

Department of Child and Family Studies

Thesis Procedures

A Master's Thesis Study in the Department of Child Development and Family Studies (CFS) addresses a problem, question, or issue concerned with youth and families across different developmental, educational, and/or cultural themes.

A prospectus should be submitted that address the following: (1) identifies a problem, question, or issue and argues that the proposed research contributes to disciplinary knowledge; (2) that a solution or answer can be found using the approach specified; and (3) that the project can be completed in the time allotted.

Master's Thesis Study – 7 Steps to Follow

1) Students develop preliminary thesis idea and select a faculty member who will serve as *Chair* on their committee and who will provide supervision to them as they formulate and implement their thesis.

2) Students must also select a second faculty who will serve as a committee member and thesis reader. This person should be a full time faculty member in CFS or in another department in the university. Occasionally part-time lectures have volunteered to assist students with their thesis study. This is acceptable as long as the part-time lecturer is available during the time period for thesis completion.

Note: *Students are expected to keep regular contact with the faculty Chair throughout the period of thesis research and writing. Holidays, summer vacations, professional travel, and sabbatical leaves may restrict the availability of the faculty Chair and/or reader. Students are expected to plan accordingly.*

3) Students will prepare a thesis prospectus, and final thesis.

Thesis Prospectus – The thesis prospectus is a summary statement that ranges from 2-3 single-spaced, 12-point Times font, typed pages. The prospectus should include: 1) a title and topic statement; 2) a brief literature review; 3) description of the research method; and 4) timeline.

Topic Statement - What is the purpose of your research? Refer to this by elaborating on the problem(s), question(s), or issue(s) that your research will address.

- What are your predictions or hypotheses?
- How does your thesis fit into and contribute to the field of *Child Development and Family Studies*?

Literature review - Review relevant literature to provide a background or context of the subject you will examine or the problem you will investigate. For the prospectus, this should include 5 or more relevant articles.

- Discuss how your thesis contributes to this body of research.

Method - In broad terms, describe how will you proceed to prove your thesis, answer the research question(s) or Investigate the problem(s).

- Discuss who will be in your study and their background characteristics.
- What materials will you need, examine, or collect?
- What procedures will you follow?
- How will you analyze your data?
- Will your thesis require IRB / Human Subjects approval? (See <http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/orsp/> for an online tutorial.)

Timeline - Provide a rough timeline of the thesis-research, -analysis, and writing phases (including submission of drafts).

4) First Thesis Prospectus Meeting – Students will distribute their prospectus to their faculty chair and committee member, and arrange for a first thesis prospectus meeting. The event will last for approximately one hour, during which time the student will verbally present their prospectus to the committee members, who will provide feedback, in terms of relevant literature, methodology, and overall thesis development. In addition, student will be counseled about IRB approval, if needed as part of their thesis.

5) Second Thesis Prospectus meeting – Students are to carry out and complete their thesis under the supervision of their faculty chair. Students will expand each section of the prospectus resulting in a document that is judged by their Committee Chair to be adequate in length. Page length can vary from 30 to 60 pages. The feedback obtained in the second thesis prospectus meeting is to be used as the basis for expansion and formulation of the thesis. As portions of the thesis are approved by the Chair, the student will distribute a copy to the other committee member. When the other committee has approved those sections that were provided, the student is to arrange for a second thesis prospectus meeting. Again, the event will last for approximately one hour, during which the student will verbally present their prospectus to their committee members, who will provide more *extensive* feedback, in terms of the introduction / literature review, methodology, and overall thesis development. Student will also provide a draft application for IRB review, if needed.

6) Thesis Submission and Approval-Students will attend a Masters Thesis advisement workshop offered by the library. This workshop addresses issues of thesis format, signature page preparation and timeline for filing thesis with the library.

7) Formal Thesis Presentation – Students will arrange for a formal oral presentation in the Spring Quarter of the academic year in which they complete their thesis. It is expected that students will present their work for the first 15 minutes, primarily focusing on results and interpretations and then address questions from committee members. The event will also be opened to interested faculty, and masters and undergraduate students.

Evaluation Criteria

1) The faculty Chairs and committee member(s) grade the thesis as *Passing* or *Not Passing*. {*Faculty Chairs will monitor the in-progress thesis such that unsatisfactory documents are not submitted for review to fellow readers.*}

Committee members are free to request revisions as many times as necessary in order to generate an adequate MA thesis. When revisions are required, students are to generate a brief reply (*no more than 2 pages*) outlining the changes made, specifically highlighting the page numbers and paragraph numbers.

2) In order to assure a high level of scholarly rigor, the following criteria will be used by the faculty Chair and committee member(s) in evaluating the thesis: 1) the significance of the topic; 2) the thoroughness, accuracy, and inclusiveness of the critical review of the literature on the topic; 3) the cogency of the research problem(s), question(s), or issue(s); 4) the appropriateness of the research method utilized; 5) competence in analyzing findings; 6) the adequacy of the specification of implications of the study in areas of theory, research, and application; and 7) acknowledgement of the limits of the study.

3) If the Committee Chair and committee member vote that the thesis is acceptable or can be made acceptable with minor changes approved by the Chair, the candidate may proceed with the preparation of the final copy. However, if the thesis is conditionally accepted but continues to require substantial changes, the revised thesis must first be approved by committee chair and member(s), prior to the preparation of the final copy.

4) The basis for a non-acceptance and required revisions can range from excessive typographical errors, failure to adhere to APA style, and/or substantive problems in the literature review, methodology, data analyses, and/or discussion.