



Thesis and Project Guidelines

Master of Education
Faculty of Education

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Photo Credit: John Bastin

Introduction

Congratulations for embarking on your academic journey towards the completion of a project or thesis in St. Francis Xavier University’s Master of Education program.

We have created this document as a guide through the stages of writing. Please refer to it often. As well, refer to the ***MEd Graduate Student Handbook*** for specific guidelines related to your degree pattern, academic writing, and APA referencing.

Project and Thesis Timelines

Students and faculty each have roles and responsibilities in the research, writing, and program completion processes. The following sections list these roles in roughly a sequential order. These lists are intended to indicate the relative roles and responsibilities, but each student and his or her faculty advisor may adjust some of their interactions as appropriate and mutually agreed upon.

Student Role: What You Do

The information on your role as a student is presented below with a series of checkboxes so you can track your progress. **The Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership must approve all applicants for project or thesis. Note: some tasks are applicable to thesis students only.**

Status	Task	Date Completed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Part-time students must normally complete all required courses prior to enrolling in EDUC 506 or 507.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take EDUC 506 or 507	

When you, as student, enroll in EDUC 506 or 507 you will:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Meet with the Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership and share program goals and request a supervisor. Complete <i>Declaration of Research Interest and Advisor Request Form</i>. See p. 8.</p> <p>The Chair, in consultation with the Dean, will determine the eligibility for an applicant to partake in the project or thesis route. Then, the Chair, in consultation with your supervisor will solicit other professors to serve on your committee. (The project requires a second reader; the thesis requires second, third and external readers).</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enrol in EDUC 593 upon recommendation of the Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership	

Status	Task	Date Completed
<p>As per the StFX Academic Calendar (2010-2011):</p> <p>Candidates must make a formal presentation of the thesis proposal. The formal presentation is normally made to the faculty of the Department for which the thesis is being written, and it is open to members of the Committee on Graduate Studies, other interested faculty members, and graduate students. The Department Chair (and/or the candidate's thesis supervisor) will ensure that at least two weeks notice is given of the date, time, and place of the presentation of the thesis proposal. After presentation of the proposal, after obtaining the approval of the appropriate ethics committee(s), and on the recommendation of the candidate's thesis supervisory committee, and the Department Chair or Director of the school, the candidate will be permitted to register in the thesis. (p. 28)</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Upon approval by the Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership, contact the Program Office at 1-877-867-3906 to register in EDUC 590 (Research project) or 599 (Thesis)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	If appropriate, consider external sources of funding to support research.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	In collaboration with your supervisor, develop and submit a first draft of your proposal.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Revise and resubmit subsequent proposal drafts to your advisor.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	If your supervisor provisionally accepts the project or thesis proposal, together you submit it to the second reader on your committee.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Present your proposal in a meeting with your committee.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	With your supervisor, complete and submit a <i>Research Ethics Review Form</i> if necessary.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make requested revisions to the Research Ethics Board and re-submit if required. Typically, approval by the Research Ethics Review Board requires a minimum of 6 weeks after submission. It often takes longer. Once all required revisions are made, the Research Ethics Review Form is accepted by the university Research Ethics Board.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	In addition to StFX REB approval, most school boards require their own ethics approval. No data may be collected before receiving ethics approval from both the StFX REB and the school board where appropriate.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Submit a copy of the approved <i>Ethics Review Form(s)</i> to the Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Conduct your research.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Submit draft 1 to your supervisor, following the Faculty of Education's <i>Writing & Style Guidelines</i> outlined in this document and in the APA manual.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Revise and resubmit to your supervisor as required.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	As a project or thesis candidate, meet with members of the examination committee for the final oral presentation, which consists of an in-camera seminar; members of the Committee on Graduate Studies, and other faculty members of the Faculty of Education may attend as observers.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sign the <i>Library Release Form</i> .	
<input type="checkbox"/>	After revisions, submit four bound copies of the project or thesis to the Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that all course requirements are complete and all outstanding accounts with the university are cleared.	

Faculty's Role: What Others Do

- In consultation with each graduate student, the Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership determines a possible supervisor, consults with potential faculty supervisors, and informs the student of the appointed supervisor.
- The supervisor makes contact with the student soon after the appointment is made.
- The EDUC 506 or 507 instructor and the supervisor provide direction and clarification regarding your potential research.
- Your supervisor collaborates with you during the proposal development stage.
- After submission of the 1st draft, your supervisor gives feedback; the collaboration and feedback may include advice about course options—particularly electives—and relevant bodies of literature appropriate for the topic to be researched.
- Your supervisor continues to give feedback.
- The second reader's role is to advance the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological rigour of the proposal. In the case of a thesis, once the second reader accepts the proposal, the thesis proposal is sent to a department reader. Then a proposal presentation meeting is scheduled.
- The thesis committee accepts the proposal; or asks for revisions and resubmission; or the clarity of the thesis and its conceptual, theoretical, and methodological approach are worked out during the presentation.
- Your supervisor supports and assists you in a mutually-negotiated manner.
- Your supervisor provides feedback on all drafts.
- When your supervisor considers it appropriate, a draft of your work is submitted to the MEd Thesis Copy Editor for adherence to the Faculty of Education's referencing and style guidelines.
- Your supervisor provisionally accepts your work and submits it to the second reader. In the case of a thesis, it is submitted to the third reader for comments.
- After your committee members approve the thesis, it is sent out to an external reader. The external reader is external to the Faculty of Education and normally has **at least 1 month to read and respond to the thesis**. The external examiner submits a written report of the thesis to the Chair at least 1 week prior to the final oral examination date.
- The supervisor, in collaboration with the committee, sets a date and time for the final oral presentation of the project or thesis.

The last date for a final oral examination for Fall convocation is October 15th and for Spring convocation, March 15th.

In order to apply for graduation in Spring convocation, you must fill out an Application for Degree/Diploma online by October 1, and by July 15 for Fall convocation.

- The candidate's committee has three options: (a) accept the work as presented, (b) accept with revisions, or (c) reject the work.
- After acceptance of the completed project or thesis, the committee members sign the relevant acceptance form.
- The Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership will distribute three copies of the completed project or thesis: (a) the Angus L. Macdonald Library, (b) the Faculty of Education

Resource Centre's project and thesis collection, (c) the candidate's supervisor. The fourth copy remains with the Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership.

Roles of Project and Thesis Committee Members

Thesis Supervisor

The thesis supervisor works closely with the student through all phases of the thesis process including proposal preparation and ethics review application, and makes substantive, theoretical, and methodological suggestions. In consultation with the student, the thesis supervisor makes suggestions to the Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership for the second and third reader and arranges for an external reviewer. The thesis supervisor also arranges for the proposal presentation and the final thesis presentation seminar. Announcement of the proposal and thesis sessions need to be publicly posted 2 weeks in advance of the session. Debbie MacIsaac, secretary in the Faculty of Education has the templates for these announcements.

You have the option to request changing your thesis supervisor, if you so desire. The Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty of Education, has the final decision based on faculty members' workload.

Second Reader

The second reader works with the thesis supervisor and the student to advance the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological rigour of the thesis proposal and then the thesis.

Third Reader (thesis only)

The third reader normally receives a copy of the final draft of the proposal and the thesis for comment. The Third Reader provides a third set of eyes to raise any issues for consideration that may have been missed by the student, supervisor, or second reader. The third reader plays a consultative role in the thesis preparation process.

MEd Thesis Copy Editor (thesis only)

The role of the MEd Thesis Copy Editor reads the thesis for coherence, completeness, and consistency, and for adherence to the APA style manual (6th ed.). This reading will take place at the final draft stage—normally before the thesis is sent to the external reviewer. You will need to be very conscious of deadlines and turn-around times for thesis revisions as a careful edit of your thesis takes time.

The MEd Thesis Copy Editor is to provide feedback, not to do the writing. Students and faculty supervising students are expected to be familiar with the APA style manual conventions and to know how to incorporate these conventions throughout the process. Wendy Kraglund-Gauthier is the MEd Thesis Copy Editor. She is located in Xavier Hall 304 and can be reached by telephone at (902) 867-4530 or email at wkraglun@stfx.ca. Her website is <http://www.stfx.ca/people/wkraglun>.

External Reviewer (thesis only)

The external reviewer is a person with a PhD who works outside of the St. Francis Xavier University's Faculty of Education and has expertise in the area of study of the thesis. The external reviewer reads the thesis and makes a recommendation as to whether or not it should be accepted, accepted with revisions, or rejected. The external reviewer sends a summary of her or his comments to the thesis supervisor, along with questions she or he would like asked at the oral thesis seminar.

Research Declaration Form (see p. 8) [Downloadable as a PDF here](#)

Students interested in doing a project or thesis as part of their MEd program have (a) the option of meeting with a faculty member to discuss their research interests, and filling out the form (see following page) together, (b) students may complete as much of the form as possible and submit it to the Dean and the Chair and an advisor will be assigned to you. All faculty/student research supervision must have the written approval of the Dean.

PROJECT/THESIS

**DECLARATION OF RESEARCH INTEREST AND ADVISOR REQUEST FORM
Master of Education Program**

This form is to be used by faculty when counselling prospective project and thesis students.
Please complete this form with the student, and email or send a copy to the Chair of MEd Program AND the Dean of Education. The Dean and Chair will review each request before assigning an advisor.

Date of Submission:	
Student Name:	ID#
Mailing Address:	StFX email:
	Home phone:

1. Check one: Project <input type="checkbox"/>	Thesis <input type="checkbox"/>
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2. If possible, indicate a prospective advisor, or reader(s) where applicable:

Project	Thesis
Project Advisor:	Thesis Advisor:
Second reader:	Second Reader:
	Third Reader:

3. Working title of project or thesis if known:

4. Please state, in 25 words or less, the topic area in which you wish to do your project or thesis:

5. Date when you propose to take 506 or 507:

6. Date of recommended 593:

7. Proposed start date of project or thesis:

8. External committee member (if determined):

9. Submitting faculty member:

Chair approval: _____ Date: _____

Dean approval: _____ Date: _____

After approvals are granted, a copy of this form is to be returned to Coleen Jones, MEd Program Office, so student can be registered.

Research Ethics Protocol

The Faculty of Education adheres to the Tri-Council's (1988) policy statement entitled *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. The Tri-Council comprises, jointly, the Medical Research Council of Canada (MRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). This policy, administered by the StFX Research Ethics Board, is outlined briefly below, and the relevant appendix of the Tri-Council's policy statement is presented in detail. In some cases, additional research ethics clearance may be required from research settings (for example, government, school board, Band Council). Please go online to <http://www.mystfx.ca/research/ethics/> to obtain complete ethics guidelines.

Policy in Brief

Any student or faculty member creating research that in any way will involve human beings as research subjects is required, **before** initiating such research, to receive approval to conduct that research from the University Research Ethics Board (REB). **There is no exception to this.** It is only after a student or faculty member receives written, documented permission from the Chairperson of the University Research Ethics Board that the student or faculty member may proceed with the portion of their research that will involve human subjects.

Protocol

The St. Francis Xavier University ethics review application form is available online at <http://www.mystfx.ca/research/ethics/>. All students must complete their REB forms with their thesis advisors before submitting them to the REB Committee for review and approval. Documentation of REB approval must be forwarded to the Chair of Curriculum and Leadership.

Important Documentation

A photocopy of your letter of approval from the Research Ethics Board must be included in your completed thesis as an appendix. If you do not require ethics approval, your thesis supervisor will need to sign a copy of the ethics release form instead (see page 24 of this document for a sample).

For more information about ethical conduct for research involving humans please read the following excerpt from Appendix 1 of the Tri-Council Policy statement—the entire policy and updates made after August 2008 can be found online at <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/tcps-eptc/>

Tri-Council's Appendix 1: Scope of Research Requiring Ethics Review

The following which is adapted from the University of Alberta, *General Faculty Council Policy Manual* indicates the range of research projects or instances that should be reviewed by the REB.

- Whether the research is funded or not;
- Whether the funding is internal or external;
- Whether the subjects are from inside or outside the institution;
- Whether the subjects are paid or unpaid;
- Whether the research is conducted inside or outside Canada;
- Whether the research is conducted inside or outside the institution;
- Whether the research is conducted by staff or by students;
- Whether the research is conducted in person or remotely (e.g., by mail, email, fax or telephone);
- Whether the information is collected directly from subjects or from existing records not in the public domain;
- Whether the research is to be published or not;
- Whether the focus of the research is the subject;
- Whether the research is observational, experimental, correlational or descriptive;
- Whether a similar project has been approved elsewhere or not;
- Whether the research is a pilot study or a fully developed project;
- Whether the research is to acquire basic or applied knowledge; and
- Whether the research is primarily for teaching or training purposes or whether the primary purpose is the acquisition of knowledge.

Writing a Project Proposal

A project proposal should be approximately **15 pages in length** (maximum). It should include an overview of the project's purpose; a concise, relevant literature review; and a section that outlines the intended research methodology and potential presentation format.

A MEd project may take any number of forms. For instance, graduate students thus far have produced Web sites, multimedia presentations, autobiographical narratives, interactive CDs, extensive unit plans, teacher manuals, PowerPoint™ presentations, etc.

Project Preparation & Style

The project should be written in the past tense (I did, I observed, etc.) and it should adhere to the guidelines of APA (6th ed.). The project is usually more practical than a thesis, with less emphasis on research methodology and theoretical underpinnings and more emphasis on practical applications.

Although no formal oral presentation to faculty members of the project is required, it is recommended that you present your findings to a suitable public audience such as school in-services, school board meetings, public audience of teachers, school board officials, parents, etc. The completed project will be read by your project advisor (who is the course instructor for EDUC 590) and a second reader in the Faculty of Education.

Reference List

All projects must have a list of references following the last chapter and preceding any appendices. The reference list must include every reference cited in the project, and no other references. The references are listed in alphabetical order, in accordance with APA 6th edition guidelines. Most projects require only a reference list. However some projects may also have a bibliography following the reference list. A bibliography provides an extended list of references closely related to the project topic, but which may not be cited in the project itself, and which may be of interest to the reader. A bibliography may be subdivided according to subtopic if useful. Page numbering of the reference list continues from the last section, in the same format.

Appendix / Appendices

All appendices should be labeled using letters (Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.), in the order cited in text, even if only one appendix is cited. Headings for each appendix should be parallel with section headings (i.e., Level 1), and each appendix begins on a new page. All appendices pages should be numbered, in sequence continuing from the reference list (and bibliography if one is included), and in the same format. Styling (page margins, font, etc.) within most appendices should be similar to that in the rest of the project. Documents used as appendices should be retyped or electronically transferred and reformatted into the project document. When scanning images, please use high quality print and reproduction settings.

Writing a Thesis Proposal

Writing a thesis proposal is a signal that you have identified an area of interest that you deem worthy of formal research. Your proposal will be a concise outline of what you plan to do throughout the course of your inquiry. Thesis proposals are normally **no more than 30 pages in length**, including references and appendices.

The proposal should include information on the following categories (Note that these headings are not necessarily the same headings you will use in your thesis):

Introduction (What do propose to do and what is your rationale?)

Untitled introductory paragraph(s). This is a brief statement in one or a few paragraph(s) to introduce your thesis topic and your practitioner focus, and to orient the reader toward a better understanding of your proposed research.

Personal educational context. This section provides the reader with a picture of your practical experience as an educator and of your research interests. It situates your study within *your* particular geographic/demographic and work setting. Often, this section is the largest component of this major section.

Background to the study. This section provides a setting for you to state the focus of your inquiry (research question) in a way that is meaningful to a reader who may not be familiar with your specialized area of interest. It should not contain a full-fledged discussion of definitions or a review of the entire literature concerning the stated topic of inquiry, but may well cite an especially illuminating exposition or conception of the topic (e.g., educational trends related to the topic; unresolved issues; social, instructional, or organizational concerns).

Significance of the study. Usually this section describes why your intended topic is significant to the field of education. If brief, the significance of the study may be part of the introductory paragraphs for this section.

Organization of the proposal. In a paragraph or two, set up the theoretical or conceptual framework of the ensuing sections for the reader.

Survey of the Literature (What do others say about the topic?)

This section provides a brief overview of *who* has written *what* that bears on your inquiry. The literature provides a theoretical or conceptual framework for the study and methods used. This locates your work in the larger field of education and focuses specifically on your topic.

Themes and sub themes. Sections and subsections vary greatly according to the nature of the proposed research.

Be comparative and critical. In citing others' ideas and findings, be comparative (among references) and critical (use published literature to critique published ideas). Take the stance of a journalist reporting on the existing literature. Be sure references cited are relevant and current for your proposed study; also recognize relevant early theorists. You may occasionally show the connection between specific ideas and your context, but, in most cases, it is best to refrain from entering into an introspective conversation on the ideas—unless such an introspective conversation is part of a thesis whose main thrust is comparative analysis of theoretical concepts.

Definition of terms. Terminology can have different meanings to different people, or unfamiliar technical terms may need to be explained for readers to fully grasp their implications within a project.

Methodology and Data Collection (How do you intend to explore your research question?)

This final section describes what you propose to do, how you will do it, and who will be involved. It explains the general approach you propose to take in pursuing the research and the specific steps you propose to use to collect data. Include ethical considerations here.

Methodological approach. This section includes a brief overview of the research genre you propose to use, and it may present the key theoretical constructs (citing literature) of the approach. It is important to explain why you chose this method, why this approach is appropriate for your study, and how you may be adapting and/or applying that approach.

Data collection activities. This section explains where and how you propose to obtain the data, including the nature of any human sources. It outlines the specific activities you propose to engage in (e.g., interviewing or self-reflective writing and analysis) to complete your study. Provide the generic characteristics of any participants, and describe how they will be approached/solicited to participate. Give the reader a sense of the uniqueness or generalizability of the data sources, especially in relation to the intended uses for the thesis.

Ethical considerations. Explain the steps you will take to protect the voluntary nature, ability to withdraw, and confidentiality of study participants during the study. Clarify how you propose to extend these considerations within the actual thesis (such as the use of fictitious names, removal/revision of identifying comments or descriptions, and opportunity for participants to review drafts). Cite the StFX Research Ethics Board and the REB documentation you attach as an appendix to the thesis.

Timeline

Be realistic in outlining the time it will take to carry out the various stages of your research. Plan for periods of research, writing, revision, and presentation. Be sure to add the targeted deadlines for Research Ethics Board Meetings and thesis deadlines.

Chapter Outline

Writing a draft chapter outline at the research proposal stage serves to help you to think about how you will organize your research and how you will present it. See pages 63–64 of this document for a sample of a typical thesis Table of Contents which will help to guide your chapter outline.

References

Be sure to include all cited references used in this proposal, following APA guidelines.

Appendix (Appendices) [if appropriate]

Your appendix section is a place to include information such as learning models and/or drafts of questions for participants. The nature of your thesis will determine the nature of or need for appendices.

Thesis Preparation & Style

These guidelines provide merely one way of organizing your thesis. They are *not a recipe* or a rulebook. You must still determine what is best for you and the presentation of your work. These guidelines can help you, as a graduate student, and your advisor to focus relatively more of your time on the research process and the content to be included in the thesis, and relatively less time on presentation considerations.

Overview of the Preparation and Style

The Faculty of Education follows the American Psychological Association's (APA) style. This style has become the standard for most publications in the social sciences and humanities fields. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th edition are to be adhered to closely. **You may also refer to the *StFX MEd Graduate Student Handbook* for more information on writing and referencing.**

Length and Appendices

The thesis text should be **about 100 pages long**. It should incorporate reference citations. The reference list and appendices follow the text. Appendices, if any, should comprise only that material that cannot usefully or easily be accommodated within the text. Use original text and not photocopies in your appendices. Appendices should normally constitute no more than 10% of the total number of pages.

Editing

You are strongly encouraged to have someone read and edit your work. Even the best and most famous writers regularly use editors. An editor improves the flow and readability of your work by recommending changes in style and structure. Ask that person to look for such things as quality of content, presentation of ideas (smoothness, transition, precision, consistency, and clarity), grammar, punctuation, and spelling. **Remember, the entire thesis should read as a whole.**

The Faculty of Education's MEd Thesis Copy Editor will edit your thesis before it goes to the external reader, for a closer reading on style and structure. Your faculty thesis supervisor will assist you in submitting your thesis proposal and final thesis to the MEd Thesis Copy Editor

Timelines and Review Process

Sufficient time (at least 1 month, preferably not during the 2 months before Fall or Spring convocation) must be allotted for thesis editing by the MEd Thesis Editor before final deadline submissions. The external reader requires at least 1 month to read and to respond to your work.

It is imperative that you be accessible by telephone, fax, and StFX email while you are completing your thesis. Please provide your thesis supervisor with an updated list of numbers and addresses where you can be contacted, and also send this list to Coleen Jones, Assistant to the Director of Continuing & Distance Education via email to cjones@stfx.ca, telephone (902) 867-3906, or fax to (902) 867-5154.

Confidentiality

Your thesis is a public document. To avoid potential ethical issues regarding participant confidentiality, you should use fictitious names, unless written permission has been explicitly granted to use real names for persons and organizations. Use only personal data for which you have received informed consent (e.g., taped interviews), not from informal conversations for which consent was not specifically extended. Be sure fictitious names are not transparent (e.g., by revealing place of institution or identifying background detail of persons). **Refer to the Faculty's Research Ethics Protocol section in these guidelines and the complete ethical guidelines at this website:**

<http://www.mystfx.ca/research/ethics/>

Thesis Copies and Binding

Laser quality printing (minimum 180 dpi) of final copy is required for reproduction. The xerography must be on high-quality paper (minimum laser white) of standard size (8.5 x 11 inches).

Type size for text is to be 12-point. The main font should be Times New Roman.

Required by the University. Once you have successfully completed your thesis, made any necessary revisions, and have the thesis acceptance page signed, please give the Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership 1 (one) final, completed copy of your thesis 1 month before the date of convocation. You will also need to print and have bound four copies as soon as possible after completion to the following: one to the university library, one to the Faculty of Education Resource Centre, one to the Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Leadership, and one to your thesis advisor.

Optional copies. You may have as many additional copies bound as you wish. Your work is valuable and others may appreciate having copies presented to them. You may want or need to provide a copy to your school board, participants in your research, etc., and a copy for yourself of course! It may be appreciated if you provide copies for each of your committee members; these optional copies can be coiled paperback copies.

Binding. All binding costs are the students' responsibility. If the title of the thesis is lengthy, a short title (45 characters) may be needed for the spine of the bound thesis. This should follow the wording of the original title as closely as possible. Information on the spine should also include the title of your thesis, your name, MEd, and the year of completion. Please contact the following individual for preparation of your four required copies and any additional copies you may wish to have bound:

<p>Fernand Daigle 332 Hillside Drive Boutilier's Point, Nova Scotia B0J 1G0 Telephone: (902) 826-7915</p>
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A Typical Thesis Outline

Not all of the suggested categories are necessary or appropriate for all studies, and the order of items within chapters (or the number of chapters) may vary somewhat. For examples, consult recent theses completed in *this* department. A sample title page, signing page, library release form, and table of contents are included in this handbook.

Order of Prefatory Pages

The thesis should contain the following prefatory pages, in the order presented here:

- title page (see example)
- faculty signing page (see example)
- library release form (see example)
- dedication page (optional)
- acknowledgements (optional, maximum one page)
- abstract (see details below)
- table of contents (see example)
- list of tables (if any)
- list of figures (if any)
- list of symbols or abbreviations (if applicable)

Leave these pages unnumbered.

Abstract

The abstract is a summary or condensation of the thesis and states the background and focus of the inquiry, the methods used, the key findings, and any significant conclusions and implications. The abstract should not exceed 250 words.

Table of Contents

The table of contents lists the main divisions (headings) of the thesis and all the subdivisions (subheadings) as well. It identifies the reference list and the appendices (if any). It is followed by a list of tables (if any) and a list of figures (if any), formatted in the same style.

Chapter 1: Introduction (Describe what you set out to do and why)

This chapter is preferably titled using appropriate, descriptive, succinct wording. Chapter 1 should deal with the following kinds of information, keeping in mind that this is an overview of the key elements of the thesis presented in a length and order that is most appropriate for your particular study (roughly 10–12 pages).

Untitled introductory paragraph(s). This is a brief statement in one or a few paragraph(s) to introduce your thesis topic and your practitioner focus, and to orient the reader toward better understanding the rest of the thesis.

Personal educational context. This section provides the reader with a picture of your practical experience as an educator and of your research interests. It situates your study within *your* particular geographic/demographic and work setting. Often, this section is the largest component of chapter 1.

Background to the study. This section provides a setting for you to state the focus of your inquiry (research question) in a way that is meaningful to a reader who may not be familiar with your specialized area of interest. It should not contain a full-fledged discussion of definitions or a review of the entire literature around the stated topic of inquiry, but may well cite an especially illuminating exposition or conception of the topic (e.g., educational trends related to the topic; unresolved issues; social, instructional, or organizational concerns).

Significance of the study. Usually this section describes why your topic is significant to the field of education. If brief, the significance of the study may be part of the introductory paragraphs for the chapter.

Organization of the thesis. In a paragraph or two, set up the theoretical or conceptual framework of the ensuing chapters for the reader.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature (What do others say about the topic?)

This chapter provides the reader with a brief overview of *the works of the people who have influenced* your inquiry. The literature provides a theoretical or conceptual framework for the study and methods you will use in your study. This chapter locates your work in the larger field of education and focuses specifically on your topic.

Themes and sub themes. Sections and subsections in chapter 2 vary greatly according to the nature of the individual thesis. In certain theses, such as those that comprise comparative analysis of theoretical concepts, the literature review may comprise more than one chapter. In certain other theses, the review of ideas from the literature may be scattered among the other chapters.

Be comparative and critical. In citing others' ideas and findings, be comparative (among references) and critical (use published literature to critique published ideas). Take the stance of a journalist reporting on the existing literature. Be sure references cited are relevant and current for your study; but also recognize relevant early theorists. You may occasionally show the connection between specific ideas and your context, but, in most cases, it is best to refrain from entering into an introspective conversation on the ideas—unless such an introspective conversation is part of a thesis whose main thrust is comparative analysis of theoretical concepts.

Definition of terms. Be aware that terminology can have different meanings to different people, or that unfamiliar technical terms may need to be explained so that readers can grasp their implications within a thesis.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Data Collection (Describe how you explored your research question)

Chapter 3 describes what you did, how you did it, and who was involved. It explains the general approach you took in pursuing the research and the specific steps you used to collect data. Include the ethical considerations here.

Methodological approach. This section includes an overview of the research genre you used, and it may present the key theoretical constructs (citing literature) of the approach. It is important to explain why you chose this method, why this approach was appropriate for your study, and how you adapted and/or applied it.

Data collection activities. This section explains where and how you obtained the data, including the nature of any human sources. It outlines the specific activities you engaged in (e.g., interviewing or self-reflective writing and analysis). Provide the generic characteristics of any participants, and describe how they were approached/solicited to participate. Give the reader a sense of the uniqueness or generalizability of the data sources, especially in relevance to the intended uses for the thesis.

Ethical considerations. Explain the steps you took to protect the voluntary nature, withdrawal ability, and confidentiality of the participants during the study. Clarify how you extended these considerations within the thesis (such as use of fictitious names, removal/revision of identifying comments or descriptions, and opportunity for participants to review drafts). Cite the StFX Research Ethics Board and the REB documentation you attach as an appendix to the thesis.

Assumptions. In applying general research techniques to specific situations, often assumptions are made that underlie the nature of the data and findings—for example, assumptions about the wording of questions may influence responses received. If, upon reflection, you may have made any assumptions that could have influenced the nature of the data or findings, make them explicit here.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings (Describe what you found)

This chapter provides the reader with the key findings of the study. Generally, the findings are presented in an analyzed and digested format, not as raw data. However, interpretation of the significance of study findings for you or other educators is often done in a separate chapter.

Organization of the findings. Sections and subsections are used to organize the findings; these are unique to each thesis. The headings chosen should enable the reader to grasp the basic nature of the findings by skimming the chapter.

Presentation format for the results. The themes that have emerged should be presented in a manner that enables the reader to most easily perceive the most important elements first, and the nuances and detail (or sub-themes) in relationship to these key elements. Specific details, including dialogue, are used to amplify and illustrate the themes. Sometimes figures and tables can help, especially for comparing numbers or expressions of perspectives, but be sure to describe the key

features of each figure and table in the text as well. Perspectives expressed in the participants' own words can add insight and understanding for the reader.

Studies where findings are lengthy and fall into two or more discrete categories. In some studies, the findings may constitute the majority of the thesis or may comprise quite discrete categories. In such cases the findings may be presented in two (or more) separate chapters, perhaps each of interest to different readers.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Interpretation, Implications, Conclusions, Recommendations (What does it all mean?)

The final chapter (or two) is the place to make sense of the findings in relationship to educational practice, previous understanding, or the research question posed in Chapter 1. In some theses (such as ones that present a new model for practice) two chapters may be required to separate the relevant interpretation and implications from the conclusions and recommendations. Some of the topics you might consider are suggested below as illustrative only.

How do your findings support or challenge the literature? Show how specific findings (perhaps use specific examples from your data) contrast with or provide consistent evidence with comparable literature if the findings extend the literature (new contexts), expose weaknesses or gaps in it, or reinforce tentative ideas expressed in the literature,.

What interpretations have you constructed to answer your research question? If you have a new model or interpretation to offer about a practice concern, describe it here and explain its features. Point out how your interpretation is distinct from previous ones.

How do you integrate the new knowledge or perspectives you have generated? If your findings point to a new way of doing things, discuss the implications for your practice as an educator. Similarly, examine the implications your findings may have for other educators in their approach to practice. Discuss the significance of any changes implied.

Conclusions drawn from the study. Any conclusions you make should be based on your data and should flow from the findings.

Recommendations. Recommendations are your suggestions for others to consider as a result of the findings and interpretations presented in the thesis.

Bringing closure. Various techniques can help to bring a sense of closure to the thesis. First, be sure that any narrative threads, metaphors, or logical ideas you introduced in earlier chapters are tied together, without any loose ends. Sometimes the conclusions and recommendations are presented in a separate short chapter. Often a short, reflective, final section discussing the personal impact of doing the thesis is useful. In other theses, a short reflective chapter, often without section headings, is used to bring closure. Another useful closure strategy is to discuss the ideas for further research that doing this thesis has inspired.

References

All theses must have a list of references following the last chapter and preceding any appendices. The reference list must include every reference cited in the thesis, and no other references. The references are listed in alphabetical order, in accordance with **APA guidelines (6th ed.)**. Most theses require only a reference list. However, some theses may also have a bibliography following the reference list. A bibliography provides an extended list of references closely related to the thesis topic, but which may not be cited in the thesis, and which may be of interest to the reader. A bibliography may be subdivided according to subtopic if useful. Page numbering of the reference list continues from the last chapter, in the same format. These references are presented singled-spaced, with one space between each reference.

Appendices

All appendices should be labelled using letters (Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.), in the order cited in text, even if only one is cited. Headings for each appendix should be parallel with chapter headings (i.e., Level 1), and each appendix should be started on a new page. All appendices' pages should be numbered, in sequence continuing from the reference list (and bibliography if one is included), and in the same format. Styling (page margins, font, etc.) within most appendices should be the same as used in the rest of the thesis. Documents used as appendices should be retyped or electronically transferred and reformatted into the thesis document. When scanning images to be used in appendices, pay attention to print and reproduction quality.

Some Sample Page Formats

The following pages show sample formats for the title page, signing page, library release form, research ethics compliance letter or form, table of contents, and typical headings.

Title Page

St. Francis Xavier University

CLASSROOM STORIES OF DIVERSITY

By

Leslie Smith

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Curriculum and Leadership
Faculty of Education

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Education
in Educational Administration and Leadership
[or]
in Curriculum and Instruction

Antigonish, Nova Scotia
Copyright, Fall [or] Spring, Year

Thesis Acceptance Form (Signing Page)**St. Francis Xavier University
Faculty of Education**

The undersigned have read, and recommend to the Committee on Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled [**Insert in Bold Font the Thesis Title**] submitted by [Insert Student Name] in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Education.

Dr. [insert name]
Supervisor

Dr. [insert name]
Second Reader

Dr. [insert name]
Department Reader

Dr. [insert name]
External Reviewer
Reviewer's University

Date

Library Release FormName of Author: **Author's Name** [Bold and Underlined]Title of Thesis: **Title** [Bold and Underlined]Degree: **Master of Education**Year this Degree Granted: **Fall [or] Spring, Year**

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Date: _____

Student's Signature _____

Address of Student

Appendix for Theses that do Require REB Approval

The letter of approval for doing the research, signed and sent by the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board, should be cited in text and included as an appendix.

Appendix for Theses not Requiring REB Approval *

<p style="text-align: center;">St. Francis Xavier University Faculty of Education</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Confirmation of Research Projects/Theses NOT Requiring Ethics Approval from REB</p> <p>This is to certify that _____ [Name of student] _____ does NOT require ethics approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at St. Francis Xavier University in order to complete her or his thesis,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ [Title of Thesis] _____</p> <p>as part of her or his Master of Education Program.</p> <p>_____ <i>[Signature]</i> _____</p> <p>Dr./Professor [Name] Thesis supervisor</p>

*** Note: This appendix should be cited in text**

Creating a Table of Contents

These instructions will help you to use MS Word to create a Table of Contents that is formatted and aligned correctly to APA 6th edition standards. You can avoid frustration and errors in style formatting by not linking your Table of Contents to the headings in your text and by not using MS Word’s template function to create your Tables of Contents. It is best to create a Table of Contents from a new blank page of text. To get started use MS Word help to find the official instructions for creating a Table of Contents for your version of MS Word; look for information about Creating a Table of Contents, Tab Leader and Alignment. A sample setup for a Table of Contents is given below; you’ll also see examples of tabs, alignment and leaders by looking at the Ruler Bar as you look through the sample Table of Contents below.

1. First, format the tabs for the first line as follows:
 - a) Set tabs at 0.5, 1.0, and 1.5 for indents at the beginning of the lines according to the heading level using the following specifications:
 - Alignment: left
 - Leader: none
 - b) Set tab at 0.3 or 0.4 inch *before* the right margin (say at 5.6 inch for page margins of 1.5 inch left and 1.0 inch right margin) using the following specifications:
 - Alignment: right
 - Leader: dotted
 - c) Set tab at right margin (6.0 inch) using the following specifications:
 - Alignment: right
 - Leader: none
2. Type the headings, type one space after the last word, press the tab key for the dotted leader, press the tab key for the right-margin tab, then type in the page number.
3. Sometimes you need to delete a tab stop for a particular line if the heading is short in order to not have one of the first three tabs (rather than the leader tab) invoked after the heading. Conversely, if you have four levels of headings, you will need to add another initial tab at 2.0 inch for the indent at the beginning of this line.

The following is an example of how these tabs should align if formatted properly (Note the layout if a heading wraps to the next line):

Chapter 6. Reconceptualizing the Traditional Language Lab.....	89
Perception versus Reality	89
Seeing Second-Language Learners as Kindred Spirits	91
A Closer Look at the Second-Language Learner Community	93
Practical Implementation: Forming Second-Language Teaching–Learning Communities	97
Seeing Things Differently Through World Traveling	104
Cultural differences in learning approaches	105
Possibilities for Changing Second-Language Teaching	108
Questions of Courage along the Way While Journeying	110