



**College of Education  
Master's Research Project Handbook**

Supplement to:

ED 586 Research Methods in Education  
and ED 503 Master's Project

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## Introduction

Welcome! You are about to embark on an exciting and rewarding journey. Conducting a master's research study and writing the thesis are worthwhile and gratifying experiences. You will have the opportunity to ask your own questions, and to design and conduct a study through which you will pursue your own area of interest. The research can be intriguing, the writing can be fulfilling, and the completion of your research project can be professionally satisfying. If you choose your research topic carefully, staying focused on your situation, your interests, and your burning questions, your study will become a labor of love. Enjoy the experience! The Master of Science (MS) program faculty is here to offer any assistance you may need.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide the guidelines for developing and conducting your study, and writing the master's thesis. Following a consistent format allows others to follow the logic and organization of the thesis research project. It also provides consistency within the education profession. We hope this handbook will prove useful by providing the most commonly used format and content requirements.

### *Why A Master's Thesis?*

One of the core outcomes of the MS program at Eastern Oregon University is the development of thoughtful and knowledgeable teacher researchers. Successfully conducting a school- or classroom-based research project enhances the individual's ability in identifying important issues, formulating questions to be investigated, and making data-driven decisions based on thoughtful analysis. It is the desire of the College of Education faculty that our MS graduates not only demonstrate the above abilities, but do so by selecting a research question that

is both meaningful to the individual and that has relevance and application in the individual's professional context.

### *The Importance of "APA Style"*

In the field of education, the standard for professional writing is the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, published in 2001. This is often informally referred to by the shorthand phrase "APA style" or sometimes simply "APA." The manual is available for purchase directly from the APA at [www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org), as well as from many independent and college bookstores. Furthermore, most college libraries have copies available in their reference sections.

When instructors ask you to write in "APA style," they do not mean writing style. They are referring to the editorial style that many of the social and behavioral sciences have adopted to present written material in the field. Editorial style consists of rules or guidelines that are observed in order to ensure clear and consistent presentation of written material. Editorial style concerns uniform use of such elements as: (a) punctuation and abbreviations, (b) construction of tables, (c) selection of headings, (d) citation of references, (e) presentation of statistics, (f) elements that are a common to most manuscripts.

APA format requirements apply to all MS research projects conducted at EOU. The APA Publication Manual is clear and comprehensive, and addresses nearly every situation that the student may encounter. This handbook does not intend to duplicate the basic APA information that is already contained in the APA Publication Manual. Rather, the APA items provided in this handbook are ones where APA format has been modified modifications to meet specific EOU requirements.

In the rare instances where APA does not clearly address a specific situation, the thesis chair can assist the student in resolving the issue. However, it is not the responsibility of the thesis chair to edit the thesis for conformity to APA style. That responsibility rests with the student.

One word of caution: It is common to find various online references for APA format and style. The website for the American Psychological Association ([www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org)) is one such resource. However, the APA webpage gives only limited information. Furthermore, many online APA resource websites are hosted by colleges and universities, and as such the style and format requirements they suggest may have been specifically modified for use in their particular programs. You should be cautious in the use of any non-APA sites. The only definitive source for proper APA format is the actual APA Publication Manual!

### *Two Aspects of the Thesis: Process and Product*

Research, at its core, is simply the purposeful, structured, and organized method by which a problem or question may be investigated. Furthermore, the findings of such investigations need to be communicated to others. This is, fundamentally, the purpose and nature of the master's research project.

A research project consists of two complementary elements. It is, first of all, a process. As such, it involves (1) the identification of an appropriate and meaningful topic; (2) the extension and refinement of the topic into a set of specific and researchable questions; (3) the development of an appropriate methodology by which data may be collected; (4) the organized and systematic examination of the data collected; and (5) the interpretation, analysis, and/or application of the findings from the examination of the data. This, then, is the process of conducting research. It is something that you do.

The first courses in the MS Professional Core—ED 511 and ED 522—are designed provide background knowledge and skills necessary for formulating a thesis topic and design. Upon successful completion of ED 511 and ED 522, students are eligible to enroll in ED 586 and begin the actual thesis project.

The primary work of the ED 586 course is that of developing the thesis proposal. It is critical in this course that students demonstrate diligence in working closely with the course instructor, as such diligence is the key to success in finishing the thesis.

Once the thesis proposal has been accepted and approved, and drafts of the first three chapters have been written, the process then continues with enrollment in the ED 503 Masters Project course. It is during this course that data is collected, analyzed and interpreted, and the final two chapters are written.

In addition to being a process, the master's research project is also a product. It is a formal academic document that details the process by which the investigation was conducted, and that communicates the findings of that investigation to others. As a formal academic document, it follows a very specific style of writing and has precise requirements for items such as margins, fonts, spacing, and references. The final writing, submission, and approval of the thesis document takes place in the ED 503 course. Details about the format of the final thesis document are explained in later sections of this handbook.

## Section One: The Thesis Proposal

An old proverb says: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” It may often seem that completing a thesis is a “journey of a thousand miles,” but when taken step-by-step, the goal can indeed be accomplished. The first “step” is that of the thesis proposal.

### *ED 586 Supplement*

The thesis proposal is a written document, approximately three to five pages in length, and summarizes the research topic and proposed methodology. The ED 586 course has as a major focus the development and approval of the thesis proposal. This section of the handbook supplements ED 586 course materials.

### *Elements of the Thesis Proposal*

A thesis proposal contains the following elements:

#### *1. Introduction and Purpose: Educational Significance of the Proposed Research*

This is a short section (one or two paragraphs) that identifies the topic of the investigation, and explains the topic’s importance. In this section, you address questions such as the following: (a) What is it that you will be researching? (b) What is the issue that needs to be examined? (c) What is the state of affairs regarding this problem at your school and/or nationally? (d) Why is this study important? (e) How does your work related to the situation nationally or locally?

#### *2. The Literature Review: Relevance of the Topic*

This section provides a short review of the professional literature that is relevant to your topic and questions. In the final written presentation of the research project, this will be an in-depth discussion of the topic, leading to the specific research question for the project. For purposes of the research project proposal, however, this section is very brief. It should provide

sufficient evidence to support the importance and relevance of the topic. Also, list the topics that will be researched and discussed in the in-depth Review of Literature in the final version of the thesis.

The literature review, both for the proposal and for the final written presentation, seeks to answer questions such as the following: (a) What has already been investigated and/or learned about this topic? (b) What do we not know, but that we should know, about this topic? (This is sometimes referred to as the “gap in the literature.”) (c) What other ways has this topic been investigated? (d) With what type of learners has this topic previously been investigated?

The knowledge and skill acquired in the process of completing ED 511 is directly related to this element of the research proposal and eventual project. Exploring these general issues, and discovering what others have already learned from their investigations of the topic, is important in formulating the specific research question for your study.

### *3. The Research Question: Specific Focus of the Research*

The literature review provides the background and foundation that leads directly to the Specific Research Question of the study. For example, consider spelling as the topic of the project. Many strategies and programs for teaching spelling are available to elementary teachers. After reviewing the appropriate and available professional literature related to spelling in the elementary classroom, general questions such as the following may emerge: (a) What are the important comparative factors between spelling program “A” and program “B?” (b) What critical factors need to be addressed in order to successfully implement spelling program “A” in my classroom? (c) How might the use of spelling program “A” affect my students’ motivation towards spelling?

The general questions of interest, combined with analysis and reflection from the findings of the literature review, eventually coalesce into a clear, focused, and concise research question. The development of specific and focused research questions—usually one or two—is critical, as they provide the fundamental guidance for the development of the project.

For example, here is a research question on the topic of spelling:

What are the effects of a twelve-week implementation of the “Sound in Parts (SIP)” spelling strategy on students’ spelling ability in a sixth-grade classroom (Rosencrans, 1998)?

Notice that the wording is in the present tense. This is because at this stage of the writing you are proposing to do the study. You have not actually done it yet.

#### *4. Participants, Data Collection, and Data Analysis: Proposed Procedures*

Once the specific research question has been finalized, the next step is to explain the method by which you will collect and analyze the data. Remember the general definition of research provided earlier: A purposeful, structured, and organized method by which a problem or question may be investigated. It is in this section that the structure and organization of the project is explained. Typical details include the following: (a) Who are the proposed participants for the study? (b) How will participants be selected and/or recruited? (c) What data is necessary in order to answer the research question? (d) How will the data be found, and how will it be collected? (e) Over what period of time will data be collected? (f) Who will collect the data? (g) Who will have access to the data? (h) How will the data be analyzed once it has been collected?

In addition to the above items, a tentative timeline for the completion of the research study and thesis writing is to be provided.

The knowledge and skill gained from your previous MS courses (ED 511 and ED 522) will help you in this task.

### 5. *Permissions: Informed Consent*

Conducting research with humans, particularly in school settings, requires that several types of permission be obtained by the researcher. These permissions are described below.

*a. School permission.* If your research will take place in a school setting you must provide written documentation that your project has been approved by the appropriate school administrator, and that you have permission to conduct the research in the school setting. Furthermore, if you will be using data that has been collected by the school—e.g. student test scores—you also will need the school’s permission to access that data. A letter written on official school stationery, signed by the appropriate school administrator, is usually sufficient to meet this requirement.

A brief statement indicating that permission has been obtained should be included in the thesis proposal, and the original permission letter needs to be attached to the proposal as documentation.

*b. Parent and student permission.* The nature of your study may involve the direct collection of data from your participants. If this is the case, you will need to obtain the written consent and permission of your participants. In the event that your participants are under the age of 18, permission must be obtained from the parents or guardians of the participants. In the event that your participants are 18 years or older, permission must be obtained directly from the participants.

A brief statement indicating how participants’ permission will be obtained must be included in the thesis proposal. In addition, a copy of any permission letters and consent forms must be included as part of the proposal document. You do not need to actually secure individual participants’ permissions at this stage of the proposal process in order to have your proposal

approved. However, *you do need to have all permissions obtained before implementing the study and collecting your data.* Once obtained, original copies of the participants' permission letters must be retained for documentation during the course of the study.

*c. Human subjects review.* This is a legal requirement, and must be addressed in the proposal. All research conducted at Eastern Oregon University involving the use of human participants is guided by the federal legislation. Criteria for research involving human participants requires the following: (a) Risks to subjects must reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits; (b) Selection of subjects is equitable; (c) Informed consent has been sought and obtained from each prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative; (d) Informed consent has been appropriately documented; (e) The research plan makes adequate provision for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects; (e) Adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data have been taken; (f) Participants will not be compensated; (g) The research is part of a class requirement for the MS degree; (h) Results will be published as a Master's Thesis; (i) Results will be made available to the participants upon request.

As part of the thesis proposal, you must include a narrative section that describes how your research project will meet each of the above requirements that have not already been addressed in previous sections.

#### *Review of the Thesis Proposal*

Once your thesis proposal has addressed all of the above elements, it first will be reviewed by the ED 586 instructor. Any necessary revisions will be discussed at that time. Upon approval by the ED 586 instructor, your proposal will be forwarded by the ED 586 instructor to the chair of the Eastern Oregon University Institutional Review Board (IRB). In

order for your proposal to be forwarded for IRB review, you need to complete, sign, and attach a copy of the Human Subject Research Application form to your thesis proposal. This form is available from the EOU Research and Grants (RAG) website ([www.eou.edu/rag/forms.htm](http://www.eou.edu/rag/forms.htm)) or from the IRB Chair. A copy of the form is also attached at the end of the handbook. In the space titled “Research Protocol,” you may write “See attached proposal.”

Upon submission to the Institutional Review Board, one of two reviews will be conducted:

1. Expedited institutional review. This level of review is conducted by the IRB chair, and normally only takes a few days. This level of review is appropriate when the degree of “risk” or “harm” is deemed to be relatively low, the nature of the research is related to normal or routine school practices, and all the above elements have been satisfactorily addressed.

2. Full IRB review. In the event that the nature of the proposed research involves potential for “harm,” or involves an intervention or manipulation that is not normally within typical school practices, a full IRB review may be necessary. This normally takes one-to-two weeks, as it involves the convening of the full IRB committee. In the process of a full IRB review, the members of the IRB will examine your proposal, and will determine the appropriate permission.

Regardless of whether an expedited or full IRB review is to be conducted, you need to have your research proposal completed, approved, and ready for submission to the IRB chair with sufficient lead time before you plan on beginning your data collection. *Data collection involving human subjects may not begin before IRB approval is received.*

You or the ED 586 instructor will receive written communication from the IRB either indicating approval of your proposal, or setting conditions which must be met before the

proposal will be approved. After receiving IRB approval, it will be necessary to notify the IRB of any changes to your original research proposal. If the duration of your study is longer than a year, you will be required to submit a brief interim progress report.

## Section Two: The Thesis Committee

Each master's research project requires the selection of a thesis committee. The committee works with the student in the writing of the thesis document. Furthermore, the committee has responsibility for the final approval of the completed thesis.

The committee consists of at least two, but no more than three individuals, as follows:

### *The Committee Chair*

This person must be an EOU faculty member with "graduate faculty" standing from within the College of Education. The list of faculty with graduate status is published yearly on the EOU College of Education website [www.eou.edu/ms/](http://www.eou.edu/ms/). The chair has overall responsibility and authority in supervising the thesis and coordinating with the other committee members, beginning with the research proposal and concluding with the presentation and approval final thesis document. In the ED 586 course, the student works with the course instructor in identifying and securing a faculty member who will serve as the chair.

### *Second Committee Member*

This person may be any appropriate EOU faculty member from the College of Education, the College of Arts and Sciences, or the College of Business, or an appropriate public school individual. Examples of public school individuals would be building principals, curriculum directors, media specialists, or superintendents. A public school individual must hold a thesis-based master's degree (or higher) in order to serve on a student's committee. (Your committee chair can provide guidance related to this possibility). MS students are encouraged to consider the inclusion of an appropriate public school individual as a committee member, as such individuals bring valuable and helpful "outside perspectives" to the research project. The second

committee member provides a supporting role in approving the research proposal, providing feedback as the project develops, and approving the final thesis document.

*Third Committee Member*

Inclusion of a third committee member is optional, but is sometimes helpful. Your committee chair can provide guidance relative to this possibility. The third committee member has the same role as does the second committee member noted above.

It is necessary to have at least the committee chair selected before the thesis proposal can receive final approval from the ED 586 instructor.

### Section Three: Transitioning to Thesis Completion

Once you have completed the task of developing and writing the thesis proposal and written the initial drafts of the first three chapters in the ED 586 course, and after having secured all the necessary approvals, the thesis project moves to completion in the ED 503 course. You should give serious and focused attention to the decision regarding ED 503 registration, and the best term in which to register for ED 503. Completion of the thesis takes significant amounts of time beyond the individual's normal day-to-day professional responsibilities. You should not plan on enrolling for ED 503 unless you have ample time to devote to the task. While it is possible to complete the thesis in one academic term, many students find that more than one term is necessary. Extensions (an "Incomplete" grade) beyond two terms will be granted only for compelling circumstances. If you are involved in extra-curricular activities in your school setting, or are involved in extensive personal activities, you should think carefully about whether or not you have the time available to devote to the work of the thesis. This is a conversation that you may wish to have with the chair of your committee before submitting your registration for ED 503.

#### *Registration for ED 503*

ED 503 requires the following items as prerequisite for registration: (a) Completion of ED 511, ED 522 and ED 586; (b) Selection of a committee chair (and verification of the faculty member's agreement to serve as committee chair). The committee chair becomes the "instructor of record" for ED 503; (c) Submission and approval of the research proposal.

Once the above elements have been satisfied, you may register for ED 503 and proceed with the research project. Because ED 503 is individually arranged for each student, the actual registration must be manually processed. To register, you must submit two forms: (a) the

“Reading and Conference” form, and (b) the Distance Education Course Registration form. A copy of each form is available from the College of Education MS office by calling 541-962-3772. Complete each form with the appropriate information. You do not need the CRN number, as this will be filled-in by office staff once the forms have been received. Submit both forms to the College of Education MS office at the following address:

Janet Frye, MS Program

College of Education

One University Blvd

La Grande, OR 97850

You may also submit the forms via fax at 541-962-3701, attention Janet Frye.

## Section Four: The Final Thesis Document

This section of the handbook provides general guidelines for completing the work of the ED 503 course. It supplements the ED 503 syllabus.

The final thesis document—written during enrollment in ED 503—represents the formal presentation of both the process and the findings of the research project. Typically it is referred to simply as “the thesis.”

The style and format of the thesis document follows a traditional and commonly-accepted format. This traditional format facilitates communication of research findings in a manner that is easily understood across the profession. This section of the handbook presents the details of that format.

### *APA Format in the Final Thesis Document*

Just as the thesis proposal is written according to APA format, so also is the final thesis document. As noted in Section One of this handbook, EOU makes modification to selected elements of APA format. Other APA elements that are not modified for EOU purposes are applied in accordance with general APA requirements, but nevertheless still require particular attention. The following sections highlight particular APA elements to which students need to attend related to format expectations for the MS thesis.

#### *Margins*

EOU modifies APA guidelines related to margins. The left margin is set at 1.5 inches (to allow for binding) with all other margins—top, right, and bottom—set at 1 inch. Do not justify the right margin—except for certain preliminary pages of the thesis—and do not hyphenate words at the ends of lines.

### *Typeface*

The entire text of the thesis, including page numbers, must be produced with the same font or typeface. The font size should 12 point. Bold font should not be used. No handwritten symbols are allowed in equations, figures, tables, or text. Examples of 12 point fonts appropriate for thesis copy include: (a) Bookman Old Style, (b) Courier, and (c) Times New Roman. Other fonts may also be acceptable, provided they are simple and professional. The chair of your thesis committee can provide guidance if this is necessary.

### *Page Numbers*

APA format indicates that lower-case Roman numerals—e.g. i, ii, iii, iv—are to be used for preliminary pages, such as the title page and the table of contents, and that Arabic numerals—e.g. 1, 2, 3—are to be used for all subsequent pages. EOU, however, modifies this format and requires that standard Arabic numerals be used for all pages of the document. This is because standard word processing programs do not allow mixing Roman and Arabic numbering when using automatic page numbering. Furthermore, by using Arabic numbering throughout the entire thesis, it allows each section/chapter to be written as a separate document, which can then easily be merged into one document for the final copy. Having the final copy of the thesis as only one document facilitates both ease of printing the final copy and submission of an electronic copy.

Use the “header” feature of your word processing program to automatically insert the page number on top right of each page, starting with the title page. Do not use the abbreviation “p” before the page number. Although the title page is page number one, the page number itself does not appear on the title page. When setting automatic page numbering, adjust the automatic page numbering option so that the page number does not appear on the title page.

### *Spacing*

The entire text of the thesis must be double-spaced, except for tables, and figures. This includes the title page, table of contents, and reference pages. This is not a modification of APA format, but nonetheless is one that is often misapplied and thus deserves attention.

### *Headings for Sections*

The document should display a clear difference in appearance between each section division, and headings must follow a consistent style for each division. Sections 3.31 and 3.32 of the APA manual explain the different levels of headings used to indicate section divisions within the document. Just as was noted in the section above about spacing, EOU does not modify APA format in this regard. However, document divisions can be confusing, and thus need detailed attention.

Most theses papers require the use of only two levels of division: (a) the chapter title, and (b) subdivisions within each chapter. However, but three (or four) levels of division may be appropriate in some circumstances. By way of example, this handbook follows APA format, and uses four levels of division and headings. An example of two levels of division, as used in a thesis, would be as follows:

This is the Chapter Title and Number: Centered Uppercase and Lowercase

*This is a Chapter Sub-heading: Flush Left, Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase*

Explanation and examples regarding the proper use of levels of division and headings are detailed in the APA manual. It is the student's responsibility to insure that the paper is divided properly according to APA format.

### *Partial Pages*

Partial pages generally are not allowed, except at the end of a chapter. However, page breaks sometimes occur in a manner that leaves a section heading at the bottom of a page, with the text continuing on the following page. This can create an awkward visual appearance. In such cases it is appropriate to insert a page break so that the heading is moved to the following page. (The page preceding this section is one such example.)

Do not leave a gap in the text when inserting a figure or table that will not fit on the same page as the text. Fill in the page with the text that would normally come after the figure or table. A table or figure that is as large as one-half a page may be placed on a page with no text. Text should be placed on the same page with smaller figures and tables as long as there is room for at least four lines of text above or below the table or figure.

### *Figures and Tables*

A table generally refers to tabulated numerical data or textual information presented in a columnar format while a figure is often non-textual in nature (e.g., graphs, charts, line drawings, maps, and photographs). A table may be included within the text or may appear on a separate page. In either case, it should appear as soon as possible after it is first mentioned in the text. If text appears on the same page as a figure or table, there should be a consistent amount of space between text and figure (or table) throughout the document. Additionally, any page where text appears above, below, or between figures and tables must contain at least four full lines of text. The information in the tables and figures should be explained briefly in narrative form. Figure and table numbering must be either continuous throughout the thesis, or by chapter (e.g., 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3). Each figure or table should be given its own number. All captions for figures and tables must be in the same font as the text. Do not place a period after the

caption. A caption using more than one line may be single-spaced. All figures and tables must fit within the margins previously mentioned.

### *Manuscript Arrangement and Content*

The list below indicates the placement order for the parts of the thesis. Details about the nature and content of each section follows the list.

1. Title page
2. Committee Signature Page
3. Table of Contents
4. List of Figures (if necessary)
5. List of Tables (if necessary)
6. Acknowledgements (optional)
7. Chapter One – Introduction to the Study
8. Chapter Two - Review of the Literature
9. Chapter Three - Methodology
10. Chapter Four - Findings of the Study/Data Analysis
11. Chapter Five - Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations
12. References
13. Appendices
14. Library Permissions Page

### *Title Page*

Each thesis requires a title page, and follows a prescribed format. The information on each line should be centered between the left and right margins, should be evenly centered between the top and bottom margins. A sample title page may be found at the end of this

handbook as Appendix A. Remember to follow the requirements noted above about page numbering.

### *Committee Signature Page*

This page follows immediately after the title page. Once the final copy of your thesis has been submitted and approved by your committee, the committee members will sign the Committee Signature Page. This page has a specific wording and format. A sample is provided at the end of this document as Appendix B. The page will actually be signed at the time of the presentation of the final thesis document. See page 34 for additional details.

### *Table of Contents*

The Table of Contents should inform the reader quickly and clearly how the thesis is organized. It is numbered as page two. The main heading (TABLE OF CONTENTS) must be all capital letters. The headings listed should match those in the text word-for-word and in capitalization. Chapter subheadings need not be listed in the Table of Contents, but if subheadings are listed, they must be listed for all chapters. All lines are double spaced. Page numbers should be right justified. Dot leaders are optional. The Table of Contents is both left- and right-justified. The Table of Contents for this handbook is an acceptable example.

### *List of Figures / List of Tables*

If the thesis contains figures, then a List of Figures should be included following the Table of Contents. Likewise, if the thesis contains tables, a List of Tables should be included, also following the Table of Contents. The List of Figures and List of Tables appear on separate pages; do not combine them on one page. The main heading of any such pages must match the style of the Table of Contents. Each caption listed in the List of Figures or List of Tables should match word-for-word what appears in the text with the word “Figure” or “Table” preceding the

figure or table number. The List of Figures and List of Tables are also left- and right-justified, and follow the same style and format as the Table of Contents.

### *Acknowledgements*

An acknowledgements page is optional. If an acknowledgements page is included, the heading should match the style and format of the Table of Contents. The acknowledgements page is placed as the last preliminary page before the main body (Chapter One) of the thesis.

### *Chapter One - Nature of the Study*

The first chapter of the thesis usually contains the following elements:

1. *Introduction.* This is a brief section to give a little background on the topic of your study.

2. *Statement of the problem.* What is it that you will be researching? What is the issue that needs to be examined? What is the state of affairs regarding this problem at your school and/or nationally? Because of that situation, your study is needed. This gives the reader some rationale for your work.

3. *Research questions.* Give a brief introduction and frame out the parameters for the structure of the study enough for the reader to see the context of these questions. State your questions. Usually there are one or two.

4. *Purpose of the study.* Why is this study important? How does your work relate to the situation nationally or locally? What are your objectives and goals? What are you going to do in your study to address the problem you've outlined? Briefly mention the setting and the subjects to provide the reader with a larger context.

5. *Hypotheses and assumptions.* Here you are letting your reader know what your hypotheses and assumptions were for the purpose of your study. Your hypotheses can be listed

following a statement such as: “This study was conducted based on the following hypotheses.” These are either your “hunches” as to what your study may reveal, or they can be broad statements from the larger context of your general orientation or philosophical beliefs. For example, “It is hypothesized that there will be a trend indicated in the data toward greater use of peer conferencing in writing instruction” or “Children’s writing improves if they have extended time for daily guided practice in writing.”

Your hypotheses are about what you may see, and your theoretical foundations provide the context and framework upon which the study is based. Your assumptions are within the smaller context of your study. For example, you assume that students performed to the best of their ability on your questionnaire, or you assume the methods you are using are valid means of evaluating student performance.

6. *Limitations.* No study is perfect, and here you let your reader know you recognize certain limitations you faced as you conducted your study. For example, this could include the size of the group with whom you were working, time constraints, location, or availability of materials.

7. *Definitions.* Here you define the words you will be using that would not be clear to the lay reader. Assume your readers know very little about your field or special area. You are familiar with the particular words you will be using, so clearly define them for your reader.

8. *Implications of the Study.* In this section you will describe for the reader how the results of your study will affect or contribute to the profession. How will your results assist teachers in improving their practice or in better meeting students’ needs?

## *Chapter Two - Review of the Literature*

The purpose of Chapter Two is to examine in depth the current knowledge base in the field of education on the topic of your study. The literature review conducted as part of your thesis proposal provides a starting point, but the literature review of the actual thesis requires more extensive research and writing than was done for the thesis proposal. This review of current research on the topic of the thesis allows you to show where there are gaps in our understandings of the topic, and how your study will contribute new or different knowledge to the topic. It is a satisfying chapter to write, because the result is a clear demonstration of why your study is important and needed.

The knowledge and skills related to conducting and writing a literature review that you gained in the ED 511 course have direct applicability to the writing of this chapter of your thesis. If you need a refresher, your thesis chair or the instructor of your ED 511 course will be happy to suggest supplemental readings and materials that will assist you in this task.

### Citing Sources: Facts, Summaries, Paraphrases, and Quotations

*Citation of sources.* Although facts, summaries, paraphrases, and quotations will be used throughout your thesis, they typically are more extensively used in chapter two than in other chapters. Legal and ethical concerns regarding plagiarism are of paramount concern here. It is beyond the scope of this handbook to address the various forms for appropriate and proper citation of sources, as the APA manual already provides extensive and detailed discussion of this topic. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the proper format for quotations, as well as the format for citations and references.

### *Chapter Three - Methodology*

This chapter describes the setting and procedures used in your study. After a brief introduction and overview of the chapter, the following sections are typically included:

*Participants and setting.* Introduce the reader to the participants with whom you worked in your research. Questions such as the following may serve as a guideline for structuring this chapter: What was the population, or large group, from which your participants were selected (e.g. senior students attending an urban high school in the northwest)? How did you select the group you worked with? How many participants were there? What ages and/or grade levels were they? What unique characteristics, if any, existed? Where did the study take place (e.g. classroom setting, playground, after school)? How did you gain access to this setting? If done in a school setting, were you a member of the faculty at that school?

*Human subjects protection.* Permissions necessary to conduct the study, and review for protection of human subjects, must have been obtained and conducted during the thesis proposal stage, respectively. In this section of the chapter, describe for your reader the procedures you went through to obtain permission, and the procedures you employed to protect the confidentiality and rights of the subjects; e.g. use of pseudonyms, coding of the data, and handling and storage of data.

*Procedures.* Describe in detail the specific steps in implementing the study. This is the heart of the chapter. The description of your steps and methods should be so clear, detailed and sequential that anyone could pick up your thesis and replicate your study. Some studies are reported in terms of Phases, Steps, or Stages. Choose a format that is comfortable for you and appropriate to your work.

The following questions may be helpful in thinking through the structure for this section: What did you do at each step of the process? Who was involved? Where was the study conducted? Do not name the school, but instead use general terms such as “A rural elementary school in a town of 3000 in the northwest.” What were the participants doing? What data was collected? How was the data collected? From whom was the data collected? What assessments or instruments were used to collect data? How and when were assessments administered? What were the timelines or timeframes for the study? Remember, this is basically a recipe that other professionals could follow. Provide information in sufficient detail so that someone would be able to retrace your steps.

*Analysis of Data.* At the conclusion of the chapter, let your reader know how the data was analyzed. Connect the analysis of your research data to your research questions. How does the evidence gathered address the question and inform the reader? How will the data be reported and discussed in the following chapters?

#### *Chapter Four - Findings of the Study*

The main purpose of Chapter Four is to present your results and findings. Open with a short restatement of the purposes of the study and your research questions. The rest of the chapter can be organized around your findings relative to each question. This chapter is intended to simply report findings, not to analyze them, make inferences, or draw conclusions. You will do that in Chapter Five.

If you have used tables or figures in the data presentation, make certain that they are formatted according to APA requirements. End the chapter with a section that, for each of your research questions, gives a clear and brief summary of the findings that you have just presented.

This is a “courtesy section” for the reader, who may want to “cut to the chase” and get right to your findings.

#### *Chapter Five - Summary, Discussion and Recommendations*

Open by briefly re-stating your purposes and research questions. Following this brief introduction, the chapter will then contain the following sections:

*Summary.* In this section, you give the reader a brief overview of the entire study. Remember, someone may pick up your thesis and read only this chapter, or perhaps only Chapters Four and Five. Give enough context to allow the reader to know what your study was about. In this section you will draw inferences and conclusions about what your data tell you. Using your research questions as an organizer is helpful. For each of your main findings, discuss: (a) the nature of the particular finding, (b) how the finding is best or appropriately interpreted, and (c) your conclusion about that particular finding.

*Discussion.* This is the next major section of the chapter. This is your chance to talk about any aspect of your study you found intriguing, troublesome, surprising, astonishing, perplexing or delightful. Talk about your instruments; were they appropriate? Talk about your participants; were they cooperative? Talk about your setting; was it conducive to the required tasks?

A major task of this section is to relate your results back to the main points revealed in the review of the literature. Did others find similar results? Did your findings refute or support the work of others?

This is also where you talk again about the implications of your work for classroom teachers. The purpose of research is to add to the knowledge base in our field. What have you learned that will move us forward as educators? What do we know now that we didn't know

before that will help our learners? How will your findings lead us to better practice in the classroom?

You should also discuss in this chapter any limitations or external influences that may have affected your study. If any such factors were present, were they reasonably foreseen or not? Was the influence, if any, major or relatively minor?

*Recommendations.* This is the final section of the chapter. Give your recommendations to other researchers interested in a similar study. What would you suggest to them? What “next question” was revealed in the findings of your study that needs to be explored in a future study? What was most successful in your study? What would you do differently if you had it to do over again? Would you analyze your data differently? Help others learn from your experience.

### *References*

Facts, quotations, and paraphrases included in the text all require appropriate in-text citations. Likewise, your summary of someone else’s idea also requires appropriate in-text citations. APA provides helpful information and specific format requirements for use of in-text citations. It is the student’s responsibility to cite sources using correct APA style.

Furthermore, every in-text citation must have a corresponding entry in the References section, listed at the end of the thesis. Again, it is the student’s responsibility to be familiar with APA reference requirements, and to use correct APA style.

If you would like to include other resources that would be helpful to your reader, but were not specifically cited in the text, you can add a “Bibliography” section following the References. If you do have a Bibliography, you must also make the appropriate entry in the Table of Contents.

### *Appendices*

It is sometimes helpful to your reader to see copies of documents, such as permission letters or questionnaires, that would be cumbersome to include within the body of the text. Include these items of interest as separate appendices following the References. Each individual document comprises a separate appendix and each appendix has a separate title page that is numbered.

### *Library Permissions Page*

Pierce Library is the official repository for all master's theses. Your final thesis copy requires the inclusion of a signed permissions page, which authorizes EOU to archive your thesis, and to make your thesis available for distribution via print and/or electronic means. This page is the very last page of your thesis. Please remember to sign the page when you submit your final copy of the thesis. A sample of the Library Permissions Page is included at the end of this handbook as Appendix C.

### *Working with your Thesis Committee*

A thesis is not a solo endeavor, but rather is a collaborative effort between the student and the thesis chair. The role of the thesis chair is to provide guidance and constructive feedback as the student progresses through the process of writing the thesis. Ultimately, the thesis chair has final responsibility for approval of the thesis.

Each thesis chair has his or her preference regarding submission of drafts for feedback and revision. Most chairs prefer to have students submit drafts of individual chapters as they are written. This is something you should discuss early with your thesis chair.

The second (and perhaps third) committee member serves in a supportive role. You should discuss with your thesis chair how he or she would like you to work with submitting

chapter drafts to the supporting committee member(s) for feedback and revision. In all cases, the thesis chair has final responsibility for approving the final draft of the thesis.

### *The Oral Presentation of the Thesis*

When the writing is complete, and all revisions have met with the approval of the thesis committee members, the thesis is ready for its oral presentation. Your committee will work with you to determine a mutually acceptable time and place at which you will meet as a group to discuss your study. At the time of the Oral Presentation you should provide a clean, unbound copy of the complete thesis for each member of the committee, as well as your own copy.

Your committee chair presides over the oral presentation. At the oral presentation, questions such as the following form the basis for the conversation: What have you gained as a result of having conducted your study that will influence you as a teacher? What would you do differently if you conducted the study again? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this study? What are you most proud of? How will the results of your study inform the profession and improve classroom practice?

The oral presentation is a time for you to shine as a researcher. You are now the expert in your area and can share your wealth of knowledge and experience with your interested colleagues.

### *Final Submission of the Thesis*

Upon conclusion of the Oral Presentation, the members of the thesis committee make the final decision as to the acceptability of the thesis. In some cases the committee may request specific final revisions necessary for the thesis to be acceptable. In this event, you will need to make those revisions for the thesis to be approved. In most cases, however, the thesis is accepted without revision following the Oral Presentation.

The thesis committee members will indicate their acceptance of the thesis by signing in the appropriate places on the Committee Signature Page. Once all appropriate signatures have been secured, your thesis may be bound and submitted.

The final copy of the thesis for submission should be printed on 8.5 x 11-inch paper, using only one side of each sheet. Please use a bright white, 20 lb. weight paper containing approximately 25 percent cotton. The copy should be printed on a high quality printer, and must be clean, clear, and crisp. Front and back covers should be on card stock. Copies should be bound using a plastic spiral on the spine.

You should print a second copy for yourself, following the same guidelines as for the EOU copy. Additional copies for members of the committee are optional. You should ask the committee members if they want such copies, and if they do, it is your responsibility to provide them.

In addition to the one required bound copy, described above, you also need to submit an electronic copy. This electronic copy must be on CD, and consist of only one file in either Microsoft Word® or RTF format. The electronic version must be an exact copy of the bound version.

## References

American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

Rosencrans, G. (1998). *The Spelling Book: Teaching children how to spell, not what to spell*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Appendix A

Sample Title Page

THIS IS THE TITLE  
OF THE THESIS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty and the College of Education

Eastern Oregon University

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

by

Name

Date

Appendix B  
Committee Signature Page

The Graduate Faculty  
and  
The College of Education  
Eastern Oregon University

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of /name/ find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C

## Library Permissions Page

Pierce Library

Eastern Oregon University

## Nonexclusive Right to Publish Blanket Agreement

THIS AGREEMENT between the author and Eastern Oregon University (EOU) concerns all theses, reports and projects, written by the author, for inclusion in the Pierce Library Theses & Senior Papers collection.

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Eastern Oregon University further agrees to archive the electronic and original pieces until those works no longer fit the institution's curriculum.

Author \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Library Representative \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Handbook originally compiled by M. Ruth Davenport and Ralph F Woodward, 1996

Revised by Danny R. Mielke, 1997, 1999, and 2004

Revised by Allen Evans, 2008