

## CULTURAL & EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES: M.A. THESIS GUIDELINES

The M.A. thesis is the final requirement for the awarding of a master's degree in Cultural and Educational Policy Studies. We expect that an M.A. thesis will make a noteworthy, original contribution to current research knowledge and understanding of an educational issue or question that falls within the social foundations of education. A typical CEPS M.A. thesis is in the realm of 30-50 double-spaced pages (excluding references) and may eventually be revised and reworked to be submitted for publication as a book chapter or journal article.

### STEPS IN THE PROCESS

Students should initiate the thesis process by meeting with their CEPS advisor to discuss possible topics. Typically the student's advisor serves as a student's Thesis Committee Chair and together the student and Chair identify a second faculty member who will round out the Committee. Following these initial discussions, the student is to prepare a Thesis Proposal in accordance with the general guidelines specified below. Once the Thesis Proposal has been reviewed by the Thesis Committee Chair it is sent to the second committee member and a Thesis Proposal Defense is scheduled.

The Thesis Proposal Defense is an opportunity for the student to present his or her research project and to make refinements to the project so that it will meet expected standards for originality, rigor and significance. Subsequent to the Proposal Defense, if human subjects will be involved in the thesis research, the student works with her or his Thesis Committee Chair to prepare and submit an application to the [Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board](#) to get approval to conduct research involving human subjects.

Through the research and writing phase of the process the student works with his or her Thesis Committee Chair according to an agreed upon timetable and deadlines. Once a full draft of the thesis is prepared and approved by the Chair it is distributed to the other committee member and a Thesis Defense is scheduled. (At both the Thesis Proposal Defense and the Thesis Defense stages, faculty members should be afforded two weeks between receipt of the document and the actual defense date.)

The Thesis Defense is an opportunity for the student to present the results of his or her research and to answer questions from the Thesis Committee. The Committee then determines whether to approve or not the thesis. If the thesis is approved -- and once any requested revisions are made -- the Committee Chair then signs off on all required paperwork and the student submits the final copy to the Graduate School. The final copy must be formatted in accordance with the Graduate Schools' requirements for the [formatting of a thesis or dissertation](#). (Students are also required to follow the Graduate School's requirements for submitting a sample of the text for Format Check earlier in the process. Please note that text can be submitted for Format Check prior to being approved by the Thesis Committee.)

### TIMETABLE AND DEADLINES

It is strongly recommended that students complete the proposal approval process in the semester prior to the semester of anticipated completion/graduation. Please refer to the Graduate School's [schedule of key dates](#) for exact deadlines. The following resents an approximate sketch of what students should plan for and anticipate -- however much depends on the type of research project that the student will

be conducting and in many cases additional time for data collection and writing should be built into the schedule.

Intended Graduation: May

Thesis Proposal defended by November/December of previous semester

Full Draft of Thesis prepared by February 15

Thesis Defense conducted by March 15

Final Copy of Thesis submitted by April 1

Intended Graduation: August\*

Thesis Proposal defended by January/February

Full Draft of Thesis prepared by May 15

Thesis Defense conducted by June 15

Final Copy of Thesis submitted by July 1

\* Please note that due to summer research, travel and teaching in May-June, faculty availability may be considerably reduced and may force modifications to the above timeline

Intended Graduation: December

Thesis Proposal defended by April/May

Full Draft of Thesis prepared by September 15

Thesis Defense conducted by October 15

Final Copy of Thesis submitted by November 1

## PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Students are requested to meet with their CEPS advisor prior to preparing a full Thesis Proposal as certain research projects may require a different proposal format. However, a typical CEPS M.A. Thesis Proposal is 10-18 double-spaced pages long, excluding references, and includes the following sections:

- Abstract (1 paragraph). Start with a single paragraph that lays out the study and includes your primary research question.
- Statement of Problem (2-3 pages). Explain why your proposed study is important and relevant. You can use research literature and/or contemporary events to inform this section.
- Review of Research Literature (3-5 pages). Review the literature on your chosen topic. Strands of literature that you consider should draw from issues or areas of research that are relevant to your chosen topic. Your treatment of the research literature, while not as thorough as it will be in your thesis, should lead into your research question, by highlighting areas that merit further inquiry or that will offer new perspective.
- Research Question (1 paragraph). State your question (with a question mark) and your sub-questions. If you feel it is necessary, add a paragraph explaining the question(s) and how it/they relate to the preceding material.
- Research Methodology (3-5 pages). Explain the research methodology you will be using for your thesis. Start by explaining why the method you've chosen is appropriate for your particular question, and then get into the specifics of how you will use these methods (such as whom you would survey, what survey instruments you would use, or what texts you would analyze, and how you would go about selecting them). Then, perhaps under a subheading, discuss your plans for data analysis. Title it however you want, but make sure to spend 2-3 paragraphs discussing what you are going to do with the material you generate or collect. Please specify how you will use these data to answer your research question(s).

- Limitations (1-2 paragraphs). Please specify what your project will not include, and why (you can relate this to the scope of your study), and what these limitations mean for the generalizability of your study.
- Timeline (1-2 paragraphs). How long you anticipate taking to collect, analyze and write up your study, and when you hope to defend your thesis (keeping in mind LUC's deadlines for thesis submission, approval, formatting and final submission prior to graduation)
- Appendices. Please include any data collection instruments, such as surveys, interview protocols or observation protocols, as an appendix to the thesis.
- Bibliography. Please provide full citations for all the material listed in your proposal's text.

December 2011