

Margaret Warner Graduate School of  
Education and Human Development

# Teaching and Curriculum

2007-08

Master's Essay Guidelines

2007 - 2008  
Teaching and Curriculum  
**MASTER'S ESSAY GUIDELINES**

The Master's Essay provides an opportunity for the candidate to develop a well-organized report on a topic of significance in the field of education. A reasonable length for this essay is 25-35 double-spaced pages, excluding references. The first reader of the essay will always be the candidate's advisor. The chair of Teaching and Curriculum, in consultation with faculty, will determine the second reader. Both readers must approve the essay for it to pass. If a candidate fails on the first attempt, he/she may revise and resubmit only one more time.

Prior to proceeding with the essay, the candidate must prepare a 2-4-page proposal describing the scope, rationale, and organization of the essay to be handed in prior to the due dates listed below (specific dates to be negotiated with the advisor, but will typically be due several months before the final thesis deadline). The candidate's advisor must approve this proposal (see attached form). Candidates choose one of the master's essay formats below.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINES:**

	<i>Expected graduation date:</i>	<i>Final essay due date:</i>
1.	March 2008 graduation:	<b>December 3, 2007</b>
2.	May 2008 graduation:	<b>April 1, 2008</b>
3.	October 2008 graduation:	<b>May 5, 2008<sup>1</sup></b>
4.	March 2009 graduation:	<b>December 5, 2008</b>

**MASTER'S ESSAY FORMATS**

**1. Library Research**

Candidates will identify a significant issue or problem in contemporary U.S. education, do a review of the relevant literature, locate the research in a theoretical framework, state their position, and support it with conceptual arguments or empirical evidence in current educational theory and research. Candidates should also compare and contrast this position with others in the literature. The implications for education, educational theory, and future research must be clearly stated.

**2. Field Research Project**

Candidates will address a specific educational issue or problem through reporting and analyzing a research project they have undertaken in an educational setting other than their own classroom. Like option 1, this essay should identify the problem they examined, locate the research in a theoretical framework and, in a review of the relevant literature, describe what has already been done to study it. The essay must also describe how the research was conducted and analyze the findings. The implications for educational practice, theory, and future research should be clearly stated. For example, how do these findings contradict or support current educational theory and research?

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<sup>1</sup> If this deadline is missed, the late submission deadline is August 25, 2008 and will require you pay continuing enrollment for fall semester.

### 3. **Examining Your Own Educational Practice**

In this essay format, candidates conduct research that examines their own teaching practice. Candidates should locate the rationale for the research in current educational theory or research (literature review). The research question/s that candidates explored systematically during their experience should also be clearly articulated, located in a significant educational problem, and grounded in a theoretical framework. A rich and detailed description of the practices examined, how the research question was explored, and an analysis of the results should constitute the body of the essay. This section should incorporate or refer to attached artifacts, such as teacher materials, lesson plans, examples of student work, videotapes of classroom events, etc. The implications for the candidate's own practice, in particular, and for curriculum development, educational practice, and school reform in general should be clearly stated. In other words, what are the bigger questions that come out of your research for the field?

#### Academic presentation counts!

1. Your essay should have a clear introduction, identifiable argument, logical structure, and effective use of evidence (from the research literature and/or your own data collection). See rubric for more detail, and consult the *APA Publication Guide*.
2. Use an engaging title to predispose your reader to an enjoyable experience.
3. Include a Table of Contents with page numbers.
4. Include a running head with your name and abbreviated essay title.
5. Follow APA bibliographic, citation and subhead style.
6. Double-space and paginate your essay, including appendices.
7. Use subheads generously to help your reader follow your argument easily in this long essay.
8. There should be no grammatical or mechanical errors. Find someone to do a final proofreading.
9. Change all names of school districts, schools, teachers, and students to pseudonyms.
10. Use an attractive binding that is appropriate for keeping together the kinds of artifacts you have included.

MASTER'S ESSAY APPROVAL FORM

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of First Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

**I. PROPOSAL: Proposal must be attached to this form.**

Date Proposal Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Expected Completion: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposal Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Advisor Signature) (Date)

**II. ESSAY APPROVAL:**

Date Essay Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

First Reader Evaluation: (Circle One)

Pass No Pass

First Reader: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature) (Date)

Second Reader Evaluation: (Circle One)

Pass No Pass

Second Reader: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature) (Date)

**This form must accompany the essay when it is submitted.**

## MASTER'S ESSAY RUBRIC

### 1. Library Research

Candidates will identify a significant issue or problem in contemporary U.S. education, do a review of the relevant literature, locate the research in a theoretical framework, state their position, and support it with conceptual arguments or empirical evidence in current educational theory and research. Candidates should also locate this position in the literature. The implications for education, educational theory, and future research must be clearly stated.

NOTE: Consistent with the Comprehensive Master's Portfolio rubric, the emergent (2) rating has been eliminated from this rubric. Given the Master's Essay occurs at the end of the candidate's program, we expect at least basic proficiency. Emergent proficiency is no longer acceptable.

CRITERIA	(1) Weak/ Unacceptable	(2) Adequate	(3) Outstanding	Score
<b>Statement of Research Problem</b>	The problem or issue being addressed is not articulated in a clear, convincing way, nor is its significance established.	The problem or issue is addressed with some degree of clarity, but without a fully compelling, convincing argument about <i>why</i> this research is worthy, timely, and significant.	The problem or issue is addressed with both clarity and conviction. A convincing argument is made about why the research is worthy, timely, and significant.	
<b>Review of Relevant Literatures</b>	The review of relevant theory and research literatures is weak and unconvincing. There is insufficient evidence of a knowledge base informed by contemporary literatures in the candidate's domain of study. Bibliographic references may be missing, outdated, or only weakly connected to the research issue addressed. The candidate's command and synthesis of theory may be unconvincing or even confusing. There is little evidence of an original, critical <i>synthesis</i> of research literatures nor is there an under girding framework informed by theory.	The review of relevant theory and research literatures is only moderately convincing. There is moderate evidence of a knowledge base informed by contemporary literatures in the candidate's chosen domain of study. Bibliographic references are in most cases appropriately provided and connected to the research issue(s) addressed. The candidate attempts a synthesis of relevant theoretical literatures, but with mixed or moderate success. There is an attempt made to articulate a theoretical framework, but the achievement of this synthesis is partial.	The review of relevant theory and research literatures is clear, critical, and convincing. The candidate's command of contemporary literatures in his/her chosen domain of study is obvious. Bibliographic references are appropriately provided; their links to the research issue(s) address are always clear. The paper evidences a creative, original synthesis of theoretical material and research literatures that leads to the articulation of a clear, under girding framework informed by theory.	
<b>Methodology and Data Analysis</b>	The connections between the problem and analyses of the literature and arguments made are weakly articulated – if at all. There is little or no articulation of the rationale for the candidate's argument and forms of data analysis. Arguments may be presented without adequate framing information or explanation in terms of the wider goals of the paper.	The connections between the problem and analyses of the literature and the arguments made are articulated with moderate success. A rationale for the candidate's argument and forms of analysis may be provided, but the links between this rationale and the ensuing arguments made may be less than fully clear or convincing. Arguments are presented with some framing information and some description or explanation of their meaning.	The connections between the problem and analyses of the literature, and the arguments made are clear and convincing. A rationale for the candidate's argument and forms of analysis is provided; this rationale has clear links to the candidate's synthesis of theory and research literatures and to the ensuing argument(s) made across the paper. Arguments are presented with appropriate framing information and description or explanation of their meaning in terms of the wider goals of the paper.	

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>(1) Weak/ Unacceptable</b>	<b>(2) Adequate</b>	<b>(3) Outstanding</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Grounding of Evidence/ Significance of Results</b>	The conclusions drawn are weakly or inadequately supported by the evidence presented. There is little in the way of summation that includes discussion of the wider implications (for research, practice, policy, theory) of the work. The conclusion does not show evidence of a perspective that takes into account potential critiques and a potentially wide, diverse readership.	The conclusions drawn are supported moderately well by the evidence presented, though with partial rather than full success. There is a summation of the central points made and some discussion of the wider implications of the work. The conclusion provides some evidence of a perspective that at least considers potential critiques and attempts to reach beyond a narrowly construed readership.	The conclusions drawn are fully, richly supported by the evidence presented. There is a clear and convincing summation of the central arguments made as well as discussion of the wider implications of the work (for research, practice, policy, and/or theory). The concluding arguments show evidence of a critical perspective that takes into account potential critiques and that addresses a wide, diverse readership	
<b>Clarity and Style</b>	The writing reveals a lack of awareness of intended audience in terms of word choice and style, and a lack of command over the genre that is most suited to the wider goals as these are articulated in the candidate's paper. The sequencing of sections may be confusing and/or the transitions between them weakly achieved. The introductory and concluding sections of the paper may be weak or barely discernable to the reader.	The writing reveals some awareness of intended audience and some effort to match genre to both audience and the wider goals of the work. However, the writing may at times be unclear or inconsistent: the sequencing of sections may be confusing in some places, transitions may at times be weak, or word choice may be awkward or ill-matched to the genre most suited to the candidate's larger purposes for the work. The introductory and concluding sections of the paper provide only moderate support and clarification for the reader.	The writing reveals a thoughtful, discerning awareness of audience, style, and genre. The genre and stylistic choices made by the candidate are appropriate to the wider goals of the candidate, and they are consistent in terms of their use throughout the paper. The sequencing of sections and transitions are smoothly achieved; the argument built up across the paper is clear and accessible for the reader. The introductory and concluding sections of the paper provide ample support and further clarity vis-à-vis the paper's argument and its overall structure.	

Candidates must receive either a 3 or 4 in all categories in order to pass the Master's Essay requirement. A 1 in any category constitutes a "no pass". A candidate may receive a 1 based on any of the criteria listed within the "unacceptable/insufficient" description and it will still constitute a "no-pass". Candidates may submit one revision after an initial "no pass" assessment.

## MASTER'S ESSAY RUBRIC

### 2. Field Research Project

Candidates will address a specific educational issue or problem through reporting and analyzing a research project they have undertaken in an educational setting other than their own classroom. Like option 1, this essay should identify the problem they examined, locate the research in a theoretical framework and, in a review of the relevant literature, describe what has already been done to study it. The essay must also describe how the research was conducted and analyze the findings. The implications for educational practice, theory, and future research should be clearly stated. For example, how do these findings contradict or support current educational theory and research?

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CRITERIA	(1) Weak/ Unacceptable	(2) Adequate	(3) Outstanding	Score
<b>Statement of Research Problem</b>	The problem or issue being addressed is not articulated in a clear, convincing way, nor is its significance established.	The problem or issue is addressed with some degree of clarity, but without a fully compelling, convincing argument about <i>why</i> this research is worthy, timely, and significant.	The problem or issue is addressed with both clarity and conviction. A convincing argument is made about why the research is worthy, timely, and significant.	
<b>Review of Relevant Literatures</b>	The review of relevant theory and research literatures is weak and unconvincing. There is insufficient evidence of a knowledge base informed by contemporary literatures in the candidate's domain of study. Bibliographic references may be missing, outdated, or only weakly connected to the research issue addressed. The candidate's command and synthesis of theory may be unconvincing or even confusing. There is little evidence of an original, critical <i>synthesis</i> of research literatures nor is there an under girding framework informed by theory.	The review of relevant theory and research literatures is only moderately convincing. There is moderate evidence of a knowledge base informed by contemporary literatures in the candidate's chosen domain of study. Bibliographic references are in most cases appropriately provided and connected to the research issue(s) addressed. The candidate attempts a synthesis of relevant theoretical literatures, but with mixed or moderate success. There is an attempt made to articulate a theoretical framework, but the achievement of this synthesis is partial.	The review of relevant theory and research literatures is clear, critical, and convincing. The candidate's command of contemporary literatures in his/her chosen domain of study is obvious. Bibliographic references are appropriately provided; their links to the research issue(s) address are always clear. The paper evidences a creative, original synthesis of theoretical material and research literatures that leads to the articulation of a clear, under girding framework informed by theory.	
<b>Methodology and Data Analysis</b>	The connections between data, analyses, and the research issue addressed and arguments made are weakly articulated – if at all. There is little or no articulation of the rationale for the candidate's selection and use of particular research methodologies and forms of data analysis. Data may be presented without adequate framing information or explanation in terms of the wider goals of the paper.	The connections between data, analyses, and the research issue addressed and the arguments made are articulated with moderate success. A rationale for the candidate's use of particular research methods and forms of analysis may be provided, but the links between this rationale and the ensuing arguments made may be less than fully clear or convincing. Data are presented with some framing information and some description or explanation of their meaning.	The connections between data, analyses, and the research issue address and the arguments made are clear and convincing. A rationale for the candidate's use of particular research methods and forms of analysis is provided; this rationale has clear links to the candidate's synthesis of theory and research literatures and to the ensuing argument(s) made across the paper. Data are presented with appropriate framing information and description or explanation of their meaning in terms of the wider goals of the paper.	

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<b>Grounding of Evidence/ Significance of Results</b>	The conclusions drawn are weakly or inadequately supported by the evidence presented. There is little in the way of summation that includes discussion of the wider implications (for research, practice, policy, theory) of the work. The conclusion does not show evidence of a perspective that takes into account potential critiques and a potentially wide, diverse readership.	The conclusions drawn are supported moderately well by the evidence presented, though with partial rather than full success. There is a summation of the central points made and some discussion of the wider implications of the work. The conclusion provides some evidence of a perspective that at least considers potential critiques and attempts to reach beyond a narrowly construed readership.	The conclusions drawn are fully, richly supported by the evidence presented. There is a clear and convincing summation of the central arguments made as well as discussion of the wider implications of the work (for research, practice, policy, and/or theory). The concluding arguments show evidence of a critical perspective that takes into account potential critiques and that addresses a wide, diverse readership	
<b>Clarity and Style</b>	The writing reveals a lack of awareness of intended audience in terms of word choice and style, and a lack of command over the genre that is most suited to the wider goals as these are articulated in the candidate's paper. The sequencing of sections may be confusing and/or the transitions between them weakly achieved. The introductory and concluding sections of the paper may be weak or barely discernable to the reader.	The writing reveals some awareness of intended audience and some effort to match genre to both audience and the wider goals of the work. However, the writing may at times be unclear or inconsistent: the sequencing of sections may be confusing in some places, transitions may at times be weak, or word choice may be awkward or ill-matched to the genre most suited to the candidate's larger purposes for the work. The introductory and concluding sections of the paper provide only moderate support and clarification for the reader.	The writing reveals a thoughtful, discerning awareness of audience, style, and genre. The genre and stylistic choices made by the candidate are appropriate to the wider goals of the candidate, and they are consistent in terms of their use throughout the paper. The sequencing of sections and transitions are smoothly achieved; the argument built up across the paper is clear and accessible for the reader. The introductory and concluding sections of the paper provide ample support and further clarity vis-à-vis the paper's argument and its overall structure.	

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<b>Grounding of Evidence/ Significance of Results</b>	The conclusions drawn are weakly or inadequately supported by the evidence presented. There is little in the way of summation that includes discussion of the wider implications (for research, practice, policy, theory) of the work. The conclusion does not show evidence of a perspective that takes into account potential critiques and a potentially wide, diverse readership.	The conclusions drawn are supported moderately well by the evidence presented, though with partial rather than full success. There is a summation of the central points made and some discussion of the wider implications of the work. The conclusion provides some evidence of a perspective that at least considers potential critiques and attempts to reach beyond a narrowly construed readership.	The conclusions drawn are fully, richly supported by the evidence presented. There is a clear and convincing summation of the central arguments made as well as discussion of the wider implications of the work (for research, practice, policy, and/or theory). The concluding arguments show evidence of a critical perspective that takes into account potential critiques and that addresses a wide, diverse readership	
<b>Clarity and Style</b>	The writing reveals a lack of awareness of intended audience in terms of word choice and style, and a lack of command over the genre that is most suited to the wider goals as these are articulated in the candidate's paper. The sequencing of sections may be confusing and/or the transitions between them weakly achieved. The introductory and concluding sections of the paper may be weak or barely discernable to the reader.	The writing reveals some awareness of intended audience and some effort to match genre to both audience and the wider goals of the work. However, the writing may at times be unclear or inconsistent: the sequencing of sections may be confusing in some places, transitions may at times be weak, or word choice may be awkward or ill-matched to the genre most suited to the candidate's larger purposes for the work. The introductory and concluding sections of the paper provide only moderate support and clarification for the reader.	The writing reveals a thoughtful, discerning awareness of audience, style, and genre. The genre and stylistic choices made by the candidate are appropriate to the wider goals of the candidate, and they are consistent in terms of their use throughout the paper. The sequencing of sections and transitions are smoothly achieved; the argument built up across the paper is clear and accessible for the reader. The introductory and concluding sections of the paper provide ample support and further clarity vis-à-vis the paper's argument and its overall structure.	

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