MA CHDV PROGRAM

Thesis/Project Guidelines

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The Culminating Experience

To receive a Master’s degree at CSUS, a student must complete a culminating experience. Currently, there are three ways to meet the culminating experience requirement in the Child Development MA program - through completion of a thesis, a project, or culminating exam. This handbook provides guidelines and resources for completion of the thesis or project. A separate handbook addresses exam completion.

A Thesis is the written product describing a systematic study of a significant problem. It clearly identifies the problem; states the major assumptions within a theoretical framework; explains the significance of the undertaking; sets forth the sources for, and methods of, gathering information; describes the analysis of the data; and offers a conclusion or recommendation. The product must evidence originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, clarity of purpose, and accurate and thorough documentation (CSUS Catalog). Typically, a Child Development MA thesis involves the creation of new knowledge thorough empirical research. Some examples of types of Child Development theses are:

- A descriptive research study examining how parents respond to their children’s sibling conflict
- A study examining the effectiveness of an innovative method to teach conversation skills to children with autism
- A qualitative study on the friendships that develop between children with learning disabilities and their peers without disabilities in one elementary school.
- An experimental study of children’s reasoning about mathematical concepts

A Project is a significant undertaking appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields. It must evidence originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. It must be described and summarized in a written abstract that includes the project’s significance, objectives, methodology, and a conclusion or recommendation (CSUS Catalog). Typically, a Child Development MA project involves the dissemination of theory and empirical research to the professional discipline or targeted members of the community (e.g., caregivers, teachers, parents, administrators). Below are some examples of projects that one might undertake in the Child development program:

- A web page for parents that presents empirical research on sibling conflict
- A project that examines empirical research on the salient characteristics of high quality child care and culminates in an in-service for parents about child care quality.
- A project that examines factors contributing to homelessness among single parents receiving Vocational Rehabilitation services and culminates in a grant proposal for the creation of services for runaway youths.
Sponsors and Second Readers

Your sponsor (committee chair) is a full-time tenured or tenure-track Child Development faculty member who supervises your thesis or project. This person may or may not be the same person who has served as an academic advisor for you. The role of the sponsor is to work closely with you as you complete each step of your thesis/project. S/he will help guide the development of your research question or project idea, assist you as you write your project or thesis petition, supervise the implementation of your work (i.e., gathering thesis data or developing the project’s product), and approve the final draft of the written thesis or project.

Generally speaking, your sponsor should have some expertise or interest in your research area. However, you may choose to select your sponsor according to a variety of criteria – including his/her areas of methodological expertise, the types of research he/she does, or simply because you feel you would work well together.

The sponsor-student relationship is an important one. As such, you should talk with your sponsor about expectations and set guidelines for contacts and level of support. As you develop your research idea, write up a short statement about your proposed project or thesis, then meet with potential sponsor(s) to discuss their participation. It is helpful to talk extensively about the potential sponsor’s research interests, working style, and availability, as well as your thesis/project idea. Below are some suggested questions you might ask your sponsor:

1) Research Interests:
   What are your current research projects?
   What other research interests do you have? What topics do you feel comfortable sponsoring?
   With what research methods do you feel comfortable?
   Do you feel comfortable sponsoring both theses and projects?

2) Work style:
   How would you describe your style in working with your MA students?
   How would your students describe you as a sponsor?
   How regularly would we meet and for how long?

3) Expectations:
   What could I expect from you as a sponsor?
   What do you see as my responsibility in this process?
   What is your availability during breaks, especially summer?

4) My thesis/topic:
   (Describe your topic and idea) What areas of the literature do I need to review for my topic?
   Do you have any advice for me as I begin my thesis/project?

Your sponsor will provide you with feedback on your writing and the organization of your product, but it is not the role of the sponsor to copy-edit your product for you. Thus, before you turn in any “draft” you should make sure it is ready to be evaluated. If a draft contains many spelling,
grammatical, and/or style errors you can expect that your sponsor will return it without substantive comments. Regardless of how confident you are in your written product, **you will want to give yourself ample time to turn in drafts of each section of your product, get feedback, and revise.**

**It is your responsibility to stay in contact with your sponsor on a regular basis, keep up with deadlines, and follow through with your commitments.** The availability of the thesis/project sponsor during the summer months cannot be expected and must be discussed with your sponsor beforehand. Further, it is your responsibility to monitor your own progress toward the completion of the thesis/project. This requires knowing the dates when the final copy of your work must be turned in to the departmental office and when other documents must be submitted (e.g., graduation application).

A project or thesis also requires approval from a **second reader.** At a minimum, this person reads and approves your final draft. S/he is the second “pair of eyes” reviewing your thesis. S/he may also provide consultation or feedback along the way, depending on his/her interests and expertise. Your second reader does not receive workload credit for assisting you and it is up to him/her to decide how much time s/he can spend assisting you on your thesis. Your second reader may require up to a month to review your thesis or project.

You should talk to both your sponsor and your second reader about the role your second reader will play during the thesis/project process. The second reader will read and approve the petition, and should also be contacted at the beginning of the semester in which the student expects to finish the thesis to coordinate any feedback.

**Some advice about choosing (and recruiting) a sponsor:**

- Start the process of selecting a sponsor early in case your first choice is unable to work with you at this time. You then have time to consider other sponsors.
- Build relationships with potential sponsors faculty early by attending graduate orientation in the fall, talking with instructors from your courses, and other CHDV professors with whom you share interests (see CHDV MA Handbook for list of faculty and research areas).
- Don’t take “no” personally. Sponsors are juggling many responsibilities and must make judgments about sponsorship according to workload and availability during a given time period.
- Check the department web site for information on areas of faculty interest – try to choose someone with similar interests or a needed area of methodological expertise.
- Do some advance work and planning on your topic before meeting with a potential sponsor. Potential sponsors will have a better idea whether s/he can sponsor you if you have a good idea about where you would like to go with a topic and a plan for completion. Prepare a paragraph-long statement that summarizes your topic and state some ideas for proceeding.
- Be open to changing your ideas according to a potential sponsor’s interests and expertise.
Steps to Completing a Thesis or Project

Once you have been admitted to the program and received classified status, the steps to completing your thesis/project are as follows:

1. Advancement to Candidacy – Advancement to candidacy is typically completed after completing 9-12 units in the program. The form is reviewed and signed by an advisor, and submitted to the department for review. Forms for advancement to candidacy can be obtained in the department office or on the Office of Graduate studies website. You will have seven years to complete your degree beginning with the oldest course you have listed on your Advancement to Candidacy form.

2. Take CHDV 290 – Culminating seminar. In this semester you will:
   - Refine your question or project idea by conducting a comprehensive literature review
   - Learn about thesis/project format and content.
   - Work to secure a faculty sponsor and second reader - Your sponsor supervises your thesis/project and serves as the thesis/project committee chair.
   - Decide whether you will do a thesis or a project – In consultation with your faculty sponsor and the 290 instructor, decide whether your question or problem is best formulated as a thesis or a project.
   - Learn about format, content and Human subjects requirements
   - Develop a draft of your petition and human subjects application, if applicable

3. Complete a reservation form for CHDV 504 – This is submitted in the semester before you take CHDV 504 (March 1\textsuperscript{st} for Spring, October 1\textsuperscript{st} for Fall). The form is available online at the COE website (or see resources and links at end of this handbook).

4. Finalize your methods – with sponsor assistance.

5. Submit a petition to your thesis/project committee (sponsor and second reader) and to the department. The petition clearly specifies what your culminating activity will involve. Your sponsor and CHDV 290 instructor will work with you on this document, which is more fully described in this handbook. The petition is first approved by the sponsor, and then the second reader BEFORE it is submitted to the CHDV graduate program coordinator. One hard copy of the petition, accompanied by a cover sheet (see appendix) assigned by your sponsor and second reader is submitted to the department office with an electronic copy is sent directly to the CHDV graduate program coordinator. Petitions may be submitted for departmental approval any time up to 12\textsuperscript{th} week of the Fall or Spring semester.
Ideally, the petition is submitted at the beginning of the semester in which you take CHDV 504, but it is possible to submit earlier or later, depending on your rate of progress. **You should begin work on your thesis or project only after receiving written feedback and approval from the department graduate program coordinator (and IRB approval, if applicable).**

6. **Submit protocol to the COE Human Subjects Committee,** if applicable. If your work will involve the participation of human subjects, you must submit appropriate human subjects forms to the College of Education Human Subjects Committee. Further information about Human Subjects is included in the resources/links section of this handbook. **You should receive written approval from the relevant human subjects committee before you begin your study.** At times, the COE committee will indicate your study needs to also be approved by the university-level Human Subjects Committee. **Leave ample time for this process.**

7. **Begin and complete your thesis/project.** While collecting your data or working on your project, keep in touch with your sponsor on a regular basis to evaluate progress, discuss your concerns, and make any changes as necessary. Don’t expect the sponsor to contact you. You will need to take the initiative. Do not wait until it is too late --- this may cause a delay in the completion of your thesis or project, or the need to start over.

**Continuous Enrollment:**
- You are permitted to enroll as a continuing education student for reduced fees for **three semesters following the 504 semester.** Please note registration in continuing education (599) units is required each semester until you submit your thesis or project. **If you do not complete your thesis/project during the three semesters after taking CHDV 504, you will be required to re-enroll in (and pay for) CHDV 504.**
- After your 504 semester, if you fail to enroll in continuous enrollment or other coursework, you will be dropped from the program and need to reapply. Graduate Studies does not make exceptions so do not let enrollment lapse.
- Remember too that you have 7 years from the semester you began taking courses counting toward program requirements to complete all degree requirements (including the thesis/project) without having to reapply to the program.

8. **Submit the written thesis/project for approval.** Your project or thesis must follow the formatting of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (most recent edition) and the CSUS thesis/project format requirements. Where there are differences between CSUS and APA format, you should comply with the CSUS requirements.

**The Approval Process:**
1. **Once your Sponsor (Committee Chair) deems your thesis/project to be complete, she/he will submit (or request that you submit) an electronic copy of the thesis/project via email for second reader approval.** The second reader typically asks for changes before approving the document. **You should allow at least 2 weeks for this review.**
2. Once approved by sponsor and second reader, an electronic copy of the thesis/project and title pages are then sent, via email, to the CHDV Graduate Program Coordinator or Department Chair for departmental review. To graduate in a given term, you must submit to the department by the following deadlines:

   November 1st for Fall graduation
   April 1st for Spring graduation
   July 1st for Summer graduation.

Once submitted, departmental review of the document takes 2 weeks. The grad program coordinator may require that changes be made before the thesis/project can be approved, so do not print the entire thesis on the high quality cotton paper until you have made these changes.

3. Once your thesis or project is approved, the Sponsor, Second reader and Graduate Coordinator (or Chair) will sign the appropriate approval pages printed on cotton paper. Note: The CHDV Graduate Program Coordinator will approve your thesis/project on the behalf of the department, but the COE GPSE Chair will sign your approval page. You will need to bring in these pages to the COE office to obtain signatures. The student will be informed when the approval pages may be picked up in order to deliver it to the Office of Graduate Studies.

4. Prior to delivery to the Office of Graduate Studies, the thesis/project will need to be copied on 24 lb. (100% cotton) paper. An appointment is necessary to submit your thesis/project to Graduate Studies. Deadlines for submission of final approved thesis/project to Graduate studies generally occurs during the first week of May for Spring, and the first week of December for Fall graduation. See the grad studies calendar for exact dates.

**Petition Guidelines**

Your petition is brief description of your proposed study or project submitted to the Child Development MA Program faculty. It includes an argument for the significance of your thesis/project along with a proposed method for completing your study or implementing your project. Please address the following areas in describing your proposed thesis/project. Your responses should be in paragraph form using the headings below, with APA-style citations and format.

You should expect to go through several drafts of your petition with initial review by the CHDV 290 instructor and later feedback from your sponsor before submitting it for second reader and program review. The Petition includes the following sections.
1. **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**
You must first state clearly and explicitly the nature of the problem that your research study or project will address. The goal of this section is to justify to your reader that you have selected a real and worthwhile problem to study. Include a reference or two relevant to your problem statement.

   **Example:** Children are reading less than ever, both at home and in school. Yet previous research (see Jones, 1995, Smith, 2004) has confirmed that the amount of time a child spends in recreational reading is related to children’s attitudes toward reading as well as to their reading ability.

2. **PURPOSE OF YOUR STUDY OR PROJECT**
After considering the problem laid out in the previous section, describe the specific purpose of your study or project – in other words, what will you do in your study/project to address the problem you have selected? Make your purpose statement as specific and explicit as possible. Remember that a good research question clearly defines the study variables, their relationships and how you will study them, and is actually researchable. A good project is solving a specific practical problem in a given professional discipline through the dissemination of research.

   **Example:** The purpose of this study is to compare effects of two different modes of recreational reading in the classroom on students’ reading ability and attitudes toward reading.

3. **BACKGROUND/SIGNIFICANCE OF YOUR STUDY OR PROJECT**
Briefly summarize how the literature related to your topic has informed the development of your study. Define the major areas of research you will be including in your review. Discuss briefly one or two key sources related to your topic. Your discussion of the literature in this section should “make a case” for your research question or project idea.

Next, explain why your thesis/project is important to the professional or academic discipline. For a thesis: What new knowledge will your study contribute to our understanding of the research question or topic? For a project: What new materials or information will you contribute to the profession? Who will it affect and how? Include a reference or two which help to explain the significance of the study/project. You should end this section with a clear and specific re-statement of the purpose of the study. The literature you cite should directly support this stated purpose.

   **Example:** A preliminary review of previous studies confirms the positive effect of recreational reading on student achievement as well as attitudes towards reading. In one study, Smith noted………..

Along with an examination of the literature related to recreational reading, the review will also provide a discussion of current approaches to reading instruction, as well as more recent research related to implementation of recreational reading…. 
In their report of a national survey of effective reading instruction, the International Reading Association noted the strong relationship between reading achievement and students’ participation in recreational reading (IRA, 2000). In addition, states continue to report slow progress in improving reading achievement, particularly in certain populations of at-risk students (see National Assessment of Educational Progress). Thus, the proposed study will address…

4. METHODS
Describe the specifics of how will you conduct your study or develop your project materials.

For a thesis:
Remember that your design, data collection and analytical methods should be chosen so that they address the variables and your research question specifically.

a) Design of the study – example: experimental study, field observation, survey study, ethnography, etc.
b) Participants – who, how many, characteristics, how you will recruit?
c) Procedures – steps in conducting the study
d) Data sources and instruments – what kinds of data will you collect, and how will you collect it? What specific measures or instruments will you be using?
e) Analytical methods – in what ways will you analyze the data you collect to address your research question?

For a project:
Describe how you will develop and implement your project.

a) Population of interest – what are the characteristics of the population you hope to serve, how will you identify/recruit this sample?
b) Procedures – Specify the phases or steps in the project plan and how you propose to carry those out. Be explicit in your description of what the project will entail. How will the literature you review inform your project?
c) Data sources and instruments – what kinds of data will you collect concerning your project, and how will you collect it? How will you use any data you collect to develop, implement and/or evaluate your project?

Example: The study will compare the reading achievement and attitudes in two different classrooms of second grade students enrolled in a low income public elementary school. In one classroom, children will receive 20 minutes of recreational reading three times per week. The second classroom will receive the same amount of recreational reading time, but the teacher will supplement with suggested book lists and related activities. Changes in children’s reading achievement and reading attitudes will be assessed using Smith’s 1999 Student Reading Attitudes survey as well as scores from the school district’s standardized tests of reading achievement. Differences between the two groups will be determined by comparing the sets of scores using a t-test for statistically significant differences.
5. PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES
Reflect upon how your study is related to your previous personal, educational and professional experiences. Cite specific references to your coursework where applicable.

Example: My seven years of experience teaching second grade in a public elementary school have made me very aware of the continuing challenge of developing students’ reading abilities. In the CHDV 250 course, I was able to explore my interest in this topic through a paper assignment. Etc………

6. DISSEMINATION
How will you share your results or your project materials once your study or project has been completed? Please be specific, including opportunities for local dissemination as well as for conference presentations and publications. Who will be interested in your results or your project materials?

Example: Findings in this study will be of interest to elementary teachers and reading specialists in particular. Results of the study will be shared with the teachers at my school and in the district through an inservice workshop. I will also pursue the opportunity to present the findings at the state California Reading Association annual conference.

Content and Format of the Thesis/Project

The following section describes the components of the thesis/project and provides information on format specific to the thesis/project. Additional information is provided in the Appendix of this manual. You should also consult the most current edition of the APA Manual (6th edition) for information on citation of references and presentation of data. It is a good idea to examine previous theses and projects (available in the library) for examples of thesis/project format and content.

TITLE PAGES
Title pages should match University templates found on the Office of Graduate Studies web page. Use centered lower case roman numerals at the bottom of each page. The title pages include the Abstract, which should include the following content (not necessarily with headings): Statement of problem, Sources of Data, and Conclusions Reached.

Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION
Note: In your thesis/project, start with “1” in the upper right-hand corner on the first page of Chapter 1 and number consecutively through the last page of your References. Do not use a “running head” (NOTE: this differs from APA requirements).

The introduction provides an overview of your project or research study. Here you describe the problem, provide information about the problem’s significance, and state how the problem was addressed in the current study or project. Headings often used in this section are listed below. Your
sponsor may decide to modify these headings, depending on the nature of your thesis/project. For example, your sponsor may request that you provide a section for the theoretical framework for your study. Much (but not all) of what you write in this section will come from your petition.

**Purpose of the Study (or Project)**
Tell the reader what your research project is going to do about providing a resolution for the identified research problem. "This study aims to …"

**Statement of the Problem**
This section introduces the reader to the problem or research question. At the end of this section the reader should have a clear idea of what the problem is.

**Significance of the Project (or study)**
This section has two purposes: (a) to begin to be more specific about the problem; and, (b) to convince the reader that what you are studying is truly a problem. Use evidence and logical arguments to document that what you are studying is in fact a problem. Do not take it for granted that the reader is automatically going to agree with you that what you are studying is a problem. Cite sources to document your assertions.

**Methods**
Here you should provide an overview of the methods employed in your study or a description of the methods employed to develop your project materials.

**Definition of Terms**
Provide both conceptual and operational definitions for any key words or phrases that are either important or may be unclear to the reader. Note the term key words. Consult with your sponsor about what qualifies as key terms.

**Limitations**
Describe any potential limitations to your project or study.

**Organization of the Project/Study**
Here you should provide an overview for the following chapters, briefly describing what each chapter will include.

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**Chapter 2 - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**
A literature review documents, synthesizes, and evaluates important literature on your topic of study. It is used to make a "case" for your research question or project idea. The primary purpose is to establish relevance/significance of work for the reader, to make an “argument” for the necessity of your thesis/project. Hence, the researcher tells the reader what others have found out about the particular problem as a means of supporting the importance of his/her study or project. In addition, the literature review often serves as the content for developing project materials. As such, Ch. 2 it should include a review of empirical research relevant to the project materials.

Typically, the literature review starts with broad concepts that orient the reader to the topic at hand. It then becomes progressively more specific. Begin the review of the literature with an introduction telling the reader how the review is organized. Next, provide the theoretical framework that guided
your study or project. Group research studies and other types of literature by theme or assertion. Summarize research around these themes/assertions, keeping in mind that space denotes importance. You should work to connect and integrate the articles you review THROUGHOUT your paper, as well as in your conclusion. This is often done when introducing a new study, through the use of transition sentences/clauses. Think about how each article or study relates to everything else and make that connection explicit to the reader. Don’t forget to cite authors/articles, when appropriate. When you make a point, be sure to back it up either with a logical argument or empirical evidence.

End the review with a summary highlighting the major findings, including an integration and general evaluation of the research you have presented. Your conclusions should lead to a research question or to the need for the development of your project materials.

Be sure to use APA style in citing your sources. Provide some details about the methodology of the actual research referenced. This enhances the reader's ability to judge the quality of the research. Also, your review should include primarily current literature (typically within the last 10 years) and most should come from peer review journals. Finally, be aware that the University catalog makes the policy on plagiarism very clear. This policy is taken very seriously in this department. If you have any questions about what this means or what constitutes plagiarism, talk to your committee chair/advisor and consult the University’s policy statement.

**Chapter 3 - METHODS/METHODOLOGY**
(Note: Choose one of these two as the chapter title) In this chapter, you will clearly explain the methods (procedures and measures) employed in your study or a description of the methods employed to develop your project materials.

**Students Doing a Thesis:**
Describe the study design, sampling procedures, independent and dependent variables (if appropriate), data collection procedures, instruments used, procedures to ensure reliability and validity, data analysis approaches, and any organizing principles used in gathering the materials and assembling them into the final product. Typically, headings used in this chapter for quantitative studies may include:
- Research question
- Design
- Participants
- Measures and/or Materials
- Procedures

**NOTE:** your sponsor may wish to change these titles based on your specific research study, particularly in the case of a qualitative study.

**Students Doing a Project:**
Describe how the information for the project was gathered, the individuals you collaborated with in the field, and the procedures you used in the development of the actual product (e.g., handbook). The actual project materials should be included as an appendix. Headings typically include:
Chapter 4 – RESULTS (for thesis students only)
In this section, restate your research question and provide an overview of data analyses used to address the question. Next, talk about the specific findings.

For quantitative analyses:
Present other descriptive and inferential statistics used for each research question or hypothesis. Make sure to explain whether or not each hypothesis was supported (or what your finding was with regard to your research question) the statistical procedure(s) used to make this determination, and the level of significance. Use appropriate APA format for any tables or figures in your results section. Present tables and figures in text rather than at the end of the document.

For qualitative data analysis:
Describe how you analyzed the data. Describe the themes/findings in categories that you and your sponsor have discussed. You will be depicting quotes, narrative, artifacts, and other types of qualitative data. Note any additional findings that you obtained from the study here as well.

Chapter 5 – DISCUSSION (Chapter 4 – DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS for Project Students) (Note: work with your sponsor on what to title this chapter)

Students Doing a Thesis:
This is where the researcher summarizes the work of the thesis and draws conclusions. You should present and offer explanations for the major findings presented in Chapter 4 with reference to previous research and theory discussed in your literature review. Provide explanations and insights regarding the findings, or any unusual observations that emerged from the research. You can also make recommendations, describe limitations, and suggest future research that is needed in this area of study.

Students Doing a Project:
A brief summary of the Project belongs in this chapter. Any manual, directory guide, curriculum, web site, film, video, CD, DVD, alternative media etc. developed as a Project belongs in an Appendix. You should summarize, make recommendations, and state any conclusion(s) you might have. Describe the results of any evaluation of your project. Describe how the project might be put to practical use. Finally, state any advice you might have for updating or expanding the project. With hindsight what could you as the author have done better or have omitted?
APPENDICES
Put all materials in this section that does not easily fit into the main body of the text. Examples include manuals, handbooks, letters, regulations, data gathering protocols, field notes, computer printouts, and other enhancements. Use a separate appendix for different types of materials as is done in this document. Tables and figures are typically included in the text of the main document, not in the appendix.

REFERENCES
References should be done according to APA style (see manual and appendix), except that they should be single spaced with a space between each entry.

Department and University Requirements
The first level of evaluation lies with your sponsor. Your sponsor will guide you in deciding when to bring in your second reader in the final steps of your thesis/project. Once both the sponsor and the second reader have approved your thesis or project, your thesis should be approved by the department secretary for adherence to basic formatting principles. It often requires many drafts of your written product to be ready to submit your work to the department.

The departmental review consists of a careful reading by the department chair or the graduate coordinator. S/he may ask your sponsor to have you revise certain aspects of your thesis or project before departmental approval. The University will evaluate the thesis primarily for format. Please see the appendices and the grad studies web page for more information about formatting requirements.

Typically, faculty will use the following criteria in evaluating the format and content of your thesis/project. You should carefully examine these criteria and use them to evaluate your thesis/project at several stages during the process of its completion. Please note that your sponsor and second reader may have some additional areas of focus that you will need to account for in your final thesis/project. All components are ultimately the responsibility of the student, and lack of compliance will likely result in delays in filing the thesis/project in the department and with Graduate Studies.

Format
- The generally acceptable format is consistent with the guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) -- with some minor modifications to fit the requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies.
- Errors in format (including style and grammar, punctuation, typographical, etc.) will results in the thesis/project being returned to the student with possible delays in completion and/or graduation.
Writing Style will be evaluated for:
- Clarity and cohesiveness
- Scholarly, APA style
- Grammar and spelling

Chapter 1: Problem Statement
- Clearly stated
- Description of the project or thesis that was done to respond to the problem
- Ideas supported by empirical evidence

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature
- Thoroughness and currency
- Use of primary sources as evidence to support ideas
- Sufficient detail of some studies and their findings
- Differentiation of data-based, opinion, and philosophical sources
- Analysis, critique, and explanation for how the data relate to the thesis/project

Chapter 3: Method
- Thesis: Complete description of subject, procedures, and measures
- Project: Description of all steps taken to develop the project

Chapter 4: Results (for Thesis Option)
- Careful analysis and articulation of findings, including tables and figures as appropriate
- Descriptive and Inferential Statistics to be reported, in APA Style, where applicable
- Both qualitative and quantitative data need to be equally well articulated

Chapter 4 (Project) or 5 (Thesis): Discussion
- Degree to which the discussion relates to the original problem and the findings of the study or project itself
- Evidence of independent and critical thinking in drawing conclusions about the findings
Other Resources/Links

General Resources:
COE Graduate and Professional Studies:
  http://www.csus.edu/coe/academics/graduate/index.html
CSUS Office of Graduate Studies:
  http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/
CSUS Writing Center
  http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/
Thesis Writing Groups:
  http://www.csus.edu/wac/WAC/Students/thesis_groups.html
Forms and checklists – CSUS/Office of Graduate Studies
Advancement to Candidacy:
  http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/forms/candidacy_formspetitions/advancement_candidacy.pdf
Human Subjects Forms & Information
  (University)
  (College of Education):
  http://www.csus.edu/research/researchIntegritycompliance/humansubjects/policyformprocedure.html
Graduation check list:
  http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/CurrentStudents/StepsToGraduation.html
Continuous Enrollment form:
  http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/forms/academic_curriculum/Continuous%20Enrollment%20Form.pdf
Graduation application:
  http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/forms/graduation_diploma_forms/graduation_application.pdf
OGS Submission and Deadlines:
MA binding receipt:
  http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/forms/thesis_project_forms/micro_binding_receipt.pdf
Thesis/project receipt form:
  http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/forms/thesis_project_forms/thesisprojectdissert_receipt_form.pdf
University Format Workshops:
  http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/CurrentStudents/Thesis-Project-Dissertation/FormattingWorkshops.html
Thesis/project title page guides and templates
Forms – Department/College:
COE MA forms page:
   http://www.csus.edu/coe/academics/graduate/forms/index.html
Human Subjects forms and procedures (COE):
CHDV MA Student Handbook:
CHDV504 Intent to Register:
APPENDIX A
MA CHILD DEVELOPMENT
THESIS/PROJECT FORMAT GUIDELINES
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This is the beginning page of Chapter One. **REMEMBER: University requirements supercede all other requirements when typing your project or thesis.**

The margins must be 1.5” from the left hand side and one inch from the bottom and right side of the page. The page numbers for all pages will be in the upper right hand corner. **NO TEXT OR PAGE NUMBERS CAN APPEAR IN THE MARGINS. THIS INCLUDES TOP, RIGHT AND BOTTOM MARGINS.** “Chapter” is typed in upper and lower case. The chapter title is typed in all capital letters. Put four spaces after the chapter title and between sections.

Double space all text in the body of the project. The only exceptions to this rule are long quotations, tables and references. Single space references and double space between references. There should only be one space after periods. Put 4 spaces between sections. Paragraph indents and block quote indents should be $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.

**Centered Titles**

The first level under the chapter title is the Capitalized Centered Bold Title. This divides your text into manageable sections. The “normal” sections of Chapter 1 are:

Purpose of the Project (or Study), Statement of the Problem, Significance of the Project (or Study), Limitations, Definition of Terms and Organization of the Project/Study.
There should be no “hanging headings” in your document, i.e., pages should not end in headings. If your heading ends a page, space until your heading starts on the next page.

**Side Titles**

Bolded Side titles, as above, are the next level of headings. Double-double (4) spaces follow the end of the paragraph prior to side titles. Double space after the side title.

**Subtitles.** Paragraph subtitles are the third level of headings. This level is used when you need to break down the information into categories under the side title.

---

**Format and Style for the Department of Child Development**

The Child Development program requires that projects and theses be submitted in the format of the American Psychological Association (APA), 6th edition with modifications contained in this handbook and listed on the Graduate Studies formatting guidelines. The keys to “passing” the format check are ACCURACY (check spelling and tense), and CONSISTENCY. You should purchase and use a copy of the current APA style manual for use in formatting your thesis. *It is your responsibility* to check your document for APA style as you write. Your sponsor expects that you will use correct APA style in your drafts as well.

Work or statements made by others should be cited using APA style. Quotations of fewer than 40 words should be incorporated into the text and enclosed by double quotation marks (“like this”). Citations (APA Style) and page numbers should
accompany all direct quotes. Quotations of 40 or more words are a single-spaced block of typewritten lines with no quotation marks. Indent ½ inch from the left margin only. Do not indent the first paragraph any additional space. If the quote is lengthy and there is a second paragraph, indent that paragraph five spaces. NOTE: Direct quotes should be used sparingly. The following is an example of an indented quote:

A project is a significant undertaking of a pursuit appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to a professional field. A project is a formal written report of a planned activity designed to meet an immediate problem or an identified need. It must evidence originality, and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization and a rationale.

The project must clearly identify a significant problem of interest, state the major assumptions, review the past research for criteria related to the problem, set forth the sources for and methods of gathering information to develop a product which can be curriculum or research related. (Rogers, 1997, p. 10)

Other Formatting

Please refer to the Appendix and Office of Graduate Studies templates for requirements for headers, fonts and spacing, margins and other format requirements. These University requirements supersede APA Style requirements.
Chapter Two is a review of relevant literature used in the preparation of the project or thesis. Use past tense to discuss past results, i.e., Smith reported, Jones concluded, Baker said, etc. Switching tenses or using present tense in reporting research (that is in the past) is the most common format error in the Review of Literature. Another common mistake is using **BOLD** or **ITALICS** text. **Bold** should not be used except as specified for headings. As a general rule, *Italics* should not be used in the body or the project or thesis. However, if emphasis might otherwise be lost, use *italics* rather than **Bold**. *Italics* are also in reference to published questionnaires and curricula, and in headings.

Reference citing is the style preferred by APA. An example of reference citing is as follows: Jones (1997) stated that.... or, if it is a direct quote, Jones (1997, p. 43) said ... *Paraphrasing (with citation) is encouraged, rather than direct quotes. Direct quotes require citation *and* page numbers, in APA style.*
Chapter 3

METHOD

In a project, the following headings are typically used. Check with your sponsor.

Project Design

Setting and Participants

Role of Researcher

Procedures

Data Collection and Analysis

For a thesis, the following headings are typically used. Check with your sponsor.

Research Question

Research Design

Participants

Measures

Materials or Apparatus (if applicable)

Procedure
Chapter 4

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

For a project, Chapter 4 is entitled Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions. For a thesis, Chapter 4 is entitled RESULTS and Chapter 5 is simply entitled DISCUSSION. Appendices are placed after the final chapter, with each appendix receiving its own label (e.g., APPENDIX A). Use this label when referring to the document in your text.
REFERENCES

This is the reference page, not a bibliography. It includes all references cited throughout the paper. You should double-check your document and reference page to ensure that all cited references are included in the reference page, and that there are no references in the reference section that are not directly cited.

You should consult the APA style manual for reference format. Here, however, are a few important notes:

1. Single space references and use the hanging indent format. Double space between references.
2. Do not indent the first line (see examples below). Indent the subsequent lines of a reference.
3. *Italicize* titles of books and journals.
4. Space between authors’ initials.
5. Keep entire reference together. If a reference will split over two pages, move the entire reference to the next page.
7. The only things capitalized are the names of journals and proper names.

Here are some examples of references:

*Example of a journal article, one author:*


*Example of a journal article, two authors (paginated by issue):*

Example of a journal article, three to five authors (paginated by issue):


Reference to entire book:


Reference to book, third edition:


Example of article or chapter in edited book:


Example of reference to on-line information:


Example of on-line periodical:


Example of reference when author and publisher are the same:

# Child Development Program

## Format Check Quick Guide for Theses/Projects

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO  
MA Child Development  
Thesis and Project Descriptions

**Thesis Description**  
*A Thesis committee requires a chair and a second reader.  
A thesis is a written report reflecting on the systematic study of a significant  
problem. It identifies a problem, states major assumptions, explains the  
significance of the undertaking, reviews the past relevant research on the topic  
and, based on this review, justifies the current study. It then sets forth the  
sources for and methods of gathering information, reports and analyzes the  
data, and offers a conclusion or recommendation. The finished thesis must  
evidence originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization  
and format, clarity of purpose, and accurate and thorough documentation. How  
data are gathered and interpreted will vary depending on the research method  
used. Examples of research studies include historical, philosophical, experimental,  
descriptive, case study, evaluation study, ethnographic study, discourse  
analysis.

A thesis adds to the already existing research knowledge base on an identified  
topic. In order to complete such an undertaking, the following is recommended  
as possible organization.

**Chapter 1** Introduction  
(This chapter is usually written in its final form near the completion of the thesis, to orient the reader to the document. It is to contain brief helpful descriptions of what is to come.)  
A. The problem  
   1. The purpose of the study  
   2. Statement of the Problem  
   3. Significance of the study  
B. Research hypotheses or questions  
   I. Methodology  
   2. Definition of relevant terms  
C. Theoretical basis for the study  
D. Limitations and assumptions  
E. Organization of the study

**Chapter 2** Review of the Literature  
A. A demonstrated expertise in review of relevant literature.  
B. An argument that justifies the importance of what will be investigated.

**Chapter 3** Method  
A. Detailed information about participants and how they were gathered/recruited  
B. Detailed information about materials and procedure followed to collect data

**Chapter 4** Analysis of the Data or Conceptual Framework  
A. Specific information regarding the analytical approach (e.g., how data coded; specific type of analysis)  
B. Detail specific findings from your data; often includes reference to tables and figures

**Chapter 5** Discussion, Findings, Interpretations, Recommendations, Implications  
A. Brief summary of findings  
B. Relate your results to your expectations and/or to other work in the discipline  
C. Explain your findings (or lack thereof)  
D. Describe limitations of your study

**Appendices**  
**Tables**  
**Figures**  
**References**

**Project Description**  
*A Project committee requires a chair and a second reader.  
A project is a significant undertaking of a pursuit appropriate to the fine  
and applied arts or to a professional field. A project is a format written  
report of a planned activity designed to meet an immediate problem or  
an identified need. It must evidence originality, and independent  
thinking, appropriate form and organization and a rationale.

The project must clearly identify a significant problem of interest, state  
the major assumptions, review the past research for criteria related to  
the problem, set forth the sources for and methods of gathering  
information to develop a product which can be curriculum or research  
related. The conclusion section of the project must include an  
explanation of its significance, the impact of the discovered criteria on  
the final effort, an evaluation of to what degree were the criteria from  
the review met, and recommendation for its use.

Examples of project types are: building a device; designing a special experiment; producing a documentary report; and producing a professional article of publishable quality.

The project addresses an applied problem. The existing research is  
used to develop a product in response to this identified problem. In order to complete such an undertaking, it is necessary to include the following:

**Chapter 1** Introduction  
(This chapter is usually written in its final form near the completion of the project, to orient the reader to the document. It is to contain brief helpful descriptions of what is to come.)  
A. The problem  
   1. The purpose of the project  
   2. Statement of the problem  
   3. Significance of the project  
   4. Limitations  
   5. Organization of the project  
B. The theoretical basis of the project

**Chapter 2** Review of the Relevant Literature  
A. A demonstrated expertise in review of relevant literature.  
B. An argument that justifies the importance of the product  
to be generated.

**Chapter 3** Methodology  
A. Detailed information about how information will be  
gathered and how the product will be developed.

**Chapter 4** Discussion, Recommendation, Conclusions  
A. Brief summary of findings/results/product  
B. Relate your product to the target audience and critically  
analyze its potential effectiveness  
C. Describe implications of your product  
D. Discuss limitations of your product

**Appendix** The Finished Product  
**References**
APPENDIX B

CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FORMS
## COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
## CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

### CULMINATING EXPERIENCE PETITION COVER PAGE

NOTE: Submit 1 hard copy of your petition along with this signed cover sheet to the department office in EUR 401 AND provide an electronic copy of the petition to the CHDV graduate program coordinator via email. Petitions will be considered in a given semester only if submitted by the 12th week of the semester.

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Circle the option you plan to complete: Thesis  Project

Culminating Experience advisors (committee) Sponsor:  Second Reader:

Requested semester of registration in CHDV 504 (or semester taken) Spring__________ Fall__________

Date of Advancement to Candidacy

### IMPORTANT DEADLINES AND INFORMATION

1) Continuous enrollment (CHDV 599) will be required if project/thesis is not completed in the semester you take CHDV 504.
2) Failure to maintain continuous enrollment will require retaking CHDV 504 (1 semester lapse without leave approval) or the need to reapply to the program (> 1 semester lapse in enrollment without approved leave)
3) You will be required to reregister for CHDV 504 to complete the project/thesis unless it is submitted by the third semester following enrollment in CHDV 504.
4) The University requires that ALL requirements for the MA degree be completed within 7 years of degree conferral.

**I have read and understand the above deadlines and requirements. Student initials**

The following signatures are required.

Student___________________________________________________________

Sponsor_____________________________________ Second Reader _____________

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CULMINATING EXPERIENCE AGREEMENT (OPTIONAL)

Name:____________________________________________________________________________________

Culminating Experience Chair:__________________________________________________________________________

Program:_____________________________________________________________________________________

Having met with my Culminating Experience Chair, I am prepared to accept the following responsibilities during the semester in which I register for the thesis or project.

1. I understand that my Culminating Experience Chair is prepared to meet with me on a regular basis, although I must schedule our appointments. During this time, my Culminating Experience Chair will read my draft efforts, advise on research directions, and guide me toward a completed manuscript.

2. I understand that a completed effort requires perfect spelling, good grammar and correct punctuation. Although my Culminating Experience Chair will be helpful in these matters, attaining the standard for Graduate Studies’ acceptance is my responsibility.

3. I understand that format is my responsibility and must meet CSUS standards. These can be obtained from the Graduate Studies Office the CSUS Guide for Thesis Format or the CSUS Guide for Project Format or on line at csus.edu/gradstudies/forms.htm.

4. The required format in the Department of Child Development is APA. Obtain the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (Latest Edition). Specific questions regarding format may be directed to the Department Office. I understand that completed work will not be accepted unless it meets the format standards of the University, as interpreted by the Department of Child Development and University Graduate Studies Office.

5. I understand that I must take care of my own progress toward the completion of my thesis or project. This requires knowing the dates when the final copy of the thesis or project must be turned in to the Department Office (April 1st for Spring completion, July 1st for Summer completion and November 1st for Fall completion), and when other documents must be submitted (e.g. advancement to candidacy, application for graduation, etc.). In the preparation of a thesis, I must select a second reader who will need to be informed of my progress. My second reader will need approximately two weeks or as agreed upon to review the final draft on my thesis.

6. I understand that if I do not complete my work during the registered semester, that I may have three additional semesters in which to complete the project/thesis. During this time, I must register through Continuous Enrollment. To obtain this extra time, I must make satisfactory progress (as determined by my Culminating Experience Chair) during the registered semester.

7. I understand that the availability of my Culminating Experience Chair during the summer months cannot be expected and must be discussed beforehand.

8. I have taken a graduate course in research methods and I am prepared to meet the standards of thoroughness, honesty, and careful attention to references that such an undertaking requires.

9. I understand that this is an adventure, and that I may be surprised, disappointed, frustrated and overworked, but I expect to be both proud of my work and pleased with my efforts when I am finished.

10. ____________________________________________________________________________________________

11. ____________________________________________________________________________________________

12. ____________________________________________________________________________________________

Student Signature_______________________________________ Date___________________________
APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY FORMAT REQUIREMENTS
Thesis Format

The culminating experience for a master’s degree in the California State University system can be a thesis, project, or comprehensive examination. Each of the three options is equivalent in academic rigor but different in terms of the final product. There are subtle, yet distinct differences in these culminating products.

This guide is designed to provide graduate students with the formatting requirements for the standard cover pages for all theses. Departments may use other style manuals that do not conflict with the guidelines provided in this document. These style manuals describe rules for manuscript preparation including headings, tables, figures, notes and other matters related to the final production of a written, publishable document. Sample pages for standard cover pages can be found on the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) website: www.csus.edu/gradstudies.

FORM AND STYLE

The single-sided, double-spaced manuscript is to be arranged as follows:

1. Blank Page
2. Title Page. The candidate’s name must be the same as name listed on thesis/project receipt form.
3. Copyright Page (optional)
4. Approval Page
5. Format Approval Page
6. Abstract
7. Preface, Dedication and/or Acknowledgment Pages (optional)
8. Table of Contents with page references. Individual listing of preliminary pages (Preface, Dedication, Acknowledgments, if included; Individual listing of Tables, Figures, Illustrations, Software Specifications, if included; List of Chapter or Section Headings; Appendices; Bibliography). Do NOT list abstract.
9. Tables, Figures, Illustrations, and Software Specifications (separately listed)
10. Text (double spaced)
11. Appendices (if included)
12. Bibliography/References
13. Blank Page

Note: One copy of the thesis is required for filing with OGS. We also require an extra copy of signature pages (format approval, approval page and abstract), three copies of THESIS/PROJECT RECEIPT FORM, and one paid MICROFILM AND BINDING RECEIPT FORM.

PAPER

Use 24 lb. (100 percent cotton); 8 1/2 x 11 (except for oversized items).

FONTS AND SPACING

The preferred font is Times New Roman or a similar font; acceptable font sizes are 10-12; different typefaces (e.g., italics) may be used only to show differences in captions and special text.

PRINT QUALITY

Use laser printers or minimum 600 dpi inkjet printers.

MARGINS AND PAGINATION

- Text must be double spaced, except for quoted passages that may be indented and single-spaced for emphasis.
- Bottom and right margins of text: one inch from edge of paper.
- Top and left margins of text: one and one-half inch from edge of paper.
- Pages preceding Chapter 1 must have lower case Roman numerals, centered one inch from bottom of page, starting with the approval page that is numbered “ii”. Title page is unnumbered, but is the implied number “i”.
- First page of text uses the Arabic number “1” and pages thereafter carry consecutive Arabic numbers, including the pages in the Appendices and the Bibliography.
- Arabic numbers are positioned in the upper right-hand corner, one inch from the top and one inch in from the right edge of the paper. Double space to the first line of the text.
COPYRIGHT
Theses receive copyright protection when accepted by the University; students do not need to include a copyright page unless they are formally registering the manuscript. Students registering must submit a copy of the complete document, with a copyright application to Register of Copyrights, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20559.

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIALS

TABLES AND FIGURES
- Color may be used, however, when it is microfilmed, it will be in black and white.
- If color is used, students must label or number the table or figure so that meaning can be determined in black and white.

OVERSIZED MATERIALS
- Oversize foldout pages may be included, though ample margins for binding must be included. Leave oversize pages unfolded. The bindery will fold and insert them.
- All pages must be appropriately numbered if bound in the text.
- If the oversize pages are bulky, the bindery will place them in a special pocket at the back. If a pocket is required, it must be listed in the Table of Contents, but no page numbers are required.
- A duplicate set of all oversized materials must be submitted.

PHOTOGRAPHS
Photographs may be reproduced on 100 percent cotton paper and placed within the standard text margins.

CDS AND DVDS
Submit in duplicate and identify with title, name of student, and semester.

COMPUTER SOFTWARE
- Describe in separate section in prefatory pages (e.g., list of figures and tables).
- State requirements for the use of the software (e.g., hardware, screen resolution type) and any other information necessary for proper viewing of the software.

SLIDES
Submit in duplicate and identify with student’s name, semester, and slide number.

SAMPLE THESIS LAYOUT
The following presents a framework for a thesis. The information is offered as a general guideline. Students should always consult their graduate coordinator and program documents for additional regulations and policies.

Introduction: background; statement of the problem; purpose of the study; theoretical bases; limitations of the study; definition of terms; and organization of the remainder of the study.

Review of the Literature: chronological, categorical or related theoretical viewpoints related to topic.

Methodology: research design or approach (quantitative or qualitative); population and/or sample; collection and tabulation of data; and data analysis procedures.

Analysis of the Data, Results, and Discussion: presentation of the findings and discussion of the findings.

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations: summarize the entire research effort.

Appendices: material too detailed or lengthy for inclusion in the body of the study (e.g., questionnaires, maps, photos, letters of permission).

Bibliography/References: includes all sources used in the study.