

MASP Culminating Experience Options

The following culminating experience options are available to students who started on or after the 2018-2019 CSUSM catalog year. Students who started prior to Fall 2018 with compelling reasons to choose one of alternatives to the traditional thesis can ask their culminating experience chairs for approval.

The first option below, the thesis, is the standard option for MASP students. It prepares students for both further graduate study and work in the community. The second option is designed for students planning to pursue doctoral study in a program that requires a scholarly journal-length paper. The third option, the applied project option, is recommended for students embedded in a community organization (or those that will be shortly after starting the program) who plan to work in a non-profit, social service, or advocacy organization after graduation.

A/ Thesis

This option allows students to research a topic in consultation with their chair and committee and analyze the results in a thesis. Students will write a proposal in SOC 690 (Culminating Experience Proposal). This proposal will outline the context of the research, the social problem it addresses, the existing scholarly literature on the topic, the theories and methods they plan to use, the significance of their project, and their timeline for completion. They will work with a culminating experience committee consisting of three tenure-track/tenured Sociology faculty members during this process. After successfully defending this proposal, students advance to candidacy for the master's degree and enroll in SOC 695 (Culminating Experience) the following semester.

Students will conduct their research and analyze their findings in a paper that is up to 25,000 words (a maximum of 100 pages excluding references and appendices). The format of the thesis will follow the basic guidelines provided by the Sociology Department and the CSUSM University Library. Students will be required to present their thesis in a culminating experience defense.

B/ Scholarly Journal Article Option

This option allows students to analyze the results of their culminating experience (CE) research in a scholarly journal article. As in the thesis option, in SOC 690 (Culminating Experience Proposal) students will write and defend a proposal outlining the social relevance of their proposed research, the existing scholarly literature on the topic, the theories and methods they plan to use, the significance of their project, and their timeline for completion. They will work with a culminating experience committee consisting of three tenure-track/tenured Sociology faculty members during this process. After successfully defending this proposal, students advance to candidacy for the master's degree and enroll in SOC 695 (Culminating Experience) the following semester.

Students will conduct their research and analyze their findings in a paper suitable for publication in a selected peer-reviewed scholarly journal. Papers should not be more than 10,000 words including references and appendices (approximately 40 pages). Students will be required to present their finished papers in a culminating experience defense.

C/ Applied Project Option

This option allows students to participate in applied sociological work and/or advocacy reflecting the values of community engaged scholarship (reciprocity, theoretical grounding, community impact,

and knowledge dissemination). As in the other culminating experience options, students will write and defend a proposal in SOC 690 (Culminating Experience Proposal) outlining the social relevance of their proposed project, the existing scholarly literature on the topic, the theories and methods they plan to use, the significance of their project, and their timeline for completion. They will work with a culminating experience committee consisting of three tenure-track/tenured Sociology faculty members during this process. After successfully defending this proposal, students advance to candidacy for the master's degree and enroll in SOC 695 (Culminating Experience) the following semester.

The final applied project will have multiple required elements: *documentation of a tangible contribution to the community* through an event, intervention, resource, program, grant proposal, program evaluation, curriculum, or internship; and a written *scholarly reflection* of approximately 5,000 words (20 pages) that addresses the process involved, its community impact, and possibilities for replication. Students will share their projects and reflections in a culminating experience defense. They will also *share their reflections with the community* with whom they worked in an accessible format.