

Major Research Project Option (MRP)

Requirements

A Candidate selecting the Research Project option to complete the Master's Degree is required to complete the following:

- (1) The equivalent of *three* full-courses (i.e., *six* half courses). Up to one full-course equivalent may be taken outside of the program, in other graduate programs at York, or in an acceptable graduate program at another university (with the prior approval of the Candidate's advisor and the Faculty of Graduate Studies).
- (2) Research Project, the nature of which and its procedures are described below.

NOTE: As per Faculty of Graduate Studies regulations (Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar), all Candidates are reminded of the importance of the timely completion of their programs (coursework requirements and Research Project). Full-time students have a maximum of 2 years (6 terms) and part-time students a maximum of 4 years (12 terms) in which to complete their programs.

The Nature of the Research Project

The Research Project allows Candidates to engage in additional scholarly work and provides a more flexible format than the Thesis. Research Projects, as with Theses, move beyond description and/or opinionated accounts of practices and theories.

The Research Project may take many forms such as: a critical review of the research literature relevant to the Candidate's interest; a position paper on a crucial issue in education, a theoretical essay that explores an educational practice; a research study (either qualitative or quantitative in nature) that considers a specific problem, experience, or event. It may also take the form of a document that presents a curriculum project, handbook, or video, or an exploration of an educational technology. In *all* these latter cases a short discussion paper that provides a theoretical framework and rationale must be an integral part of the project. Should the Candidate create new materials for educational purposes, these too need to be accompanied by a short discussion paper that elaborates the conceptual and theoretical context for the generation of new materials.

Thus, while the form of the Research Project is flexible, the Research Project is a focussed academic exercise. A Research Project:

- (1) Demonstrates a relationship to educational research and a field of study;
- (2) Articulates the conceptual framework that motivates the Project;
- (3) Provides a critical discussion of the topic; and
- (4) Contributes to an expanded understanding of the problem addressed.

A Research Project is also distinguished by its supervisory and evaluative procedures. The Research Project is supervised by a Supervisor and is examined by the Supervisor and a Second Reader. The Research Project is graded as either Pass or Fail. The Research Project culminates in a Summative Discussion of the work undertaken by the Candidate.

The standards for the presentation of the Research Project should be in keeping with those of any graduate course major paper submission.

On Distinguishing a Research Project from a Thesis

The Research Project differs from the Thesis in three ways:

- (1) The amount of graduate coursework completed prior to the Research Project;
- (2) The committee structure and evaluation procedures;
- (3) The scope of the Research Project.

A Research Project allows Candidates to engage in one of a variety of forms of inquiry (see 2b above) while working closely with a Graduate Faculty member who serves as Supervisor. A Second Reader reads and evaluates the Research Project once the Supervisor deems it to be ready. A discussion of the Research Project occurs with the Candidate, Supervisor and the Second Reader.

Research Project Supervision

(1) Selection of the Supervisor

Full-time Candidates, by the end of their *second semester*, and part-time Candidates by their *fourth semester* should have started to formulate their Project. Full-time Candidates by the end of the *second semester* and part-time Candidates by the *fourth semester* are expected to have approached a faculty member in the Graduate Program in Education (who must be a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies) to serve as a Supervisor.

There are obvious factors to consider in choosing a Supervisor, such as a faculty member's knowledge of your area of interest and her/his familiarity with the methodology or conceptual frameworks you are considering. Further, interpersonal and work style factors that influence close working relationships are important considerations. Previous contacts with faculty members and advisors should guide you.

Candidates are encouraged to talk to several potential Supervisors before making a decision.

(2) Supervisory Structure

When the Supervisor assesses the Project as ready for a Second Reader, the Supervisor and Candidate will agree upon a Second Reader for the Project. The Second Reader must be a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies deemed appropriate by the Supervisor and the Candidate. He or she must be approved by the Graduate Program Director. Exceptions to the requirement of standing in the Faculty

of Graduate Studies for Second Readers may be obtained if an appropriate rationale can be provided to the Graduate Program Director.

The Graduate Program in Education Office must be notified of the name of the Second Reader as soon as one has been chosen and no later than one month prior to the Summative Discussion.

(3) *The Role of the Second Reader*

The Second Reader will initially have two weeks to evaluate the Research Project. The Second Reader has three responsibilities:

- (a) Evaluate the Project;
- (b) Request revisions that may be substantive or minor; and
- (c) Agree to a Summative Discussion date after the Project has been deemed by the Supervisor and the Second Reader to have been satisfactorily revised.

Preparing the Research Project Proposal

The Proposal is a substantive discussion of the Project. The Proposal is submitted to the Graduate Program in Education Office and is made available to the graduate community. The Project Proposal is an opportunity for the Candidate to articulate the shape, scope, context, and rationale of the Project, the methods worked with, and, the conceptual questions and issues that concern the Project. This exercise is meant to prepare the Candidate to focus the Project, to shape its coherence, and to engage in academic work that conforms to a manual style in citation and footnote practices. Essentially, the Proposal serves as a guide to the Project and as a working document, against which any proposed changes in the nature of direction of the study may be reviewed by the Supervisor.

The length of the Proposal will vary depending upon the nature of the Project; however, the Proposal should provide a discussion of the work to be undertaken, with additional pages given over to a working bibliography and if necessary, the Human Participants Form as an addendum. The working - bibliography should suggest the research literature and theoretical orientations that the Project will engage and that the Candidate “thinks” with.

Below is a set of guidelines to aid in proposal development. The actual sections of the proposal are best determined by the nature of the thesis topic and in consultation with the Supervisor.

(1) The Research Project Proposal:

a. Cover page

Signed by student and supervisor to indicate if research involves human participants.

(See section X. *Research Involving Human Participants* to see what additional forms need to be submitted if your research involves human participants).

b. Title page

The title page should include: the proposed title of the study, the Candidate's name, the name of the institution, the degree sought and the date of submission.

c. Statement of the problem

The statement of the problem should address, in narrative form, at least the following questions:

- (a) How did you come to be interested in the topic?
- (b) What is the nature and scope of the topic?
- (c) Why is the topic worthy of consideration?
- (d) What sorts of insights and thinking are behind the topic and/or, what research has addressed this topic?

d. Statement of key questions you bring to the Project and discussion of literature

Typically, in this section, Candidates are asked to consider two different types of issues. The first highlight the personal importance the Project. Consequently, Candidates are asked to consider: What are the central and critical questions that underlie the exploration? Why are these questions important to the Project? The second set of questions should discuss: (a) the scholarly literature the Candidate is working with, (b) any concepts and orientations that are important to the Project and why they are important, (c) any philosophical issues raised in the Project, and (d) the theory drawn upon as the Project is being crafted.

e. Description of methodology and/or strategies.

This section describes what Candidates will do as they conduct their Projects. The discussion of methodology depends upon the nature of the Project and the strategies employed for crafting the Project. As with the Thesis, the methodology should make sense in relation to the question or problem posed.

The following questions should be considered in relation to this section: What type of work will be done in this Project? Why is the particular orientation of the work necessary for the Project? How will the Project be organized? How will the Project's importance be assessed?

[Note: If the Project concerns fieldwork and interviews, consideration should be given to the specific methodology employed and why this methodology is important to the work? If the Project concerns textual analysis or archival work, how will the procedures for critique and analysis be defined?]

f. Timetable

Propose a timetable for completing the Research Project.

g. Concluding statement, reference list and working bibliography

A brief statement outlining the intended shape the Project will take (e.g., a position paper, essay, field study, curricular Project, annotative bibliography and essay discussion etc.).

It is helpful to construct two sections of references. The first section is a Reference List with bibliographic entries for every cited work in the Proposal. The second section, a Bibliography, anticipates further references of value. Consult a style manual for correct citation form.

h. Human Participants Form

Should the Project involve interviewing and/or fieldwork, a Human Participants Form must be completed prior to the commencement of the actual research (see guidelines/forms) and must be reviewed by the Graduate Program in Education Human Participants Review Committee *prior* to the commencement of the study.

Only after the Research Project has been accepted by the Supervisor and has been approved by the Human Participants Review Committee (if applicable), then the Candidate may commence the work.

i. Summative Discussion and Evaluation

Once the Project has been passed by the Supervisor and the Second Reader, a Discussion about the Research Project will be scheduled. To schedule a Discussion, a Summative Discussion Meeting Form must be submitted indicating the date, time and location of the Discussion.

This Discussion meeting, that lasts approximately one hour, provides an opportunity to have a conversation about the genesis of the Project and to reflect on the import of the original Proposal.

j. Submission of Final Copies

Upon completion of the Research Project and the Discussion, 2 copies must be filed with the Graduate Program in Education Office. Specific time lines (i.e., deadline dates for each semester) are available from the Graduate Program in Education office. The Research Project will then be made available to the graduate community at York.

ALL FINAL COPIES SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Title page with supervisor's signature
- Abstract (no more than 150 words)
- Acknowledgement page (optional)
- Table of contents
- Introduction
- Chapters
- Conclusion
- References
- Appendices (if needed)

To ensure convocation and avoid the need of registering for a further term, Candidates should check with the Graduate Program in Education Office for final details.