate course to “wade” through it. Do not use a style that is too colloquial (informal or conversational/chatty) such as use of contractions (e.g. don’t). On the other hand, you should also avoid using words or styles that are ornate or overly elaborate (consult your APA manual regarding parsimony).

### “Data”

The word “data” is frequently used in writing theses/projects. Often it is used with the wrong verb. **This word is always plural** so the correct verb to use is “are” or “were”, not “is” or “was”. For example: *Data were collected. Data are analyzed by....*

### Gender Pronouns

The APA Manual warns against the use of sexist bias when always using the pronouns of a single gender to refer to individuals who are of both genders. You can solve this problem by making the subject of the sentence plural and using “they” or “their”. A less attractive alternative is to use “s/he”, “she/he”, “his/her” or alternate between the genders.

### Past tense

When your thesis/project is completed, you will have it bound in book form. When you read a book about events that have already occurred, it is written in the past tense because the events are in the past. In the same way you will write your thesis/project in the past tense even though you may be carrying out some of the steps/procedures/methods as you are writing about them. Instead of saying, “*I am going to select a random sample,*” you should say “*a random sample was selected.*”

### Third person

In most academic writing the use of first person pronouns such as “I,” or “me” is avoided. Instead of writing, “*I examined the appropriate way to conduct an interview,*” you should write, “*research was conducted to ascertain the ideal methods used in conducting interviews.*” Using “I” or “me” a limited number of times when it makes the meaning clear and the writing less complex is acceptable.

### Affect-Effect

The misuse of affect and effect words is rampant among students. Many students don’t know which of the two words should be used in a particular context. The following chart provides some information regarding the appropriate use of affect and effect.

HOW IT IS USED	PART OF SPEECH	CORRECT WORD
<i>A feeling</i>	<i>noun</i>	<i>affect</i>
<i>A result or influence</i>	<i>noun</i>	<i>effect</i>
<i>To influence</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>affect</i>
<i>To bring about</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>effect</i>

### Quotes

Whenever you use the exact words written by one of your sources you must identify the words with appropriate quotation marks and a citation containing the page number(s). **Review the page on Academic Dishonesty from the University Catalog** (Appendix G). You are responsible for understanding and following the University policy on academic dishonesty. If you are unsure how these policies impact your work, contact your thesis/project committee chair for advice. Failure on your part, to understand and follow these policies may result in your removal from the master’s program as well as sanctions provided by the University.

Be sure to review the Student Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism prepared by the Associate Dean of Judicial Affairs that can be found at:

**[http://fdc.fullerton.edu/learning/Academic%20Integrity/student\\_guide\\_to\\_avoiding\\_plagia.htm](http://fdc.fullerton.edu/learning/Academic%20Integrity/student_guide_to_avoiding_plagia.htm)**

Selecting particularly important quotations to include in your thesis/project is appropriate. However, the bulk of your thesis/project cannot be done by stringing together quotations from various sources. Quotations of 40 or less words should be set off by double quotations. You will notice that when quotation marks are used, the citation is placed inside the period; but when a longer block quotation is used (40+ words), the citation is placed outside the period (Nobody knows why, it is just that way!). Check your APA manual for explicit instructions regarding citing quotations.

**7. NOW YOU CAN START TO DRAFT YOUR THESIS/PROJECT!**

Keep in mind that what you are starting to do is write a draft that will go through **many, many** revisions.

Please note that even though the abstract comes first in your thesis/project—it is the **last** part you will write. Do **not** try to do it now!

After you turn in a draft of a chapter to your committee chair, keep right on working on the next chapter. Do not take breaks—keep a steady pace of continuous work on your thesis/project. **You may want to set aside a specific time each week to work on your thesis/project.**

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the literature



During the time you are taking Sped 531, 532, 535 you will begin the research for your Review of the Literature (Chapter Two in your thesis/project) and write a mini literature synthesis that will be expanded to a comprehensive literature review later (often in Sped 599). Chapter 2 is often **the most difficult and time consuming chapter** to write because it involves examination and synthesis of all relevant literature related to your topic.

#### *Purposes of Chapter Two*

First, it provides the reader with the background information necessary to understand and appreciate the work that you propose; Second, it convinces the reader that your work will contribute to the field because it is appropriate and necessary; and third, it convinces the reader that you are a knowledgeable professional whose work is to be respected because you have background knowledge about the field necessary to contribute to it.

The chapter should begin with a general overview/introductory paragraph. An introductory paragraph eases the reader into the material you are going to present. Remember that you cannot begin the chapter with another major heading until you have presented some information, i.e. you cannot have a heading followed by another heading or sub-heading without text in between the two. You also need to have at least two areas for each heading or sub-heading or the headings and sub-headings are not necessary. Your review should include bridges between ideas, statements that relate it to the major topic, and summaries at the end of the discussion.

At this point you have searched the literature and you should have an indication of what has and has not been examined and what questions/hypotheses have and have not been asked or addressed respectively. This chapter is where you list the questions that you will be addressing. They should be a **natural outgrowth** of the literature you have examined. These questions/hypotheses are critical components that represent the essence of your topic and drive your research study. They are so important that without investigating them your study will be incomplete.

What you glean from your review of the literature should also help you to substantiate the rationale and define the purpose of your study (rationale and purpose belong in the Introduction, Chapter 1). Furthermore, this information will help you to formulate questions regarding your topic that remain unanswered, and develop hypotheses/predictions (which are generally included at the end of Chapter 2) about your results.

Providing sound self-direction and management of the thesis/project development process is the third critical gate in the thesis/project process. (The other gates were: demonstrating that you could find information about your topic and ability to write clearly at the graduate level).

*What a literature review is NOT*

It is NOT a series of paragraphs summarizing articles or research you found (e.g., annotated bibliography). It is NOT for sharing of YOUR beliefs, experiences, or opinions.

*What a literature review IS*

It is a thoughtful, well-organized chapter in the thesis/project. Its purpose is to move the reader along a path of understanding the various main ideas of your thesis/project toward the NEED for your study. The reader should be introduced to each main idea of your study and a complete/thorough review of key/all related literature for that element. For example, a study of the relationship between achievement of students with learning disabilities (LD) and parental involvement in a parent education program may include the elements of: (a) students with LD, (b) student achievement, (c) parent involvement programs, and (d) parents of students with LD.

You are reviewing the empirical evidence on a specific topic for your reader, in narrative format, based on the literature. You must begin at the beginning—by introducing each of the elements of your study to the reader. You PRESENT each of the elements of your study, DISCUSS how each element has been researched in the past (including conclusions drawn), and COMMUNICATE HOW this past research funnels toward your study. In this way, you demonstrate to the reader that you have a thorough understanding of your topic/area and are “academically qualified” to proceed with a study in this area. Then, and only then, can you guide your reader toward a convincing ACADEMIC argument of your study.

*Content*

*Hypothesis.* By now, you should also have enough information from the literature to establish your hypothesis. A hypothesis represents a prediction of the results of the research findings for quantitative or deductive methods. Hypotheses should be based on sound reasoning, provide a reasonable explanation for predicted outcomes, clearly state the expected relationships between variables, and be testable within a reasonable time frame. The null hypothesis always takes the position that there is no difference when the treatment variable is manipulated. Here are some examples for you to consider when writing your hypothesis.

### Hypotheses Examples

**#1** Low-achieving 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students who have a 5<sup>th</sup>-grade mentor have fewer behavior problems than low-achieving 3<sup>rd</sup> graders who do not.

participants--low-achieving 3<sup>rd</sup> graders;

independent variable--the causal or treatment variable is the presence or absence of a 5<sup>th</sup> grade mentor;

dependent variable --the effect or observed outcome on behavior problems.

**Null Hypothesis:** Low-achieving 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students who have a 5<sup>th</sup> grade mentor will have more or an equal amount, of behavior problems as compared to low-achieving 3<sup>rd</sup> graders who do not have a 5<sup>th</sup> grade mentor.

**#2** There is a negative relationship between peer-group rejection and attitude toward school among 9<sup>th</sup> students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

**Null Hypothesis:** There is no relationship or a positive relationship between peer-group rejection and attitude toward school among 9<sup>th</sup> grade students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

**#3** There is a direct relationship between teachers' computer literacy and use of computers for educational purposes in the classroom.

**Null Hypothesis:** There is no relationship between teachers' computer literacy and use of computers for educational purposes in the classroom.

It is important to remember that the researcher does not set out to prove the hypothesis, but collects data to establish whether or not the hypothesis is supported by the data. **Inductive or qualitative research methodologies including action research do not begin with a hypothesis.**

#### *Research Questions*

Once you have examined the literature you should have enough information to lead you to educated and informed research questions (or at least one question). Be careful when drafting research questions. They should be clear and concise but make sure that you do not use confusing terms.

Here are some examples for you to consider when writing your research question:

**What you are examining/measuring in your research should be clearly stated.**

#### **Example of a poorly written question**

*"How much do students grow as a result of this intervention?"*

Does "grown" refer to height? GPA?, Test scores? This question is too vague.

#### **Example of a well written question**

*"What is the increase in math achievement scores as a result of this intervention?"*

This question specifically states that math achievement is being measured.

**Your research question should be specific enough to be practical—not global.**

**Example of a poorly written question**

*“Do students with disabilities perform better, academically, in inclusive classrooms?”*

Which disabilities? Which age group?

**Example of a well written question**

*“Do middle school students with learning disabilities perform better, academically, in inclusive classrooms as compared to non-inclusive classrooms?”*

This question specifically states what age and type of students are being examined.

**Do not state conclusions as a research question.**

**Example of a poorly written question**

*“Instruction in phonics will improve the reading performance of students with behavioral disorders.”*

This is not a question it is a statement of what the researcher thinks will happen.

**Example of well written question**

*“What is the effect of reading instruction in phonics on the reading performance of students with behavior disorders?”*

This is a question that the research should answer.

**Ways to more sharply focus your research question:**

Focus on a specific program, population, intervention, etc. If you have several questions, make sure they are closely related and focus on the same aspect of a problem. Think of your thesis/project as a first step in a series of research efforts—do not try to do it all now. It is much better to do an excellent job on a “small slice” of a big problem than a poor job on a “large slice.” Make sure you can actually carryout the thesis/project you are proposing. Is there enough time? Can you get access to collect data? (Appendix H)

*Summary*

Your entire literature review should end with a summary of the information presented throughout the entire chapter, which consists of the main points presented in your review (including citations), conclusions based on the main points presented, the questions/hypotheses that you now have as a result of your review, and identify a need for the material or research that you are to present in the remainder of the thesis/project.

## CHAPTER 1 Introduction

Once you have completed a draft of your literature review, you now have the information you need to write the Introduction (Chapter 1). The purpose of an introduction is to describe the problem area, establish its importance, and indicate the author's perspectives on the problem. Introductions usually conclude with an explicit statement of the research hypothesis, purposes, or questions to be answered in the study.

Prior to introducing the purpose of your thesis/project, a brief overview or introduction should be presented. The purpose of this overview is to prepare the reader for the statement of the problem. The content of this introduction could include a current problem, which motivated you to work on the thesis/project or a very short historical account of your topic. The rationale, purpose, and assumptions should be embedded into the narrative. **There should be no special subheadings** for these parts of the introduction.

### *Rationale*

You need to discuss how the problem you are posing is related to theories, practice, and/or policy. Tell why the research you plan to do is important and how it is relevant or why the problem is significant. You can give a brief history of the topic or problem in the traditional way by going from the past to the present, or the reverse, by going from the present to the past. You also need to present reasons why this study will contribute to the profession. Be sure to include the citations of the sources you include in this chapter.

### *Statement of Purpose*

The introduction should include a clear, sharply focused statement of the problem (not solution), namely, an explanation of why you think the topic you have chosen is important. In order to write this statement you must know enough about the literature and research in this area to be able to relate your problem to the rest of the field. You should be able to complete the following sentence: "The purpose of this thesis/project was...." No more than two sentences should follow this statement for purposes of elaboration.

### *Assumptions*

Assumptions are premises that you start with before working on your topic or problem. For example, if you are using SAT9 results, you are assuming that the test is an adequate measure of what students know. It is important to present your assumptions at the beginning of your document in order to provide a lens through which the remainder of the document can be viewed.

### CHAPTER 3 Methodology

In Chapter Three you need to spell out all the details of the process and methods you will use in conducting your thesis/project. Someone who knows nothing about your study should be able to read your Chapter 3 and replicate your study. It is as if you gave your friends a recipe for the most delicious cookies in the world. If you leave out one step of the recipe the cookies will not turn out as they should.

Specifically, you will describe who was in your study, what you did, where the study was conducted, when it was conducted, and how you collected your data (**remember to write in the past tense**) and the specific research method you used. You will need to read enough about the method you used in the research methods literature to be sure that it is appropriate for your work. You must also cite authorities supporting the appropriateness of your methods.

The content of Sped 510 will assist you in determining an appropriate method for conducting your thesis/project research. (See the illustration on the top of the next page). The method chosen is always based on whether or not it is the best choice for addressing your research questions/hypotheses.

#### *Choosing a Method*

The type of research method you choose (quantitative vs. qualitative) as well as the research design (e.g., survey, quasi-experimental) depends directly on your research question(s)/hypotheses.

**Warning: NEVER, NEVER CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS UNLESS YOU HAVE** checked with your chair about “**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**” for all theses and some projects. Federal law prohibits people from conducting research that may harm humans. The University has an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application form that you must complete and have approved **PRIOR** to conducting research. You may download the application from the Office of Grants and Contracts at <http://ogcserv.fullerton.edu/>. You are also required (university policy) to take the IRB tutorial and pass it before you can submit your IRB for review. **Your committee chair makes the final decision regarding when to submit your IRB application.**

#### *Improving Chapter 3*

When you first drafted your Chapter Three (part of proposal assignment for Sped 510) your primary concern was to create a draft that would become the basis for your final draft. Now it is time to think about polishing up your draft. Ask yourself these questions:

**a. IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO ACTUALLY COMPLETE THE STUDY I PLANNED AND GRADUATE ON TIME?** \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no \_\_\_not sure

**b. WILL THE STUDY I PLANNED BE USEFUL?** \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no \_\_\_not sure

**c. DO I WANT TO SPEND THE TIME IT WILL TAKE TO CARRY OUT THIS STUDY?** \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no \_\_\_not sure

Unless you answered, “**yes**” to all of these questions, you should consider revising your planned study. You can make revisions without “dumping” your work as long as you stick with the general topics outlined in your research proposal (Sped 510). For example, if you had said that you were going to survey all of the districts in Orange County on how they provide transition services, you could revise your methodology in a variety of ways: (a) limit the survey to a specific district or grade level, (b) write a case study of how one district provides transition services, or (c) focus your study on the perceived value of such services by families. In all these examples your literature review on transition services would still be useful and might need only minor or no revisions.

If you are considering changing your methodology from that which you outlined in your research proposal (Sped 510), be sure to have your new plan approved by your thesis/project committee chair **prior** to working on further revisions. It is especially important that you obtain IRB approval prior to conducting your research.

*Content for Chapter Three (subheadings are determined by the nature of your study (e.g., quantitative or qualitative) and should be discussed with your chair)*

*Participants/Sample.* This section should include a discussion of the demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the study (e.g., gender, disability, age).

*Setting.* Describe the setting in which the data were collected. This may be the classroom, playground, home, office, etc. A detailed description and analysis of the setting provides the context for understanding the significance of your thesis/project.

*Data Collection Procedures.* Your research question(s) also dictate(s) which data collection methods you choose (e.g., direct observation, survey, archival data).

*Instruments.* Describe the instrument(s) (e.g. achievement tests, social skills tests, surveys) used to collect your data. Why did you select a particular pre-existing instrument, why did you structure the instrument you designed in a particular way, why did you choose one instrument over another similar instrument? If you designed your own instrument, did others give input regarding the design? If so, who? Make sure you include information regarding the validity and reliability of each instrument you use. If you have created your own instrument, you must describe the validation process used. Copies of instruments should be placed in the appendix (es) of your thesis/project.

**NEVER, NEVER USE A SURVEY INSTRUMENT OR OTHER INSTRUMENT UNLESS IT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY YOUR COMMITTEE CHAIR AND IRB (IF APPLICABLE)**

You may jeopardize your thesis/project if you break this rule. You may have to collect the data all over again. Have your committee chair sign and date his/her approval on a copy of the instrument using the Faculty Approval of Instrument form (Appendix I).

*Variables.* This section includes a description of all significant independent and dependent variables in the study. If you are conducting a qualitative study this sections may not be applicable.

*Procedures.* Include in detail what happened first, second, third, and so on. Describe the whole course of your research from start to finish. If your research requires it, present the hypothesis or hypotheses expressed in null form.

*Design.* Include a description of the plan or design the research will follow. Did you use qualitative or quantitative methods? What research design did you choose (e.g., experimental, survey, quasi-experimental)? Describe the advantages and disadvantages associated with the design(s) you used. You must be able to justify the research method/design you selected by citing authorities on those methods.

The following provides two examples of how your methodological approach and procedures should be described, including citations to the methodological literature.

**Example 1**

In order to create a well-rounded case study, both qualitative and quantitative statistics were utilized. These methods were selected based on the writings of Yin (1984) in his book, Case study research: Design and Methods and Jaeger (1988) in his book, Complementary methods: For research in education. Both writers argue that many sources of evidence are necessary to describe and explain a case study. A Spearman Ranking instrument was developed for quantitative statistics.

**Example 2**

The case study method was used for this thesis/project because of its ability to explain the causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for simple surveys. According to Merriam (1988, p. 28), the case study method is used when, “description and explanation are sought, when it is not possible to manipulate the potential causes of behavior, and when variables are not easily identified or are too embedded in the phenomenon to be extracted for study.”

*Analysis.* Describe the analysis techniques you selected to analyze your data. You must be able to justify the analyses you selected.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results

**While you are taking Sped 596 or Sped 599**, you will need to write and revise your Chapter Four, which presents your data.

This is where you present the results of the analysis of your data. You may call attention to significant findings, but do not make sweeping interpretations, reach conclusions, state opinion(s), or draw implications. **Remember to write in the past tense.** For quantitative studies, information presented should include the results, the analysis conducted (e.g., ANOVA, T-test) and if findings are statistically significant, indicate at what level.

For qualitative studies it is critical that sufficient descriptive data be presented in narrative form, so that readers can judge the reliability and significance of your conclusions; “thick description” that includes detail and analysis is absolutely necessary.

When presenting tables, figures, or anything that is not text only **you should consult your APA manual for specific formatting information.**

#### *Continuing Your Revisions*

It is critical that you continue to review your thesis/project based on feedback from your committee chair. Keep up the pace of your work, stay consistent, and pay attention to your thesis/project on a regular basis. You are responsible for taking charge of and managing the continuing development of your thesis/project.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Discussion**

While you are taking Sped 596 or 599 you will need to write and revise your Chapter Five. This chapter includes a brief summary of the thesis/project results, interpretation(s) of the results, implications/conclusions, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research. This is where you get to have your “say” about the question or problem. You can present personal interpretations of what the data mean, reach conclusions, and/or draw implications. You are expected to make recommendations related to current practice and future research needed.

#### *Content*

*Summary.* Include a brief summary of the results of the study. Connect your findings to the statement of the problem, the rationale, and the review of the literature.

*Implications/Conclusions.* Implications indicate how your findings can affect teaching, learning other aspects of education for persons with disabilities. You should base your implications or conclusions on the findings presented in Chapter Four.

*Limitations.* No study is perfect and study limitations should be discussed. Limitations are those factors that may affect the results of your study or explain why your results did not support your research question(s) or hypothesis. These may include small sample size, time constraints, low response rates (if you conducted a survey), invalid or unreliable instruments, etc.

*Future Research.* Indicate promising areas for further study that you uncovered in your work on this thesis/project that other scholars may be interested in pursuing such as expanding the population to include individuals with other disabilities or ethnicities or adding a component to an intervention.

## FRONT MATTER

### *Front Matter*

Now is the time to do your front matter. This includes title/approval page (the one with all the signatures of your committee members), abstract, and table of contents. Remember that the front matter is numbered using lower case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv, etc.). Refer to the GTRSH for all format requirements for “Front Matter.”

### *Abstract*

Now that you have a completed thesis/project, you can write the abstract. The abstract is a summary of the key points in the thesis/project. It must state the problem and/or research question, the key findings, and important conclusions and recommendations. But it must be short—a paragraph (generally 150 words or less). Remember, the abstract paragraph is not indented on the first line.

### *Abstract Format.*

The abstract is the only portion of the front matter that is not explicitly described in the GTRSH. The format guidelines are as follows:

1. The title “abstract” must be in capital letters: ABSTRACT
2. There must be a 2 inch top margin.
3. Text should be double spaced with the beginning of the paragraph indented.
4. There must be a triple space between the title “abstract” and the first line of the abstract text.
5. The abstract is limited to a maximum of 150 words.

We also recommend that you include an acknowledgements page. This is a great place to thank people such as those who helped, encouraged, or inspired you.

## FINAL TOUCHES

During Sped 597/8 you will be working very closely with your thesis/project committee chair to complete final edits, etc. Your chair is the person responsible for helping you to complete your thesis/project. However it is your responsibility to correctly format your paper and meet all deadlines. Please consult the GTRSH for all format regulations.

### *Continuing Your Revisions*

It is critical that you **continue** to revise your thesis/project based on feedback from your committee chair.

## FINAL APPROVAL

You must submit your final draft of your thesis to your committee chair **six weeks** prior to the thesis reader due date (check the department graduate program bulletin board or website) for theses and six weeks prior to the due date set by the department. Your committee chair will review your final thesis/project including **all** of the required parts. If your chair believes that your thesis/project is completed, your chair will give copies to your other committee members. Your committee members will review your thesis/project and return the edited document to your chair. Your chair or a committee member will contact you regarding what final edits you may need to make. Any of your committee members may ask you to make revisions prior to signing the thesis/project approval page. You cannot get your degree until three faculty members have signed your thesis/project approval page and you submit a copy of your approval page and verification that you have had your thesis/project bound. The time before the graduation deadline will be short so you need to be ready to make any necessary revisions quickly. The completion of your thesis/project should be your **only** priority at this point. See Appendix J for a checklist of this process.

## BINDING

Once you have your approval page signed, you should arrange to have your thesis bound

Students may have their theses bound wherever they prefer (See GTRSH).

**You must submit your final thesis/project with a sign page to your graduate program adviser (Dr. Jung) *electronically* before the last semester is over.**

## The Last Steps

### Final and completed product turned in

Submit one complete, unbound, and perfect copy of your thesis/project to your chair for final review.

Date turned in \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Given to Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

Final approval to bind (three faculty signatures obtained by) \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Your thesis to the thesis reader (if applicable)

A copy of the approval/signature page and a copy of the receipt verifying that you had your thesis/project bound.

Submit two bound copies of your thesis/project directly to the Special Education Department Graduate Program Advisor.

Within 4-6 weeks you will receive a letter from the Special Education Department Graduate Program Advisor stating that you have completed all requirements for obtaining your degree.

Congratulations, you ARE DONE!



## **Independent Study Sped 599**

**The purpose of Sped 599 is to help you polish up your thesis/project, particularly chapter 2 (literature review) and provide accountability so that you move toward completion while you are taking classes.**

### **CONTINUING YOUR REVISIONS**

It is critical that you continue to review and edit the portions of your thesis/project that you have already completed. Keep up the pace of your work and pay attention to your thesis/project on a **regular** basis.

### **EXPAND AND/OR ENHANCE YOUR LITERATURE REVIEW**

Go back and review your literature review (Chapter 2) and any faculty feedback you received. If you need more information about some aspect of your topic, now is the time to expand and enhance your literature review!

Pick one or two key authors who have written about your topic. They may: support your premises, have a unique way of looking at your issue, do an excellent job of summarizing the research in this field. You probably began your research using a subject index to find these first sources.

#### **Search backward from your existing sources:**

Find the articles that are cited in the reference section of your key article(s). These are the sources used by the author of the key article(s). They provide the basis for the key work(s) that you have selected and can be an important resource in helping you to expand or enhance your literature review by providing more information about the topics you already covered and/or providing you with additional topics that should be discussed.

#### **Search forward from your sources:**

Use the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) to find articles that have referenced the same articles you have identified in other works published as a key, since the time the key article(s) was/were written (*Yes, you can do this!*). Your key article(s) will appear in the reference section of the SSCI article(s). This will provide you with the most recent developments on your topic.

SSCI is available in the Library in paper volumes, on one computer that uses CD's, or more recently on the Library web site. Contact a reference librarian for assistance in locating the index on line.

#### **Library Resources:**

If these search steps seem difficult, you may need to take advantage of the training available from Pollak Library. You can also request appointments with a research librarian to assist you by logging

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on to the library website at <http://www.library.fullerton.edu/ipresearch.htm>. Be specific when you fill out the request so they can provide you with the most effective and efficient assistance possible.

**EXPAND AND/OR ENHANCE YOUR OTHER CHAPTERS YOU HAVE WRITTEN**

While you continue to keep Chapter 2 current, you should continue to revise other chapters that you have written.

You should always be working on something!

### **Advanced Research Seminar Sped 596**

**The purpose of Sped 596 is to help you finish your thesis/project, particularly chapters 4 (results) and 5 (discussion) and provide accountability so that you move toward completion while you are taking classes.**

#### **CONTINUING YOUR REVISIONS**

It is critical that you continue to review and edit the portions of your thesis/project that you have already completed. Keep up the pace of your work and pay attention to your thesis/project on a **regular** basis.

#### **EXPAND AND/OR ENHANCE YOUR RESULTS AND DISCUSSION SECTIONS**

This class is designed to help you complete your results and discussions sections. You will review what is required in a results section (e.g., inferential and descriptive statistics) and presenting your results, as well as what is required in a discussion section. Be sure to review the checklists for chapters 4 and 5 in the Appendixes to determine if you have included all the elements of chapters 4 and 5.

APPENDIXES

## Appendix A

Formal vs. Informal or Action Research  
(Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003)

Topic	Formal Research (required by CSUF) THESIS	Informal Research PROJECT
Method of identifying the problem to be studied	Generated from review of previous research	Problems or goals currently faced; not generated from previous research
Procedure for literature review	Extensive, using primary sources	Extensive, using primary sources
Sampling approach	Random or representative	Students or clients with whom one works
Research design	Rigorous control for error, internal and external validity	Loose control for error, internal and external validity
Measurement procedures	Focus on statistical or functional significance; present descriptive/inferential statistics, graphs	Focus on practical significance; present descriptive statistics, graphs
Application results	Emphasis on generalizability of results; increased knowledge about teaching and learning in general; contribution to theoretical/ applied research literature	Emphasis on practical significance; improved teaching and learning in a particular classroom; contribution to practitioner research literature
Reporting outcome	Published report; journal article; professional conference	Informal sharing with colleagues; brief report; ERIC document; conferences
Who Reads	Across campus	Department Only

Appendix B  
Getting Organized

Department of Special Education  
(714) 278-7769 / Fax (714) 278-3110

### Thesis/Project Committee Assignment Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please Print*

Name		Student ID #
Daytime Phone ( )	Email Address	
Evening Phone ( )		FAX # (if available)

Check all boxes that apply:

- Thesis
- Project
- Proposal form is attached
- Institutional Review Board approval is attached (if required)

Proposed Thesis or Project Title
_____
_____
_____

Thesis/Project Chair

Committee Member

Committee Member



Appendix D  
**GRADUATE STUDENT CHECKLIST**  
**Department of Special Education**

= Action initiated by student (as indicated below)     = Action initiated by the University

**1. GRADUATE STANDING: CLASSIFIED**

- Complete any course prerequisites and/or remove deficiencies
- Provide department with any other supporting statements or materials, as shown in program descriptions in
- Make an appointment with your faculty advisor to develop an official MS study plan in order to apply for classified standing in Special Education prior to completion of nine units of study plan course work university catalog
- Take tests if required by program and order test scores sent to Cal State Fullerton, designating appropriate academic department on the test registration form
- Recommendation for classified standing made by graduate program adviser by sending the signed study plan to the Graduate Studies Office
- Notification of classified standing granted is sent from Graduate Studies along with a copy of the approved study plan
- If notification of classified standing is not received within 6-8 weeks; contact the department graduate program adviser.

**2. COMPLETION OF REQUIREMENTS**

- Apply for graduation prior to the beginning of the final semester. Specific deadlines are listed in the class schedule and posted on the Graduate Studies website. The form is available at the Admissions and Records Service Center and the Graduate Studies Office. A graduation processing and diploma fee of \$90 (\$115 if graduating as of end of fall semester 2004) will be paid to the university cashier with the application for graduation.
- Consult the department graduate program adviser to confirm final requirements for the degree
- Final, approved study plan, with recommendation, sent by the department graduate program adviser to the Graduate Studies Office
- A copy of the Grad Check Review Form is sent to the student showing the adviser's recommendation.
- Preliminary audit completed by Graduate Studies Office staff. The student's study plan is checked for pending grades, and completion of any other requirements.
- Complete all general and specific requirements, other than final course examinations, by the last day of classes, in order to assure granting of the degree by the end of the semester
- Complete written and/or oral examination, if required. Complete thesis or project, if applicable
- Obtain committee approval for thesis, project or results of comprehensive exam(s)
- Submit thesis to committee chair by \_\_\_\_\_ (posted on bulletin board outside office of the graduate advisor)
- Submit thesis to university thesis reader by \_\_\_\_\_ (date is posted in the class schedule and on the Graduate Studies website)
- Thesis reader signs "Thesis Approval Form"
- Take approved copy of thesis with "Thesis Approval Form" to the bookstore (Titan Shops Copy Center) and make arrangements for binding, microfilming and publication of the abstract. The cost is currently \$155 plus \$65 if copyright is desired.
- Submit project to committee chair by \_\_\_\_\_
- Deposit approved copy of thesis or project in academic department (if required)
- Final verification of completion of requirements sent by the Graduate Studies Office staff to the registrar
- Notification of award of degree received from registrar approximately eight weeks after the end of the semester

**3. COMMENCEMENT**

- Make appropriate arrangements for cap, gown and hood rental in the campus bookstore
- Commencement information sent by the College Dean's Office

## Helpful Tips to Remember

---

The following are guidelines for preparing your thesis for binding.

1. Use 8 1/2" x 11", white, 20-pound weight paper.
2. Use standard, conservative 12-point type (Times New Roman or Courier) that is dark, clear, and readable. Use ink-jet or laser printer.
3. Do not right justify margins.
4. Type every page with a one-inch margin on the top, bottom and right hand side.  
**1.5 -inch margin on the left side of all pages is required for binding purposes.**
5. Double space between all lines of the manuscript, including quotations, references, and headings.
6. Page numbers should be centered at the bottom of the page.
7. *Frontis* pages will be numbered in lowercase Roman numerals and centered one inch from the bottom of the page. The title/sign-off page should **not** be numbered though it will be regarded as page "i." The first numbered page contains the abstract, and is numbered "ii." Subsequent frontis pages are numbered consecutively.
8. The text and any subsequent pages are paginated consecutively in Arabic numerals beginning with "1" on the first page.
9. The use of a running head is optional.
10. Indent (five spaces) the first line of every paragraph by setting and using a tab.
11. Do not break words at the end of a line.
12. Do not put a heading at the bottom of a page with the text beginning on the next page.
13. Center the word References at the top of the reference list page.
14. For in-text citations, mark places in the documentation where information has been used that is from other sources. Place the citation as near as possible to the text that is based on the author's ideas or actual words. Cite each time you refer to the same source, except when all of the sentences in a paragraph refer to the same source. In this case, provide a full citation for the first use and use page numbers for subsequent citations. This can only be done as long as there is no mention of another source that would confuse the reader.
15. There must be a citation with a page number for every quotation.
16. As a general rule, spell the numbers zero to nine and use the numerals for numbers 10 and above.
17. Do not begin sentences with Arabic numbers (1, 2, etc.). You must spell out the number at the beginning of a sentence.
18. Each copy of your manuscript should contain an original signature.
19. Signatures must be obtained before binding.

Appendix E

Checklists for Chapters

**The following pages are checklists for each chapter. Turn in a copy of the appropriate checklist for each chapter submitted. Faculty members will note on the checklist the items completed or where additional work is needed.**

**CHAPTER ONE CHECKLIST**

Use the checklist below to be sure that you have included all of the critical parts of the chapter.

- Introduction—brief overview of the chapter
- States how problem relates to theories, practice or policy
- Tells why the research you plan to do is important, relevant to the problem
- Presents reasons why study will help educators in general and students
- Clear, sharply focused statement of the problem/topic and why it is important
- Clearly states assumptions—premises you start with before working on your topic

**CHECKLIST FOR CHAPTER TWO**

Use this checklist to be sure that you have done a good job of writing your Chapter Two.

- Review comprehensive? The literature emphasizes the findings of previous research.
- Uses the literature to provide the historical context/support for the present study.
- Cites references relevant to the problem under investigation
- Points out trends in the literature.
- Points out gaps in the literature.
- The literature addresses the purpose presented in the Introduction?
- References are analyzed and critiqued, and the results of various studies are compared and contrasted.
- Review is well organized and educates the reader about the problem or topic.
- Uses direct quotations sparingly.
- Reports sparingly on the details of the literature being cited.
- Indicates questions that will be addressed.
- States hypothesis (ses) clearly (only used when conducting quantitative research)
- Review concludes with a summary and interpretation of the literature and its implications for the problem being investigated.
- References are cited completely and correctly using APA format.
- All citations contained in the text also contained in the References.
- Written in the past tense.
- Uses subheadings effectively

**CHECKLIST FOR CHAPTER THREE**

Use this checklist to make sure that you have covered all of the necessary parts of Chapter Three.

- Describes participant selection
- Includes participant demographics
- Describes the measures and instruments used in the study
- Describes how variables were measured
- Describes how was the instrument was designed and steps taken to assure instrument reliability and validity
- Describes strategy for conducting/structuring the study—basic structure of the study
- Describes how the study was carried out from the beginning to end—steps to be followed.
- Operationally defines all variables in the study.

**CHAPTER FOUR CHECKLIST**

Use this checklist to make sure that you have covered all of the necessary parts of Chapter Four.

- For quantitative studies: presentation of results of descriptive and inferential analyses, statistical significance if appropriate
- For qualitative studies: presentation of the data presented with sufficient descriptive detail so that the reader can judge reliability and significance of the data, also is there “thick description” which includes analysis of the situation?
- Chapter Four answers the research questions presented in Chapter Two or addresses the problem statement or hypothesis presented in Chapter One.
- May call attention to significant findings, but does not make sweeping interpretations, reach conclusions, state opinions or draw implications.
- Presents a summary statement for the major findings.
- Describes the type of research design used (i.e. Correlation, descriptive, experimental, case study, ethnography, etc.).
- Describes techniques used to analyze/study the data (e.g., t-Test, ANOVA, thematic analysis)
- Describes statistical procedures used (if any).
- Uses subheadings effectively.
- Test statistic for statistical tests and p values when appropriate.
- Written in the past tense.

**Research Thesis/project**

**CHECKLIST FOR CHAPTER FIVE**

Use this checklist to make sure that you have covered all of the necessary parts of Chapter Five.

- Answers the research question or addresses the problem raised in Chapter One
- Gives researcher's conclusions as a result of research conducted
- Notes important implications of the study for current practice
- Notes areas of research that are needed to extend or improve on the current work
- Notes limitations of the study
- Makes recommendations for future research

Appendix F

**Ten Commandments  
For getting three signatures on your thesis/project!**

- One** Faculty will edit only the content or ideas presented.
- Two** Committee members will stop reading your thesis/project when they discover that you have not followed the guidelines of this department survival guide and the APA Style Manual.
- Three** Committee members will stop reading your thesis/project if they find that you have not made corrections requested on a previous draft.
- Four** Faculty will stop reading your thesis/project if they find consistent grammar, syntax, or formatting errors.
- Five** Committee members will mark a particular type of problem only once. The student will have to find subsequent errors of the same type and correct them.
- Six** The student will not collect data without approval from his/her committee chair and or an approved IRB application.
- Seven** It is the student's responsibility to deliver a high-quality draft to the faculty member at her/his office and make arrangements to pick up the draft when notified.
- Eight** It is the student's responsibility to be aware of all required deadlines and to promptly meet them.
- Nine** For final review, students must turn in *all* of the elements of the thesis/project when submitting a draft for review.
- Ten** Students must arrange for the copying and binding of their thesis/project after it has been signed by three faculty members and give one copy of the approval page to the Special Education Department Graduate Advisor.

## Appendix G

**Academic Dishonesty** Academic dishonesty includes such things as cheating, inventing false information or citations, plagiarism, and helping someone else commit an act of academic dishonesty.

It usually involves an attempt by a student to show possession of a level of knowledge or skill which he or she does not possess.

Cheating is defined as the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent or unauthorized means. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to: using notes or aids or the help of other students on tests and examinations in ways other than those expressly permitted by the instructor, plagiarism as defined below, tampering with the grading procedures, and collaborating with others on any assignment where such collaboration is expressly forbidden by an instructor.

Plagiarism is defined as the act of taking the specific substance of another and offering it as one's own without giving credit to the source. When sources are used, acknowledgment of the original author or source must be made following standard scholarly practice.

The initial responsibility for detecting and dealing with academic dishonesty lies with the instructor concerned. An instructor who believes that an act of academic dishonesty has occurred is obligated to discuss the matter with the student involved. The instructor should possess reasonable evidence, such as documents or personal observation. However, if circumstances prevent consultation with the student, the instructor may take whatever action, subject to student appeal, the instructor deems appropriate.

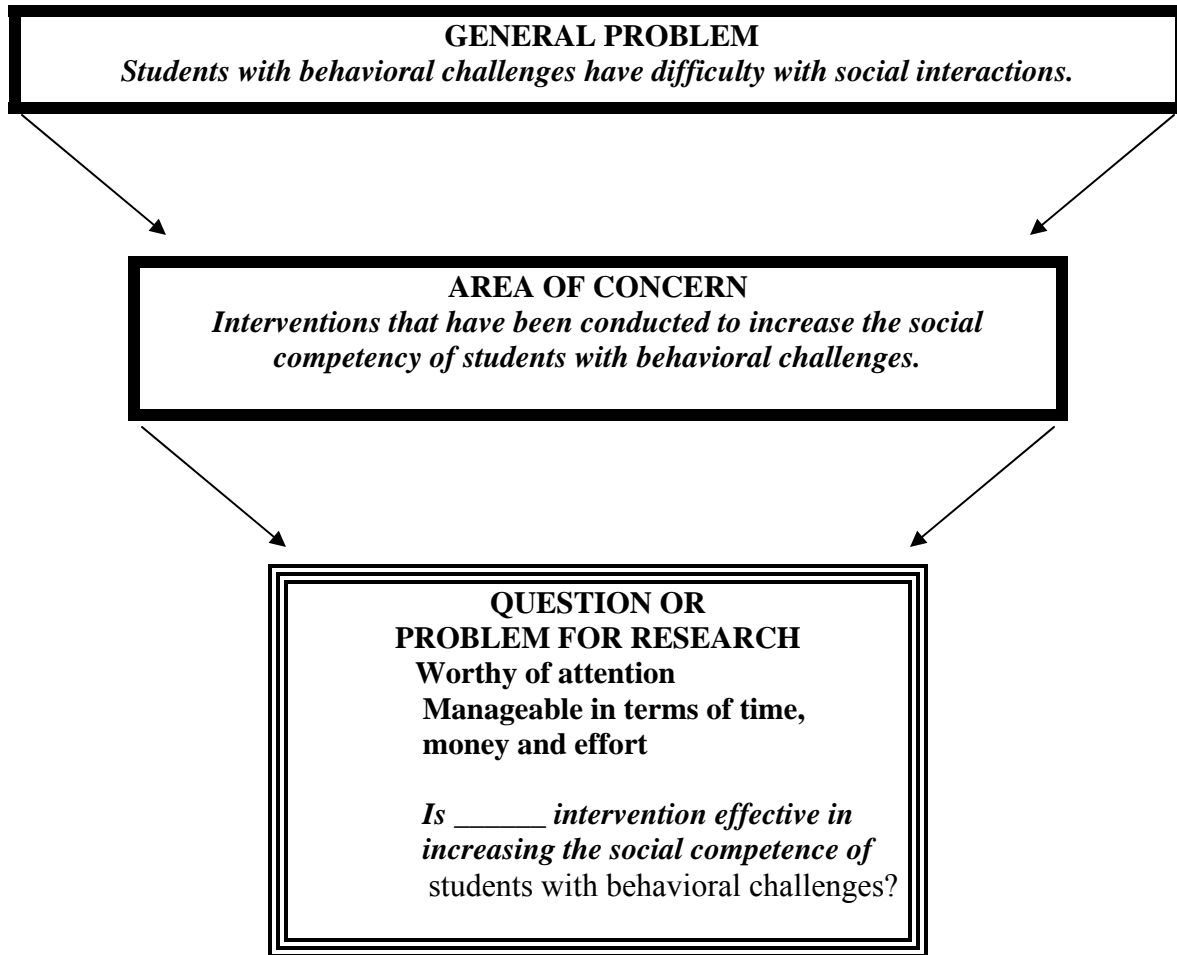
An instructor who is convinced by the evidence that a student is guilty of academic dishonesty shall: 1. Assign an appropriate academic penalty. This may range from an oral reprimand to an F in the course. To the extent that the faculty member considers the academic dishonesty to manifest the student's lack of scholarship and to reflect on the student's academic performance and academic integrity in a course, the student's grade should be adversely affected. Suggested guidelines for appropriate actions are an oral reprimand in cases where there is reasonable doubt that the student knew that his or her action constituted academic dishonesty; an F on the particular paper, project or examination where the act of dishonesty was unpremeditated, or where there were significant mitigating circumstances, or an F in the course where the dishonesty was premeditated or planned.

2. Report to the student involved, to the department chair, and to the vice president for student affairs the alleged incident of academic dishonesty, including relevant documentation, and make recommendations for action that he or she deems appropriate.

The vice president for student affairs shall maintain an academic dishonesty file of all cases of academic dishonesty with the appropriate documentation. Students shall be informed when their names are inserted into the file and provided with copies of any appeals or disciplinary procedures in which they may become involved. The vice president for student affairs or his or her designees may initiate disciplinary proceedings under Title 5, California Code of Regulations, Section 41301, and Chancellor's Executive Order 148; when two or more incidents involving the same student occur, he or she shall do so. Opportunities for appeal regarding sanctions resulting from disciplinary proceedings are provided by Executive Order 148.

A student may appeal any action taken on a charge of academic dishonesty under the University Policy Statement 300.030, "Academic Appeals." See "Academic Appeals" in the "Student Affairs" section of this catalog.

Appendix H  
**MOVING FROM A GENERAL STATEMENT TO A  
FOCUSED RESEARCH QUESTION**



Appendix I

Faculty Approval of Instrument(s)

Faculty Approval of Instrument  
Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Signature:  
Attach to each page of your instrument for faculty approval

Faculty Approval of Instrument  
Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Signature:  
Attach to each page of your instrument for faculty approval

Faculty Approval of Instrument  
Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Signature:  
Attach to each page of your instrument for faculty approval

Faculty Approval of Instrument  
Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Signature:  
Attach to each page of your instrument for faculty approval

Faculty Approval of Instrument  
Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Signature:  
Attach to each page of your instrument for faculty approval

Faculty Approval of Instrument  
Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Signature:  
Attach to each page of your instrument for faculty approval

Appendix J

Checklist for Final Approval Process

- Submit thesis/project to committee chair
- Committee chair gives thesis/project to committee members
- Committee members return edited thesis/project to committee chair
- Committee chair contacts student regarding next steps

# Important Information

# Items Submitted