Master of Education Program

_Culminating Written Project  Option A_

_Research Project Guidelines_

The Research Project should be a product that is practical and can make a difference for students and your institution (i.e., your classroom, school, or unit). Also, the format for each RP may ‘look’ a little different--depending on the specific project. The project should be one that you are _personally_ interested in—since you will be ‘living’ and writing about it for a year or more! Because it is a progressive project, remain in touch with your university advisor and field supervisor right from the start to make sure all are aware of the direction of your project. Moreover, the project should be of benefit to you as an educator.

**CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

**Background:** In this section, provide background information and “introduce” the research project topic. Cite research and literature, and possibly personal experiences to help **build a case** for your project. The reader should be informed about the _general_ importance of your project.

**Significance of the Study:** In this section you will connect the project to _the context of your specific school, district and/or state, even international perspective_. Consider: How and why is the project significant? (Start to ask yourself the “So What?” question throughout the paper—why is this important?) What kind of information do you hope to gain from your investigation? How will the new information improve your practice?

**Statement of the Problem (Area of Focus):** Begin this section with a defined and narrowed definition of your particular project problem: write a _specific problem statement_ (often one or two sentences). For example, your problem statement might be: “The high dropout rate of students at Abraham Lincoln High School has very serious and detrimental ramifications for our students and the community. The purpose of this project is to identify and implement research based strategies for intervention of dropouts.” This clearly defined specific problem should be the focus of your entire project that you are going to research and “resolve”. The problem statement will help you decide on the best way to investigate the area of focus in your project and “stimulate” the direction of your research project.

**Research Questions:** Following the problem statement, you should pose several questions, which will be answered in the project. These questions will be addressed in your review of literature and subsequent chapter(s) as you seek to resolve your problem. These specific questions will necessitate research methods. For example, should you use qualitative or quantitative methods (or both) to investigate your project?
At this point, Institutional Review Board (IRB) decisions may need to be implemented to ensure that human subjects are not adversely affected by your project.

Possible Limitations: Whether limitations need to be stated will depend on the context of your project. For example, limitations may relate to generalizing your results to another situation, the research design, or validity of conclusions based on very few subjects.

Definition of Terms: List and define any terms that the reader will need to know. Remember, you are familiar with key terms because you are living with the ideas daily, but a reader may not be familiar with terms that you believe are very common (e.g., EALRs). Cite references related to specific terms.

Evidence to Gather: (For ProCert candidates)
List and explain the data/information you plan to collect when conducting this action research. Refer to Section 2-42 of Professional Certification Handbook for further clarification.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW
(A minimum of 20 sources must be included with 8 research sources.)

Introduction: Write a paragraph or two to describe the basic organization of the research and literature reviewed in this chapter. This paragraph will inform the reader of the logical progression of your review.

The Review: This review will cover both educational research and general literature to address the problem statement and questions raised in Chapter One. Specific research studies (such as those reviewed during your EDUC 520 class) and additional literature will be reviewed in this section. Research studies and literature used should be primarily from the last ten years unless the works are “classics”.

The research and literature will be organized into several major sections for clarity, with headings and subheadings (follow the latest edition of APA style). Your headings and subheadings should make sense on their own, even before the rest of the paragraphs are developed. Thus, there should be a common sense “flow” from study to study, from idea to idea. It is your responsibility to tie the ideas together. Obviously, developing an effective outline, for your own use, before drafting the review section will be critical. Cogent, well-constructed, and logical transitions between and among sections are critical. Again, the review of research and related literature must be logically organized.

It may be appropriate to write about and analyze the classical research studies and studies that examine topics in a more general fashion early on in your review, to provide a foundation and/or background for the more specific studies.
Beyond the research studies, important related literature should be tied to your review (e.g., philosophical points of views, exemplary programs, standards, anecdotal information, personal interviews, excellent articles that are not specific studies, historical records, etc.).

**Conclusions or Summary**: Chapter Two will end with conclusions or a summary of your research and literature briefly reviewing and synthesizing your most important points which will help lead the reader to Chapter Three (and beyond, depending on the project).

**CHAPTER 3. PROJECT DESIGN**

**Introduction**: As in Chapter Two, begin this chapter with a brief overview noting how the chapter will be organized.

**Targeted subjects**: In this section, you give a detailed description of community, school, students, and any relevant demographic information such as SES, age, gender, learning issues, etc. The information should tie into your research questions.

**An action plan**: You will develop a plan for carrying out your project according to the new perspective you gained from Chapter 2. While developing your plan, keep these questions in mind: what contextual and demographic information is relevant to illuminating your research questions, i.e., what information should be included? What strategies/models you researched in Chapter 2 will be used in design of your project? How will these new strategies/models and the data collection be implemented? How will this plan change your current classroom or daily practice? What is the schedule you will set up to implement this plan? What assessment and evaluation approaches will you use to validate the effect and impact of this plan? Use subheadings to organize this section.

**CHAPTER 4. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

This chapter will describe what actually happened during implementation of your project designed in Chapter 3. Consider answers to the following questions with data collected during implementation of the action plan developed in Chapter 3: Was the plan implemented as planned? What changes did you make? What were the factors that caused the changes? What data did you collect? Data analysis should focus on which part of the project worked and what did not work; more importantly to answer the question “Why/ahas”. Link information synthesized in Chapter 2 to support your practice or challenge some previous research findings with solid evidence from your project. Also consider challenges that you experienced, but were unexpected, that you did not set out to find and that were not a central part of your original research questions.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Chapter V is composed of two parts: conclusions and reflections. Conclusions normally covers two areas: 1) summary of the entire process of the project and recommendations: what you (or the team you are working with) would do differently, with future research recommendations (e.g., How can the school reach the next level of excellence?). Reflections focus on your own growth through this project and your future professional development goals and plan.

REFERENCES
The latest edition of APA format must be used.

APPENDICES
You are highly encouraged to include portfolio and artifacts they are part of your action plan. This information/data functions as evidence to enhance the validity and effectiveness of your project. If students’ work from your classroom is used, erase names and other identity clues to maintain confidentiality.

(A special appreciation goes to Dr. Harvey Alvy for his contributions to the Guidelines.)