

Master's Graduate Degree Program
CRITICAL STUDIES IN EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

MASTER'S CAPSTONE REQUIREMENT

Students in the Critical Studies in Educational Foundations (CSE) are required to complete a final capstone assignment to conclude their master's program of study. The final capstone assignment synthesizes your scholarly knowledge utilizing your academic skills to complete a vigorous scholarly inquiry. Through your capstone you are demonstrating the critical academic abilities you have developed commensurate with being awarded a graduate degree.

There are four options from which students, in consultation with their academic advisor, may choose. Each option is a challenging piece of academic work. In order to complete the capstone, it is expected that students will engage in further independent scholarly reading in the area(s) of their research interests beyond what they have read in their coursework.

Option One: CSE MASTER'S THESIS

A thesis is a formal academic research project that has University and College directed requirements and early deadlines that must be met. Upon completion, a formal thesis is turned into the University and is published electronically as an academic document that can be accessed around the world through academic search engines.

The thesis requires the following:

- a. Create a three-person faculty committee that represents both CSE and the academic areas of your research interests, chaired by your advisor and including at least one other CSE faculty member
- b. Develop and defend your thesis proposal to your committee
- c. Complete the IRB process relevant to one's thesis research
- d. Carry out an original research project, usually involving empirical data collection
- e. Write the complete thesis, including, but not limited to, an introduction, literature review, methodology, project data, data analysis, and conclusion. The student should have some coursework preparation for completing an empirical research study.
- f. If a student chooses to complete original philosophical or theoretical thesis research, the student should be well versed in writing in the field of philosophy and/or academic social theory. This style of thesis would require a well-reasoned and well-developed philosophical/theoretical argument with a clear thesis and supporting theoretical/philosophical "evidence". The time spent in empirical data collection is replaced by time spent in depth reading, thinking and writing in order to complete a philosophical and/or theoretical inquiry.
- g. Successfully complete an thesis oral defense before your committee

- h. Meet all College and University required deadlines. Please note these deadlines are early in each semester, and they are non-negotiable. In addition, please note that there are other detailed requirements such as having the official plagiarism check completed. The student is responsible for knowing all requirements.

Registration Procedure: Students register for EDCS 6950 *Masters Thesis in CSE* for a total of 4 credit hours. If students do not complete the thesis in a semester they receive a PR. In each following semester until completion of the thesis, students register for EDCS 6950 for a minimum of 1 credit hour each semester.

Option Two: CSE MASTER'S CAPSTONE RESEARCH PAPER

A master's capstone research paper is a significant research paper on a topic related to a student's research interests and critical social theory. The student works closely with their advisor to define a topic and create a research question(s) to be addressed via the capstone paper. The research question should be original in the sense that a student is bringing different bodies of research literature to bear on a new question. In general, capstone papers range between 50 – 75 pages in length, and are to be completed demonstrating a high level of academic quality and academic style and presentation.

The capstone paper is completed working under the direction of one's advisor and does not require the creation of a committee, or standardized requirements, or meeting university deadlines (other than those for grading and graduation).

Writing the capstone paper requires extensive scholarly literature review in order to respond to the student's posed research questions. The Research Paper is not simply a review of the literature, but is a synthesis and analysis of scholarly literature in order to answer the student's research question. It should be noted that a student and advisor can decide to include empirical research as well. Any empirical research will require IRB approval.

A master's capstone research paper includes the following:

- a. Introductory chapter posing student's research question(s)
- b. Statement of methodology
- c. Extensive and relevant literature review
- d. Analysis of the literature to respond to student's research question(s)
- e. Summary discussion, conclusions and recommendations

Registration procedure: Students register one time for EDCS 6941 *Master's Research Project CSE* for 4 credit hours. If a paper is not completed within that semester, students receive a PR in the course, and must register for a minimum of 1 credit hour under EDCS 6940 (Independent Research) during each semester when working on their paper.

Option Three: CSE MASTER'S CAPSTONE RESEARCH PROJECT

A capstone research project involves carrying out a project that utilizes a student's previously developed skill set in order to respond to an area of their academic inquiry. While the capstone research project does require academic writing and a literature review, the writing is more limited in scope, with the focus on the project portion of this option.

The student and advisor discuss the feasibility of completing a project that meets the academic standards of graduate work. The project is not only a "service" or a project or product offered to an audience of a sort, but also is an inquiry into an area of scholarly interest to the student.

Examples of projects include, but are not limited to:

- Making an original video
- Utilizing an artistic skill and creating an opening exhibition and/or performance (painting, music, dance, multimedia)
- Developing a curricular unit or pedagogical strategy and utilizing it within a classroom setting over a time span, and receiving feedback via a peer review process
- Developing and carrying out a workshop for a group outside of CSE utilizing the skill set of the student
- Writing a play, short stories, novel, series of essays, book of poetry, novelette, with a public presentation

The capstone research project includes an academic portion that includes the following:

- a. Written introduction, addressing the rationale for the project, a statement and discussion of the problem distilling the inquiry itself, and your research question
- b. Limited, yet specific, academic literature review to support the project's inquiry
- c. A detailed description of what the project will be, with supporting appendices as needed, including copies of materials used, products created, etc.
- d. (Student then carries out a substantial project)
- e. Documentation of the project
- f. Reflective summary discussion utilizing the previously provided scholarly literature

Registration procedure: Students register one time for EDCS 6941 *Master's Research Project CSE* for 4 credit hours. If the complete project and paper is not completed within that semester, students receive a PR in the course, and must register for a minimum of 1 credit hour under EDCS 6940 (Independent Research) during each semester when working on their project paper.

Option Four: CSE MASTER'S COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The master's comprehensive examination concludes a student's program of study with both a written and an oral portion. The purpose of the exam is to demonstrate the student's depth and breadth of knowledge in selected critical social theories, as well as their specialized area(s) of research.

Under the direction of their advisor, the student will select two additional faculty members to serve on their Comprehensive Examination committee. Each committee member should represent a specific academic area related to the student's work. There must be a minimum of two CSE faculty on the committee.

In preparation for the exam, the student will meet with each faculty member to develop a comprehensive examination question representing the academic area of their expertise relevant to the student's studies. Each faculty member will direct the student towards study materials. After the student prepares themselves through intensive academic reading, the student schedules time to sit for an all-day in-house written examination in an approved examination room.

The examination will take place in a quiet room with a "clean" computer available to the student. The student will have two hours to answer each question, for a total of six hours of writing in three 2 hour blocks.

After completing the written portion of the examination, the student and advisor will schedule the two-hour Oral Portion of the Comprehensive Examination. The faculty committee should have a copy of all three written answers two weeks prior to the Oral Portion. At the Oral Portion, the committee will meet with the student; each faculty member will have an opportunity to ask the student questions regarding the written answers. Questions may ask the student to expand on the written answers, clarify them, or speak to aspects important in the field that the faculty members feel have not been adequately addressed in the student's writing.

Near the end of the two-hour period, the student will be excused while the committee deliberates in order to make the determination of "Pass", "Pass with revisions" or "Fail".

If a student fails the Comprehensive Examination, they may repeat the full Comprehensive Examination process one time. The student cannot re-take the Comprehensive Exam in the same semester. In order to provide adequate time for further study the student cannot schedule the exam earlier than the following semester.

Registration procedure: Students register one time for EDCS 6941 *Master's Research Project CSE* for 4 credit hours. If the Comprehensive Examination is not completed within that semester, students receive a PR in the course, and must register for a minimum of 1 credit hour under EDCS 6940 (Independent Research) during each semester when preparing and completing the Comprehensive Examination.

GENERAL NOTES RE. CSE MASTER'S CAPSTONE OPTIONS:

1. *Advisors provide a significant amount of feedback. Students should expect to spend extensive time in preparation completing additional reading and literature research, and writing multiple drafts for feedback and comments. This is not simply an extended course term paper.*

2. *Not only does the Capstone Requirement ask you to demonstrate your academic abilities, it also expects you to demonstrate independence and self-discipline in setting goals, meeting time deadlines, and checking in with your advisor on a regular basis.*
3. *All graduating students will present their final capstone assignment at the annual CSE “Speak Out” which is held two Fridays prior to graduation, usually the 3rd Friday in April.*
4. *The Patton College of Education has a graduate student research fund that can be used for relevant expenses incurred in carrying out the research. The application for these funds is available on-line, and requires careful articulation of your study’s purpose, supporting research literature, and methods. The application must be signed by your academic advisor as well. There is a college deadline each semester for funding applications.*
5. *Students are encouraged to utilize the ELIP Graduate Writing Center and/or to take relevant academic preparation courses offered through the English Language Improvement Program (ELIP). Courses range from Oral Communication, to Graduate Reading Comprehension, to writing for Graduate Theses/Dissertations.*
6. *Please be aware that full-time faculty are on nine-month contracts and are not officially employed during the summer semester. Faculty may or may not choose to teach during summer, or they may be working on their own research, or utilizing their time in other ways and may be out-of-town for significant periods of time. You should not plan on faculty being available throughout the summer. Students and their advisors should plan ahead of time to work within applicable schedules.*

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SELECTING YOUR CSE CAPSTONE REQUIREMENT:

1. *What are your professional and/or academic goals? How does the capstone further those goals?*
2. *If you are planning to enter a Ph.D. program within the next three years, while not required, you should give serious consideration to completing a research thesis. (This is also dependent upon the field of Ph.D. study you are considering. For example, a field in the Arts might lend itself more to a research project.)*
3. *If you are planning to go into an “applied” field such as teaching, consider a research option that will develop relevant knowledge to share with those in your field, and/or demonstrate competence via a relevant project.*
4. *Give serious consideration to your own time constraints. Most capstone options cannot be completed within one semester if taking other academic coursework, especially the thesis that has early deadlines.*
5. *Think about what option fits best with your own learning style.*
6. *Students who choose to complete a project must have prior skills developed to complete the project. The project option is not a time to develop your skills in a given area; it is a time to utilize and apply a set of skills to a project-based research inquiry.*