

Master Degree Capstone Options and Requirements

Graduate students in the Department of Education have five options to choose from for completion of the Capstone Experience. These five options are described below:

1. The Master's Thesis:

The thesis is a traditional research study which utilizes a problem-solving method (identification of a Problem; Review of Literature; Collection of Data; Analysis of Data, and Conclusions). The research will address a topic in the student's area of study. A student electing this option must make plans with the advisor early in the program.

An approved research plan is required before the student can collect data for a thesis. The final written report will consist of five chapters paralleling the problem-solving method. An exit interview is required. The examining committee for the thesis will consist of the advisor and at least two other faculty members.

The Master's Thesis is a scholarly inquiry into a topic chosen by the candidate and approved by the Thesis Committee. The degree candidate may enroll in thesis credit for three or six hours of credit; however, enrollment for credit is not required; the Thesis may be completed as a non-credit activity.

(a) Prerequisites.

To be eligible to enroll for thesis credit, the candidate must have completed no fewer than twenty-four semester hours of course work from her/his approved Program of Courses including ED 565 – Introduction to Educational Research;

(b) Thesis Committee.

The Thesis Committee is composed of (a) the Graduate Program Advisor, who shall serve as chairperson of the committee and at least two other members of the Faculty of the Education Department nominated by the candidate and approved by the Graduate Program Adviser.

(c) Thesis Proposal.

The candidate will prepare a Thesis Proposal following an approved outline. The Thesis Proposal will be presented to the committee orally and must be approved in writing by all members of the Thesis Committee. Depending on the nature of the research, it may also be necessary for the Proposal to have approval of the Washburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is responsible for reviewing any research involving human subjects. A research study involving human subjects must not be conducted without IRB approval. It will be the responsibility of the candidate and the program advisor to obtain IRB approval.

(d) Thesis Format.

The candidate will prepare the Thesis according to standard thesis and APA format.

(e) Oral Defense.

After each member of the Thesis Committee has had an adequate period of time to read the Thesis, the Graduate Program Adviser will schedule the Oral Defense of the Thesis. The Thesis must be approved by a majority of the Thesis Committee. The Oral Defense will be open to all interested members of the University Faculty.

(f) Time Limit.

The Oral Defense of the Thesis must be completed within the six year time limit for all other graduate degree requirements.

(g) Copies.

The candidate will provide Mabee Library with one bound copy of the Thesis for its permanent collection and the Education Department with one bound copy of the Thesis for its permanent collection. Normally bound copies are provided for the Chairperson of the Thesis Committee and each member of the Committee who desires one.

2. The Comprehensive Examination.

The examination will consist of questions which require integration of course work. The examination will require a one day setting (six hours of writing time) near the end of the program and completion of course work. The advisor and at least one other faculty member will serve on the examining committee. No oral exit interview is required.

(a) Prerequisites.

To be eligible to write the Comprehensive Examination, the candidate (1) must have completed a substantial portion of the courses from the approved Program of Courses, and (2) must have the approval of the Graduate Program Adviser.

(b) Composition and Examination.

Each student's Graduate Program Adviser will design questions which require a synthesis of concepts in the major area(s) of concentration and which reflect program objectives. At least one question must reflect the spirit of the Core Curriculum as that area relates to the major area of study.

(c) Administration of Examination.

Early each semester, each Graduate Program Adviser will nominate eligible candidates to the Chairperson of the Department, who will notify each candidate of the Examination time and location. The Examination will be administered on a regularly scheduled date each semester and will typically be conducted from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. and from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.

(d) Evaluation.

Questions will be evaluated by the Graduate Program Adviser as either "PASS" or "FAIL". A second reader from the field of study must concur on "Fail" questions.

(e) Rewriting the Examination.

If the student's performance on a single question is evaluated as "FAIL", the Graduate Program Adviser may allow the student to rewrite a similar question within two weeks. If more than one response is unsatisfactory, the student may be allowed to rewrite similar questions at the next regularly scheduled examination period. Students receive credit for the satisfactory responses they have made; they are required to rewrite only responses in those areas which were not satisfactory.

(f) Additional Course Work.

If the student's performance on the comprehensive examination is unsatisfactory on the first attempt to rewrite the examination, the Graduate Program Adviser may recommend to the Graduate Program Committee that the student be required to complete additional course work before attempting to rewrite the examination. Additional course work may involve retaking one or more courses, or it may require taking a program of directed reading.

3. The Written Comprehensive Paper:

The written paper will represent a comprehensive (e.g., historical, philosophical or research meta-analysis) paper of a topic in the student's area of study. Approval must be obtained from the advisor before commencing with a written paper and candidates must present paper topic and general outline to the committee prior to starting. An oral exit interview with the committee is required. The advisor and at least two other faculty members will serve as the examining committee.

4. The Action Research Project:

This option will require the student to utilize a problem-solving method (identification of the Problem, Collection of Data, Analysis of Data, and Conclusions). Unlike a traditional research study, action research is of limited scope addressing an authentic problem in a local school district. A student electing this option must make plans early in the program with the advisor. An approved research plan is required before the student can collect data for the project. In addition, the research may need to be approved by the Institutional Review Board prior to implementation. The final written report will consist of five chapters paralleling the problem solving method. An oral exit interview with the committee is required. The examining committee will consist of the advisor and at least two other faculty members.

5. The Portfolio/Oral Exam

This option will require documentation and its interpretation related to the licensure/degree objectives of a program. A student will develop a portfolio which demonstrates how each objective of the program was achieved and at what competency level. The student will be required to complete a program evaluation with suggestions for its improvement. An oral examination with the three-member committee is required after each committee member has reviewed the portfolio. The examining committee will consist of the advisor and at least two other faculty members.