FIELD STUDY PROJECT GUIDELINES
Ed.S. in Special Education

OVERVIEW
Candidates working towards the Ed.S. in Special Education must complete a Field Study Project. This project must reflect the candidate's area of emphasis (generalist, mild/moderate disabilities, severe/low incidence disabilities, emotional/behavior disorders, or gifted education). The project must demonstrate the candidate's ability to plan, implement, and report results when engaging in inquiry-based practice.

REQUIREMENTS

Field Study Project Committee: Each committee will consist of three members, including the committee chair. Committee chairs must have level 2 or 3 regular graduate faculty status, and have content expertise in the candidate's emphasis area. Committee members must have level 1, 2, or 3 regular or associate graduate faculty status. The graduate status of all faculty can be found on the Graduate School website (http://www.usm.edu/graduateschool/gradfac.php).

Once the committee has been finalized, the student must complete the committee request form, attaining committee member signatures and the signature of the department chair. This form will be submitted to the Graduate School. (http://www.usm.edu/graduateschool/downloads/progress_to_degree_forms.xls)

Written and Oral Format of the Field Study Project: The Field Study Project proposal and final presentation will be presented to the committee in two formats: written and oral.

The written format should follow the three-chapter structure provided in the next section of this document unless formal written approval for another written format is given by the committee. An example of an acceptable alternate format is a manuscript following the publications guidelines of a peer-referred journal. All written documents must follow the current APA guidelines.

The oral format should follow the same structure/sections of the written format, but will be presented to the committee orally. With prior approval, candidates residing outside the immediate area may be allowed to utilize real-time, online formats (i.e., Wimba Classroom) for their oral presentations. It is strongly recommended that candidates prepare a PowerPoint presentation to accompany the oral presentation.

Approved December 3, 2010
**Organization and Format of the Field Study Project:** Unless otherwise approved by the committee, the written product will include the following chapters:

Chapter 1:
- Introduction
- Statement of the Problem
- Definition of Terms
- Hypothesis or Questions to Be Answered
- Review of Literature
- Delimitations
- Plans for Analysis of Data

Chapter 2:
- Methodology
  - Subjects
  - instrumentation
  - Procedure

Chapter 3:
- Data Analysis and Results
- Findings
- Discussion

References

Appendices

**Proposal:** Unless otherwise approved by the committee prior to the formal proposal, **Chapters 1 and 2** will serve as a proposal for the Specialist Field Study Project.

Step 1 – Pre-proposal: The candidate should work closely with his/her Chair to identify an appropriate topic and methodology prior to drafting the Proposal. After preliminary topic and methodology approval, the candidate will develop a draft of Chapters 1 and 2 for their Chair’s approval.

Step 2 – Selection of Oral Proposal Date: In collaboration with the Chair, the candidate will work with the 3-member committee to select an oral proposal date. The oral proposal typically lasts 1 hour.

Step 3 – Submission to Committee: Upon approval by the Chair, the candidate will submit the written proposal to the 3-member committee **no less than 2 weeks** prior to the oral proposal date.

Step 4 – Oral Proposal: The candidate will meet with the 3-member committee to formally propose his/her Field Study Project. At the oral proposal, the committee will provide feedback to the candidate and make the determination to approve or reject the proposal.
Institutional Review Board (Human Subjects) Approval: After the full approval of the committee, the candidate will attain approval from the IRB. Requirements can be found here: http://www.usm.edu/irb/ NO data may be collected prior to attaining approval from the IRB. Approval by the committee is NOT IRB approval.

Data Collection: Data collection and analysis is to be conducted as approved by the field study committee and as outlined in the approved Human Subject Review Form. Any deviation must be approved by the advisor and major changes may involve a re-approval of the Human Subjects Review Form.

Final Presentation of the Field Study Project: Unless another format was formally approved at the proposal, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 must be submitted to the Field Study Committee Chair for approval and then to the committee who will have two weeks to review before the oral defense meeting for final approval.

   Step 1 – Chair Approval: The candidate should work closely with his/her Chair to draft the final written document for the Field Study.

   Step 2 – Selection of Oral Presentation Date: In collaboration with the Chair, the candidate will work with the 3-member committee to select an oral presentation date. The oral presentation typically lasts 1 hour.

   Step 3 – Submission to Committee: Upon approval by the Chair, the candidate will submit the written document to the 3-member committee no less than 2 weeks prior to the oral presentation date.

   Step 4 – Oral Presentation: The candidate will meet with the 3-member committee to formally present the results of his/her Field Study Project. At the oral presentation, the committee will provide feedback to the candidate and make the determination to approve or reject the Field Study Project.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you will not be completely finished with your Field Project during the Spring semester, you may request an incomplete in SPE 794. Please be aware, however, that you must be enrolled in at least three hours the semester in which you submit your comprehensive exam results. The defense of your field project serves as your comprehensive exam.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How is a Field Study Project different from a thesis or dissertation? Most typically, a thesis or dissertation is designed to study a topic that has not been explored or to generate new knowledge. While many Field Study Projects have new and novel elements, the depth and rigor of the project is less than is required in a thesis or dissertation. The Field Study Project is often more reflective of practitioner-based examinations of situations or methods; translating research to practice.

What type of methodology must I use for my field study project? While methods vary greatly, candidates’ projects have included the investigation of a topic through survey-type research, in-depth examination of existing data sets (including historical data, existing educational records, etc.), action research, or single-subject research methodology. Your method should be driven by what you want to study or show. Talk about your options with your Chair and your SPE 791 instructor.
Alignment of Field Study Project Requirements and SPE 791 Requirements

The following table is provided to help you align the work you will be doing in SPE 791 (fall 3 hours; spring 2 hours) and SPE 794 (spring 1 hour). While these are separate courses, students can align the activities to meet course requirements while providing additional structure and support for the Ed.S. Field Project. Students are NOT required to use SPE 791 for the Field Project, and may choose to complete an additional project to meet the SPE 794 requirement. If you choose to align the requirements of SPE 791 with your Field Project, it is important that you ensure you meet all requirements of both 791 and CISE Field Project requirements. It is strongly suggested that you have frequent communication with your SPE Field Project Chair to ensure that assignments completed for SPE 791 meet expectations for the field project. When using the SPE 791 study for the field project, it is the student’s responsibility to ensure that requirements of both are met. It should also be understood that the instructor of 791 and your Chair may have different expectations. An “A” in one does not necessarily mean the requirements of the other have been met.

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<tr>
<th>FALL SEMESTER</th>
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<tr>
<td>SPE 791 Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Following a literature review, identify 3 potential research areas/problems. Discuss ideas.</td>
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<td>Select idea and translate into a researchable question.</td>
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<td>Conduct further review of relevant literature to establish a rationale for study.</td>
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<td>Plan methods, which may include securing and/or developing instrument.</td>
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<td>SPE 791 Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal Proposal to Field Study Committee:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit application and secure IRB approval(s) for conducting study.</td>
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<td>Collect and analyze data.</td>
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<td>Develop APA format manuscript based on identified venue for dissemination</td>
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<td>Present research findings</td>
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