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## MASTER THESIS

### WHAT IS A THESIS?

In the US, a Thesis is usually the final project to obtain a Master Degree.

The Master Thesis demonstrates an understanding of the knowledge acquired during the Master program. It is a level above the normal research paper written in undergraduate school. For a Master Thesis, the student uses research already performed and provides her/his critical analysis. The focus is on the student's ability to analyze research and use acute critical thinking to arrive at conclusions and insights.

The length of a normal Thesis is about 100 pages.

### THESIS CHAPTERS

This purpose of this document is to help students understand the organization and content of the Thesis chapters. For other items such as Table of Contents, References, List of Tables, etc... students should consult APA and EMU Thesis guidelines.

Thesis chapters must be written in the scholarly style and be well organized. Each paragraph should flow into one another with purpose and clarity. The importance of the topic should always be kept in mind.

#### **Abstract (150 words)**

The abstract is written after all chapters of the Thesis are completed. The purpose of the abstract is to clearly and succinctly define the problem statement and the student's research. The abstract covers all aspects to include the methodology, the highlights of the research, the findings, and the importance and possible applications of the findings.

#### **Chapter 1 - Introduction (8 to 20 pages)**

Chapter 1 introduces the purpose and goal of your research and why you feel it is an important topic. What are you trying to demonstrate and why.

The introduction to this chapter includes a general overview of the topic, and the influencing factors, as well as the motivation for choosing the topic. The scope and context of the topic is addressed.

The chapter then addresses six components:

1. General Statement of the Problem (one or two sentences)
2. Significance of the Thesis – why is the topic important?
3. Research Question(s)



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4. Limitations, Delimitations
  5. Assumptions
  6. Definition of Terms

A transitional paragraph ends the chapter into a very brief preview of the rest of the Thesis.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature Review (about 20 pages)**

The chapter addresses the following questions:

- How unique is the Thesis?
- Is it a logical expansion of previous work?
- Has this topic been already explored?

The student reviews the research and literature in the field. The review gives the reader a solid background and historical update on the topic. Given the substantial amount of data available, this chapter must be well organized with different headings. Make sure there is a flow with purpose between each reference. This chapter is not merely an enumeration of the research and writing that has been done, it is an organized presentation of the material that can be thematically or chronologically presented.

The specific works chosen for review will reflect the student's capability of identifying key contributions as well as identifying seminal work. The reader will understand the reason why a contribution is being presented. It is in the student's interest to present a complete view of the areas that have been researched whilst guiding the reader as to which contributions are key and why.

Some suggestions:

- Where are the weaknesses and strengths of the literature review?
- What assumptions, if any, are being made?
- Identify each of the key concepts.
- Gaps in the literature – are there aspects of the topic which are not addressed?

## **Chapter 3 – Methodology & Design (15 to 30 pages)**

This chapter addresses the specifics of the research methodology and the design.

- Sample population and size
- How participants are chosen
- Demographics
- Instrumentation
- Data Collection
- Data Treatment Procedures

The student demonstrates that the research answers the Question(s). Complete details of the research are written to “enable readers to evaluate its appropriateness or to replicate your study should they desire” (Smith & Davis, 2007).

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## **Chapter 4 – Findings (15 to 30 pages)**

Chapter 4 is an important chapter which discusses the findings of the student's research. The student must present the findings clearly and succinctly using tables, charts, or graphs. Different findings are discussed and the student must identify what she/he considers the most relevant information and why.

Implications and factual support are discussed. Make sure all data are presented in this chapter. At the end of the chapter, the student discusses how her/his findings are similar or different from other research.

Usually this chapter is presented in two different sections:

1. Results – raw data is presented without analysis or interpretation
2. Discussion

## **Chapter 5 – Conclusions (15 to 30 pages)**

The student summarizes the data and the discussion of Chapter 4. This chapter highlights and clarifies the main points of the student's research. The student has the opportunity to change the sequence of presenting the data with a supporting discussion of why. The problem statement or hypothesis need to be restated when discussing the results that relate to them.

The chapter ends with a clear, brief, but compelling conclusion that includes any insights gained by the student's research.

## **Suggested References for Writing a Thesis**

College of Education Masters Committee. (n.d.). *Guide for thesis and projects, 2nd Ed.*  
[http://www.csusb.edu/coe/programs/correctional\\_ed/documents/GuideforThesesandProjects.pdf](http://www.csusb.edu/coe/programs/correctional_ed/documents/GuideforThesesandProjects.pdf)

Locke, L. F., Silverman, S. J., & Spirduso, W. W. (2010). *Reading and understanding research, 3rd Ed.* Los Angeles: Sage.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry, 7th Ed.* Boston: Pearson.

Smith, R. A., & Davis, S. F. (2007). *The psychological detective: An introduction to conducting research in psychology, 4th Ed.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

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