

FAQs on PPA 500 (Culminating Experience)

(12/2/18)

What is the purpose of PPA 500?

The intent of our culminating experience course is to assist you in completing a minimum of two polished (defined as submitting at least two iterations of a draft to advisors and responding to comments) chapters of your required thesis, and at least a first draft of a third chapter. Typically, you will take PPA 500 in a semester with one or two other courses, and then fully complete your thesis in the summer or semester after taking PPA 500.

When is PPA 500 taken?

Under our traditional course sequencing of either part-time (two classes a semester) or full-time (three classes a semester), you will take PPA 500 in the last semester of your full-fee enrollment in the MPPA Program (<https://www.csus.edu/ppa/curriculum/sequence.html>). With this traditional sequencing, if you are a full-time PPA student, you should enroll in PPA 500 in the spring semester of your second year along with PPA 240B and an elective course of your choosing. If you are a part-time PPA student, you should enroll in PPA 500 in the spring semester of your third year along with an elective course of your choosing.

How do I “pass” PPA 500?

By the close of finals week in the semester that you take PPA 500, you must submit to your primary advisor two edited chapters of your required thesis, and at least a draft of a third chapter. Your primary advisor will decide whether this requirement has been satisfied. If you and your primary advisor disagree about whether this requirement has been satisfied, your primary advisor, secondary advisor, and the PPA Chairperson will decide jointly. The achievement of this requirement grants you “reasonable progress” (RP) that converts to a passing grade once you complete your full thesis.

How long do I have to complete my thesis after receiving reasonable progress in PPA 500?

Once you receive RP in PPA 500, you must sign up for continuous enrollment each fall or spring semester that your thesis is not complete (this cost \$281 in spring 2019). Students typically complete their thesis during the summer or semester following PPA 500. It is important to note that you may only continuously enroll in this class up to three times. If your thesis is not complete after these three semesters of continuous enrollment, you must reenroll in PPA 500 and pay the full six-unit fee (\$2866 in spring 2019). The PPA Program only allows you to take PPA 500 twice. The only exception to this comes through the extenuating circumstances specified under Sac State rules.

If I do not complete my thesis in the spring, can I finish it over the summer?

Yes, this is a possibility. Moreover, if you finish your thesis by the August date set by Graduate Studies you will not have to pay continuous enrollment fees or reenroll in PPA 500 for the fall. However, this is dependent on your thesis advisor’s willingness to review and approve draft

material. Our faculty are generally on 10-month contracts. This means they are not obligated to supervise students over the summer, between academic semesters. Faculty members may choose to provide advising anyway because they do not have conflicting obligations and they wish to promote student success. But, before you assume your advisors will continue working with you over the summer, you should check with them about their availability and willingness to do so.

I would like to finish my thesis (and graduate) in the same semester that I take PPA 500. Is that possible?

Yes, it is possible, but it means going farther than the intent of PPA 500 as described above. To do this you would need to come into PPA 500 with at least two completed chapters (usually an introduction and a literature review) and a strong idea (draft chapter) of the intended methodology. If you do this, then the structured format of PPA 500 could get you through a finalized methods chapter, results chapter, and concluding chapter.

How do I pick a thesis topic?

The PPA Faculty have made a renewed commitment to discuss potential thesis topics in all PPA courses. In addition, this commitment includes a principal assignment in each course that helps inform a particular portion of a thesis (background, literature review, methodology, etc.). Use these assignments to help you hone in on a thesis topic and gather relevant material that you can use in your thesis.

At a minimum, what do I need to do before I take PPA 500?

Choose a primary advisor for your thesis based upon availability, compatibility, and topic at least one-full semester before the semester in which you plan to take PPA 500. Working with your advisor, compose a prospectus (as described in the PPA 500 syllabus) of what you intend your thesis to be about, method, and expected chapter content. Also, look for another PPA student intending to enroll in PPA 500 in the same semester, and commit to being thesis partners to assist in motivating/editing each other's work through the PPA 500 process. Examples of what you and your thesis partner could do include: bouncing ideas off of each other regarding ways to proceed before talking to your primary advisor, reading/commenting on each other's draft chapters, setting a dedicated time and place to work independently on your theses, etc.

What is the structure/content of PPA 500?

Usually, PPA 500 will meet every two or three weeks of the semester (but consult the specific PPA syllabus for the semester enrolled for exact details). The intent is to provide you with guidance, motivation, feedback, encouragement, a sounding board, etc. regarding the work plan you have devised with the strong consultation of your primary advisor. In the early part of class, you will establish a schedule (work plan) designed to help you complete two chapters and a draft third chapter by the end of the 15-week semester. Your work plan will include specific milestone dates to help you stay on track for reasonable progress, or full completion, of your thesis. These dates are also important, so your primary advisor can schedule her/his time to adequately comment on your work.