

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: GUIDELINES FOR MA PROJECTS

MA Theses (EDTE 299): Follow the university guidelines

MA Projects (EDTE 298): The following guidelines are for a publishable research paper in a professional journal.

General Guidelines:

1. Bold headings correspond with major components in your research paper—you may use different wording, but it is important to address these issues in a clear and concise way.
2. Underlined headings correspond with sub-components.
3. Drafts and the final version of the manuscript should be double-spaced to facilitate revision and editing.
4. Use 12 pt. font and one inch margins.
5. All stylistic components of your manuscript should conform to one of the accepted style manuals (e.g., APA).
6. Do NOT attach all the data you collected—refer to data selectively to illustrate your points.
7. It is acceptable to use the first person when writing about your project.
8. Number all pages.
9. Use pseudonyms, not the real names of participants, schools and districts.

Specific Guidelines:

I Abstract (about half a page*)

Written after you have completed your study. It summarizes the purpose of the study, research questions, research methodology, results, and implications.

II. Introduction: Statement of Question/Problem (about 1-2 pages)

Part 1: Background. Description of context, setting or background of the study. Tell the story of the school, classroom, district or other focus of your study. Let readers “see” the setting and come to understand the research question/problem before you tell them directly.

Part 2: The Question/Problem. End your introduction with a clear description of your question/problem. Embed it in the state, national, and global context, as appropriate.

* **Numbers of paragraphs and pages are only guidelines. Length of manuscript will vary according to the type of research project that you do.**

III. Literature Review (about 3-4 pages)

Part 1: What have others learned about your topic? This should flow directly from the question/problem that you discuss above. In 3-4 pages, discuss what 10-20 authors have learned from their studies of a similar or related question/problem. Select literature from a variety of research genres.

Part 2: What still needs to be learned about your topic? What aspect of the topic are you interested in that no one has written about yet? This will be your contribution to the research literature. Discuss this in about a paragraph.

Part 3: Research question. Turn the part of the question/problem that you are interested in and hasn't been studied into your research question.

IV. Your Research Methodology (about 1-3 pages)

Part 1: Data collection. Describe what you did and data you collected (e.g., interviews, student work, field notes, collecting baseline data, implementation of some action). What triangulated data did you collect?

Part 2: Data Analysis. How did you analyze your data? Why did you use these analyses?

V: Findings (about 7-10 pages)

Part 1: Major findings. (about 4-5 pages). What did you learn when you analyzed and interpreted your data? Tell a story about your data. Include quotes to illustrate your points. Include charts, tables, graphs and samples of student work, etc., to help you make your points clearly and evocatively. Relate your findings back to your research question and the existing literature. Unanticipated findings belong here, too.

Part 2: Limitations of your study. (about 1-2 paragraphs). If you were to do the study again, what would you do differently and why? How else might one explain what you found? What factors related to this study limit its usefulness (e.g., events, population)?

Part 3: Implications and Conclusions. (about 1-2 pages). Now your study is done. So what? What do your findings mean for you, for other educators, for the school, for the education community in general?

Part 4: Future Research. (about 1-2 paragraphs). What further research needs to be done to learn more about your topic? What new questions did your research project raise?

VI. References

VII. Appendices (optional)

- a. Data collection tools, if not presented in the manuscript.
- b. Epilogue (a reflection on the process of doing the research, and its impact on you)—may belong more appropriately in the Findings section.
- c. Other.