

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Thesis and Project Guidelines and Procedures

This document outlines general thesis and project guidelines and procedures for students in the College of Education at California State University, Long Beach. Students must consult their program guidelines and faculty members to ascertain whether there are any program-specific requirements for applying for and completing a thesis or project.

WHAT IS A THESIS OR PROJECT?

A thesis is a written product of the systematic study of a significant research problem. It is offered as a culminating experience in most CED master's programs. It clearly identifies the research problem, surveys the literature about the topic, explains the significance of the undertaking, sets forth the sources for and methods of gathering information, provides an analysis of the data, and offers a conclusion or recommendation.

A project is a significant undertaking appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields. It evidences originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. It is described and summarized in a written document that includes the project's significance, objectives, literature review, methodology, and a conclusion or set of recommendations.

Completing a thesis or project is a significant undertaking that involves a considerable amount of time and planning. Students who choose the thesis or project exit option should have a strong interest in completing a scholarly study or project on a topic for which they have a deep interest and should be prepared to work independently with considerable self-motivation.

Projects and theses share the following characteristics:

- Demonstrating original work
- Grounded in research
- Including a written document that is filed in the University Library
- Requiring enrollment for two semesters in 698 (thesis) or 699 (project), totaling six units
- Requiring a committee of at least 3 members
- Typically involving 12 months from inception of the research or project idea to submitting the thesis or project document to the library

The thesis can further be described as:

- Primarily empirical, historical, or theoretical
- Typically containing five chapters (the structure is to be negotiated with the thesis committee chair)

The project can further be described as:

- Oriented toward practice or application
- Consisting of two parts – a product and a written narrative of three to four chapters (alternative structures may be negotiated with the project committee chair)

Both theses and projects may potentially be of publishable quality. They may be of benefit to students planning doctoral study.

GETTING STARTED

Students who are considering the thesis or project option should approach their program advisors with ideas as early as possible to begin the process. Advisors can direct students towards instructors, literature sources, and topical courses that are in line with students' research interests. When appropriate, students and instructors may discuss tailoring course assignments to align with students' intended thesis or project topics.

As students commit to the thesis or project option, they should:

- Pay attention to the research design of studies they read for courses or reading recommendations by their advisors; and
- Read filed theses or projects in the University Library to get a sense of the scope of these culminating experiences.

SELECTING A CHAIR AND FORMING A COMMITTEE

Thesis and project committees consist of a chair and two other committee members. As stated in the [University Catalog](#), the chair of the thesis/project committee must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member from a department authorized to offer a graduate degree. Additionally, the College of Education requires the thesis/project chair to be a faculty member in one of the departments in the college. The chair and the student collaboratively determine the structure of the committee, which includes two full-time faculty members, at least one of whom must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member at CSULB. The third member may be a faculty member from another CSULB program or another university, a school principal, or other professional with relevant expertise. All members must hold at least a master's degree. The thesis committee must be approved by the thesis chair, the department chair, and the Associate Dean for Faculty Development, Research and Graduate Studies.

The following considerations may guide the identification and/or selection of the chair and committee members:

- The students' needs, such as theoretical, methodological, topical, etc.;
- The students' working relationship with faculty;
- Faculty expertise and availability; and
- The constructed committee's ability to work harmoniously together.

Some programs require an additional thesis application and approval process. Please note that not all students interested in completing a thesis will be matched with a chair and students may need to complete another exit requirement.

ROLES OF CHAIRS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The thesis/project chair serves as the primary guide, with support from the committee members. The chair plays an especially important role for the following reasons:

- The chair takes the lead in helping the student frame the study (i.e., generating research questions, determining the target literature, helping create the thesis or project structure, selecting an appropriate methodology, etc.);
- The chair is the major contact point with the student;
- The chair communicates the expectations and processes the student will follow;
- The chair recommends additional committee members and oversees the other committee members' work with the student;
- The chair assures that the editorial and format standards are appropriate to the preparation of a thesis or project;
- The chair works with the student to establish guidelines and deadlines to be followed to ensure completion of thesis/project in a reasonable timeframe;
- The chair coordinates with other committee members regarding their feedback on students' work and resolving conflicting views or interpretations;
- When required, the chair arranges for the proposal and/or final oral defense of the thesis/project;
- The chair is responsible for reporting the grade agreed upon by the committee members.

All committee members play an important role in:

- Supporting students with insight, information, and counsel
- Suggesting ideas for revisions and strengthening of students' theses or projects

APPLYING FOR A THESIS OR PROJECT

After careful consideration, students who are committed to undertaking the thesis or project are required to submit an [Application for Thesis or Research Project](#) to the College of Education Office of Graduate Studies and Research. The application must be filed by October 1 for spring enrollment, and by March 1 for fall enrollment. The application requires students to:

- Confirm their [advancement to candidacy](#)
- Include a tentative statement of problem or project narrative
- Obtain signatures from all committee members and the department chair. Department chair signatures may be obtained at the office locations listed below:
 - Advanced Studies in Education and Counseling: EED-10
 - Educational Leadership: AS-201
 - Teacher Education: EED-13

EARNING CREDIT IN 698/699 COURSES

After receiving a registration permit from the Graduate Studies Office, students will enroll in 698/699 for 6 units over two regular semesters (typically fall/spring). The course generally involves independent work on the thesis/project with guidance by the chair, and meeting times are arranged directly with the thesis/project chair (often once per week or every two weeks).

Students initially receive an in-progress (RP) grade for 698/699; letter grades are submitted for both sections of 698/699 after the thesis or project has been approved by the Thesis and Dissertation Office after having been approved by the thesis/project committee and the College of Education Dean. Students whose thesis/project is not approved by the committee will receive a failing grade or no credit (as applicable) for all sections of the 698/699 courses. Students who do not submit a full thesis/project approved by the committee to the Dean by the date specified and/or do not submit and finalize the document approved by the Dean per the University Library's specifications will not receive a grade or credit for any 698/699 courses, even if work toward the thesis/project has been completed. The RP grade will automatically change to W if the student does not submit a final, fully approved thesis/project to the library. In such cases, units will not be earned for any 698/699 courses taken, even if partial work has been completed. Some students may need to take additional courses and complete the comprehensive examination as the exit option to meet program requirements and complete their degrees.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION THESIS/PROJECT SEMINAR

Thesis or project students are expected to utilize College of Education Thesis/Project Seminar resources, which are provided at no cost to students. The Seminar is facilitated by a CED faculty member and meets twice per month. Ideally, students will submit an application by March 1 to enroll in 698/699 the following year; students begin the Thesis/Project Seminar in summer and continue for an entire year until the thesis or project is complete. Some thesis/project chairs require attendance at the Seminar. All students enrolled in 698/699 courses have access to a BeachBoard site for the Seminar and are expected to review and use the resources provided.

STEPS TOWARD COMPLETING THE THESIS OR PROJECT

Developing Chapters 1-3

Prior to beginning the 698/699 course, students typically have drafted Chapters 1-3, which include the introduction, the literature review to contextualize the focus of the thesis or project, and the research methodology/project plan. Students may not proceed with implementing the thesis research or project plan until approval is received by the chair and committee, if applicable. Some programs consider Chapters 1-3 to be a full thesis/project proposal and may require an oral defense with the committee before students may proceed.

The Institutional Review Board Approval Process

All students completing a thesis or project that involves human subjects are required to submit an [Institutional Review Board](#) (IRB) proposal for university approval, even if requesting exemption. This process can take several months. The chair supports the student in crafting the proposal to align with IRB requirements, which typically includes permission from one or more research sites. The College IRB Liaison provides the service of reviewing the proposal before it is submitted to the university. After the proposal is completed and approved, the student may collect data.

Data Collection/Analysis or Project Creation

Next, for theses, students collect data if applicable, conduct analyses and write Chapters 4 and 5. The process for a project is similar and includes creation of the project product and final chapter(s).

The Writing Process

The process of writing and revision is time-intensive. Students engaged in theses or projects should create a schedule for submission and return of documents with their committee chair and committee members and submit chapters as early as possible and by agreed upon deadlines. As the nature of the relationship between the student and chair solidifies, the tone for the committee as a whole is set with respect to submitting drafts, including the amount of text submitted at any one time.

In most cases, students develop initial drafts in consultation with the chair. Following revisions of the chapters and upon the chair's approval, the chapter drafts may go forward to the rest of the committee for comments, leading to another round of revisions. Students should expect that the review process will take several weeks for each iteration and that multiple drafts of each chapter will be required. Students are responsible for submitting their best work at each point and for providing text that has been fully edited for grammar, mechanics, and [APA formatting](#).

In addition to following [APA formatting](#), the thesis/project write-up must adhere to specific [formatting guidelines](#) established by the University Thesis and Dissertation Office. Students are advised to make appointments with thesis/project format evaluators during the writing of the document and prior to submission of their theses to the University Library to ensure that these guidelines have been met.

Completing the Thesis/Project

Oral defenses of theses or projects may be required as one of the final steps in completing the thesis or project. Typically, an oral defense includes a 30-minute presentation by the student outlining the thesis/project followed by an opportunity for the committee to ask critical questions and determine changes that must be made before final submission of the thesis/project.

Theses or projects are considered completed after the committee is satisfied that all conditions have been met, after all committee members have signed off on the thesis/project, after the Dean of College of Education has approved the thesis/project, and after the final thesis/project has been submitted to the University Library. If students' theses or projects are not completed by the conclusion of the second semester of 698 or 699, they must maintain continuous enrollment at CSULB by enrolling in program classes or [GS 700D](#), a zero unit placeholder course. Students may enroll in GS 700D for a maximum of two semesters total.

There are four periods for thesis or project submission, which coincide with the date in which a degree may be conferred: spring, summer, fall, and winter. The dates for filing theses and projects change every year and current dates may be found via the University Thesis and Dissertation Office [website](#). Please note the final date for submission each session falls well before the end of that session and that the Dean of the College of Education will need at least two weeks to review the final document that has been approved by the committee before it may be submitted to the University Thesis and Dissertation Office.

To conclude the [submission process](#), students submit an [electronic signature request](#) to the University Thesis and Dissertation Office. All committee members and the Dean must electronically sign. A payment is required at time of submission; check the [Thesis and Dissertation Office](#) for specific amount. After payment is received, students receive instructions to upload their theses or projects to ProQuest for review. After all revisions are complete, students will receive an issue of clearance letter.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Several helpful resources are available to inform students about the thesis/project process, such as deadlines for filing, style and format requirements, workshops offered by the Thesis and Dissertation Office, and academic writing support.

CSULB Thesis and Dissertation Office

- [Steps in thesis /project submission process](#)
- [Style and format procedures guide](#)
- [Submission deadlines](#)
- [Thesis and dissertation workshops](#)
- [Electronic signature page procedure](#)

[CSULB Graduate Degree Information](#) (*University Catalog*)

[College of Education Thesis and Project Information](#)

[CSULB Graduate Studies Resource Center Writing Support and APA Workshops](#)

[CSULB Writer's Resource Lab](#)

[Purdue University's Online Writing Lab \(Writing Tips\)](#)

College of Education IRB Liaison ([Dr. Paul Ratanasiripong](#))