

Special Education

Masters of Science Degree

A Student Guidebook to
Completing the Master of Science in
Education Degree with an Emphasis in
Special Education

August 2009

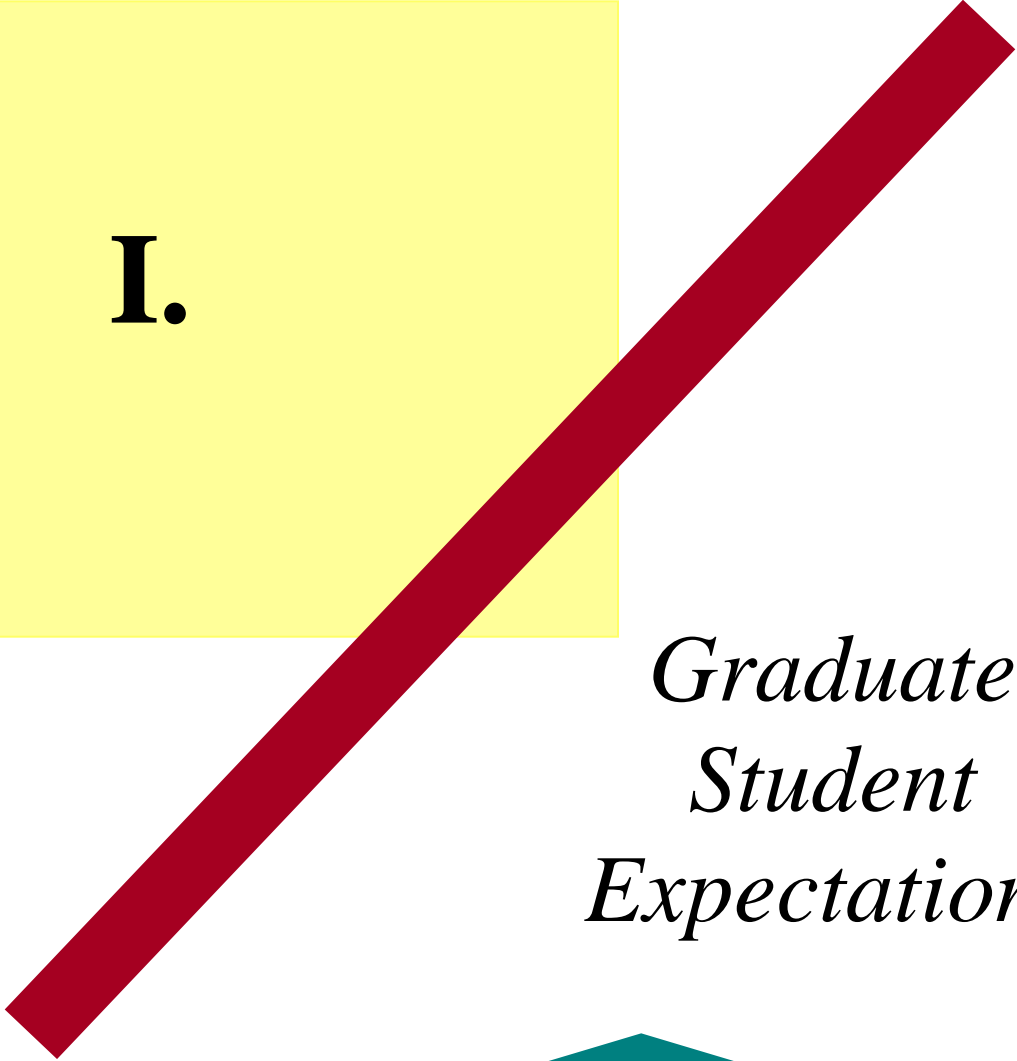
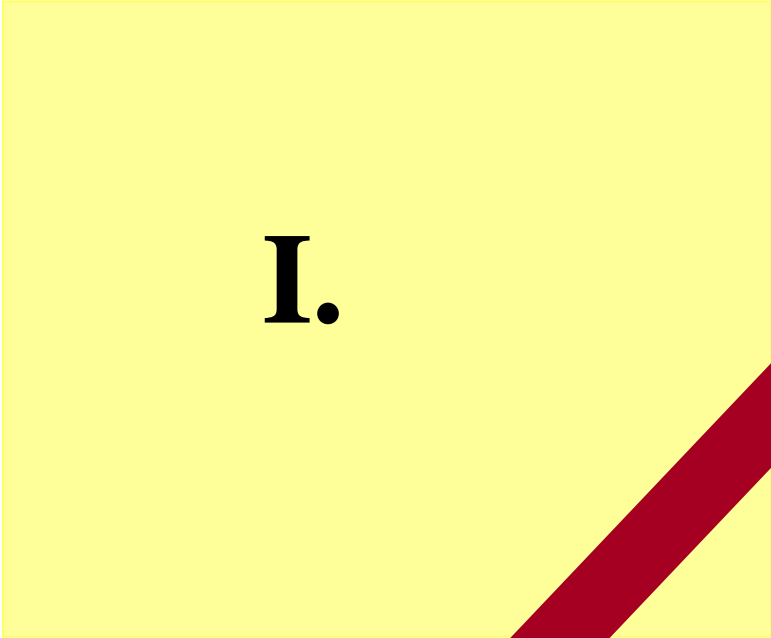
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Department of Special Education would like to acknowledge the Department of Secondary Education for their collegial spirit in allowing us to use and adapt the material in its *MSE Student Guidebook*. We deeply appreciate your generosity. Thank you!

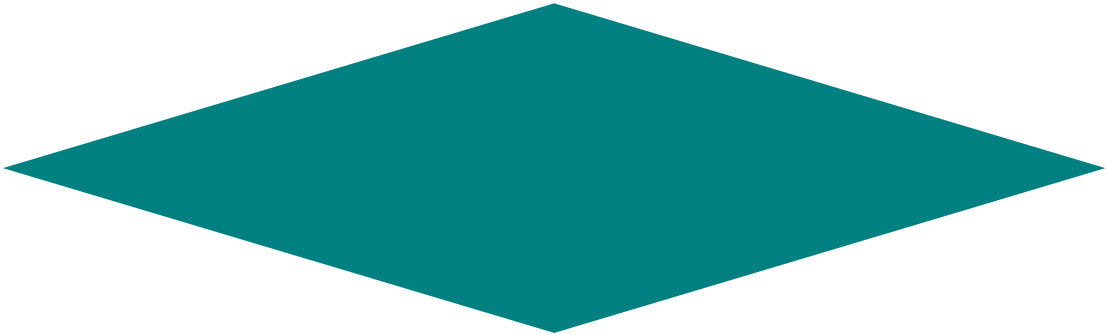
Table of Contents

I.	Graduate Student Expectations	3
	Graduate Academic Standards	4
	Transfer Credit Policy	6
	Administrative Probation	7
II.	Classified Status	10
III.	Coursework	10
	Sped 501	9
	Core Courses	9
	Elective Courses	9
	Sped 596	9
	Sped 599	10
II.	Differences Among Exit Options	11
	Exit Options- Overview	12
	Comprehensive Exam	13
	Project Option	14
	Thesis Option	15
	Thesis Versus Project Distinctions	16
	Rationale for Each of the Exit Options	17
III.	Project Option	18
	Project Guidelines	19
IV.	Thesis Option	22
	Thesis Guidelines	23
V.	Programming Yourself for Success	26
	Planning Ahead	27
	Getting Ready	28
	Finding and Utilizing Resources	29
	Helpful Advice	29
	APA Format	30
VI.	Graduation Procedures	32
VII.	Appendixes	35
	Culminating Project Form	36
	Committee Assignment Form	37
	Policy on Writing Competency for Entering Students	38
	Policy on Computer Competency for Entering Students	39
	Independent Study Proposal Form	40
	501 Checklist	41

|



*Graduate
Student
Expectations*



Graduate Academic Standards

From University Catalog, pg. 499

Please check with the Graduate Office for updated information on academic standards for graduate students.

University Grade-Point Average

A graduate degree student is expected to earn a 3.0 average in all units subsequent to admission to the program. In addition, a graduate degree student must earn a 3.0 average in **all 500-level courses taken in the student's department or program (including 500-level program prerequisites)**.

Study Plan Grade-Point Average

The 30 or more semester units of approved study plan course work, including transfer work, required for the degree must be completed with a 3.0 (B) minimum grade-point average. Only grades of A, B, or C are considered satisfactory for study plan courses. If a student receives a grade less than a C on a study plan course, the course must be repeated and passed with a grade of C or better. A course may be repeated only once. In extenuating circumstances, the student can petition the Office of Graduate Studies to add another course to the approved program with unit value equivalent to that of the course in which the unsatisfactory grade was received.

If a student approaches the completion of the degree requirements with less than a 3.0 average, a request may be made for a change in the study plan to:

- a. add no more than six units of course work in order to achieve at least a 3.0 grade-point average, or
- b. repeat no more than six units of course work in which a C or lower was earned in order to achieve at least a 3.0 grade-point average.
- c. a combination of a. and b. equal to six units.

Requests for course work to be added to the study plan or repeated must be approved by the graduate program adviser and Office of Graduate Studies prior to registration (see "Changes in Study Plan"). If the grade-point average at any time falls below such a level that it cannot be raised to a 3.0 within the prescribed limits of course work, this has the effect of disqualifying the student from the master's degree program.

If permission is given to repeat a course, both grades are considered in computing grade-point averages. However, successful repetition of a course originally passed carries no additional unit credit toward a degree.

When a course is added, the original course stays on the study plan and both grades received shall be used in the calculation of the student's GPA.

Academic Probation and Disqualification

A graduate student enrolled in a graduate degree program in either conditionally classified or classified graduate standing is subject to academic probation if a cumulative grade-point of at least 3.0 (grade of B on a four-point scale) is not maintained. A listing of students subject to

probation is reviewed each semester by the Office of Graduate Studies with the advice of the student's department graduate program adviser.

The Office of Graduate Studies, with the advice of the student's department graduate program adviser, will disqualify a graduate student who is on academic probation if the student does not, or cannot, raise the study plan and applicable course work cumulative grade-point average to 3.0 by the completion of the second regular semester (exclusive of interim and summer sessions) following the session in which the cumulative grade-point average failed to meet the minimum 3.0 standard.

A student who has been disqualified from a master's degree program or from a postbaccalaureate credential or certificate program may apply for readmission to that program or to another program after one calendar year following disqualification. A readmitted student must file a new study plan which meets current requirements and policies. Any disqualified student who wishes to use previous course work must have it approved by the Office of Graduate Studies. Disqualification will remove the student from graduate standing and prevent further enrollment in the university.

A graduate student may also be placed on probation or may be disqualified for reasons other than cumulative grade-point average. These reasons include repeated withdrawal, failure to progress toward an educational objective, non-compliance with an academic requirement, and inappropriate behavior as defined in the Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, and in the Academic Dishonesty sections of this catalog (see "University Regulations").

A postbaccalaureate student (credential, unclassified, or undeclared status) will be subject to academic probation if after completing 12 or more units the cumulative grade-point average falls below a 3.0 average. A postbaccalaureate student on probation will be subject to disqualification if the cumulative grade-point average is not raised to 3.0 the semester after being placed on probation. Disqualification may be either from further registration toward a postbaccalaureate credential or certificate program, or from further enrollment in the university as determined by the Director of Graduate Studies.

Declassification

Graduate students in classified graduate standing shall be declassified upon the recommendation of the appropriate academic unit, with a change to postbaccalaureate standing, unclassified, when one or more of the following conditions exist:

1. The student's request for declassification has been recommended for approval by the graduate committee.
2. The student fails to maintain the grade-point average required in the master's degree program.
3. The student has failed to demonstrate a satisfactory level of scholastic competence and fitness.
4. The student fails to complete the degree within the prescribed time limit.

A recommendation for declassification is sent to the Graduate Studies Office by the graduate program adviser for the particular degree.

Transfer Credit Policy

Graduate students may be able to use a limited amount of transfer course work in meeting the requirements for a master's degree. The use of transfer course work on a student's study plan is subject to the following provisions:

1. Each course being transferred must:
 - a. have been taken at an accredited college or university.
 - b. be acceptable for credit toward a graduate degree at the institution where the course work was taken.
 - c. have been completed with a grade of B or better.
 - d. not have been used in meeting the requirements for another earned degree (either graduate or under-graduate).
 - e. have been completed within the student's five-year time period which is required for completion of the requirements for the master's degree at CSUF.
2. An absolute minimum of 21 semester units toward any master's degree at CSUF must be in residence units. For master's degrees requiring more than 42 semester units, a minimum of half of the units used on the student's study plan must be in residence units. Residence units are granted for courses taken at the University during regular sessions of Fall and Spring and any special session.
3. Use of transfer work on a student's study plan is subject to all other policies concerning study plan course work; e.g., fifty percent must be graduate level work, no correspondence course work, no credit by examination, no courses with nontraditional grades.
4. In all cases, the use of transfer course work on a student's study plan is subject to the acceptance and approval of the academic unit's graduate adviser and the Office of Graduate Studies. Course work taken at another institution after admission to CSUF as a graduate student is rarely accepted for credit toward a master's degree and can only be accepted if the student has received prior approval of both the graduate adviser and the Office of Graduate Studies.
5. Extended Education credits can only be accepted if they qualified as graduate credits at the institutions where they were offered.
6. All approved transfer units and grade points will be entered on the CSUF transcript at graduation.
7. Unless an exception dictates, only graduate level courses will be allowed on student study plans.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROBATION

A graduate student may be placed on probation for reasons other than cumulative and/or study plan grade-point average.

Reasons for this administrative-academic probation include:

- Repeated withdrawal
- Failure to progress toward an educational objective
- Non-compliance with an academic requirement
- Failure to demonstrate a level of professional competence or
- Academic Dishonesty (see University Regulations, catalog page 514).
- Inappropriate behavior as defined under “Student Conduct” (Catalog page 517)

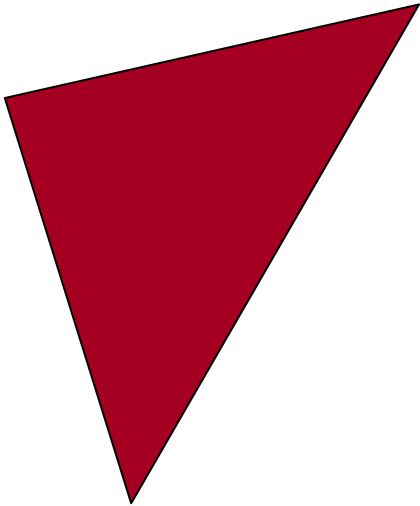
Students will remain on administrative-academic probation contingent upon conditions required for their continuing in the program.

Students placed on administrative probation will be disqualified if:

1. The conditions for removal of administrative-academic probation are not met within the period specified.
2. The student becomes subject to academic probation while on administrative-academic probation.
3. The student is removed from administrative-academic probation and subsequently becomes subject to administrative-academic probation for the same or similar reasons as originally placed on probation.



Coursework



SPED 501

Sped 501 is a required prerequisite one unit course that is offered credit/ no credit and does not apply to the graduate study plan. The course provides an in depth overview of the graduate program in Special Education. It allows students to identify major issues in special education, develop a program plan and project/thesis agenda based on these issues, and set goals for their graduate work. In addition, it is the vehicle through which interviews are conducted. Finally, successful completion of Sped 501 is required in order to become a classified graduate student.

CORE COURSES

All students must complete a core of 12 course units. Some of these courses may also overlap with courses required for completion of one's teaching credential in Special Education. Nevertheless, all courses at the 500 level are considered graduate level courses. As such, the level of rigor of these courses will be at the graduate level.

CONCENTRATION COURSES

All students must complete a concentration of 12 course units. Some of these courses may also overlap with courses required for completion of one's teaching credential in Special Education. Nevertheless, all courses at the 500 level are considered graduate level courses. As such, the level of rigor of these courses will be at the graduate level.

ELECTIVE COURSES

All students must complete 3-6 elective course units. It depends on your choice of exit option. These courses will be identified in consult with the Department Graduate Program Advisor during the Study Plan meeting. Elective courses may include those taken as a required course for one's teaching credential but only 500 level courses are recommended as elective courses.

SPED 599 Independent Graduate Research (597 or 598)

Sped 599 is a recommended (your chair can decide) independent study course. It is intended help students progress toward degree completion. **It is advised that students who wish to take Sped 599 do so in order to work on their literature review (chapter 2), data collection, or both, of the thesis or project, but the course may be taken to complete other work for the thesis/project.** Students must take the initiative to meet with their project/thesis committee chair to identify objectives or plans that the student will complete during the course. It is the responsibility of the student to meet with the project/thesis committee chair and complete all identified objectives or plans.

SPED 599 Independent Graduate Research (595: Exam)

Sped 599 is a required (3 units elective) independent study course. It is intended help students progress toward degree completion. **It's an exam preparation class and students work with their chairs independently before taking SPED 595.** Students must take the initiative to meet with their comprehensive exam committee chair to identify objectives or plans that the student will complete during the course. It is the responsibility of the student to meet with the exam committee chair and complete all identified objectives or plans.

SPED 596 Advanced Research Seminar

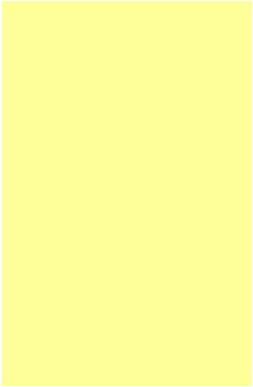
Sped 596 is an advanced research seminar course. You must have already taken Sped 510, have chapters 1-3 written, and have an approved IRB if necessary. This course is designed to give you additional assistance in writing and completing your project or thesis in conjunction with your committee chair. This course is more specific to writing and especially with chapters four and five. **If you choose the exam option you don't need to take it as an elective.**

Although you will not have a “course” in which you will complete your thesis/project, there are certain classes in which the skills you will need to conduct and complete your thesis/project available.

It is very important that students realize that the completion of coursework does not mean completion of the MSE degree. Coursework is only part of the degree requirements. The culminating activity for the degree is the thesis/project. Without the thesis/project, one will not complete the MSE degree requirements and will not graduate. Also, the remaining option is to complete SPED 595: The Written Exam in place of the sped 597 or sped 598)



III.



Differences Among Exit Options

Exit Options- Overview

Culminating Experience Options

The culminating experience allows candidates to synthesize what they have learned and extend their knowledge through the comprehensive exam, the development of a research thesis, or a project.

- Comprehensive Exam (SPED 595)
- Project (SPED 597)
- Thesis (SPED 598)

Three Options

Comprehensive Exam Option

To exit the program by completing a comprehensive exam option, you must enroll in SPED 595: Comprehensive Exam. This course should be taken during the semester in which you plan to graduate. The Comprehensive Exam assesses multiple skills and abilities including the following: (1) mastery of content knowledge, (2) ability to integrate knowledge, (3) demonstration of critical thinking/analysis skills, (4) high level writing competency, and (5) accuracy of documentation. The Comprehensive Exam is an essay exam covering content from your Master contract courses. The exam consists of 4 questions and is 4 hours long, administered in 4-hour blocks. During the exam, you will be given 2 questions in your area of specialization (mild/moderate, moderate severe, or early childhood). The additional 2 questions will consist of 1 general education questions and 1 research questions. The exam will be taken on a computer here on campus. Should you choose this exit option you will be working very closely with the chair.

The exam was only 4 questions and it is only 4 hours long... and was completed in one morning .. not two time periods...

Project Option

To exit the program by completing a professional project, you must enroll in SPED 597: Project. This course should be taken during the semester in which you plan to graduate. It will be the capstone course for your program and will help you complete your project. **However, you should have completed the majority of the work for your project prior to enrolling in SPED 597.** You should plan to use SPED 597 to finish your project—not begin it. You should allow a minimum of 100 hours to complete your project (*See the appendix for the Culminating Thesis/Project Proposal form, which must be completed and signed by the committee chair and graduate program advisor before any work on the project can be started*).

The project committee will consist of three members from the Department of Special Education. Additional members from other departments may also be allowed. The student will invite a faculty member to chair the committee. The invited chair will then assist the student in the selection of additional committee members if necessary (Students will need to use the *Committee Assignment Form* located at the end of this guidebook to arrange a project committee). All students need to adhere to the project deadlines, established by the department and readily available on the Department of Special Education website and Graduate Program bulletin board. **Should you choose this exit option you will be working very closely with your committee chair, but the research rubric below should prove helpful to you.**

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification (NBPTS) is added as a project option. You will be completed one of the 4 portfolios to complete a master's degree.

Click below to open the rubric.



research
rubric6.23.06.doc

Thesis Option

To exit the program by writing a thesis, you must enroll in Sped 598:Thesis. This option is recommended for those students with plans to pursue work at the doctoral level. This option will require the candidate to establish a thesis committee well in advance of taking the thesis course. This course should be taken during the semester in which you plan to graduate. It will be the capstone course for your program. You should allow a **minimum** of 100 hours to complete your thesis. Additional time should be allotted for completing institutional review board paperwork, establishing your thesis committee, collecting and analyzing data, and writing up the results of your study (*See the appendix for the Culminating Thesis/Project Proposal form, which must be completed and signed by the committee chair and graduate program advisor before any work on the project can be started*).

The thesis committee will consist of three members from the Department of Special Education. Additional members from other departments may also be allowed. The student will invite a faculty member to chair the committee. The invited chair will then assist the student in the selection of additional committee members (Students will need to use the *Committee Assignment Form* located at the end of this guidebook to arrange a thesis committee). All students need to adhere to the thesis deadlines, established by the university and readily available in the schedule of classes and on the Graduate Studies website. **Should you choose this exit option you will be working very closely with your committee chair, but the research rubric below should prove helpful to you.**



research
rubric6.23.06.doc

Thesis Versus Project Distinctions

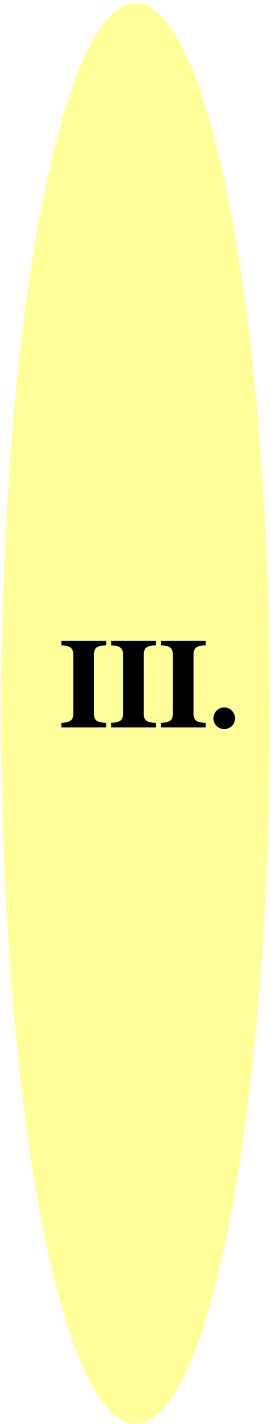
Thesis	Project
Scholarly Research	Informed Application
Extensive, using primary sources. Greater emphasis on theoretical	Extensive, using primary sources. Greater emphasis on pragmatic inquiry
Uses established research paradigms. Uses quantitative and qualitative research methods	Likely to emphasize action research
Goal is to advance an academic/scholarly body of knowledge	Goal is to advance one's own immediate practice
Target audience is the academic/scholarly community	Target audience is one's own professional community
Research is conducted based on a research question inspired by a disciplined examination of related scholarship.	Finds a solution to a local problem to improve professional practice.

Rationale for the Project Option

The project option allows students to engage in pragmatic/action research. In completing the requirements for the MSE Special Education Concentration, students have greater flexibility in the type of research required for completing a project, projects can be very practical in dealing with specific issues in your school or district, such as action research. In addition, it typically (see your committee chair for clarification) does not have to be reviewed by the Graduate Studies Office and does not need to be microfilmed (which saves the student money). If your intended audience is yourself, your school or professional community, the project option may be the best choice.

Rationale for the Thesis Option

The thesis option allows students to engage in scholarly research. Particularly for students who plan to pursue an eventual doctoral degree, the thesis provides an opportunity to conduct an in-depth, disciplined inquiry of a particular topic/problem. If your intended audience is an academic/scholarly audience, the thesis option may be the best choice.



Project Option

Because projects fulfill a wide variety of practical and applied purposes, the nature of both the process for completing a given project and its end result (product) will also vary greatly. Therefore, the student should work closely with the project committee chair to design a substantive, purposeful, and systematic approach to completing the project. The first step in planning is to clearly define the goals of the project. In most cases, some form of literature review will be necessary to ensure an informed perspective. The research process might also include the use of additional resources such as textbooks and publisher materials, curriculum standards, policy statements, technology tools, or human resources.

The project committee chair is the person who directly supervises the project, is responsible for the final evaluation of the project and has the authority to assign a grade for the project when completed. It is expected that the project committee chair and the student will meet on a regular basis to discuss the student's work. The grade that is assigned to the project by the project committee chair appears on the student's transcript as a grade for SPED 597 (project).

The student must write a formal proposal for the project (See the *Culminating Thesis/Project Proposal Form* located in the Appendixes of this guidebook). The project proposal should describe the project to be undertaken in sufficient detail to serve as a basis for the project's evaluation. The detailed content and format requirements for the proposal are defined by the project committee chair and the candidate. The project committee chair may advise students to work closely with additional faculty who have expertise in the specific topic being explored by the candidate.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification (NBPTS) is added as a project option. You will be completed one of the 4 portfolios to complete a master's degree.

What is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification?

The NBPTS Certification was started in 1987 as a way to document and assess experienced teachers. The creators of the National Board first drafted a set of core principles detailing what experienced and successful teachers should know and be able to do. These core principles are the foundation for the National Board Standards that are in widespread use and were the foundation for similar standards drafted by other groups and states. The certification process was created purposefully as an alternative to more standardized approaches to teacher assessment that fail to take into account variations in content area, grade level, and local context. Currently, teachers who have at least three years of experience may elect to participate in this performance based assessment. As stated by the [NBPTS Organization](#), it is this performance piece that is key because “it assesses not only the knowledge teachers possess, but also the actual demonstration of their skills and professional judgment as applied daily in the classroom.”

The process of becoming a National Board certified teacher is a grueling one that demands much of teachers who are also juggling all the other demands of their profession. Teachers must complete a portfolio demonstrating their practice and highlighting the ways they put the National Board standards into practice. They must include written plans, videotapes of their teaching, and

extensive written reflections on their teaching. In addition to the portfolio, teachers must complete a more standard, written assessment aimed at evaluating their content knowledge. The NBPTS encourages teachers to work together and support one another during this process. They also encourage teachers to seek out support programs and/or mentors who can provide them with feedback on all aspects of the process. Despite the difficulty, becoming National Board certified makes a difference for these teachers and their students. Teachers who have achieved National Board certification outperform their peers on 11 of 13 dimensions of teaching expertise (Bond, Smith, Baher & Hattie, 2000).

SPED Project Guidelines

Steps in Writing a Project

The project will have two components, one being a creative or pragmatic work and the second being a theoretical defense of the work. The product might focus on writing for publication, classroom based research, curriculum projects, or any other product of interest to you. Many people utilize the work they have done in other classes and expand it into a complete project. Others have turned a school based assignment into a project for their degree.

The following steps are recommended to you for completing your project.

1. Obtain the SPED 597 code number and register through the normal process. It is recommended that you officially enroll in the course the semester that you will complete the project. You should, however, contact your committee chair and work on the project before you officially enroll. It is recommended that the semester before you take your project course that you enroll in SPED 596 (Advanced Research Seminar). This 596 course serves as a means to completing your project, specifically chapters 4 and 5 and any other refining that is necessary. If you do not complete the project the semester you enroll you will receive an “in progress” grade (RP). Remember that you must be officially enrolled in the University the semester your project is completed in order to receive a graduation check. Non-enrollment during the final semester disqualifies you from using the university facilities including the library.
2. Choose your committee chair. You, with the assistance of your faculty advisor, the graduate program advisor, or other faculty member, will choose your project committee. Your committee consists of a chair, with whom you will work most closely throughout the project process and two other persons (faculty members) to serve as committee members. You may also add faculty members from other departments or individuals other than faculty members such as community/public school personnel who have expertise in your area of interest. The responsibility of the committee is to give you direction, guidance, and support.
3. Consult with your committee chair. While you are encouraged to work with all committee members, your major contact will be your project committee chair. Use this person to answer questions, direct your efforts or act as a sounding board for your ideas.
4. Write the proposal for your Project. The formal proposal is a means of introducing your committee chair to the particulars of your project. It should be relatively brief (4-8 pages) but

specific enough to give the committee members the information they will need to help you form the components of the project. The proposal that you submit may get altered in the process of discussing your ideas but after discussing it with the advisor, you should have a fairly concrete idea of what the project will involve (Ideally, you will have an approved project proposal two semesters before you sign up for Sped 597).

In addition to the *Culminating Thesis/Project Proposal Form* located in the Appendixes, the proposal should include the following sections:

- a. **Statement of Purpose.** This should be a short (2-3 sentence) statement of the purpose to alert the committee to your intent and direction.
- b. **Review of related literature/research.** This section provides the theoretical defense for your project. It should cover the research/literature on the major areas related to your topic. This section convinces your readers of the worthiness of the project and assures them that you understand the topic you are developing. Note: This section usually becomes a second chapter of your Project so it needs to be well developed and well documented.
- c. **Detailed description of the project.** This section should include an explanation of why the project is significant and the specifics of the project (intended population, topics, purpose, etc.).
- d. **A Timeline.** This section should include a schedule of completion of the parts of the project so your committee chair can anticipate when you will need their attention to your work.
- e. **A References section.** This will include all of the resources you have used in writing your paper thus far (in correct APA format).

5. Submit one hardcopy of your proposal to your committee chair and the Graduate Program Advisor, and electronic copies to all committee members.

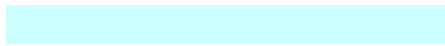
6. Institutional Review Board application (IRB). Each student who is completing a thesis or project is required to complete an IRB application. (This contradicts what was said previously .. project do not have to have an IRB) Because this is a required assignment for Sped 510, you are simply polishing up and updating any information you included on your assignment. Once you have completed the application, it must be approved by your chair and the Graduate Program Advisor. Once the application has been approved by your chair, it will then be determined whether or not it needs to be submitted to the IRB committee.

(I would take out the required component in 510 because students doing a project or an exam should not have to jump through this hoop since it will be a waste of time for the IRB people and the students... Also, in 510 the IRB can be discussed and those who have to do one can serve as examples for discussion on good quality research)

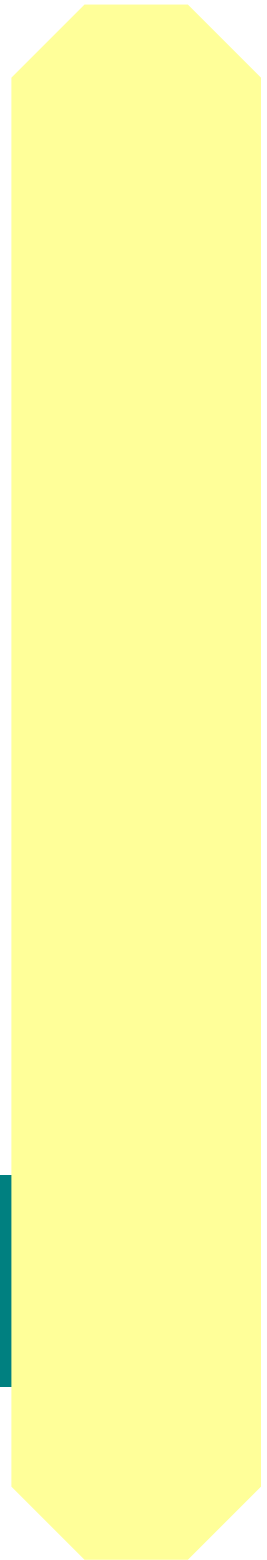
7. Begin independent work on your Project. Once the proposal has been approved, you will want to begin working on your project.

8. Consult with your committee chair. The committee chair's responsibility will be to answer your questions and guide your independent work. Seek your committee chair's help whenever needed.

9. Chapter requirements. Consult your Survival Guide for MS Degree Candidates in Education Emphasis in Special Education.



*Thesis
Option*



Thesis Option

Theses are empirical studies that contribute to the scholarly literature in the field of Special Education. Therefore, the student should work closely with the thesis committee chair to design a substantive, purposeful, and systematic approach to completing the thesis. The first step in planning is to clearly define the research questions/hypotheses of the study. All theses are required to include a literature review to ensure an informed perspective. The research process might also include the use of additional resources such as textbooks and publisher materials, curriculum standards, policy statements, technology tools, or human resources.

The thesis committee chair is the person who directly supervises the thesis, is responsible for the final evaluation of the thesis and has the authority to assign a grade for the thesis when completed. It is expected that the thesis committee chair and the student will meet on a regular basis to discuss the student's work. The grade that is assigned to the thesis by the thesis committee chair appears on the student's transcript as a grade for SPED 598 (thesis).

The student must write a formal proposal for the thesis (See the *Culminating Thesis/Project Proposal Form* located in the Appendixes of this guidebook). The thesis proposal should describe the study to be undertaken in sufficient detail to serve as a basis for the study's evaluation. The detailed content and format requirements for the proposal are defined by the thesis committee chair and the candidate. The thesis committee chair may advise students to work closely with additional faculty who have expertise in the specific topic being explored by the candidate.

SPED Thesis Guidelines

Steps in Writing a Thesis

The thesis is a report of an empirical study which includes a theoretical defense of the work. Because each study is different, theses may include the use of various quantitative or qualitative research designs. The goal of the thesis is to contribute to the scholarly literature in the field of Special Education

The following steps are recommended to you for completing your project.

1. Obtain the SPED 598 code number and register through the normal process. It is recommended that you officially enroll in the course the semester that you will complete the thesis. You should, however, contact your committee chair and work on the project before you officially enroll. It is recommended that the semester before you take your thesis course that you enroll in SPED 596 (Advanced Research Seminar). This 596 course serves as a means to completing your thesis, specifically chapters 4 and 5 and any other refining that is necessary. If you do not complete the project the semester you enroll you will receive an "in progress" grade (RP). Remember that you must be officially enrolled in the University the semester your project is completed in order to receive a graduation check. Non-enrollment during the final semester disqualifies you from using the university facilities including the library.

2. Choose your committee chair. You, with the assistance of your faculty advisor, the graduate program advisor, or other faculty member, will choose your project committee. Your committee consists of a chair, with whom you will work most closely throughout the thesis process and two other persons (faculty members) to serve as committee members. You may also add faculty members from other departments or individuals other than faculty members such as community/public school personnel who have expertise in your area of interest. The responsibility of the committee is to give you direction, guidance, and support.

3. Consult with your committee chair. While you are encouraged to work with all committee members, your major contact will be your thesis committee chair. Use this person to answer questions, direct your efforts or act as a sounding board for your ideas.

4. Write the proposal for your Thesis. The formal proposal is a means of introducing your committee chair to the particulars of your project. It should be relatively brief (4-8 pages) but specific enough to give the committee members the information they will need to help you form the components of the project. The proposal that you submit may get altered in the process of discussing your ideas but after discussing it with the advisor, you should have a fairly concrete idea of what the project will involve (Ideally, you will have an approved thesis proposal two semesters before you sign up for Sped 598).

In addition to the *Culminating Thesis/Project Proposal Form* located in the Appendixes, the proposal should include the following sections:

a. Statement of Purpose. This should be a short (2-3 sentence) statement of the purpose to alert the committee to your intent and direction.

b. Review of related literature/research. This section provides the theoretical defense for your project. It should cover the research/literature on the major areas related to your topic. This section convinces your readers of the worthiness of the project and assures them that you understand the topic you are developing. Note: This section usually becomes a second chapter of your Thesis so it needs to be well developed and well documented.

c. Detailed description of the study. This section should include an explanation of why the study is significant and the specifics of the project (intended population, topics, purpose, etc.).

d. A Timeline. This section should include a schedule of completion of the parts of the project so your committee chair can anticipate when you will need their attention to your work.

e. A Reference section. This will include all of the resources you have used in writing your paper thus far (in correct APA format).

5. Submit one hardcopy of your proposal to your committee chair and the Graduate Program Advisor, and electronic copies to all committee members.

6. Institutional Review Board application (IRB). Each student who is completing a thesis or project is required to complete and IRB application. Because this is a required assignment for Sped 510, you are simply polishing up and updating any information you included on your assignment. Once you have completed the application, it must be approved by your chair and the Graduate Program Advisor indicating that it is ready to be submitted to the IRB committee. Once your application is approved by the IRB committee, you may then begin your data collection. You must also submit an approved IRB (by the IRB committee) with your thesis to the thesis reader or you will not graduate.

7. Begin independent work on your Thesis. Once the proposal has been approved, you will want to begin working.

8. Consult with your committee chair. The committee chair's responsibility will be to answer your questions and guide your independent work. Seek your committee chair's help whenever needed.

9. Chapter requirements. Consult your Survival Guide for MS Degree Candidates in Education Emphasis in Special Education.

Course Sequence for project (597), thesis (598)

SPED 531/32/35: Literature Review (must take before SPED 510; do not allow to take concurrently)

SPED 510 (fall only): proposal/IRB (MUST); data collection and chapter 3 (Recommend): Must take before SPED 596; do not allow to take concurrently with 510

SPED 596 (spring only): Data collection, chapter 3, and 4

SPED 599 (independent studies): this class can be recommended by the chair; you have a chance to work with your chair personally

SPED 597 or 598: chapter 5, wrap-up, committee review

- **You are not allow to take 596 and 597 or 598 concurrently**



V.



*Programming
Yourself
For Success*

Planning Ahead

It is important that you spread the work on your master's project/thesis/exam over the entire time you are in the graduate program. Putting off this work will only result in being overwhelmed later in the program. The quality of your project or thesis will suffer, and you will experience more stress. Managing the work for your culminating experience is no different than managing the many projects that teachers have on their desks at any given time. Your culminating experience is a “long-term homework assignment” that is not attached to a specific course. Although you will receive assistance in various courses, you should use initiative and self-management to complete the culminating experience in a timely manner.

Please keep in mind that you need to turn in a full/complete draft of your thesis or project for faculty review well before the end of the semester when you are graduating (this date can be found on the Special Education Department website and Graduate Program bulletin board).

Getting Ready

All MSE Special Education students are required to take SPED 501, Introduction to Graduate Studies in Special Education, no later than the first semester in the master's program. In this course you will be provided a detailed overview of the MSE emphasis in Special Education graduate program, prepare your Study Plan, develop skills in APA writing style, explore possible research topics, and become familiar with library resources.

Exploring Topics

One important requirement of SPED 501 is the completion of a series of steps designed to help you explore project topics and then narrow your choices. The process of selecting the specific research question/s can be illustrated by thinking of a funnel. They are wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. You first circle over the top of the funnel with a list of ideas, then 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; but unless the topic is closely related to the one you selected earlier, you will have to start over at the beginning of the process.

Narrowing Your Topic

By the end of your first semester, you should select a topic that will be the focus of the research for your culminating experience. At this point the topic will still be broader than your final research question, but must be sufficiently narrow so that you can move on to the next step. For example, “Inclusion” is far too broad. “Teachers’ perceptions of inclusion” is more narrow, but still too broad. “Teachers’ perceptions of including students with disabilities” is more precise, but “General education teachers’ perceptions of including high school students with disabilities in science classes” is much more precise and focused.

Finding and Utilizing Resources

Library Resources

To determine whether there is sufficient information and research on your topic, 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 www.library.fullerton.edu. You should also check to see how much information is available from the PsychoInfo and ERIC databases that are also available from the Pollak Library. If you have not done so already, you need to get a Titan Card (PLS-140, 278-3555) so that you can checkout material.

The Library also offers orientation sessions that will be very helpful in learning how to use many of the electronic resources. Information on sessions for beginners can be found at: <http://guides.library.fullerton.edu/introduction>. A list of sessions for advanced library skills can be found at: <http://guides.library.fullerton.edu/advanced>. In all likelihood you will need to participate in both levels. You will also attend a library orientation in your SPED 501 course.

In-depth Research consultations are available to CSUF students and faculty for individual research assistance on a specific research assignment, topic, or thesis.

<http://library.fullerton.edu/ASP/LibTemplate.asp?version=1&showoption=askalibrarian&showoptionpush=160&contentpage=../content/iandisunit/reference/askalibrarian/default.htm>. To expedite your session effectiveness it is suggested that you conduct a preliminary search of the literature prior to requesting individual consultation. Once you have completed this preliminary search you can explain to the research consultant what you have already accomplished and where you are having the most difficulty. This information will help the research consultant to more effectively and efficiently help you.

Internet Resources

You should also seriously consider purchasing Titan Access, which is an Internet service provided by the University for \$15 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. All MSE graduate students are required to have Internet access and an email address.

Helpful Advice

Collaboration with Colleagues

You must complete your own culminating experience (thesis/ project). However, if there is a topic that interests more than one student, it is possible to share library resources. For example, one student might be examining strategies how to improve upper-grade math scores on state exams. A second student might be doing survey research on teacher attitudes about strategies to improve upper-grade math scores on state exams. Both students would need library sources on math strategies.

Editing Buddies

Every student should identify 2-3 editing buddies, at least one of whom is a fellow student. We recommend groups of three, but no more than four. Working with colleagues who share some

commonality in their topics will help everyone in the group to produce a better culminating document. Your editing buddies should read and edit your drafts before you turn them into a faculty member.

Keeping Track of Information

Most students find that making copies of the articles, reports, or chapters they plan to use is most helpful because they can make notes directly on the material and they can sort it into categories. Be sure that you copy the title page and note all of the information necessary to provide a complete citation and reference entry. You could also write the complete citation on your copy of the article. Endnote is an affordable computer program that manages and sorts your references. Endnote is available for review and purchase on the Internet, <http://www.endnote.com/>.

Using Technology

The Department of Special Education has its own technology policy. All MSE students must read this document (See Appendixes) and be familiar with its contents. If you do not have the minimum competencies in this area, you will need to seek out assistance in this area.

APA Format

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.

When no direction is given in this guidebook on a topic, follow the APA Manual. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th 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). The cost is approximately \$30. You may also want to explore how to format your text and references in APA using the Format Ease program (www.formatease.com, ISBN 1572304634, phone 212-431-9800). The cost is around \$50. 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.

Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography gives the full citation as it would be listed at the end of a project/thesis and adds a paragraph about the content and usefulness of the source. The following is a sample annotation from an annotated bibliography about research methods. (You will be completing an Annotated Bibliography in SPED 501).

Sample Annotation

Example of a Book

Yin, R. (1993). *Applications of case study research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

This 130-page paperback will be very useful for students who wish to use qualitative methods or who are interested in using case studies to test a single theory or rival theories. There are good examples of case studies that have been done in the education field and a separate chapter on using case studies as an evaluation tool. Excellent examples abound on how to use visual models in the analysis and presentation of case study data.

V.

*Graduation
Procedures*

General Graduation Procedures

See http://www.fullerton.edu/catalog/graduate_regulations/gradchecklst.asp
or Pg. 507 of Catalog

* = Action initiated by student (as indicated below)

λ = Action initiated by the University

1. Admission to Graduate Standing: Conditionally Classified

- * Apply for admission
- * Declare objective(s), using precise codes on the application form
- * Receive application acknowledgement from the Admissions Office
- * Request two sets of official transcripts of all previous college-level course work attempted to be sent to Admissions Office
- * Take tests, if required by program, and order test scores sent to Cal State Fullerton, designating appropriate academic unit on the test registration form
- * Consult appropriate academic unit for advisement
- * Provide appropriate academic unit with any other supporting statements or materials, as required
- λ Recommendation for admission made by academic unit to Admissions Office
- λ Receive notification of admission from Admissions Office

2. Graduate Standing: Classified

- * Complete any course prerequisites and/or remove deficiencies
- * Apply for classified standing in the academic area offering the particular program prior to completion of nine units of study plan course work
- * Consult appropriate academic unit for advisement, including development of official study plan
- * Provide appropriate academic unit with any other supporting statements or materials, as shown in program descriptions in this catalog
- * Take tests if required by program, and order test scores sent to Cal State Fullerton, designating appropriate academic unit on the test registration form
- λ Recommendation made by academic unit to the Office of Graduate Studies
- λ Receive notification of classified standing being granted from Graduate Studies when the Office of Graduate Studies sends the study plan, showing approval.
- * If not received within a reasonable length of time, call the academic unit sponsoring the degree or Graduate Studies.

3. Completion of Requirements

- * Apply for a graduation check and/or advancement to candidacy prior to the beginning of the final semester and no later than the deadline initiating university review and formal approval by faculty. The form is available at the Admissions and Records information desk and the Graduate Studies Office. A graduation and diploma fee must be paid when filing the request with the university cashier.
- * Consult appropriate academic unit for advisement
- * Complete written and/or oral examination, if required. Complete thesis or project, if applicable
- * Obtain approval signatures of committee members (project, prior to submitting to thesis reader for thesis)
- * Obtain approval of university thesis reader (thesis only)
- * Deposit approved copy of thesis and make arrangements for binding (thesis and project)
- * Make arrangements for microfilming and publication of the abstract in the campus bookstore by the applicable deadline (thesis only)
- λ Final, approved study plan, with recommendation, sent by appropriate academic unit to Office of Graduate Studies
- λ Preliminary approval, pending adequate grades, and completion of any other requirements, granted by Office of Graduate Studies
- * Deposit approved 2 bound copies of thesis or project in academic department
- * 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 the MSE exit survey and submit verification of completion to Graduate Program Advisor
- λ Final verification of completion of requirements sent by the Graduate Studies Office to the registrar
- λ Receive notification of award of degree from registrar approximately eight weeks after the end of the semester

4. Commencement

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

Deadlines (see pg. 505 in Catalog)

Adequate time should be allowed for typing, reading and approval by the committee chair, the committee members, and the university thesis reader (thesis only).

- λ **Thesis Deadlines** are published in the class schedule (usually due in Graduate Studies three weeks before the last day of final exams) and on the Graduate Studies website.

The Department of Special Education requires that the final draft of the thesis be submitted to the candidate's committee at least 6 weeks prior to being submitted to the thesis reader and the final draft of the project is to be submitted 6 weeks prior to the last day of classes. These dates can be

found on the Special Education Department website and the Department of Special Education Graduate Program bulletin board. The deadline for submission to the university thesis reader is two weeks prior to the last day of classes. For summer completion, the student should check with the academic unit and the Office of Graduate Studies for appropriate deadlines. The Office of Graduate Studies must receive notification from the campus bookstore by the last day of final examinations for the appropriate semester or session that the thesis has been deposited there and the fees paid. Ample time should be allowed for any special arrangements, such as duplication of the thesis by the campus bookstore or elsewhere, prior to the deadline.
(see http://www.fullerton.edu/catalog/graduate_regulations/theseproj.asp#E)

Semester	Date	Deadline for Applying (see class schedule for specific dates)
Fall	January	End of August
Spring	May	End of January
Summer	August	End of January

Completion of Requirements and Award of Degree (see pg. 498 of Catalog, or http://www.fullerton.edu/catalog/graduate_regulations/mdegreq.asp#E)

The degree is awarded upon the satisfactory completion of all state and university requirements, the specific requirements for the particular program, the recommendation of the appropriate graduate adviser and committee (advancement to candidacy), and the approval of the faculty and the Office of Graduate Studies. All work for the degree, except final course examinations, should be submitted by the last day of classes, in order to assure granting of the degree by the end of the semester or session.

If completing a thesis, it must be deposited in the campus bookstore according to instructions shown under “Theses and Projects,” no later than the last day of final examinations for the semester or session in which the degree is to be awarded.

It is the **student’s responsibility** to file an application for a graduation check and pay the graduation and diploma fee prior to the beginning of the final semester. Forms are available at the Admissions and Records Service Center and the Graduate Studies Office.

The application for graduation initiates review of degree requirements and formal approval by the faculty as well as serving as a diploma order. **The last date to file the application is listed in the front inside cover of the class schedule for each regular semester.** Candidates for August graduation must file their requests prior to registration for the spring semester.

Students who fail to complete requirements as planned must update the application for a graduation check and do so by the appropriate deadline. A fee is required to change the graduation date.

GS700 Enrollment

Students who have completed all coursework on the study plan and are continuing to work on thesis or project preparations have two options for registration:

1. **GS700 through regular restriction:** Students pay full fees and receive full student benefits (health center, student activities, etc.)
2. **GS700 through University Extension:** Students enroll paying a reduced fee and receive no university benefits other than library privileges. Permission to enroll through extended education is monitored through the Graduate Studies office using a request form signed off by the graduate program advisor and, for international students, an advisor in International Education and Exchange. No student will be permitted to enroll in GS700 through Extended Education without this form.

Registration materials will be released through the Graduate Studies office. Graduate program advisers will be sent a list of students enrolled in this special GS700.



VI.



Appendixes



Culminating Thesis/Project Form

Department of Special Education PROPOSAL FOR Thesis/Project	
<p>The Department of Special Education supports projects on topics related to the candidate's graduate program plan and professional development as a teacher. This form must be completed and signed by both the candidate and the committee chair. Submission of this form documents that the candidate agrees to work independently on his/her project and submit a completed product by the deadline established by the department and committee chair. <i>Note: A typical project/thesis undergoes MULTIPLE revisions before being accepted as complete. As such, students should expect to revise their work numerous times prior to having their work accepted as complete.</i></p>	
Thesis/Project Title	Date
Name	Student ID
Email	Anticipated Completion Date
Resources required of the University:	
Abstract of proposal (1000 word limit: include a detailed summary of your intended project; should include rationale, purpose of study, brief summary of the literature with references, research questions and/or hypotheses)	
Design of the Project	
Materials Required	
Timeline	
Participants and research design (e.g., quantitative reversal design, qualitative case study, pre-post test action research design).	
Procedures (Steps to completion)	
Signature of Candidate:	Signature of Committee Chair:
Date:	Date:
<i>Created 8.07</i>	Signature of Graduate Program Advisor:
	Date:

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)	

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

Proposed Thesis or Project Title

Thesis/Project Chair

Committee Member

Committee Member

Masters of Science in Education
Emphasis in Special Education
POLICY ON WRITING COMPETENCY
FOR ENTERING STUDENTS

Because clear and effective written communication is a necessary skill for success in the Masters of Science in Education Program at California State University, Fullerton, this policy statement sets forth minimum expectations for entering students as to competency in written language.

As outlined in the university catalog, “Students working toward a master’s degree are required to demonstrate writing ability commensurate with the baccalaureate degree” (p. 497). Students should be able to:

- a) write with clarity and precision;
- b) use Microsoft Word on a computer to create, format, store, track changes, retrieve, print, and electronically edit documents;
- c) accept that revision is at the heart of writing well. With this expectation in mind, students may be required to rewrite work (sometimes more than once) that their instructors deem as not at the graduate level.

Students who feel they do not meet the expected level of competency should contact their Graduate Advisor, who will determine the most appropriate way to remedy any writing limitations. Possible remediation and interventions, selection of which will be based on the degree of competency in specific areas, include the following:

- 1. mentoring in writing by a more proficient colleague in the program;
- 2. completion of a tutorial program in the areas needed; or
- 3. the successful completion of a writing course (English 301, Advanced College Writing or an equivalent course) prior to being admitted into the program/or before being approved to take courses with high writing demands.

Revised 8/13/09, Department of Special Education

Masters of Science in Education
Emphasis in Special Education
POLICY ON COMPUTER COMPETENCY
FOR ENTERING STUDENTS

Because clear and effective written communication is a necessary skill for success in the Masters of Science in Education Program at California State University, Fullerton, this policy statement sets forth minimum expectations for entering students as to competency in written language.

All entering students are expected to be knowledgeable in the use of a PC computer prior to being admitted to the university. (Mac users need to be able to transition onto the PC platform since on-ground instruction will be done on PC computers.) Students should be able to do the following:

- a) Use a personal computer to locate, create, move, copy, delete, name, rename, and save files and folders on hard drives and on special storage devices such as floppy disks and/or external hard drives;
- b) Use Microsoft Word on a PC/Mac computer, to create, edit, format, store, track changes, retrieve, and print documents, including electronic editing;
- c) Use an electronic mail system to receive, create, edit, print, save, and send email messages with and without attached files;
- e) Use an Internet browser to search and retrieve information from the World Wide Web; and
- f) Be Familiar with and be able to access to Microsoft Office software, including PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, Excel, and FrontPage.

Students who feel they do not meet the expected level of competency should contact their Graduate Advisor, who will determine the most appropriate way to remedy any limitations in computer literacy. Possible remediation and interventions, selection of which will be based on the degree of competency in specific areas, include the following:

1. mentoring in a specific area by a more advanced colleague in the program;
2. completion of a tutorial program in the areas needed; or
3. the successful completion of SPED 504 Microcomputers for Special School Classrooms, or its equivalent, prior to be admitted into the program/or before being approved to take courses with high technological demands.

Revised 8/13/09, Department of Special Education

**Department of Special Education
PROPOSAL FOR SPED 599 INDEPENDENT STUDY**

The Department of Special Education supports independent graduate study on topics related to the candidate's graduate program plan and professional development as a teacher. Depending on the candidate's needs and the scope of the project, the candidate may enroll in 1, 2, or 3 units of study. This form must be completed and signed by both the candidate and the project or thesis committee chair by the third week of instruction. Submission of this form and enrollment in SPED 599 documents that the candidate agrees to work independently on his/her thesis/project and will submit a completed product by the end of the 15th week of instruction.

Project Title:		Units of enrollment:
Name:	Student ID:	
Email:	Current Number of Units Completed toward MSE (must be >15):	
Content Area:	School:	
Supporting Faculty Member with whom you are working (applies only if you have made previous arrangements e.g., committee chair):		
Resources required of the University:		
<p>In this section, please respond to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will this work support or extend your graduate study plan? • What will be the tangible product that will result from this project? <p>Proposal should be limited to 500 words and be professionally prepared in APA format. References should be provided, as appropriate. Scope of work should reflect the number of units you have enrolled for (i.e., a 1-unit 599 is equivalent to 15 hours of instruction; 2-units is equivalent to 30 hours; and 3-units is equivalent to 45 hours.).</p>		
Signature of Candidate:	Signature of Thesis/Project committee chair:	
Date:	Date:	
Signature of Graduate Program Advisor:		
Date:		
Due Date of Completed Work:		



501 Checklist

Student: _____

Date: _____

Graduate Program Advisor: Dr. Woo Jung

- _____ **Students should always keep a current copy of their study plans**
- _____ **SPED 501 must be completed prior to or during the first semester of the program.**
- _____ **Entering students must meet the writing and technology expectations for entering graduate students. Students may, at any time and by any member of the graduate faculty, be required to overcome any deficiencies before being allowed to continue with the graduate program**
- _____ **Any transfer course must be 500 level and no more than 9 units may be used as transfer units.**
- _____ **This program has a firm commitment to scholarly and practitioner research; as such, all students will be expected to read, evaluate, and utilize current educational research in all of their classes, and especially for the completion of the masters project/thesis.**
- _____ **Most courses in the program will have an online component.**
- _____ **Students should must request an official leave of absence with the university if they are not going to maintain continuous enrollment while completing program.**
- _____ **Coursework on study plans must be completed in five years. For extenuating circumstances a two-year extension may be granted.**
- _____ **Students will need to complete a university required online Institutional Review Board tutorial and complete formal documentation prior to beginning their data collection for their study. This is mandatory for theses and to be determined on an individual basis for projects.**
- _____ **Students will need to request a grad check the semester before their last semester in the program.**

_____ **Student Signature and Date**

_____ **Committee Chair Signature and Date**

Last revised 8.08