

Requirements and Guidelines for the Preparation of the Master's Thesis

School of Graduate Studies and Research



Approved Fall 2013

I. INTRODUCTION

A research study may be undertaken after the graduate student has:

- been admitted to candidacy for the master's degree,
- completed a course in methods of research (RES 800 or the equivalent course in the graduate student's academic area), and
- been assigned a research advisor for this purpose.

The graduate student, in consultation with the research advisor, writes an overview of the proposed project or thesis, completes a rough draft for the research advisor, and then prepares a final draft for presentation to the research advisor and, if appropriate, to the committee who will schedule an oral examination with the candidate on the subject of the research project or thesis.

Students register for the department-specified research courses, which may include the following:

- **RES 829 RESEARCH PROJECT** (2 credits) A written report on a specific topic of investigation based on knowledge of the subject, research techniques, and accurate presentation of the findings.
- **RES 849 MASTER'S THESIS** (3-6 credits depending on the curriculum) A written report of an extensive research into a specific area of investigation, demonstrating knowledge of the background of the subject, the published literature of the subject, and high standards of original research and presentation. A thesis is often experimental in nature. The primary purpose of a thesis is to train the student in the processes of scholarly research and writing under the direction of members of the faculty. After the student has graduated and the work is published, it serves as a contribution to human knowledge, useful to other scholars and perhaps even to a more general audience.

The Research Project and the Master's Thesis may be distinguished further from one another as follows:

- The **Research Project** should make a contribution to the graduate student, either professionally or in an increased mastery of the subject matter. The project may pertain directly to the graduate student's own professional work, or it may be a subject suggested by course work or other pertinent interests. A research project requires the approval only of the faculty advisor.
- The **Master's Thesis** should make a contribution to the graduate student and to the student's field of study. It examines a subject somewhat more deeply than a research project, uses better controls, wider sampling and/or experimentation, and more of the techniques of basic research. A master's thesis is prepared under the direction of a single faculty advisor, but it is approved by a committee consisting of the advisor, another faculty member (or more) from the same graduate program, and a faculty member from another department or discipline.

The graduate student must review the official advisement sheet for their program to determine which of the above research options is used by the program.

The Master's degree must be completed within six years from the date of admission to the program. Graduate credit earned more than seven years prior to admission will not count toward the degree. Any special exceptions to this requirement must be appealed in writing to the Program Coordinator, who will in turn interview the candidate and make a recommendation to the Department Chairperson and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research.

II. THESIS PREPARATION

The Advisor, Committee and Graduate Student Relationship

When a student begins work on a Master's Thesis, he/she must work very closely with the research advisor and thesis committee. Research advisors will arrange an initial meeting. It is the student's responsibility to initiate follow-up meetings.

Research advisors may differ in style and technique in the manner in which they work with students in developing the thesis. Here are a few general guidelines:

- The student obtains the research advisor's and/or departmental committee's approval of the proposed research topic.
- The research advisor assists the student in selecting appropriate committee members and in submitting the committee to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research.
- The thesis committee approves the student's thesis topic, conducts the prospectus/proposal meeting, supervises the writing of the thesis, conducts a thesis defense meeting, and recommends the student for the degree to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research.
- The student prepares an outline/proposal of the proposed research study that indicates the nature of the problem, the importance of the study, the procedures to be used, and any other information the program may require.
- The student, where appropriate, submits the thesis proposal for approval by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB). A minimum of two weeks for return of the IRB forms should be expected. If the IRB submission is incomplete or rejected, the student makes the necessary corrections and resubmits. No student research, involving human subjects, will be accepted without IRB approval. Similarly, research involving animals must be approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).
- The student meets with the research advisor as often as necessary to complete the study. Failure to meet with the research advisor may result in delays in completing the thesis and, therefore, the date of graduation.
- The research advisor and thesis committee must approve the finished research study. It is the student's responsibility to obtain the signatures on the approval page.
- The chief function of the research advisor is to give suggestions concerning the design of the study and to ensure appropriate scientific procedures were followed throughout the investigation. The student must accept the full responsibility for writing details of the study. All materials that are to be submitted to the thesis committee must be completed utilizing a word processing program in the correct style. No thesis will be accepted unless the thesis committee has approved the thesis. The paper must meet program standards related to:
 - quality of research methodology
 - approved writing style,
 - formatting,
 - grammar and spelling.

III. GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Thesis Committee

The thesis committee shall consist of a chair (the research advisor) and, minimally, two other members. The chair should hold a Ph.D. or equivalent doctoral degree and currently hold regular (tenured or tenure-track) faculty status at Cal U. For purposes of this requirement, an equivalent doctoral degree is one that required a dissertation, which constituted a substantial and original scholarly contribution to the discipline. In the event that no such Ph.D. or equivalent doctoral degree holder is available, the minimum academic qualifications for the thesis chair will be other doctorates that consisted of relevant academic research methods coursework and included a research project. The thesis committee chair must hold regular faculty status and rank at Cal U.

Thesis committee members must hold graduate level qualifications, including but not limited to, M.Phil., M.A., M.S., M.Ed., M.A.T., M.F.A., M.S.W., P.S.M., J.D., or LL.M. Committee members must hold faculty status at an appropriately accredited college or university (or foreign equivalent). It is recommended that at least one committee member hold faculty status at California University. In any case, all thesis committees and members shall be approved by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research.

Online submission

1. Each student submits their thesis for online submission via the ETC/Proquest portal assigned to California University of Pennsylvania at this web site: <http://dissertations.umi.com/cup/>.
2. After the online submission is complete, the student alerts their faculty research advisor that their online submission is pending for approval.
3. The faculty research advisor then enters final approval on ETC/Proquest.

Fees

Several fees must be paid by the student as part of the thesis process. All students are required to submit their thesis for online publication. Currently there are no fees associated with submission unless the student chooses additional copyright or distribution options. These fees are paid to the online publisher. Also, each department may require the student to submit a bound copy of their thesis prepared by the Cal U library. The current fee for binding was \$25 when this guide was produced. Additional bound copies can be ordered by the student via Manderino Library at this same rate or through additional sources. The student is responsible for the fees for all additional copies.

Style of Writing

Research studies must conform to a format and style that is recognized by the principal scholarly journals in the discipline. Students are expected to obtain and use the style manual that is suggested by their respective programs. Most programs in the School of Graduate Studies and Research require the use of the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA), *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, or the *American Medical Association Manual of Style*. It is the student's responsibility to work with the thesis advisor to determine the specific correct style manual to use.

Preliminary Pages

Preliminary pages must conform to the manuscript forms followed by the discipline and include a title page, an approval page, acknowledgements, abstract, a table of contents, and a list of tables and figures. Use the format and spacing as shown on the sample title page in this document. The approval page of a research project differs from the master's thesis. Refer to the appropriate pages for the required format.

Margins and Spacing

The following margins are required: one and one-half inches for the inner or left-hand margins, one inch at the top, and one inch at the bottom. The right-hand margin should be one inch wide. The top margin on the first page of every chapter or major division must measure two inches.

With the exceptions of footnotes, lengthy quotations, and the bibliography, the entire paper should be doubled spaced. Only one side of the paper is to be used.

Body of the Research Study

The body of the research study may consist of an introductory chapter, a chapter on related literature, a chapter on procedures, a results chapter, and a chapter on the summary, recommendations and/or conclusions. This format may vary according to the individual department and/or advisor.

Supplementary Material

The remaining section of the research study contains a complete bibliography of sources used in the study. Appendices follow the bibliography and contain examples of test instruments, letters, etc. that were used in completing the study. If the research involves human subjects, a copy of the IRB and IACUC approvals must be placed in appendices. Each appendix should have a separate title sheet with the appropriate title (i.e. Appendix A).

IV. REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLETING THE STUDY Typing and Reproduction

The student must submit the finished project/thesis in an electronic format (PDF) to the approved university/distributor. The document page format must be 8 1/2 x 11 inches. The recommended font style should be Sans-serif face, i.e. Arial, Helvetica, or Verdata and must be in 12 point font, double-spaced. If the student desires any bound copies, they must be printed on 20lb bond paper and submitted to the library for binding. Departments may request or require a bound copy for departmental use. Should the student wish to have the document copyrighted, an additional fee must be paid to the vendor. All copies must be clean, neat, and have a sharp image on the paper. The cost of binding is \$25.00 per copy. Cash or checks are accepted. Checks should be made payable to California University of Pennsylvania.

V. THESIS AND ORAL DEFENSE

Students completing a master's thesis may be required to have an oral defense on the research study. This defense must be scheduled by the student, along with the thesis advisor and committee members, at a time when all are available to meet and review the presentation. In addition, the student must send via e-mail, a defense meeting announcement to all faculty members in the department and all academic administrators. At least two weeks prior to the date of the defense, the research advisor will present an announcement of the thesis title and the date and place of the examination to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research and to the university faculty as a whole. The defense must be completed

at least **three weeks** prior to the date on which the degree is to be conferred.

VI. ABSTRACTS

The abstract should contain the most relevant information and findings of your research study. The abstract for the thesis should be limited to one page and should not exceed 450 words. It is recommended that the text of the abstract be single spaced, and include the following information: title, author, advisor, date, and type of research problem (research project or thesis). The abstract should include the purpose of the study, nature of the problem, the method of research, and the significant findings and or conclusions. Specific format for the abstract will be determined by the program.

VII. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF RESEARCH STUDY

In order for a graduate student who has written a thesis or project to graduate in a given semester, an electronic copy must be provided according to the guidelines provided by the publisher/vendor no later than the close of the business day **one week** prior to the end of the semester. The research advisor must review the document online and complete the necessary steps for approval and submission to the vendor. Abstracts must be included for all submissions.

VIII. GRADES FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS AND THESES

A final grade is given when the research project or master thesis has been completed. If the project or thesis is not completed in the semester in which it was registered, an incomplete grade (N) will be given. The incomplete (N) grade will be changed to the final grade when the project or thesis has been completed and signed by the advisor.

Sample Pages

The following pages provide samples of the cover page and approval page of a thesis or research project report.

(1 1/2" from top) Title of the Thesis, Project or Paper (Centered)

(4" from top) A THESIS (or RESEARCH PROJECT or RESEARCH PAPER) (All caps)
Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Graduate Studies and Research of California
University of Pennsylvania in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science (or Master of Education, Master of Business Administration,
Master of Arts in Teaching, Master of Social Work)

(7" from top) by
Candidate's Full Name

(9 1/2" from top) (1 3/4" from bottom)
Research Advisor, (Name)

California, Pennsylvania
2018

CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA
CALIFORNIA, PA

THESIS APPROVAL (All capital letters)

Name of student's curriculum (ex: Athletic Training, Communication Disorders, etc.)

We hereby approve the Thesis of

(Student's Name)

Candidate for the degree of Master of Science (or Arts or Education)

Date

Faculty
