

**Educational Psychology and Special Education MA Program
Information about Writing a Thesis (Plan I)
Graduate School of Education**

During their first year in the MA program, students work in consultation with their advisor to produce an original research paper (thesis) on a topic of their choosing. Students typically select their topic during their second quarter in the program, and then work on their project throughout the year. Students must submit a proposal describing their thesis to their faculty advisor for approval; this proposal must be approved in final form by the end of the second quarter. The thesis may include a research study or a strong (publication quality) literature review. The research study proposal describes the research questions and methods, situates the project within a broader topic and literature in education, and lists a journal or journals being considered as primary hypothetical outlets for publication. The literature review (e.g., narrative, meta-analyses, best-evidence synthesis) may depend on the purpose and the state of knowledge in the field (e.g., build a conceptual framework for a relatively new area of research, summarize the state of knowledge for an established area of research, identify what works in a particular area). The literature review proposal describes the research question(s) and methods (e.g., literature search procedures, inclusion and exclusion criteria) and lists a journal or journals being considered as primary hypothetical outlets for publication. Students are responsible for communicating regularly with their faculty advisors to obtain guidance and approval for the project. The advisor may consult with other educational psychology or special education faculty, if needed, before signing the Thesis Proposal Approval Form.

The thesis is an original scholarly contribution to the field of education. A project may be a completely independent study, or it may be part of a larger research program involving one or more faculty members and graduate students; however, a thesis is a unique contribution within the research program and is authored by only a single student.

The contents of a thesis may vary greatly but should incorporate a description of a research problem and its importance, an explanation of the methods used to answer questions/hypotheses derived from the scientific problem, an analysis and description of the findings, a discussion of the findings, and a conclusion. Consult with your thesis advisor for what style best suits you. Your advisor may also have copies of theses from previous students for you to look at.

The thesis is an important component of training intended to give students experience in carrying out a research project from conceptualization to completion. However, the project is not necessarily intended as the precursor to the PhD dissertation. While some theses are eventually expanded into dissertations, in many instances this is not the case, as student's research interests may shift as they advance in the program.

Here are links about completing your thesis

- [General Regulations/Minimum Requirements](#)
- [Completing and Submitting your Thesis](#)

In consultation with their advisor, the student is responsible for identifying three faculty members with background and expertise relevant to the thesis topic and methodology to serve on

their thesis committee. The committee members are responsible for independently reviewing the thesis and then completing the [Dissertation and Thesis submission](#) process. Students should provide committee members at least two weeks to review the theses.