

Master's Thesis Guide for CD Students

Sequence for Approaching Your Thesis

1. Consider a possible topic of research. Approach faculty members early with whom you're interested in working to see if they might like to work with you on a thesis with this topic. This gives the faculty members time to consider your request. This also give you time to identify alternate committee members if a faculty is unable to participate in your committee. Faculty members might request to read your thesis proposal first before making an official commitment. Developing and completing your thesis should be a positive experience for both you and your committee members. If there are no reasonable matches that you can foresee, then a master's thesis may not be a good option.
2. Develop your idea into a proposal. The ISED 797: Seminar in Educational Research course is a natural place for this to take place.
3. Take your proposal to the faculty members who've expressed interest in serving on your thesis committee. In order to formalize their membership on your thesis committee, they must sign your Proposal for Culminating Experience Requirement form. (This form can be downloaded from <http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/culminating-experience.htm>). At this time, you and the person who has agreed to be your primary thesis advisor should work out an estimated timeline and expected responsibilities.
4. If your research involves people as subjects, you must clear your project proposal with the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. Start this as soon as possible because it can take several months.
5. You must submit the following 3 forms **the semester before** you plan to implement the proposed study. You should plan to spend one year on your study, so complete these paperwork at least 3 semesters before you plan to graduate.
 - 1) The Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) form (This form can be downloaded from <http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/atc-form.htm>.)
 - 2) The Proposal for Culminating Experience Requirement form. (This form can be downloaded from <http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/culminating-experience.htm>.)
 - 3) The Human Subjects Protection Protocol Form (Download from http://research.sfsu.edu/protocol/submit_protocol/human_protections_for_ms.html.)

6. Once you receive approval on the 3 forms above from the Division of Graduate Studies, the department will authorize you to register for CD 898 in the *following* semester. You will be able to begin your study then. **Please be aware that you must be enrolled in a thesis-specific course to begin your study. This is necessary to provide liability coverage for your study.**
7. If your Human Subjects Protection Protocol is approved by the SFSU Institutional Review Board within the same semester that you submit your proposal and you're ready to start implementing your study early, then you can get special approval from the department chair to enroll in SPED 601 rather than waiting until the following semester to begin your study. You must get the enrollment permit from the Chair's office. SPED 601 is not an official thesis course. You would still need to enroll in CD 898 in the following semester.
8. Keep in touch with your committee as you work on your thesis. Let them know your progress.
9. Finalize your thesis according to the thesis guidelines. This includes committee member signatures, paperwork, formatting your thesis according to university standards and filing your thesis. (See <http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/thesis.htm>)
10. Give yourself at least three semesters for the entire process from submitting your proposals to completing and filing your thesis.

Before Beginning a Thesis

1. You must have a 3.0 GPA in all post-baccalaureate course work
2. You must have an approved Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) Form (formerly known as the Graduate Approved Program, or the GAP) on file with the Division of Graduate Studies. The ATC is used by the Division of Graduate Studies to verify that you're completing all the requirements for the MS degree. The ATC form needs to be approved by a CD advisor and the Special Education Department Chair submitted to Graduate Studies. You can download the CD Program ATC form from the Division of Graduate Studies website (<http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/atc-form.htm>).
3. You must have an approved Proposal for Culminating Experience Requirement form also on file with the Division of Graduate Studies (downloadable at <http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/culminating-experience.htm>). The Culminating Experience Proposal describes your proposed research. It needs to be signed by a Thesis Committee of at least 2 committee members.

Selecting a Master's Thesis Committee:

- ❖ The committee consists of a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 5 members
- ❖ The chair of the committee and the 2nd member of the committee must hold tenured/tenure-track faculty appointments in your major department. A list of all the tenured/tenure-track faculty members in the Special Education Department can be found at <http://www.sfsu.edu/~spedcd/fcltystff.html>.
- ❖ In circumstances where special expertise is available in another department, the Dean of the Division of Graduate Studies may authorize a designated tenured/tenure-track faculty member from a related department to serve as a 2nd member of the committee.
- ❖ With special permission, some long-term lecturers with terminal degrees in their field or with special expertise may serve as the 2nd committee member provided that their curriculum vitae (CV) is on file in the Division of Graduate Studies.
- ❖ A 3rd member of the committee may be from outside the department or university. A lecturer may serve as a 3rd committee member.
- ❖ Developing and completing your thesis should be a positive experience for both you and your committee members. Approach faculty members early with whom you're interested in working to see if they would like to sit on your committee. This gives the faculty members time to consider

your request. This also give you time to identify alternate committee members if the faculty is unable to participate in your committee.

- ❖ To officially change the composition of your committee, you must submit a ATC Substitution or Committee Revision to committee members and the department chair. (downloadable at <http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/petition-for-committee-revision.htm>)
4. Plan the timeline for your thesis completion carefully with the help of your committee members. Remember that very few faculty members are available to review your thesis drafts during summer semesters or winter sessions. If you're working with a faculty member who is participating in the early retirement program or an emeritus professor, be sure that your work can be completed during the faculty member's employment period with the university.

Working on a Thesis

- ❖ Any thesis/dissertation/research that involves human or animal subjects must be approved by the Office for the Protection of Human and Animal Subjects (the Institutional Review Board or IRB). Approval must be obtained prior to the initiation of research.
- ❖ Once you receive approval from the Division of Graduate Studies to begin your thesis (culminating experience), you may register for CD 898.
- ❖ If you do not complete your thesis during the semester that you're registered for CD 898, you will receive a grade of RP (Report in Progress) and be given a "grace semester." When your thesis is complete, your committee members will change the RP grade to CR (Credit).
- ❖ Once you enroll in CD 898, you are required to maintain continuous enrollment. If you do not complete your thesis within two semesters (the semester of enrollment in CD 898 and the grace semester), then you will need to enroll through the College of Extended Learning (under "Culminating Experience Continuous Enrollment") until you earn your degree.