



# MASTER OF ARTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION



# **Master of Arts in Special Education Handbook**

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# Master of Arts in Special Education

The Master of Arts in Special Education and Credential Option is specifically designed for teachers who hold a valid basic teaching credential who are seeking both a master's degree and a career path in special education by adding on the Mild/Moderate and the Moderate/Severe Preliminary Education Specialist Credential(s).

The Preliminary Mild/Moderate Education Specialist Credential authorizes instruction of students with a primary disability of Autism Spectrum Disorder, Emotional Disturbance, Mild/Moderate Intellectual Disability, Other Health Impairment or Specific Learning Disability. The Preliminary Moderate/Severe Education Specialist Credential authorizes instruction of students with a primary disability of Autism Spectrum Disorder, Deaf-Blindness, Emotional Disturbance, Moderate/Severe Intellectual Disability, or Multiple Disabilities. Both credentials authorize instruction of English learners.

## Program Student Learning Outcomes

**PSLO #1: Professional Dispositions:** Demonstrate positive professional dispositions and ethics inclusive of social justice and equity, collaboration, critical thinking, professional ethics, reflective teaching and learning, and life-long learning.

**PSLO #2: Culturally Proficient Inclusive Schooling:** Develop an action plan for creating and sustaining a culturally proficient inclusive schooling environment.

**PSLO #3: Assessment and Program Planning:** Conduct and analyze formal and/or informal assessment data to develop assessment reports and Individual Education Program goals based upon individual students' assessed needs.

**PSLO #4: Research Analysis:** Analyze and integrate research in educational and professional settings.

## Requirements for Admission

1. Graduate application for California State University San Marcos
2. School of Education Supplemental Application
  - a. CSUSM Graduate Application
  - b. Verification of valid basic credential issued by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing
  - c. Verification of subject matter competency
  - d. Three letters of recommendation
  - e. A statement of purpose
  - f. Tuberculin Risk Assessment

- g. Two sets of official transcripts
- h. Interview and Writing Sample

Subject matter competency and individual requirements for out-of-state trained teachers may be required. Contact the CEHHS, Student Services Office for details, (760) 750-4277.

**Program Overview**

Pre/Co-requisite (if equivalency has not been determined) Completion of SB 2042 program

Or

EDT 630 or EDUC 422 (3 units)

**Master of Arts in Special Education Core Required Courses: (25 units)**

- EDMX 622 Literacy Education for Education Specialists (4 units)
- EDMX 627 Assessment for Planning and Instruction (3 units)
- EDMX 631 Foundations in Law, Ethics, and Procedures of Special Education (3 units)
- EDMX 632 Technology and Communication for Special Populations (3 units)
- EDMX 633 Community Access through Supported Environments (3 units)
- EDEX 602 Culturally Proficient Inclusive Schooling in a Pluralistic Society (3 units)
- EDUC 622 Research Methods in Education (3 units)
- EDUC 698 Master's Culminating Experience Seminar (3 units)

**Select a MA + Credential(s) Pathways:**

**Pathway 1: Master of Arts in Special Education and Mild/Moderate Credential (Traditional Clinical Practice) 9 units**

- EDMX 572 Education Specialist – Clinical Practice: Special Education Setting (7 units)
- EDMX 575 Education Specialist –Transition Development Plan Seminar (2 units)

*CORE + Pathway 1 = 34 units*

**Pathway 2: Master of Arts in Special Education and Mild/Moderate Credential (Full Year Internship) 18 units**

- EDMX 671 Education Specialist – Clinical Practice for Mild/Moderate Interns I Mild/Moderate (7 units)
- EDMX 672 Education Specialist – Clinical Practice for Mild/Moderate Interns II (7 units)
- EDMX 575 Education Specialist –Transition Development Plan Seminar (2 units)
- EDEX 660 Transition Plan Development (2 units)

*CORE + Pathway 2 = 43*

**Pathway 3: Master of Arts in Special Education and Mild/Moderate Credential (Semester Internship) 9 units**

EDMX 672 Education Specialist – Clinical Practice for Mild/Moderate Interns II (7 units)  
EDMX 575 Education Specialist – Transition Development Plan Seminar (2 units)

*CORE + Pathway 3 = 34 units*

**Pathway 4: Master of Arts in Special Education and Mild/Moderate and Moderate/Severe Credentials 19 units**

EDMX 572 Education Specialist – Clinical Practice: Special Education Setting (7 units)  
EDMX 575 Education Specialist – Transition Development Plan Seminar (2 units)  
EDMX 635 Education Specialist – Curriculum and Instruction: Moderate/Severe Disabilities (4 units)  
EDMX 573 Education Specialist – Clinical Practice Moderate/Severe Disabilities (6 units)

*CORE + Pathway 4 = 44 units*

**Pathway 5: Master of Arts in Special Education and Moderate/Severe Credential (for those who hold Mild/Moderate) 10 units**

EDMX 635 Education Specialist – Curriculum and Instruction: Moderate/Severe Disabilities (4 units)  
EDMX 573 Education Specialist – Clinical Practice Moderate/Severe Disabilities (6 units)

*CORE + Pathway 5 = 35 units*

**Pathway 6: Master of Arts in Special Education and Moderate/Severe Credential Full Year Internship (For those who hold Mild/Moderate) 16 units**

EDMX 635 Education Specialist – Curriculum and Instruction: Moderate/Severe Disabilities (4 units)  
EDMX 673 Education Specialist – Clinical Practice for Moderate/Severe I (6 units)  
EDMX 674 Education Specialist – Clinical Practice for Moderate/Severe II (6 units)

*CORE + Pathway 6 = 41 units*

**Pathway 7: Master of Arts in Special Education and Moderate/Severe Credential Semester Internship (For those who hold Mild/Moderate) 10 units**

EDMX 635 Education Specialist – Curriculum and Instruction: Moderate/Severe

Disabilities (4 units)  
EDMX 674 Education Specialist – Clinical Practice for Moderate/Severe II (6 units)

*CORE + Pathway 7 = 35 units*

### **Completion Requirements**

The following completion activities apply to all Master of Arts in Special Education students:

1. Successful completion of the core courses with a minimum 3.0 GPA
2. Advancement to candidacy
3. Completion of a culminating experience under the direction of a faculty committee
4. Continual enrollment in EDUC 698 until successful completion of the culminating experience
5. Up to nine (9) units of graduate-level coursework from another approved Special Education program may be accepted and transferred into the CSUSM program with faculty approval.

### **Grading**

All coursework will earn a letter grade, except field studies which will earn credit/no credit. A grade-point average of 3.0 must be maintained and any grade of less than a B- will be subject to review.

## **Graduate Student Handbook and Policies from CSUSM Graduate Studies and Research**

Please download and read the Graduate Student Handbook.

<https://www.csusm.edu/gsr/images/studenthandbook2016.pdf>

Please read all Graduate Policies.

<https://www.csusm.edu/gsr/graduatestudies/policies.html>

**Master of Arts in Special Education Program**  
**Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR)**

**Administration and Remediation Procedure**

For all graduate-level students, CSUSM has a Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) policy that can be retrieved from the Office of Graduate Studies website, [https://www.csusm.edu/policies/active/documents/graduate\\_writing\\_assessment\\_requirement.html](https://www.csusm.edu/policies/active/documents/graduate_writing_assessment_requirement.html). As part of the preparation for Advancement to Candidacy in the Master of Arts (MA) in Special Education program, candidates submit a Literature Review for assessment using the GWAR Rubric. The SPED Literature Review Template and GWAR rubric may be found at <https://www.csusm.edu/soe/graduate/specialeducation/gradresources.html>

The MA in Special Education requires each MA candidate to meet the GWAR before advancing to candidacy and enrolling in EDUC 698. The program provides each candidate up to three (3) opportunities to meet the GWAR. Guided by the MA in SPED Literature Review Template, each candidate composes and submits a Literature Review to his/her MA chair. Each candidate is provided two submission opportunities during the semester prior to enrollment in EDUC 698. If a candidate requires a third assessment opportunity, the candidate's chair and program coordinator work with the candidate to prepare for the third opportunity. The three opportunities are described below.

A candidate who does not pass the GWAR on the third attempt is terminated from the program.

**GWAR Assessment Opportunity Timeline**

<b>GWAR Opportunity</b>	<b>GWAR Administration and Remediation Procedures</b>
First GWAR Opportunity	Each candidate's Literature Review is due to the candidate's chair by or before week 11 of the semester in which the candidate is enrolled in EDUC 622. By week 13 of the same semester, the chair assesses the Literature Review using the GWAR Rubric. The chair then reports the candidate's GWAR score to the candidate, the program coordinator, and the Graduate Student Services (GSS) Coordinator. If a candidate does not pass the GWAR on the first attempt, the candidate revises and resubmits the Literature Review for a second assessment opportunity described below.
Second GWAR Opportunity	The candidate revises and resubmits the Literature Review by week 15 of the same semester. Prior to the resubmission, the chair may provide the candidate with written and/or verbal feedback to improve upon the element(s) of the GWAR rubric for which the candidate failed to receive a score of at least 3. The candidates' chair reads and assesses the revised version of the Literature Review using the GWAR Rubric by week 16 of the same semester. The candidate's chair then reports the candidate's GWAR score to the candidate, the program coordinator, and the GSS Coordinator. If a candidate does not pass the GWAR on the second attempt, the candidates revises and resubmits the Literature Review for a third and final assessment opportunity described below.
Third GWAR Opportunity	The candidate's chair in coordination with the program coordinator and appropriate support (e.g., CSUSM Writing Center) develops with the candidate a remediation plan designed to prepare the candidate for a third and final opportunity to pass the GWAR. The timeline for executing the plan allows the candidate to remediate, submit the Literature Review revisions, and receive final GWAR scores prior to enrollment in EDUC 698. The chair reports the candidate's GWAR final score to the candidate, the program coordinator, and the Graduate Student Services (GSS) Coordinator. If a candidate fails to pass the GWAR on the third attempt, the candidate is terminated from the program.



## Culminating Experience Options

### Overview

The Culminating Experience is a requirement for completion of the Master's Program. The Culminating Experience can be completed through one of two ways.

TYPE	WHO SHOULD CHOOSE THIS OPTION?	DESCRIPTION
<b>Thesis</b>	Educators interested in research, learning to conduct research on their own instruction or their students' learning, trying to test a solution to an identified problem, and/or interest in pursuing doctoral studies	Conduct a research study of interest according to the appropriate research design approved by a committee and reported in a format using the APA Style Manual.
<b>Project</b>	Educators interested in providing leadership beyond the classroom level, e.g. professional development, central office, private industry	Define a need relating to curriculum or professional development through a review of existing programs. Meet the need through the design and development of curriculum or a professional development program that has not been previously addressed by others. The project must be approved by the committee and reported in a format using the APA style Manual.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Who will be on my Culminating Experience Committee?

You will need a committee composed of:

1. A Chair
2. A Second Reader who usually provides input at the initial stage in developing the culminating experience and provides feedback/approval at its completion.

Before asking someone to be on your committee, you should consider what you are interested in doing and what faculty member has the most experience and knowledge on your topic. Then you should carry on an initial email conversation and follow up by making an appointment with the individuals you would like to serve on your committee.

Please keep in mind that the faculty; work collaboratively in program and discipline teams. As such, they make every effort to distribute the workload of Masters students. Do not be discouraged if the first faculty member you ask is unable to work with you. It is most likely that the faculty member's workload is full.

### What if I'm not done with my culminating experience at the end of the semester?

You must remain continuously enrolled in thesis units until the culminating experience is completed. The Chair of your committee will determine which of the following options you should take if you are not finished.

- A. If there remains work that will require your Chair's input and support in a significant way, you must re-enroll in EDUC 698.
- B. If it is a case of minor revisions, you may register for GRAD E699 through Extended Studies. This is a special course that is designated as meeting the continuous enrollment criteria, but does not require full tuition. Information on GRAD E699 is available on the CSUSM Graduate Studies website.

If you intend to do significant work on your culminating experience during the summer and do expect to get support by your chair and reader, then you should enroll in thesis units over the summer (EDUC 698). However, be sure to check with your chair and second reader on their availability during the summer before making any plans.

Remember, once you start with thesis units you need to remain continuously enrolled until the culminating experience are completed.

But life does happen when you are a fulltime educator, making completion of the culminating experience more difficult than you anticipated. If you are ALMOST finished, just needing a little extra time, you may enroll in GRAD E699, a one unit course through Extended Studies, for a brief extension. See the Graduate Studies Website for additional information.

However, there may be some extenuating circumstances that necessitate a leave of absence. There is a university policy related to taking a leave of absence, which should be consulted. All leaves are handled through the Associate Dean's Office. NOTE: All Masters students should notify the Graduate Program Coordinator should any change in status be requested in order to keep your file accurate.

### **What is the timeline for the culminating experience?**

The timeline is of your making. However, the university has deadlines that must be adhered to if you are targeting a specific date for graduation. With your chair, create a work plan that is reasonable for your work style and the topic you have chosen. Check the CSUSM website for School of Education deadlines and a link to the Graduate Programs division for the university deadlines.

### **What does a culminating experience document (thesis, project) look like?**

Your culminating experience can take many forms; it is something you will work out with your committee. If you want to see samples of theses, go to <http://csusm-dspace.calstate.edu/>. Looking at what others have done will give you a sense of the possibilities as well as the generally accepted format.

### **Will you present your results in a public forum?**

You will be creating a professional poster to share at the MA Poster Presentation. Your chair will provide you with a template for this poster. This gives you an opportunity to share your work, answer questions, and have upcoming graduate students look at possibilities.

### **Who owns the intellectual property produced as a project or thesis?**

The intellectual property created as part of a thesis or project is generally considered university property as it was created with the support of university resources. However, Master's Candidates may engage in a conversation with the university to release rights to the project or thesis for commercial use. Additional development of a project or thesis beyond the scope of the university's interest for completion of the Culminating Experience becomes the property of the scholar.

## Suggested Timeline for Thesis or Project Options

1. **IDENTIFY A QUESTION** - In the semester before you are to begin your culminating experience, identify a research question or project you are interested in.
2. **SELECT A COMMITTEE** - Ask faculty that you think have experience and knowledge of your topic to meet with you and create your committee.
3. **MAKE A PLAN** - Check the approval dates outlined by the Graduate Studies Office to ensure that you set a reasonable timeline for yourself for completion of the thesis or project. Culminating experiences that do not meet the deadline will be pushed to a later graduation date.
4. **WORK WITH YOUR COMMITTEE** - Be sure you work closely with your committee chair as the thesis or project unfolds. Your Chair will provide you with feedback on each facet of the process and advise you on such things as when you are ready to submit the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application available at: <http://www.csusm.edu/gsr/irb/index.html>
5. **CULMINATING EXPERIENCE TASKS**- The semester you are enrolled in thesis units, your advisor will give you specific dates for the following:

Submit advancement to candidacy prior to registration in 698
Apply to graduate by week 7
Submit chapters 1-3 to chair
Get approval of data collection from site/district
Draft of IRB app to chair
Submit IRB application online
Collect and chart research data
Analyze the data and create charts
Write and edit chapter 4 for chair review
Develop conclusions of study
Write and edit chapter 5 for chair review
Check and edit references
Write table of contents and assign pages
Create title page from library template
Ensure paper is ADA compliant
Make appointment w/ the Graduate Program Coordinator for signatures
Defend
Make final edits from defense suggestions
Get signature from committee and Program Coordinator
Submit electronically to Scholar Works

# Culminating Experience: THESIS

## Thesis should be completed by:

Educators interested in research, learning to conduct research on their own instruction or their students' learning, trying to test a solution to an identified problem, and/or interest in pursuing doctoral studies.

## Description

A thesis is a monograph embodying original research. Prior to beginning the actual thesis research, students write research proposals that must be approved by their thesis advisors. The research proposal includes Chapters 1 through 3 of the thesis (introduction, review of literature, methodologies and procedures) and appendices (timeline, budget and instruments you plan to use).

## Process

1. After you have selected your committee and have had a preliminary discussion about your ideas, identify a research problem you would like to investigate.
2. Check the approval dates outlined by the Graduate Office to ensure that you set a reasonable timeline for yourself for completion of the thesis and submission of the document for completion of the degree. Culminating experiences that do not meet the deadline will force a later graduation date.
3. Follow the procedure outlined in the research methods course (EDUC 622) for completion of the research project.
4. Complete the appropriate Institutional Review Board application prior to beginning the data collection phase of the study.
5. Make sure you work closely with your committee chair as the project unfolds. The chair will provide you with feedback on each facet of the project.
6. Obtain a set of guidelines from the library for completion of the manuscript.

In EDUC 622, Research Methods in Education, you will explore quantitative and qualitative methods of designing and conducting research in the context of classroom settings. EDUC 622 is designed to help you improve your knowledge of research and your understanding of various research methodologies, enhance your skills in planning and conducting research, develop your abilities in summarizing and interpreting research, and advance your abilities in critiquing educational research. You will develop a proposal for a research project in 622. All graduate students take 622 and develop a research proposal, regardless of the type of culminating experience they plan to complete. All students completing graduate degrees should be able to plan and carry out research, and write up the results, conclusions and implications of research studies.

## Thesis Chapters

The APA Style Manual contains information on the elements of a thesis as do most educational research texts. Be sure to check with your thesis chair to ensure that all the desired elements are included. In general, a thesis contains the following:

1. Chapter One: Introduction: **Identify and clearly state the question you will research.** Explain what you hope to accomplish in your thesis. What issue is to be addressed and explored? **What are your sub-questions?** Be very clear **about your research question.** Definitions of terms must be very clear in this section. Do not assume that the reader knows what you mean when you use educational jargon. Everyone might not agree with your definitions, so you can define them and call them operational definitions.
2. Chapter Two: Review of the Literature: Review what is currently known (and not known) about the issue to be explored by reviewing articles and books relevant to your question. Try to put your project/issue in a theoretical context. On what theories/principles are you basing your thesis? What are your assumptions? What has informed your own thinking about this project? The review of the literature puts the question into perspective and lets the reader know why the project is of significance. **You must have at least 15 referred journal articles.**
3. Chapter Three: Methodology: How was the research conducted? How will you collect data and how will you analyze it? This chapter should be written in past tense. Use these subheadings for Chapter Three:
  - a. Design – Explain which type of methodology you used and why.
  - b. Setting – Give demographics of school district and setting, do NOT name schools or districts, you may give them a pseudonym.
  - c. Subjects – Give details about how the subjects were chosen, who they are.
  - d. Materials – Cite any tests or books you will be using, explain why they were selected.
  - e. Procedure – This should almost be a cookbook type description, write it so that a peer could possibly replicate what you have done. For example you might describe what was done by days or weeks.
  - f. Analysis – Explain how you will analyze all data you collect.
  - g. Limitations – Discuss the limitations of the study.
4. Chapter Four: Results: **What** were the results of your research? This is not the place for opinions or conclusions, just the facts. Put as many of your findings in tables and charts. Organize the chapter by using subheadings for each type of data that was collected.
5. Chapter Five: Conclusions: This Chapter is your chance to explain what you think the results of your study mean. What are the implications of your findings? What recommendations would you make for future study? What questions did your thesis raise? What other kinds of research would be helpful?

# Culminating Experience: PROJECT

## The Project should be completed by:

Educators interested in providing working at a leadership beyond the classroom level, e.g. professional development, central office, private industry.

## Description

Define a need in curriculum or professional development. Meet the need through the design and development of curriculum or professional development program that has not been previously addressed by others. Create an assessment/evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the project.

## Process

1. After you have selected your committee and have had a preliminary discussion about your ideas, identify a problem for which you would like to explore a solution.
2. Check the approval dates outlined by the Graduate Office to ensure that you set a reasonable timeline for yourself for completion of the project and submission for completion of the degree. A Culminating Project that does not meet the deadline will force a later graduation date.
3. All projects must have a written component. The written document is not as extensive as a thesis but does provide documentation of the development and implementation of the project. The report includes the following sections:
  - a. Chapter 1 – Introduction - Follow the outline for a thesis including the statement of the problem and background.
  - b. Chapter 2 – Literature Review – Provide a survey of the relevant professional literature that provides the information which was used to inform the development of the project. The Review of Literature should follow the guidelines provided for a thesis.
  - c. Chapter 3 – Process/Product – Outline the process that was used to develop the project. This chapter will highlight the significant findings of Chapter Two and relate how you used those findings in your project.
  - d. Chapter 4 – Results – This is where you place the content of your project.
  - e. Chapter 5 – Conclusions/Next Steps – Describe what was learned. How might you go about implementation and what revisions or extensions might be developed in the future.