

# CULMINATING PROJECT GUIDELINES

Department of Educational Studies

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Macomb, IL 61462

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## Introduction

Congratulations! You are embarking on an exciting experience in your graduate degree ± the culminating project. Over the next semester(s) you will be investigating a topic of your choice or compiling and reflecting on the work that you have produced throughout this program and will make an argument for how you have met the program objectives. During this process, there are several important steps that you must take in order to be successful. This document is designed to familiarize you with these steps.

The EDS culminating project is intended to provide you the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills that you have accumulated in your graduate program. There are two types of culminating projects ± **EDS 601: Thesis** OR **EDS 602: Portfolio**.

### **EDS 601: Thesis**

EDS 601: **Thesis**

3. estimate the overall degree of effectiveness of curriculums, instructional methods, school policies, etc. by evaluating the studies in which the outcomes of these are examined; and
4. describe possible fruitful areas for future research based on the research conducted to date (p. 2).

For the thesis project, you will choose a topic of interest and a problem of study related to that topic. Based upon that problem, you will create a final product that includes five chapters: (1) an introduction to, and the background of the research problem with a list of research questions; (2) a review of the relevant literature that informs your work; (3) a description of the data collection and analysis methods; (4) a description of the results/findings; and (5) a discussion of the results/findings. The only exception is the review of literature, which will not include a literature review as Chapter 2. Throughout the process of writing the proposal and final paper, you will demonstrate your ability to work independently and professionally, to pay attention to detail, and to think critically.

All forms of the thesis require the same process of writing a proposal, orally defending it in front of your culminating project committee, and the writing and defense of the final project. You should expect a minimum of two semesters to reach completion. One semester will be for the proposal stage of the project. The second semester will be for completing data collection and writing the final paper.

You should expect MANY revisions of your work based upon comments from your Culminating run, paying attention to format (APA 6th<sup>1</sup>) and writing details will shorten the process for everyone. You need to adhere to a schedule of events in submitting, revising, and defending your project. Development of a culminating project also entails adequate and regular contact, as appropriate, with your Chair and committee members. It is recommended that you create a timeline with due dates for turning in drafts of the project. You will NOT be allowed to enroll in the second semester of the project until the proposal has been defended and approved.

The outlines provided in this document are appropriate for most students. Your Chair will help you adapt the outlines to less traditional research approaches.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_style\\_introduction.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html)











## Final Submission of the Project

As the final step in completing the project, you will submit the final approved thesis electronically to the School of Graduate Studies along with the original paper approval signature page.

- " For further instructions on submitting the thesis electronically, submission fees, and responsibilities for preparation, go to the following website from the School of Graduate Studies: [http://www.wiu.edu/graduate\\_studies/thesis\\_and\\_dissertation/](http://www.wiu.edu/graduate_studies/thesis_and_dissertation/)
- " **Note:** The checklist contains some deviations from APA style; for example, your paper will not have running heads. Where these guidelines contradict APA, follow APA.
- " You may have to go through several revisions on formatting before your project is accepted by the Graduate School.
- " The last possible date to submit your thesis is the Friday before finals week.

## **Format of Thesis Projects**

### **Empirical Study**

#### **I. Prefatory Material**

- " Title Page
- " Abstract (final paper only)
- " Table of Contents, table of contents for tables and figures, if needed

#### **II. Chapter I ±**

and reasons for believe them to be true. Your assumptions may be wrong, but they provide a starting point for the study.

- ” Place the study into a context by narrowing its scope. Delimitations

#### IV. Chapter III ±Methods

This chapter will be in future tense for the proposal and past tense for the final paper.

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Its length will vary from topic to topic. For the sake of brevity, the EDS faculty would like this chapter to be approximately 15 pages.

- A. Introduction
  - ” Briefly provide background and context of the study.
  - ” Provide an overview of the chapter.
- B. Research Questions (Restated here from Chapter 1)
- C. Research Methodology
  - ” Provide a discussion of the methodological approach that will be used in the study (e.g. survey, experiment, correlational, ethnography, case study, etc.).
- D. Research Design
  - ” Population and Sample
    - i. Describe the target population and the accessible population actually under study.
    - ii. Describe the method for selecting the participants of the study.
  - ” Data Collection Methods
    - i. For a quantitative study, describe and operationally define all variables to be measured, as well as how data will be collected.
    - ii. For a qualitative study, describe the methods of collecting your data.
  - ” Instrumentation
    - i.

and 5. This should complement your chosen research methodology and theoretical perspective.

**Chapters 1 ±3 complete the proposal stage of the project. Any changes to the culminating project proposal must be approved by the committee and the Institutional Review Board before going forward with the final project.**

**V. Chapter IV ±Results**

NOTE: This chapter will only be part of the final paper.

This chapter is the basic presentation of the results. You will not provide interpretations in

- ” Mention important strengths of your study and limitations including generalizability.
- ” If applicable, describe specific implications of your results on the original context and population you sought to study; and/or implications on your practice in your field.
- ” Make specific recommendations for future research.

VII. **References** (must be in APA format)

VIII. **Appendices** (e.g. solicitation for participants, informed consent, instrument, etc.)

## **Non-empirical/Conceptual Study**

Policy analysis, historical analysis, curriculum review

### **I. Prefatory Material**

” See guidelines for empirical studies

### **II. Chapter I ±Introduction**

” See guidelines for empirical studies

### **III. Chapter II ±Literature Review**

” See guidelines for empirical studies

### **IV. Chapter III - Proposed Methods**

#### **A. Introduction**

” Briefly provide background and context of the study.

” Provide an overview of the chapter.

#### **B. Research Questions (Restated here from Chapter 1)**

#### **C. Research Methodology**

” Provide a discussion of the methodological approach that will be used in the study (e.g. Critical Literature Review, Historical Research, Policy Analysis),

#### **D. Research Design**

” Describe the sources (e.g. research literature, policies, court cases, curriculum, media) you plan to use and the criteria for selection.

” Describe the procedure you will use to analyze the sources.

” Describe how you initially plan to organize the paper.

” Describe how you plan to check the trustworthiness (accuracy and credibility) of your findings.

” 3URYLGHD3HUVSHFWLYH3RVLWLRQDOLW6WDWHPHQW3HUVSHFWLYHUHIHUVW context which influences what a person can see and how they interpret it. It may indicate ideology or value systems (e.g. feminist, socialist, anti-racist, post-colonial and queer research), and it may indicate positionality which refers, more narrowly, to the social and political landscape inhabited by a researcher (e.g. gender, nationality, race, religion, sexuality, (dis)abilities, VRFLDOFODVVDQGVFLDOVWDW

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Andrew\\_Holmes9/publication/260421552\\_Research\\_positionality\\_-\\_a\\_consideration\\_of\\_its/data/00b4953121227a3086000000/Researcher-positionality-a-consideration-of-its-influence-and-place-in-research.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Andrew_Holmes9/publication/260421552_Research_positionality_-_a_consideration_of_its/data/00b4953121227a3086000000/Researcher-positionality-a-consideration-of-its-influence-and-place-in-research.pdf)





## Review of Literature

### I. Prefatory Material

” See guidelines for empirical studies

### II. Chapter I ±Introduction

” See guidelines for empirical studies

### III. Chapter II - Proposed Methods

#### E. Introduction

- ” Briefly provide background and context of the study.
- ” Provide an overview of the chapter.

#### F. Research Questions (Restated here from Chapter 1)

#### G. Research Methodology

- ” Provide a discussion of the methodological approach that will be used in the study (e.g. Critical Literature Review, Historical Research, Policy Analysis).

#### H. Research Design

- ” Describe the sources (e.g. research literature, policies, court cases, curriculum, media) you plan to use and the criteria for selection.
- ” Describe the procedure you will use to analyze the sources.
- ” Describe how you initially plan to organize the paper.
- ” Describe how you plan to check the trustworthiness (accuracy and credibility) of your findings.
- ” 3URYLGHD3HUVSHFWLYH3RVLWLRQDOLW6WDWHPHQW3HUVSHFWLYHUHIHUVW context which influences what a person can see and how they interpret it. It may indicate ideology or value systems (e.g. feminist, socialist, anti-racist, post-colonial and queer research), and it may indicate positionality which refers, more narrowly, to the social and political landscape inhabited by a researcher (e.g. gender, nationality, race, religion, sexuality, (dis)abilities,

#### IV. Chapter III ±Literature Review

NOTE: This chapter will only be part of the final paper. A comprehensive review of literature will be approximately 40 pages.

##### A. Introduction

- ” Briefly provide background and context of the study.
- ” Provide an overview of the chapter,

##### B. Discussion of Theory/Research

- ” Organize the literature review around your research questions, typically starting from broad issue(s), such as the theoretical framework, to more specific.
  - i. Each section of the literature review should summarize a context that helps readers understand a certain aspect of the research problem being studied.
    1. Review the works that add to this understanding within each section
    2. Synthesize the works by describing how they relate to each other and, together, bring about an understanding of the context and research problem
    3. Describe inconsistencies and/or conflicts in the research within this context
  - ii. Identify new ways to interpret the research,
  - iii. Critique any relevant th

## **EDS 602: Educational Studies Portfolio<sup>2</sup>**

The primary aim of the Western Illinois University Educational Studies graduate program is to assist in the development of highly competent, flexible, and empowered practitioners who will have a positive impact on student learning, their immediate professional setting, and their profession as a whole. Graduates of the ES program currently work as teachers, instructors, educational consultants, policy analysts, and academic advisors in schools, colleges, and other professional settings. Students who graduate with a M.S.Ed. in Educational Studies will be able to demonstrate a discipline-grounded knowledge base regarding contemporary psychological, sociocultural and philosophical theories and/or research. Components of this knowledge base include the review, analysis, and evaluation of scholarly literature and an exploration or investigation of relevant topics, skills, programs and issues with an eye toward resolving problems of practice.

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4. The same artifact might support more than one prompt, but make sure to have at least five different artifacts in all.
5. The reflective statements should respond to the prompts above and be very specific. The reflective statement should tell the reader exactly why an artifact, or multiple artifacts, was/were chosen and how it/they demonstrate(s) the competency for which the entry is submitted. Among the artifacts, readers should be able to see
  - a. the ability to organize and present information, arguments, and conclusions in a cohesive logical manner; and
  - b. the ability to write clearly using academic language, appropriate style (APA), and formatting; including references.

### **Portfolio Project Completion Checklist**

#### **Date completed**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Prior to enrolling in EDS 602 (0 credit hours/no cost), you must contact your program adviser (MSEd in Educational Studies Graduate Program Coordinator) for approval of this option.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your adviser will make sure that you have submitted a degree plan that includes your required courses and an additional 3 credits of graduate electives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact the Office Manager, Danielle Beard, to be enrolled in EDS 602.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Access the EDS 602 Course space on WesternOnline and follow the instructions for uploading your portfolio items.
- \_\_\_\_\_ When you have loaded all of your portfolio items, contact the Office Manager, Danielle Beard, who will arrange for three faculty members to read the portfolio.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Once all faculty members have scored the portfolio, you will receive a S/U grade for the experience.

### Expectations and Evaluation Criteria for Portfolios

Portfolios will be evaluated by the following rubric. An average of 3.0 is the minimum score needed for a portfolio to be deemed acceptable.

# of Revisions					
4-Exceeds	<p>Demonstrates a sophisticated and discipline-grounded knowledge base regarding contemporary psychological, sociocultural, or philosophical theories and research</p>	<p>Demonstrates a sophisticated review, analysis, and evaluation of scholarly literature sufficient to make well grounded decisions about specific programs and policies</p>	<p>Demonstrates a sophisticated exploration and investigation of relevant topics, skills, programs and issues with an eye toward resolving problems of practice</p>	<p>Demonstrates sophisticated ability to organize and present information, arguments and conclusions in a cohesive and logical manner</p>	

## Resources

- Bangert-Drowns, R. (2005). Literature review. In S. Mathison (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of evaluation* (pp. 232-233). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: <http://0-dx.doi.org.leopac.ulv.edu/10.4135/9781412950558.n319>
- Fraenkel, J., Wallen, N., & Hyun, H. (2012). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (8th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Gall, M., Gall, J., & Borg, W. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming a qualitative researcher: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Ling Pan, M. (2013). *Preparing literature reviews* (4th ed.). Glendale, CA: Pycszak.
- Pycszak, F., & Bruce, R. (2007). *Writing empirical research reports* (6th ed.). Glendale, CA: Pycszak.

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