**Culminating Activity: Master’s Degree Plan A Option**

Students may elect to pursue a Plan A option. This involves writing a research thesis and employing either quantitative or qualitative research methodology. The choice of research methodology will depend on the nature of the investigation and the questions posed. Additionally, the Plan A option requires that the student enroll in both EDEX 5150, *Classroom Research Application*, and EDRE 5530, *Introduction to Research.* The student is also required to take PRST 5890, *Directed Professional Study.* The Plan A option is designed for students interested in learning more about research methodology and the relationship between research and effective teaching, as well as students interested in contributing new information to the field of special education. Although the Plan A option could be of value for all Master’s degree students, it is strongly recommended for students who wish to continue their education toward a Ph.D or Ed.D degree. Research projects involving quantitative analysis may include, but are not limited to: group comparisons employing statistical analysis; and investigation of the effects of an educational procedure or behavioral intervention using a single-subject design (e.g., multiple baseline design); survey investigation; program evaluation; or a correlation analysis. Qualitative or interpretive research investigations may include: participant observation studies; interviews; or ethnographic analyses. In either case, the following components are required for the thesis: a rationale and justification for the study; a review of the literature relevant to the study; a description of the proposed research methodology to be employed; an analysis and evaluation of the findings; and a discussion of the implications of the findings. Students will be required to have both a written and an oral defense.

**See Plan A Scoring Guide/Rubric**

Scoring Guide/Rubric for Plan A Theses

The following scoring guide is used to evaluate the quality of the thesis.

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| **Component** | **Below Expectations**  (0 pt/component) | **Meets Expectations**  (1 pt/component) | **Exceeds Expectations** (2 pts/component) |
| Literature Review | No literature review provided. Literature cited not relevant to topic. Insufficient number of citations. Misunderstanding of literature cited. | Adequate literature review provided. General understanding of literature reviewed. Introduction satisfactorily frames concern. | Extensive literature review provided. Thematic strands identified. Full details provided for references paraphrased. |
| Identification of Problem/Concern | No mention of problem/concern. Problem/concern not relevant to literature cited. Problem/concern not supported by introduction. Problem/concern is vague or ambiguous. | Problem/concern identified. Problem/concern based on literature reviewed. | Thoughtful analysis of problem/concern. Persuasive justification as to shy present investigation is needed. |
| Purpose Statement | No purpose statement or research question(s) provided. Purpose not relevant to literature cited. Purpose not relevant to problem/concern. Purpose is vague or ambiguous. | Purpose statement is related to problem/concern identified. | Purpose statement indicates and expands upon how paper/investigation addresses the issues mentioned in problem statement. Correct wording of research question(s). Clear description of variables to be manipulated. |
| Description of Methods | Failure to describe each subsection. Unsatisfactory description of two or more subsections. | Satisfactory description of each subsection. Description provides adequate information to replicate procedures. No inclusion of information appropriate for other sections. | Full description of the independent variable. Description of experimental design or analytic procedure is thorough. Thorough information provided to permit replication. |
| Description of Results/Methods | Failure to report all the findings. Inadequate description of findings. | Adequate objective description of findings. No conclusions presented. Findings referenced to tables and/or figures. | Full reporting of findings provided. Specific data presented. Patterns in data set identified and described. Data presented are aligned with purpose or research questions. |
| Discussion | No discussion of implications of findings. No mention of limitations of investigation. No mention of future research needs. No mention of implications of findings for professional development. | Satisfactory summary of findings presented. Implications of findings for effective instruction presented. Discussion of limitations provided. | Comprehensive summary of findings presented. Implications of findings for effective instruction, policy, and/or professional development provided. Discussion of limitations and areas for future research provided. |
| Supporting Evidence | Relevant tables, figures or appendices not included. No “References” section. | Appropriate tables and figures provided. Complete “References: section provided. Appropriate appendices included. | Publication-ready tables and/or figures included. Consumable and/or publication-ready appendices provided. |
| APA | References (citations and “References” section), format of paper, tables and/or figures, and supporting evidence do not follow APA guidelines. | Most sections (i.e., approximately 80 percent) follow APA guidelines. | All sections and subsections of paper follow APA guidelines. |
| Writing Mechanics | Two or more spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors. | One spelling, punctuation, or grammatical error. | No spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors. |

Each component of the thesis will be graded based on the rubric described above. Proficiency will be determined as follows:

**Exceeds expectations:** 16-18 points

**Meets expectations:** 14-15 points

**Below expectations:** 13 points or below