

## Department of Child and Family Studies

### Thesis Study 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.*

Students will prepare a preliminary thesis prospectus, full thesis prospectus, and final thesis. A prospectus should accomplish the following: (1) identify a problem, question, or issue and argues that the proposed research contributes to disciplinary knowledge; (2) propose that a solution or answer can be found using the approach specified; and (3) illustrate that the project can be completed in the time allotted. The final thesis will include a full literature review situating the work within the existing body of knowledge, methods used to address the identified problem or question, results obtained, and discussion of the implications of the findings.

#### ***Master's Thesis Study – 8 Steps to Follow***

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

2) Students must also select a at least one additional 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 committee 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) **Preliminary Thesis Prospectus (Concept Paper)** – The preliminary thesis prospectus is a summary statement that ranges from 2-3 single-spaced pages, using 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman font. The prospectus should include: 1) a title and topic statement; 2) a brief literature review; 3) description of the research method; and 4) timeline. The preliminary prospectus is done independently by the student prior to officially assembling the thesis committee. It should be circulated to potential faculty committee members in advance of the preliminary thesis meeting.

**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 proposed 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).

- Who will be in your study and what are 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 preliminary prospectus to their anticipated committee chair and committee member(s), and obtain tentative oral commitment from these members before arranging 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. If faculty approve the preliminary prospectus and agree to serve on the thesis committee, official forms will be signed to form the committee at the end of this meeting.

5) Second Thesis Prospectus meeting –Students will expand each section of the prospectus resulting in a document that is judged by their Committee Chair to be adequate in length and scope. In particular, the Introduction and Literature Review sections should be complete, and the proposed methods should be presented in detail. Page length can vary from 30 to 60 pages. Again, the event will last for approximately one hour, during which the student will verbally present the prospectus to the committee members, who will provide more *extensive* feedback, in terms of the introduction / literature review, methodology, and overall thesis development. The student will also provide a draft application for IRB review, if needed. The feedback obtained in the second thesis prospectus meeting is to be used as the basis for expansion and formulation of the thesis study.

6) Completion of Thesis and Final Thesis meeting – Students are to carry out and complete their committee-approved thesis activities under the supervision of their Committee Chair. Students are required to submit all drafts at least one week before expected feedback or meetings with faculty. The writing process will involve extensive feedback and multiple rounds of editing. As portions of the thesis are written and approved by the Chair, the student will distribute a copy to the other committee member(s). When the other committee member(s) have approved all sections, the student is to complete final formatting of the thesis and submit it for approval of the thesis committee. Students are responsible for scheduling and confirming meeting dates and times with committee members.

7) 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.

8) Formal Thesis Presentation – Students will give a formal oral presentation in the academic year in which they complete their thesis, at the Department of Child and Family Studies' Annual MA Symposium. 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 and the audience. The event is attended by department faculty and graduate students. All MA students are expected to attend the MA Symposium and all MA students completing a Thesis Study or Thesis Project are expected to present at the symposium.

### **Evaluation Procedures**

1) The Committee Chair and committee member(s) grade the thesis as *Passing* or *Not Passing*. {Committee 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 provide a revised version using 'track changes' in word processing software or otherwise clearly indicating changes within an electronic version of the draft. In addition, students must prepare a brief cover memo or email (the equivalent of no more than 2 pages) outlining the changes made and how the changes address the feedback received on the prior version.

2) In order to assure a high level of scholarly rigor, the following criteria will be used by the Committee 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(s) 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 the guidelines of the most current version of the APA style manual, and/or substantive problems in the literature review, methodology, data analyses, and/or discussion.

### **Time Expectations**

Students conducting a Master's Thesis should expect the project to take at least one year, and sometimes longer. University policy dictates that there is a seven-year time limit for completing the Master's program without having to revalidate coursework.