

***Requirements and
Guidelines for the
Preparation of the Master's
Thesis/ Doctoral Dissertation***

School of Graduate Studies and Research



California University of Pennsylvania

Approved 2/5/2019

I. INTRODUCTION

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

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

The master's or doctoral candidate, in consultation with the research advisor, writes an overview of the proposed project, thesis or dissertation, 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 about the research project, thesis, or dissertation.

Candidates 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 candidate in the processes of scholarly research and writing under the direction of members of the faculty. After the candidate 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 master's candidate must review the official advisement sheet for their program to determine which of the above research options is used by the program.

The Research Project, Master's Thesis, or Doctoral Dissertation may be distinguished further from one another as follows:

- The **Research Project** should contribute to the graduate candidate, either professionally or in an increased mastery of the subject matter. The project may pertain directly to the graduate candidate'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 contribute to the graduate candidate and to the candidate'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 **Doctoral Dissertation** should make a scholarly contribution to the field of study. The doctoral dissertation examines a subject more deeply than a research project, or master's thesis. The selected topic will be researched by the doctoral candidate using the highest quality level of evidence possible under the supervision of the faculty research adviser (chair) and approval from the 2 to 3 committee members, but no greater than four dissertation committee members.

The Dissertation committee members must hold a doctoral degree level qualification and have faculty status at an appropriately accredited College or another regionally accredited College or University (or foreign equivalent). It is recommended that at least one Committee member hold faculty status at California University. Additional committee members acting as content experts must hold a graduate level degree in the area of expertise.

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.

The Doctorate degree must be completed within seven years. 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 / DISSERTATION PREPARATION

The Advisor, Committee and Graduate Candidate Relationship

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

Research advisors may differ in style and technique in the way they work with candidates in developing the thesis or dissertation.

Here are a few general guidelines:

- The candidate obtains the research advisor's and/or departmental committee's approval of the proposed research topic.
- The research advisor assists the candidate in selecting appropriate committee members and in submitting the committee to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research.
- The thesis/dissertation committee approves the candidate's thesis/dissertation topic, conducts the prospectus/proposal meeting, supervises the writing of the thesis/dissertation conducts a thesis/dissertation defense meeting, and recommends the candidate for the degree to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research.
- The candidate 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 candidate, where appropriate, submits the thesis/dissertation 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 candidate makes the necessary corrections and

resubmits. No candidate 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 candidate 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/dissertation committee must approve the finished research study. It is the candidate'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 candidate must accept the full responsibility for writing details of the study. All materials that are to be submitted to the thesis/dissertation committee must be completed utilizing a word processing program in the correct style. No thesis/dissertation will be accepted unless the thesis/dissertation committee has approved the thesis/dissertation.
- The paper must meet program standards related to:
 - quality of research methodology
 - approved writing style,
 - formatting,
 - grammar and spelling.

III. GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Thesis / Dissertation Committee

The thesis/dissertation 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/dissertation chair will be other doctorates that consisted of relevant academic research methods coursework and included a research project. The thesis / dissertation committee chair must hold regular faculty status and rank at Cal U.

Thesis/dissertation 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 / dissertation committees and members shall be approved by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research.

Online submission

1. Each candidate submits their thesis/dissertation for online submission via the ProQuest portal assigned to California University of Pennsylvania at this web site: <https://www.etsadmin.com/main/home>.
2. After the online submission is complete, the candidate alerts their faculty research advisor that their online submission is pending for approval.

3. The faculty research advisor then enters final approval on ProQuest.

Fees

Several fees must be paid by the candidate as part of the thesis process. All candidates are required to submit their thesis for online publication. Currently there are no fees associated with submission unless the candidate chooses additional copyright or distribution options. These fees are paid to the online publisher. Also, each department may require the candidate to submit a bound copy of their thesis or dissertation 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 candidate via Manderino Library at this same rate or through additional sources. The candidate 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. Candidates 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 candidate's responsibility to work with the thesis/dissertation 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 or dissertation. Refer to the appropriate pages for the required format.

Margins and Spacing

Candidates are expected to obtain and use the style manual that is suggested by their respective programs for margins and spacing. General formatting for margins is: 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. However, it is the responsibility of the candidate to use the style manual that is suggested by their respective programs for spacing.

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 candidate must submit the finished project/thesis/dissertation 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. Times New Roman and must be in 12-point font, double-spaced, or use the style manual that is suggested by their respective programs for font size and style. If the candidate 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 candidate 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/DISSERTATION AND ORAL DEFENSE

Candidates completing a thesis or dissertation may be required to have an oral defense on the thesis or dissertation. This defense must be scheduled by the candidate, along with the thesis/dissertation advisor and committee members, at a time when all are available to meet and review the presentation. In addition, the candidate 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/dissertation should be based use the style manual that is suggested by their respective programs. It is recommended that the text of the abstract include the following information: purpose of the study, nature of the problem, subjects, methods, results, data analysis, significant findings, and conclusions. Specific format for the abstract will be determined by the program.

VII. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF RESEARCH STUDY

For a graduate candidate who has written a dissertation, thesis, or research 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, THESES, and DISSERTATIONS

A final grade is given when the research project, master thesis, or doctoral dissertation has been completed. If the project, thesis, or dissertation 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, thesis, or dissertation has been completed and signed by the advisor.

IX. Sample Pages

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

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

(4" from top) A DISSERTATION (or 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
Doctorate, 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
2019

CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA
CALIFORNIA, PA

DISSERTATION/THESIS APPROVAL (All capital
letters)

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

We hereby approve the Dissertation/Thesis of

(Candidate's Name)
Candidate for the degree of (list name of degree)

Date

Faculty

Written and Developed by Dr. William Biddington and members of the HSSS department
Summer 1995

Revised by Dr. William Biddington
Fall 2012

Revised by Dr. Marc Federico
Spring 2019