Thesis Option Guidelines
Department of Education and Counseling

Policy:
In lieu of taking a comprehensive examination, the Department of Education and Counseling encourages all students enrolled in its M.A./M.S. Program in Counseling, Educational Leadership, Graduate Teacher Education to write a thesis as the culminating exercise of their program of studies. Students who are considering doctoral studies at some future point in time are especially encouraged to write a thesis.

Timeline:
First (or Second) Semester (before completion 15 credit hours):
• take research course (either EDU 8603 or CHR 8604)
Second Semester (before completion 15 credit hours):
• seek out a full-time professor to work beside (who, upon reaching an agreement with the student will serve as Chair of the student’s Thesis Committee);
• identify two readers who will complete the Thesis Committee; and,
• register one’s intention to complete a thesis with the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.
Prior to Third Semester (at completion of 15 credit hours):
• identify and have approved by the Thesis Committee Chair one’s research topic;
• meeting with Thesis Committee to approve student’s thesis proposal
Third Semester (before completion of 24 credit hours):
• present written review of the literature to Thesis Committee Chair; and,
• begin data collection.
Fourth Semester (at completion of 30 credit hours):
• complete and defend the thesis; and,
• present thesis at a symposium sponsored by the Department.

Specifications:
1. The thesis will replace two, 3-credit, elective courses (normally, third and fourth semester).
2. A student who has selected the thesis option and has not completed the requirements designated at the “Third Semester (before completion of 24 credit hours)” juncture, will be advised to take comprehensive exams instead.
3. The thesis is to be completed in APA format.
4. The thesis is graded on a pass/fail basis.
5. If possible, at least one reader will be selected from outside of the student’s program/department/college/university.
6. If a student’s thesis is published, the faculty directing the thesis may be identified as the second author.
Rationale

The Master of Science in Counseling has implemented a new thesis option for graduate students, Thesis I and Thesis II. The underlying rationale for these courses is to provide support for students who express interest in conducting a thesis and to provide the necessary structure for them to begin the thesis process and bring it to a successful conclusion.

Description

Thesis I involves working closely with a faculty member in the area of one's research interest to begin the thesis project by: identifying a problem and clarifying a topic; designing a study; conducting a literature review; developing a hypothesis or research question; arriving at an analytic plan; beginning data collection; and, writing chapters 1-3.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of Thesis I is to guide a student through the process of writing chapters 1-3.

More specifically, a student will:

1) Identify a problem;
2) State hypothesis or research question;
3) Specify research design;
4) Specify analytic plan;
5) Conduct a literature review;
6) Address ethical issues in collecting data and obtain IRB approval (if necessary); and,
7) Write chapters 1-3 (Introduction, Literature Review, and Methods).

Methods

Thesis I engages a student in directed readings of related research articles, project-based learning assignments, and feedback from the thesis director.

Course Outline

I. Identify problem
II. State hypothesis or research question
III. Specify design
IV. Specify analytic plan
V. Conduct literature review
VI. Begin data collection
VII. Write chapters 1-3
Rationale

Thesis II provides additional support for students writing a thesis and provides the necessary structure to complete the thesis successfully. Enrollment in Thesis II presupposes the student has successfully completed Thesis I and made sufficient progress to advance to Thesis II.

Description

Thesis II guides the student through the writing and defense of one’s thesis by assisting the student to analyze, interpret, and present data.

Goals and Objectives

Thesis II guides the student through writing the remaining thesis chapters and assists the student to prepare for the defense of one’s thesis. The student will complete data collection, analyze and interpret the data, as well as write chapters 4-5. Specific objectives include:

1) to complete data collection;
2) to conduct appropriate analytic procedures and analyze data;
3) to address the complexities of interpreting data;
4) to address validity issues in research when interpreting findings;
5) to address ethical issues in analyzing and presenting one’s research;
6) to write the chapters 4-5 (Results and Discussion);
7) to prepare for the defense; and,
8) to share the knowledge gained.

Methods

Thesis II engages a student in directed readings of related research articles, project-based learning assignments, and feedback from the thesis director.

Course Outline

I. Complete data collection
II. Analyze data
III. Interpret findings
IV. Write chapters 4-5
V. Defend thesis
VI. Share the knowledge gained