Master’s Degree in Education Handbook

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The Master’s Degree in Education is centered on a vision of social justice for children, their families, and their communities. Within the program, students critically examine educational theories and research through a variety of empirical, theoretical, and cultural lenses to develop an informed educational vision and innovative pedagogy. All MA in Education candidates engage with a solid set of core courses that introduce broad ideas in research, social foundations of education, social justice, and assessment. As well, each candidate selects one of three concentrations in which to deepen their intellectual and professional growth. Candidates have the opportunity to collaborate with faculty and colleagues to examine and influence current educational practice through research, project development, and advocacy.

We have prepared this handbook to assist candidates in the successful completion of a Master of Arts in Education degree. It is intended to serve as a guide and a framework for success.

Seeking advising from the program advisor in your area of concentration to collaboratively plan your MA program will also support your success. You may also confer with other graduate program faculty and the Graduate Coordinator for advising and guidance in your coursework and professional development.

Current program advisors, along with their contact information, are listed here: <http://education.sonoma.edu/departments/gsac/advising>

# Master’s Degree in Education Program Goals

Courses in the Education MA Program have been designed to align with and support the social justice mission of the School of Education. We expect graduates to emerge from their work at Sonoma State University as leaders in our field and agents of change.

## Social Justice Vision and Mission Statement

**Vision**

Advancing social justice in schools and communities through excellence in education

**Mission**

The School of Education provides transformative educational experiences through teaching, research, and key initiatives. We prepare undergraduates, graduate students, and credential candidates to advocate for social justice in their learning and throughout their careers so students, schools, and communities flourish.

**SOE Core Values**

* We believe that examining and respecting human differences is central to educational inclusivity.
* We believe that collaboration and community partnerships strengthen our work.
* We are committed to equity and access in education for all.
* We promote meaningful learning through theoretically sound and research-based pedagogies.

## Sonoma State Graduate Level Learning Goals & School of Education Program Learning Outcomes

Graduate students engage in learning in ways that are different from those of undergraduates. Graduate student learning is more self-directed and independent. Sonoma State University’s Graduate Studies Office developed *Graduate Level Learning Goals* aligned with the university’s Strategic Priorities. As well, faculty in the Education Master’s Degree program collaborated to define our own expectations of the ways in which the degree program influences graduate student growth and development. These learning goals and outcomes align well and appear in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sonoma State Graduate Level Learning Goals** | **School of Education Program Learning Outcomes** |
| **Disciplinary Knowledge:** Expand mastery of a field of knowledge, both foundational and specific. | Students demonstrate how their breadth and depth of knowledge about advancing social justice in schools and communities has changed in regard to reading and applying educational research. |
| **Critical Thinking/Analysis:** Demonstrate advanced skills of creative, analytical and critical thinking. | Students demonstrate their ability to critically analyze multiple historical, philosophical and theoretical perspectives in relationship to issues of educational and social inequities. |
| **Communication:** Demonstrate advanced oral and written communication skills. | Students demonstrate the ability to write at a graduate level. |
| **Practical Application:** Engage with practical and professional aspects of the field, such as research, projects, or professional experience. | Students can explain how the MA program has contributed to their ability to be an advocate for social justice in education. |
| **Professional Integrity:** Demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills related to cultural and ethical aspects of the field. | Students can articulate how the MA coursework has contributed to their personal, intellectual, and professional growth in relationship to the social justice framework of the School of Education  Students can explain how the MA program has contributed to their understanding of equity and access for all learners. |
| **Integrative Dimension:** Engage with competencies that integrate cultural, technological, ethical, practical, and/or professional aspects of the field. | Students complete a culminating activity in which they cogently demonstrate: their ability to draw from appropriate and adequate peer-reviewed research connections |

# Program Description

The Education graduate program of study requires 33 semester units of coursework. All MA candidates in Education take 18 units of *core curricular study*, along with 15 units of *specialization within the selected concentration*. The degree culminates with a project that synthesizes what has been learned either through a thesis or a project and which is developed in collaboration with an MA committee of professors and other experts.

We encourage you to become knowledgeable about the MA program so that you can pursue a path of study that meets your professional and intellectual goals.

## MA in Education Core Courses and Descriptions

All MA candidates in Education engage with core coursework that emphasizes the ways in which educators support social justice through teaching, curriculum development, community participation, and reading or engaging with research.

**EDMS 570 The Reflective Educator**

EDMS 570 is one of the core MA courses students take when they first enroll in the program. Through a social justice lens, students will critically examine philosophical, historical, and sociocultural perspectives that have informed schooling in the United States. Students will reflect on their personal and professional experiences in education in light of these larger conceptual frameworks in order to examine assumptions about the purposes and practices of schooling. Overarching themes throughout the course include the role of schooling in a democratic society, how schools as institutions both maintain and disrupt inequities, and what it means to be an educator who challenges oppression.

**EDSP 571 Research Paradigms in Education**

This course is designed to be taken midway in the Master of Arts degree program. This course focuses on becoming a critical consumer of research and includes among its goals the development of skills in the analysis and critique of educational research. The course serves to acquaint students with basic principles and techniques of educational research. It also provides students with an opportunity to integrate knowledge of these principles through analyses of action research projects that may serve as the foundation for the culminating master of arts degree project.

**EDCT 574 Theories & Research in Teaching for Social Justice**

This course focuses specifically on how educators can address systems of oppression within educational settings and work to ameliorate the concomitant inequities experienced by the students with whom they work. Educators will examine how racism, patriarchy, ableism, heterosexism, ethnocentrism, and linguistic privilege operate in schools and society through critical analysis of the theories and research related to teaching for social justice. Students will grapple with the myriad definitions of what counts as teaching for social justice as well as investigate the practical application of these theories and research to educational practices.

**EDCT 575 Learning and Assessment in Education**

This required core course provides an overview of various perspectives on learning and assessment in educational settings. Students will be introduced to the intersections among culture, cognition, and context as they critically analyze the design and uses of educational assessments. Students will also examine issues of equity and justice in assessment and their implementations for educational policy and practice.

**EDMS 597 Portfolio and Proposal Preparation**

This required core course provides graduate students with a collaborative community to prepare for their advancement to candidacy. Students will prepare their portfolios, write a literature review relevant to their selected topic and draft a full proposal for their culminating activity. Pre-requisites: Students must have completed most of their courses and have advisor/committee chair approval to enroll.

**EDSP 599 Supervised Study: Thesis or Project**

Supervised Research provides students with guidance in the completion of their culminating project. Under the direction of the committee chair, and in consultation with all committee members, students will complete the thesis or project that was developed in EDMS 597 . Following completion of the research project, students will participate in a formal presentation of their work to faculty and colleagues. *You must identify a committee chair and obtain approval from the Graduate Studies Coordinator before you may enroll in EDSP 599.*

### Core Course Map

MA Education core course are offered on a regular rotation. Candidates should take EDMS 570 and EDCT 574 early in the program. EDSP 571 and EDCT 575 are midpoint courses. EDMS 597 and EDSP 599 should be taken together in the last semester of the program.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Course Rotation** | |
| **Fall** | **Spring** |
| EDMS 570  EDSP 571  EDMS 597  EDSP 599 | EDCT 574  EDCT 575  EDMS 597  EDSP 599 |

## MA in Education Concentrations

We offer three different concentrations in the MA in Education. In these courses, you will delve into areas of particular interest to you, again with an eye toward social justice and improving the lives of children and families through education. Although each MA candidate chooses a concentration, we encourage you to take an elective from a different concentration as a means to expand your professional and intellectual development. Courses and requirements for each concentration are described later in this handbook.

When scheduling courses, MA candidates will generally take one course from the core and one from the chosen concentration in each semester. Candidates who wish to take more than 6 units (two classes) each semester may do so. Work closely with an advisor to plan your courses as many are only offered once each year or even in alternate years.

For planning purposes, a sample pathway through the program is provided. It assumes a fall start to the MA program. This sample assumes taking two classes (6 units) each semester, which means paying only part-time tuition/fees.

### Sample Pathway- fall entry

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **First fall** | **First spring** | **Second fall** | **Second spring** | **Third fall** | **Third spring** |
| EDMS 570 +  concentration | EDCT 574 +  concentration | EDSP 571 +  concentration | EDCT 575 +  concentration | EDSP 597  EDSP 599+  concentration | Continuing education if needed |

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## Culminating Project

At the end of the MA program, each candidate develops a project to synthesize what has been learned. This project reflects an advancement in professional and intellectual knowledge. Candidates may choose one of two types of culminating projects. Students must also present the culminating project to their three-member committee in a public forum.

**Thesis**

The thesis is a written product of a systematic study of a significant question, problem, or issue in education. It requires a great deal of independence and self-direction on the part of the student. The thesis option requires an extensive written product, including an in-depth literature review. A thesis could be based on a quantitative research study, a qualitative research study or a mixed methods research study. In lieu of research, a thesis may also involve curriculum design, creating and implementing professional development experiences, program design, or various types of creative activities.

**Project**

The project is also a significant undertaking through which students connect their course of study with the program concentration, and/or work in the field, but without involving an extensive written work. Projects arise out of candidates' goals and professional interests and may take virtually any form, e.g., professional article, video, website, field-based product. The project may address, for example, implications of the course of study for the classroom, or be reflections on teaching practices involving the use of new technologies, or the application of scholarly research and educational theory in a particular setting. A written reflection that includes the theoretical context and literature review for the project must be included.

# Advising

There are many people to whom you may turn for help with advising as you progress through the MA program. Be prepared to seek out the help you need. The SOE faculty members are helpful and will be glad to assist you with your questions; however, you should initiate advising appointments with the appropriate person. At all times, be an advocate for your graduate work and ask for the guidance that will help you succeed.

## General Advising

For the most general questions about the MA program, you may wish to contact the Graduate Coordinator for the School of Education, [Dr. Jennifer Mahdavi.](mailto:mahdavi@sonoma.edu) TheGraduate Coordinator can answer general questions you may have. The topics might include:

* Who is your program advisor?
* What are the pathways to completion?
* What are the different MA concentrations and how to choose one?
* How do you switch from one concentration to another?
* What are the deadlines for filing paperwork?

## Program Advising

When you were admitted to an MA concentration, the letter was signed by a member of the faculty who is the program advisor for that concentration. The advisors are also listed here:

<http://education.sonoma.edu/departments/gsac/advising>

Your program advisor is the one to ask all questions about your area of concentration. These might include:

* What is my program plan?
* What classes should I take this semester?
* Who should I ask to be my committee chair?

You may also refer to the list of tenured and tenure-track faculty members in the School of Education to find potential mentors who have expertise in your areas of interest.

[School of Education Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty Members and Expertise](https://docs.google.com/document/d/13gPsYhHjOHqf3rQ4CieGvbzOLoIGFsbTw-dUhbMDhRU/edit#heading=h.2ye4e29ho0b1)

# The Committee

Your committee consists of three individuals whose purpose is to advise you on your culminating activity. The committee also evaluates the final product. Your committee chair must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member in the SSU School of Education. A following section of this Handbook contains a list of School of Education tenured and tenure-track faculty and their areas of interest.

You should consider a chair who has interests and/or expertise in areas related to your culminating project; this person need not necessarily be someone you have had as an instructor in the MA program, although it is most likely that they are.

Your second committee member should also teach at SSU, although that person may teach in any SSU department—within or outside the School of Education.

The third member may be someone from outside the university, but he/she must hold at least a master’s degree. An outside committee member must submit a curriculum vita or resume to the School of Education in order to serve on a committee. It is your responsibility to relay this information to the potential committee member. In special cases, subject to approval by the SSU Graduate Studies Office and the SSU Graduate Studies Office, the second committee member may also be from outside the university.

Students seeking approval to include two community members on their committees should submit a proposal, signed by the committee chair, to the School of Education Graduate Studies Committee. If the Committee approves the proposal, it will be forwarded to the SSU Graduate Studies Office for review. The proposal should include a convincing rationale for this request. An acceptable proposal would need to demonstrate that both community members have expertise that cannot be found among Sonoma State University faculty.

## Whom should you ask to serve on your committee?

First, understand that you will be asking busy faculty members whether they are willing to work with you. It may not be possible for a particular professor or instructor to accept your invitation to be on a master’s committee.

You will invite a chair from the list of tenured and tenure track faculty members in the School of Education. Consider someone who understands your topic, someone you trust, and with whom you are comfortable. Your chair will be an important person to guide you through the culminating project. Your chair may help you set up timelines, assist you in developing your portfolio, and will be your first point of contact when you have questions about completing your MA degree.

Then, discuss other potential committee members with the chair. It is usually a good idea to get the chair’s approval before asking anyone else to serve on the committee. Third members may be from outside the university and can add a perspective that you might not find among SSU faculty.

## When should you form your committee?

You should form your committee a few months before you advance to candidacy (hold your GSO1 meeting). You need to be far enough along in your MA program so that you will have met many of the School of Education faculty; at the same time, you want to ask people to work as members of your committee in time to work with them in planning your culminating activity. You MUST identify your committee chair and form your committee before you are permitted take EDSP 599!

## How should you approach prospective committee members?

If you would like to invite someone to serve on your committee, you should contact the person and ask if he/she would be interested. You should write a tentative plan of your culminating activity and include that plan with your invitation.

## How often should you meet with committee members?

Usually, graduate students meet a minimum of twice with their entire committee: at the beginning of the process when they present their portfolio and proposal to advance to candidacy and at the end when they present their thesis or project. Some committees meet one or two times in between. In addition, students often meet informally with their chair or other committee members for input throughout the process.

## What can you expect to happen at your committee meetings?

Most students meet twice with their committees, at the Advancement to Candidacy (GSO1) and the Final Presentation (GSO2), each of which is described in detail below. Some committee chairs also recommend that the committee meet sometime between the beginning and the end of the process. At this meeting, the committee can answer your questions, give you additional direction, and respond to work you have completed thus far.

# Advancement to Candidacy (GSO1)

Typically, the first meeting of the full committee, the Advancement to Candidacy meeting is an important opportunity to gain insights and approval for your research or project ideas. Usually students will have already shared their ideas with individual committee members, but when everyone is together in the same room discussing your project, the conversation can be exciting and inspirational. During this meeting, you will present your portfolio and your proposal, hear your committee’s suggestions, and either get the go-ahead to conduct the work you plan to do for your culminating project or be asked to make revisions in the portfolio and/or proposal. This is a time for you to take the lead, ask important questions, and articulate your interest in the work you plan.

After working on it with your chair, and at least a week or two prior to the GSO1 meeting, give each member your portfolio and the proposal for your project. The length of the proposal will vary, depending on the pathway you have chosen and on how far along you are in the process. Be sure to consult with your chair prior to the meeting to determine the length and depth of your proposal.

Usually it is up to the student to poll the committee to arrange a time to meet. Be sure to fill out and bring to the meeting the required form listed in the MA Program Checklist in this Handbook. The forms are at the back of this Handbook as well as on the School of Education website and the University Graduate Studies Office websites.

The Advancement to Candidacy meeting (GSO1) usually consists of three parts, although your committee chair may ask you to provide additional items or information. Each of these three elements will be further

1. Program Portfolio: Contains a reflection on your MA program supported by artifacts from your coursework.
2. Culminating Project Proposal: Present your plans for accomplishing your project goals, and conclude with questions you have for your committee. Your committee members will have questions and suggestions for you.
3. Forms: ask the members of your committee to sign your completed GSO1 (Advancement to Candidacy) and any other form required by specific concentrations. The GSO1 form should be submitted by your committee chair to the Education MA Coordinator.

## The Program Portfolio

To advance to candidacy, all students must complete a satisfactory program portfolio and present it to their committee at the same meeting where the student presents a proposal for the culminating activity.

The portfolio is intended to be reflective in nature and should show personal, professional and intellectual growth over the course of the MA program. It should demonstrate how your MA program has prepared you to undertake your culminating activity (thesis/project, cognate project, or individualized examination).

The goal of the portfolio reflection is to articulate for your committee how the entire experience of the MA program has contributed to your learning and growth as a professional. In addition to successful completion of program courses, it serves as an assessment of [program learning outcomes](#_3dy6vkm) 1-6. Your final project write-up and presentation serve as an assessment of program learning outcome 7.

### Reflection & Portfolio Directions

The portfolio reflects your experience in the MA program and is aligned to the [Social Justice Vision and Mission Statement](#_tyjcwt). It takes the form of a 5-7 page, double-spaced, narrative reflection on your journey and revelations in the MA program, along with relevant assignments and artifacts. The format of your portfolio may be a document, a website or something else that you and your committee chair prefer.

Your portfolio reflection must address the following topics. Turning the bolded topics into subject headings may help you organize this composition. Refer to assignments, readings, or assignments from the classes you took as examples or supporting evidence for each of these topics. These objects are the portfolio that accompanies the reflection.

* **Personal, Intellectual, and Professional Growth in Social Justice**

How has your MA program contributed to your personal, intellectual and professional growth in light of the vision and mission of the School of Education? You may consider the role of class assignments, discussions, readings, and other interactions as they contributed to your increased understanding of social justice in education.

* **Breadth of Knowledge of Social Justice in Education**

Breadth of knowledge refers to an expansive idea of education policies, practices, and procedures. It crosses over ideas in one area of education to illuminate bigger theories and ideas about how education functions in the United States. How has the **breadth** of your knowledge changed about advancing social justice in schools and communities as you have read and applied educational research encountered in your core MA classes?

* **Depth of Knowledge within Education Concentration**

How has your knowledge about social justice in education **deepened** as you read and applied educational research in your program area concentration? How does your concentration fit in with broader notions in education?

* **Critical Perspectives**

How has your MA program increased your ability to critically analyze multiple historical, philosophical, and theoretical perspectives in education, particularly in relationship to issues of educational and social inequities?

* **Equity and Advocacy**

How has the MA program contributed to your understanding of equity and access for all learners and your ability to be an advocate for social justice in your community of practice? What lasting impact has your MA program had on your perspectives and career?

## Proposal for Culminating Activity

In a document separate from the portfolio, you must demonstrate planning toward the completion of your culminating activity (thesis or project). In most cases, the proposal will be developed in the EDCT 597 course. Writing the description should help you initiate your work on this activity, although it is almost inevitable that your focus will evolve as you learn more about the topic you have selected.

Described below are the general requirements for the proposal. More specific directions for the thesis or the project also appear below.

**Proposal Elements for Thesis and Project**

* A list of the individual(s) who have agreed to be members of your committee
* The topic you wish to explore and how you arrived at that interest.
* A statement of how the work will advance social justice in education.
* What is the project’s significance?
* How will it advance theory and practice in your professional field?
* Elements of Proposal or Thesis Requirements as described below
* A proposed timeline for completing the work.

### Project Proposal Requirements

In addition to the elements of the proposal described above, the project proposal must include:

* Brief review of the literature/acknowledgement of what is known about the problem
* Goals for the project
* Description of proposed activity
  + What will you create or do
  + Who is the audience for your work?

### Thesis Proposal Requirements

Your thesis proposal must address the following points

* Thesis/research question(s) or project goals
* Rationale for the study
* Preliminary literature review, with additional areas for further research identified
* Tentative research methodology for thesis or procedure to complete project. Include sampling, design, and procedures.

# The Final Presentation (GSO2)

This public meeting is the culminating moment of your MA course of study. You are encouraged to invite family and friends. Some candidates choose to use the University Faculty and Graduate Research Symposium, held each spring, as the forum for their final presentations. In some cases, presentations made at school sites, school board meetings, or parent education nights can serve as this final presentation. Talk with your committee chair about the option that is best for you.

Be sure any written work (e.g., thesis/project, any written work connected to cognate project, etc.) has been approved by your committee chair so that you can give it to your committee at least one week before this meeting. Committee members typically wish to become familiar with your work and give you feedback on it before the final presentation takes place.

At the final meeting, you present your work and discuss your ideas with your committee and everyone else in the room. It is an exhilarating experience to share your ideas and engage in intellectual discussions of your work. Once the project is approved by the committee, the committee chair signs the GSO2 (Completion of Requirements) form, and the entire committee signs the thesis title page and abstract (for thesis, if selected).

Before the School of Education will submit your GSO2 form to the University Graduate Studies Office for final processing, you must complete the School of Education Exit Survey online. Your feedback provides us with the information we need to keep improving the program and the learning experiences of graduate students in the School of Education.

## Culminating Projects: In Detail

As a culmination to the master’s degree, each student synthesizes what they learned from the core and concentration courses along with professional experience and interests into a unique project or product. Each of these permits you to explore your education-related questions in depth. The thesis requires more writing and self-direction. The project is action-oriented with a sharable product.

### The Thesis Pathway

The thesis documents a systematic study of a significant and researchable question in education. In writing a thesis, the student learns about the existing state of the research in the chosen area as a way of furthering the science. The thesis/project requires an extensive written product that will be housed in the SSU Library.

After receiving the committee’s approval at the advancement to candidacy meeting, you may need to obtain approval for conducting research with human subjects. After that time, you may, conduct the research study for the thesis or develop the project.

Throughout the process, regularly seek the advice and approval of your committee chair and, as appropriate, the other committee members. In some cases, the committee will meet as a whole with the candidate one or more times before the thesis/project is completed.

When the thesis/project is completed, the candidate and committee members schedule the thesis/project presentation (GSO2 meeting). *A draft of the thesis/project must be submitted to committee members at least two weeks prior to the final meeting*. At this presentation, the candidate provides an overview of the thesis/project and responds to questions posed by the committee and others attending the presentation.

All theses/projects share the same foundation with these opening chapters:

1. Introduction: overview of the study, including research question(s)
2. Literature Review: comprehensive review of theory and research relevant to the study that illuminates candidate’s theoretical framework or captures what is already known about the topic

#### Research Thesis

The **research thesis** involves replicating previous research, conducting a new study, or in some way explores a topic in a novel way. Each research thesis is founded on a question or problem that has not yet been resolved. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs are all appropriate, as is a well-developed applied field research activity. It is imperative that you discuss your data with your committee chair as you collect and analyze it.

After the first two chapters described above, the research thesis continues with the following chapters:

1. Methods: description of research design, including methodological framework, research sample/participants, and methods of data collection and analysis
2. Results: Analysis of data
3. Discussion: implications, conclusions, and suggestions for further research

#### Thesis Project

The **thesis project** is a way to systematically review the existing research on a topic, then develop an original piece of curriculum, a practice, a handbook, or some other informative and original work that is grounded in what is known. The thesis project is also a significant undertaking appropriate to the field of education. The student who selects the thesis project does not need to conduct a research study to evaluate the educational piece that has been created. The work of the thesis project is in the creation of the project, which is grounded in the research.

Your committee chair can guide you on the structure, but typically chapters 3, 4, and 5 include the following:

1. Description of procedure for developing the project
2. The project itself: the curriculum, website, video, etc.
3. Reflections and conclusions: e.g. results of project implementation, suggestions for further work in this area, etc.

#### Thesis/Project Evaluation

1. Candidate submits thesis/project draft to committee two weeks prior to scheduled final meeting.
2. Committee members may offer feedback to the candidate before a meeting is held. Revisions may be made as needed.
3. Once the committee has determined that the thesis/project is satisfactory, the committee will meet with the candidate for the final meeting.
4. At the conclusion of the final meeting, the committee meets privately to make one of the following recommendations:
   1. Thesis/Project is finished and ready to be submitted to the University Graduate Studies Office.
   2. Thesis/Project will need certain minor revisions before being submitted to University Graduate Studies Office.
5. If the thesis/project is not approved at the initial final meeting, candidates have two more opportunities to present a satisfactory piece of work.

### Project Pathway

The project as a culminating experience is a significant undertaking through which master’s degree candidates synthesize their graduate work by producing something that furthers the area of study. These projects are often directly related to career-related work in classrooms or school communities, with individual or groups of students, with families, or with administrators and other education professionals.

Examples of project activities—all of which must be informed by core and concentration courses—are educational websites; in-service videos; professional presentations; creation, analysis, assessment, and/or implementation of curriculum; applied field research; and other applications of ideas explored in program courses.

Projects generally require less writing, but still entail significant collaborative, analytic, or leadership roles.

A 10-20 page written report, which includes the theoretical context for the work, must accompany whatever product the student has created.

Elements of the Project Culminating Experience

* Ties together candidate’s core and concentration area courses
* Illuminates the theoretical and research basis of the project
* Includes a written reflection on what was learned and how the project potentially advances social justice in education.

#### Project Final Report

After completing the project, the candidate writes a double-spaced 10 – 20 page reflection on the cognate experience. This reflection must address the following topics:

* Statement of the Problem/Inquiry
  + From your proposal, review the problem or interest that you set about to explore with this project.
* Connections to Research
  + Include the literature review completed in EDMS 597 to inform the proposed project.
  + Update the literature with more current references, if appropriate.
* The Project
  + Describe the project that you did. Include slides or materials developed.
  + Present the results of the project. This will look very different for each MA candidate due to the incredible individualization of projects.
    - If the project changed over the period of implementation, discuss how and why.
  + Discuss the impact that your project made on the intended population. In what way was it successful? In what ways could it have been better implemented? Provide examples or anecdotes.
* Contributions to Social Justice
  + How did your project contribute to social justice in education? What was its value in your community/school/context?
  + The future- what may happen as a next step with this project? How can this work be sustainable or informative of future directions?

#### Project Evaluation

*Note: If the culminating activity that the candidate has developed is a formal presentation (i.e. inservice, workshop, scholarly presentation), then the committee may evaluate the activity at the presentation itself—which could, in some cases, also function as the final presentation meeting.*

1. Candidate submits project and report to committee two weeks prior to scheduled final meeting.
2. Committee members may offer feedback to the candidate before a meeting is held. Revisions may be made as needed. Once the committee has determined that the project is satisfactory, the committee will meet with the candidate for the final meeting.
3. At the conclusion of the final meeting, the committee approves the project or asks for revisions. Upon approval, the GSO2 form is completed.
   1. If the project is not approved at the initial final meeting, candidates have two more opportunities to present a satisfactory piece of work.

# Important University Policies for Graduate Students

The following are some of the important policies for graduate students at Sonoma State University. Many of them are further described in th[e Sonoma State University Catalog](https://catalog.sonoma.edu/), especially in the sections called [Regulations and Policies](https://catalog.sonoma.edu/content.php?catoid=8&navoid=926) and in [Degree Requirements.](https://catalog.sonoma.edu/content.php?catoid=8&navoid=920#graduate-degrees)

## GPA Expectations

All courses applied to the program must be completed with an overall GPA of 3.00, and no course for which a final grade below C is assigned may be used to satisfy unit requirements.

## Full time load

Eight units of graduate-level coursework is considered a full-time load. However, students may take up to 15 units without special authorization. It is not recommended to take more than 12 units of graduate-level courses.

The Financial Aid office considers 8 units to be full-time for graduate students.

Graduate students wishing to take over 19 units must have the endorsement of the department and the approval of theGraduate Coordinator.

## Applicable Courses

Courses used toward completion of one degree (BA or previous MA) may not be applied toward completing another degree. Up to 12 units of coursework from a credential program MAY be applied, provided they are fewer than 7-years old.

No fewer than one-half of the total units required shall be in graduate (500 level) coursework.

No more than 8 units of independent study coursework may be applied.

At least 24 units must be completed in residence at Sonoma State University. Up to 30% of the program units may be taken in transfer from another accredited university, with department and program approval.

Courses taken through Extended Education services at any university **cannot** be applied toward an MA degree unless the courses were awarded graduate level credit by the university where the courses were taken.

## Timelines

Graduate programs must be completed in no more than 7 years, which is computed as 14 semesters, not inclusive of summers.

Coursework that is more than seven years old may not be used toward the degree unless it is validated through examination or comparable experience. The department will determine whether sufficient cause exists to warrant the re-validation; if not, the coursework must be retaken or new coursework substituted. No more than 9 units may be revalidated.

## Complete the final project

A grade of RP (Report Pending) is provided to students for the semester students are working on their culminating project. The RP grade will remain until the student submits the thesis or project for review. A grade of CR (credit) is assigned by Admissions and Records when the GS02 form has been received and processed by the University Graduate Studies Office, after you have completed the School of Education Exit Survey. Neither your committee chair, nor the School of Education Graduate Director can make this grade change.

See “continuous enrollment requirements” for information on how to enroll in courses if you do not finish your project in one semester.

Students who do not complete the culminating activity in a timely fashion may be required to re-enroll in thesis or project units, and in some cases, to re-apply to the university and to the program.

You have four semesters in total to complete your culminating activity, which means that you have three semesters after taking your final course (EDSP 599) to complete your culminating MA thesis or project or exam. *IN OTHER WORDS, YOU MAY ONLY ENROLL IN EDUC 578 (Project Continuation) THREE TIMES.*

Students who do not finish the degree within 14 semesters, not inclusive of summers, may petition the Graduate Studies Office for a one-semester extension of time with appropriate reasons. These petitions must be filed before the expiration of the four-semester time limit.

## Continuous Enrollment Requirements (EDUC 578)

All Sonoma State University MA students who have begun their final projects must maintain continuous enrollment at SSU through completion of the degree. This continuous enrollment policy serves to ensure that students will be able to receive the advice and supervision of faculty and that students will be able to use university facilities such as the library and computer labs.

EDUC 578: Project Continuation through the School of Extended and International Education is the most common way to maintain continuous enrollment after program classes have been completed. *To register and pay the $295 fee, you must email the Graduate Coordinator for permission and directions.* **If you have completed all courses and are not enrolled in EDUC 578, you will not be able to graduate.**

Students who wish to maintain eligibility for financial aid must maintain regular half-time enrollment and pay half-time fees. These tudents should use PeopleSoft to sign up for EDUC 578.

Students who do not maintain continuous enrollment and subsequently return to the university will be required to apply for readmission and, as a condition of readmission, will be assessed a continuing enrollment charge of $295 for every regular semester of the period during which they were absent from the university.

## File for Graduation

**Attend to university deadlines for filing for graduation.** Filing for graduation triggers a check of your progress and will ensure that you have completed all requirements for finishing your degree. Graduation application deadlines are:

* February 1 for spring and summer graduations
* September 15 for fall graduation

If you are not going to graduate in the anticipated semester, file the form to postpone graduation. All forms are at the link below.

[Graduate Program Forms & Deadlines | Division of Academic Affairs at Sonoma State University](https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/student-success/graduate-programs/forms-deadlines)

## Leave of Absence

If you expect to take more than one semester (not including Summer) away from your MA program, please file leave of absence forms for both the University and for the School of Education.

SSU Leave of Absence form: [Leaves of Absence | Office of the Registrar at Sonoma State University](https://registrar.sonoma.edu/enrollment-policies/leaves-absence)

School of Education Request for Leave of Absence form: [Request for Leave of Absence – MA Programs](http://education.sonoma.edu/sites/education/files/request_for_leave_of_absence_masters_programs_web.docx)

Without these forms, if you are not enrolled in classes for more than one semester, you will likely have to reapply to the University and possibly to the specific program within the School of Education. Check with your advisor in the School of Education to see if you need to reapply to the School of Education.

# Degree Completion Checklist

1. PRIOR to beginning culminating experience course check that ARR (Academic Records Report) is correct and all requirements have been fulfilled Note: ARR should be reviewed for completion to make sure there are NO RED BOXES.

* You can review your Academic Records Report (ARR) via your MySSU tile
* Completed Program Coursework Requirements
  + If a course is not appearing as expected, you should work with your advisor to complete an ARR Update Form
  + If you have transfer units, you must submit your transcript to the Registrar’s Office and submit an ARR Update Form so that the courses appear on your ARR
* Be sure Advancement to Candidacy is complete– Submit [GS01 Form](https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/student-success/graduate-programs/forms-deadlines) signed by committee members to Graduate Coordinator
  + Once the Graduate Studies Office has processed your form a green check will appear for General Masters Degree Requirements in your ARR

1. Apply for Graduation (see [Master’s Degree Application](https://registrar.sonoma.edu/forms-petitions)) by the posted deadline
   * See [application deadlines](https://registrar.sonoma.edu/graduation) – late applications will not be accepted
     + Be sure to review all [Steps to Apply for Graduation](https://registrar.sonoma.edu/graduation)
   * Once the Registrar’s Office has processed the application it will appear in your Academic Requirements Report in the top left corner as ‘Applied’
   * If it is necessary to delay your graduation request a change to graduation semester (see [Graduation Postponement Form](https://registrar.sonoma.edu/forms-petitions))
   * Verify that Diploma Address is up-to-date in Student Center. [Directions](https://registrar.sonoma.edu/how-to/change-name-or-address-diploma)
   * A student may not graduate without timely submission of the Master’s Degree Application Form and will be required to file the form for the following semester.
2. Complete Culminating Experience (Thesis, Project, or Comprehensive Exam)

* If you will not complete the culminating experience by the end of the semester, you will receive a grade of RP (report in progress), be sure to request a change to your graduation semester (see [Graduation Postponement Form](https://registrar.sonoma.edu/forms-petitions))
* You will retain [Continuing Student Status](https://catalog.sonoma.edu/content.php?catoid=8&navoid=926) for one semester after the semester in which you enrolled in your final course and may use this time to complete your culminating experience and graduate in that semester.
* If you require additional time beyond the one semester grace period to complete your culminating experience, to avoid being disenrolled from the university, you must use one of the following mechanisms:
  + Enroll part time in coursework in the program (e.g. special topics)
  + Enroll in project continuation through extended education - note this course will not count towards the degree, but will maintain continuing student status
  + Take a leave of absence by submitting the [Leave of Absence form](https://registrar.sonoma.edu/enrollment-policies/leaves-absence) by the deadline for the semester in question.
* You have up to two additional semesters (four semesters total) to complete the course associated with the culminating experience.
* You must be enrolled in an appropriate graduate program course or in Project Continuation in order graduate more than two semesters after taking the culminating experience course.
* If, after four semesters (this includes the semester in which the course was taken) the culminating experience is not complete, the student must re-enroll and re-take the course.

1. Upon completion of the Culminating Experience AND all eligible coursework (with grades assigned), turn in signed [GS02 Form](https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/student-success/graduate-programs/forms-deadlines) , reviewed and signed by the Program Coordinator, to the Graduate Studies Office. See [deadlines](https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/student-success/graduate-programs/forms-deadlines)

* Both the student and the Program Coordinator are required to indicate that they have checked the student’s Academic Records Report (ARR) and that the ARR has no red boxes or coursework taken more than seven years prior.
* If any courses do not have a grade or still have an RP, be sure the grade is indicated on the GSO2 Form.

1. If completing a Thesis, turn in Thesis documents to Graduate Studies Office

* Submit all three components
  + Thesis document following required formatting, including preliminary pages
  + Thesis Signature Page – signed by all committee members
  + Thesis Authorization Form
* [See guidelines and additional documentation necessary](http://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/student-success/graduate-programs/thesis-review)

If there are any questions regarding this process, please consult your Graduate Program Coordinator for your program.

# Program Areas of Concentration

Candidates may select from three areas of concentration within the discipline of Education. Information about each concentration is summarized here. You must apply to a specific concentration before you are admitted. If you wish to switch from one concentration to another you will need to submit another application.

## Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning (CTL) Concentration

The CTL area of concentration provides program flexibility for a wide range of individuals, from teachers seeking to enhance the depth and breadth of their subject matter knowledge to those seeking staff development and leadership positions in the public or private sectors. CTL candidates need not possess a teaching credential.

Students complete core coursework and six units of CTL courses, and develop their 12-16 unit Area of Emphasis (AREM), an individualized program tailored to their needs and career goals. The Area of Emphasis may or may not be composed of courses in the School of Education. It may be an established sequence of courses, such as the Educational Technology Area of Emphasis, or it may be a unique series of courses designed collaboratively by the student and the CTL advisor.

CTL candidates may choose any of the three MA pathways. Those following the cognate pathway may use their cognate course of study to pursue further study in their Area of Emphasis or to explore a related area of interest.

### CTL Program Area of Concentration Coursework (15 units)

Required CTL Courses (6 units):

* EDCT 585 Curriculum Development: Theory, Practice, and Evaluation (3 units)
* EDCT 586 Teaching and Learning: Research and Application in the Classroom (3 units)

Area of Emphasis (9 units):

Example areas of emphasis

* Chicano and Latino Studies
* Educational Technology
* History
* Psychology
* Language and Literacy
* Special Education
* Women and Gender Studies

### Advising

Prior to beginning the CTL program, students meet with the CTL advisor to develop a preliminary plan for their Area of Emphasis. Each semester thereafter, students meet with their advisor to solidify this plan and to discuss their progress in the MA program.

### Application Procedures

Please see the School of Education website for the most up to date information about applying to the program:

[MA in Education with a Concentration in CTL Application Checklist](http://education.sonoma.edu/admissions/getting-started/ma-education-application-checklist/ma-education-ctl-app-checklist)

## Language and Literacy Education Concentration

This concentration is designed to prepare teachers for specialized teaching of reading and language arts to diverse populations of students and for curriculum and instructional leadership in the field of language and literacy. Required coursework focuses on the nature of literacy development at all levels, research and theory in teaching reading and writing, and the improvement of classroom curriculum and methods that emphasize the relationship of literacy to language and concept learning.

In addition to the Language and Literacy Concentration, we offer an [Reading & Literacy Added Authorization](https://education.sonoma.edu/programs/added-authorization/reading-literacy)  to the multiple subjects credential. All courses in the state-approved licensure programs may be applied to the MA degree. Please see the link above to learn more about this added authorization.

NOTE: A preliminary teaching credential is required for admission to pursue the Language and Literacy Concentration.Students who wish to pursue an MA degree **and** a Reading and Literacy Added Authorization may complete programs concurrently.

### Program Concentration Coursework – (15 Units)

*Reading/Language Core* (9 units)

* EDRL 524 Literacy and Literature (3)
* EDRL 521A Language Development in First and Second Languages (3)
* EDRL 522 Assessment & Teaching in Reading (3)

*Electives* (6 units)

Supportive coursework may include Reading Added Authorization courses or study in other approved areas such as curriculum, or early childhood education.

### Application Procedures

Please see the School of Education website for the most up to date information about applying to the program:

[MA in Education with a Concentration in Reading & Literacy Application Checklist](http://education.sonoma.edu/admissions/getting-started/ma-education-application-checklist/ma-reading-and-literacy-checklist)

## Special Education Concentration

The Master of Arts in Education (M.A.) with a concentration in Special Education provides advanced academic study for persons working with or on behalf of individuals with disabilities. Candidates must hold a teaching credential to enroll in this program, although from related disciplines may pursue this advanced degree with consent from the Department of Educational Leadership and Special Education. Candidates must apply and be admitted both to the University and to the M.A. program in order to pursue this degree.

### Special Education Concentration Coursework (15 units)

Candidates must apply 9-12 of these units toward their M.A. degree.

EDSP 512 (3 units): Advanced Issues in Assessment, Curriculum, & Instruction of Students with Disabilities  
EDSP 513 (3 units): Current and Emerging Research and Practice in Special Education  
EDSP 514 (3 units): Advanced Communication, Collaboration, & Consultation in Special Education  
EDSP 515 (3 units): Advanced Legal Issues in Special Education

*Electives (6 units)*  
Candidates have the opportunity to seek breadth or depth in a related area of study through completion of elective courses. The number of elective units needed to complete the M.A. degree requirements varies depending upon the M.A. pathway selected. Elective coursework may be drawn from other graduate programs in the School of Education, or other departments at Sonoma State University, such as psychology, counseling, kinesiology, or others. These courses are selected with the advice and approval of the M.A. advisor.

### Advising

All M.A. candidates within the Special Education concentration will be assigned to a special education faculty advisor for the purpose of developing an individualized program of study. Electives will be determined in consideration with the advisor, in an effort to provide a broader or deeper program of study that responds to varying student interests.

### Application Procedures

Please see the School of Education website for the most up to date information about applying to the program:

[Concentration in Special Education Application Checklist](https://education.sonoma.edu/admissions/getting-started/ma-education-application-checklist/ma-special-education-checklist)

# **Additional Resources**

* [Master's Degree in Education websit](https://education.sonoma.edu/programs/ma/masters-degree-education)e
* [Office of Graduate Studies](https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/graduate-studies)
  + [Forms and Deadlines](https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/student-success/graduate-programs/forms-deadlines) (GS01 and GSO2 forms here)
  + [Thesis Review](https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/student-success/graduate-programs/thesis-review)
* [Filing for Graduation](https://registrar.sonoma.edu/graduation)

# **Appendix**

## Preparing for & Holding Advancement to Candidacy (GSO1) & Final (GSO2) Meetings

**Timelines for Meetings**

Get each GSO meeting on the calendar as soon as possible.

Three to six weeks before meeting

* Work with chair on reflection and proposal OR final project/thesis
* Plan to send at least 2 drafts (many more for a thesis). Give your chair at least 5 business days to review and get back to you.

One-two weeks before meeting: email written materials to committee (after approved by chair)

**Elements of a GSO1 meeting**

Preparation of slides or other media to support the presentation is a choice to be made in collaboration with your MA committee chair.

*Portfolio Presentation (10-15 minutes)*

* Tell who you are and how you decided to pursue the MA in this particular topic.
* Highlight elements of your portfolio reflection.
* Share a few key items from the portfolio. Of what are you particularly proud? Or what work was most meaningful for you?

*Project Proposal and Questions from the Committee (about 30 minutes)*

* Provide research background for you project
* Describe what you intend to do with your project. What is the final product?
* Define how you will evaluate the success of the project
* Discuss the importance of this work to
  + Your professional development
  + The learning of your students (or colleagues, if it is a collaborative sort of project)
  + The field of education and social justice in education
* Delineate the timeline for completing the project.

*Evaluation of Proposal by Committee*

At the end of the presentation, the committee may excuse you from the room to deliberate the merits of your project OR it may be clear after the discussions that everyone is ready to sign off on your idea. If everything is approved, the GSO1 Form will be signed and submitted to Graduate Studies.

**The Final Meeting/Defense (GSO2)**

From the SSU Graduate Studies Office website

“Defenses are normally 45 minutes to an hour long. The first 20-30 minutes are allotted for the student to present his or her material; many students use visual aids to help describe their project. The remainder of the time is open for questions from the attendees. The defense is the time for the student to present the results of their efforts and receive feedback from their peers and the campus community.”

**Proposed Agenda**

Introductions (if necessary)

*Presentation (20-30 minutes)*

* Review of purpose of the project
* Overview of courses and literature that informed the project
* Description of cognate project (how it was developed, how it changed over time, how it might be used)
* Discussion and future directions

*Questions from committee*

*T*hese may come during the presentation, so it is possible that the presentation will go 45 minutes, but no questions will remain at the end… unless the candidate wishes to present straight through

*Deliberation* (sometimes candidate leaves the room while the committee deliberates)

Evaluation, feedback, form signing.