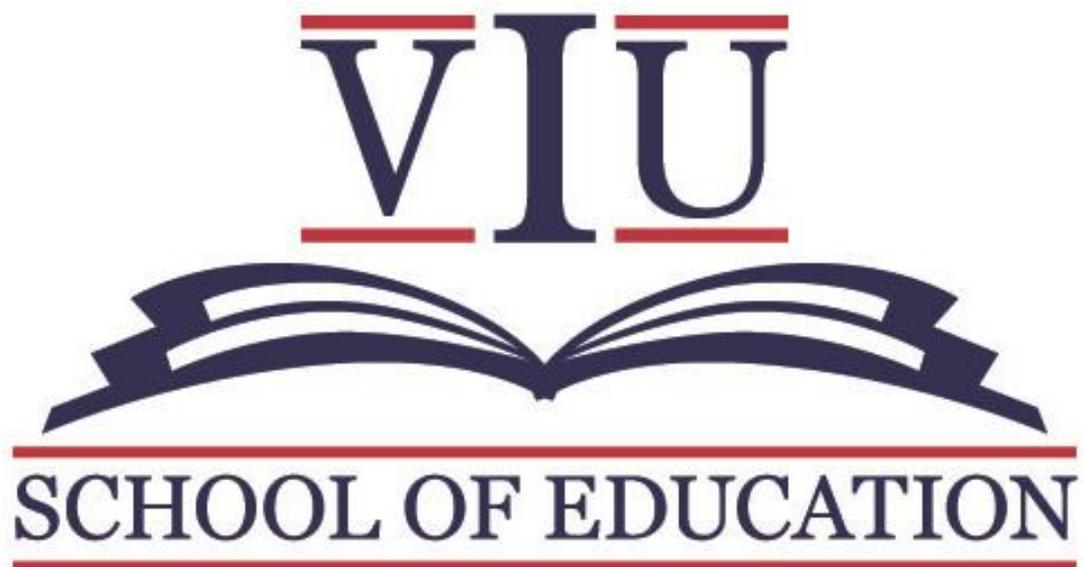


The School of Education

Thesis Guidelines

2015-2016 Academic Year



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1. Overview

The thesis serves as a personalized and distinguishing mark on a Graduate Degree from Virginia International University. As a well-planned, rigorously researched, and professionally written piece of scholarly work, it will constitute an original contribution to your discipline and represent a significant step in your independent scholarship. Throughout the process, you will work closely with a mentor who will provide guidance and help to ensure not only that you are on track to fulfill the requirements of the School of Education, but also that the product will meet the expectations and standards of research in your field and will be of publishable quality.

This guide is not intended to prescribe all components of the thesis, but should be viewed as an initial guide to getting started. A student on the Thesis Track must submit a fully developed thesis prior to the conferral of the degree. The burden of responsibility is on the student to complete all requirements of the thesis, including those pertaining to the formatting, caliber of the content, procedures, and deadlines, as outlined in greater detail below.

2. Committee

Each student on the Thesis Track will work with a mentor throughout the process of planning, researching, writing, and defending the thesis. Students may request that a mentor be assigned to them in the semester before conducting the thesis. Students should note that not all faculty are able to serve as mentors for the thesis. Students should submit a completed Mentor Request Form to the Dean of the School of Education in the semester before taking the thesis course. Requests for specific faculty members will be taken into account by the School, but final decisions on the mentor will be made by the School. Final assignment of a mentor will be done with consideration given to the research topic and available faculty.

Once a mentor is named, a committee will be formed by the mentor to include at least 1-2 other members. The final constitution of the committee should be based upon considerations such as the methodology, content, and/or theoretical/conceptual aspects of the proposed research. Committee members from outside the institution must be approved by the Dean of the School of Education. The goal of the formation of the committee is to ensure that a diverse set of scholars/professionals with complementary expertise will be able to provide the student with guidance and constructive feedback in a variety of relevant areas.

3. Thesis Proposal

Upon selection of a mentor, the student will need to complete a proposal which includes an overview of the goals of the study, potential theories or frameworks to be employed, potential aspects to be explored, the intended methodology, and an initial list of resources/references to be used in completion of the thesis. The proposal must be submitted to the mentor and the Dean of the School of Education for approval prior to registration for the thesis course. Students are recommended to complete their proposal prior to the opening of registration for the semester in which the student will work on his/her thesis. Occasionally, changes may need to be made prior to final approval of the proposal, so delays in submission may result in a delay in registration for the thesis course.

4. Completion of Requirements

A complete version of the thesis must be submitted to the mentor at least four weeks prior to the completion of the term. The thesis will be reviewed by the student's mentor and committee members. All suggested revisions should be interpreted as required unless otherwise noted by the committee. Once revisions have been made to the committee's satisfaction and the work has been deemed as sufficiently meeting the requirements for a thesis

at VIU, a finalized version of the thesis will be submitted to the Dean of the School of Education or his/her designee for review. This final version should represent publishable work meeting the expectations and standards of the discipline. A response will generally be provided within one week of this final submission. However, it should be noted that the length of time required to review the thesis may differ based upon a variety of factors, including length, content, and the number of other theses being submitted. Failure to follow the conventions outlined by the School of Education may result in a delay in graduation.

A suggested timeline is provided below:

15 Week Session	SUGGESTED TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION	SUGGESTED MEETINGS WITH MENTOR
Prior to semester	<i>Discuss your project proposal and reading list with your mentor. Work on your literature review, research materials, and IRB application.</i>	<i>Meet to establish meeting times and discuss your timeline for the semester. Share your work thus far, identify areas that need to be addressed, and make a plan for completing each stage of the project.</i>
Week 1	<i>Continue working on your literature review and make any necessary revisions to your research materials.</i>	<i>Meet to discuss the methods and materials of your study, as well as your progress and plans for improving your literature review.</i>
Week 2	<i>Submit your IRB application to your mentor, including the instruments you plan to use in your research. Continue working on your literature review.</i>	<i>Meet to discuss your IRB application.</i>
Week 3	<i>Revise your materials and procedures based on feedback. With your mentor's approval, submit your application to the IRB, including finalized materials and procedures. Continue working on your literature review and write your methods section.</i>	
Week 4	<i>Submit your literature review and methods sections to your mentor.</i>	<i>Meet to discuss your literature review and methods sections.</i>
Week 5	<i>Revise and resubmit your IRB application (if necessary). Revise your literature review and methods sections based on feedback.</i>	
Week 6	<i>Submit revised versions of your literature review and methods sections. <u>Pending IRB approval</u>, begin collecting data.</i>	<i>Meet to discuss data collection and your approach to analysis.</i>
Week 7	<i>Continue to collect and analyze data.</i>	
Week 8	<i>Continue to collect and analyze data. Begin writing your results section.</i>	<i>Meet to discuss your analysis and preliminary results.</i>
Week 9	<i>Finish collecting and analyzing data. Write your results section</i>	
Week 10	<i>Submit your results section. Write your discussion and conclusions sections.</i>	<i>Meet to discuss your results section.</i>
Week 11	<i>Revise your results section based on feedback. Complete your discussion and conclusions sections and submit the full thesis to your mentor, including an abstract.</i>	<i>Meet to discuss your discussion and conclusions.</i>
Week 12	<i>Revise the discussion and conclusion sections based on feedback. Submit the full thesis to the rest of the committee. Finalize your abstract and reserve a room for your defense.</i>	

Week 13	<i>Revise your thesis based on feedback from the full committee. Announce and prepare for your oral defense.</i>	
Week 14	<i>Finalize the manuscript for submission to the Dean.</i>	<i>Defend your thesis.</i>
Week 15		

5. Course Registration

All students are required to register for a thesis course as continuing enrollment. In the event that a student is unable to complete the thesis in one semester, the student is permitted to enroll for an additional term in the thesis course. The thesis course can be repeated only once.

6. Formatting

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the thesis meets the quality expectations and adheres to the formatting and component requirements specified by the School of Education. Students may be required to submit their work to the Writing, Research, and Media Center prior to final submission. Improper formatting and/or not adhering to the School's requirements may result in a delay in graduation.

The finalized thesis must use APA formatting and include, at minimum, all of the following elements (unless specifically listed as optional):

- Title page (student's official name, previous degree[s], etc.)
- Abstract (not to exceed 350 words in length)
- Dedication Page (optional)
- Acknowledgements (optional)
- Table of Contents (must automatically update)
- List of Tables
- List of Figures
- Chapters (usually, these will include I. Introduction, II. Review of the Literature, III. Methods, IV. Results, V. Discussion, and VI. Conclusion; consult your committee for guidance)
- References
- Appendices (optional based upon your research and/or methodology)
- CV or Resume (optional)
- Biography (optional)

Templates can be accessed through the Writing, Research, and Media Center website (<http://viu.edu/wrmc>) and/or through your School.

The length of the thesis will depend on the nature of the research being conducted. The body of a thesis at the Master's level is generally between 40-80 pages in length (excluding appendices, references, etc.).

7. English Requirement

Since the primary language of instruction at VIU is English, all theses must be written in English. Should a student wish to include items in a language other than English, the mentor should be consulted and translations must be provided.

8. IRB Approval

Students wishing to collect data from human participants as part of their thesis research must complete the necessary training in the protection of human research participants; must seek and obtain approval from VIU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning to conduct their research; and must follow exactly the procedures that have been approved by VIU's IRB.

9. Proof of Academic Integrity

All students are expected to run their theses through TurnItIn prior to final submission. The final report should be provided to the mentor as a PDF attachment with the final submission as part of its proof of academic integrity.

10. Submission Requirements

The completed thesis must be submitted to the mentor in electronic format. A paper copy may also be requested by the mentor, but a minimum of an electronic copy must be provided.

11. Thesis Defense

The defense is an opportunity for the student to present, explain, and defend his/her work, and for the committee to provide additional feedback to be incorporated in the final manuscript. The committee (and the Dean) will be the main body granting approval of the thesis, with the mentor overseeing the entire process. All suggested revisions should be interpreted as required unless otherwise noted by the committee. At the discretion of the mentor, a thesis requiring significant additional work may need to be re-defended in front of the committee following substantial revisions.

The student will coordinate with committee members to establish a day and time for the defense. Please note that working with a variety of schedules can be complicated, and students need to be quite organized in order to ensure that they are able to accommodate everyone's schedule. This is a part of the learning experience for the thesis. Students should consult with the mentor on any suggestions including resources for organization of multiple schedules (for example, scheduling tools like doodle.com or surveys/polling resources like Google Forms) and/or any tips s/he may have.

The student will coordinate with the Registrar to reserve a place for the defense. The entire committee must be present (virtually or physically) at the time of the defense. Upon approval of the time and location for the defense, the student will submit a full version of the thesis for consideration to the committee.

The defense will be open to the public and the VIU learning community. The announcement of the defense will include an abstract of the thesis. The total length of time of the defense will generally be one hour. It will consist of a brief presentation of the thesis, addressing the major points (e.g., the theoretical framework, rationale, research questions, methods, main findings, limitations, and conclusions), followed by questions and feedback from the committee and, time permitting, an opportunity for members of the community to comment. The mentor may determine the maximum time allotted for the defense presentation. If not specified, the oral

presentation portion of the defense should take approximately 20 minutes. Questions may involve the substance of the argument, the application of theory, the methodology, the approach to analysis, and/or the interpretations. The mentor will serve to moderate the defense and will allow questions from non-committee members as deemed fit.

Upon conclusion of the defense, the committee will confer and recess until a time deemed appropriate by the committee and the mentor. The student will be evaluated on the following:

- The overall quality of the thesis, including its findings, significance, and articulation
- The quality of the oral defense

A thesis receiving more than one dissenting vote from the committee cannot pass. The committee's official approval following any required revisions will allow the awarding of a "passing" grade for the thesis course. The final approval for the thesis will be granted by the Dean of the School of Education.

Any committee member(s) who is (are) not able to attend the defense in person will be permitted to email their approval to the mentor of the thesis. Wherever possible, an official email should be used (for example, ____@viu.edu, ____@campus.viu.edu, _____@fcps.edu, etc.).

12. Publication

All theses will be published and available through VIU's library. Names and titles of theses may be published on the School of Education website and/or the library website. All theses will also be on record with the students' files.

13. Tips

Understand that conceptualizing, researching, and writing a thesis is an iterative process, requiring continued work, development, and refinement of content and methodology. Remain in regular contact with your mentor and work closely with him/her throughout the experience!

Appendix A

The signature page for your manuscript should include the following information:

TITLE

by
Student Name (First and Last)

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Education
Virginia International University
in partial fulfillment of requirements of the
Degree Name
Specialization (if applicable)

Month Day (XX), Year (XXXX)

The thesis was reviewed and approved by the following

_____ Thesis Advisor Name

_____ Name of Committee Member 1

_____ Name of Committee Member 2

Academic Officer Approvals

_____ Dean's Name, Dean of the School of Education

_____ Provost's Name, Provost

Appendix B

The title page for your manuscript should include the following information:

TITLE

by

Student Name (First and Last)

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Education
Virginia International University
in partial fulfillment of requirements of the
Degree Name
Specialization (if applicable)

Month Day (XX), Year (XXXX)

Appendix C Required Forms

The following is a list of forms used for the Thesis. These forms can be found on the School of Education website:

- **Mentor Request Form** –This form is used to briefly describe the intent of the thesis and serves as a formal request for mentor assignment.
- **Proposal Form** –This is a more complete version of your earlier Mentor Request Form and represents a significant narrowing of your topic. The main areas to be included in the proposal are: theoretical or conceptual framework, problem statement, hypothesis, a brief (500 words) overview of information contained in the literature on the topic, proposed methods (materials and procedures), selected references (15-20) serving to support the literature review, and whether or not the research will involve human participants
- **Signature Page** –Appendix A of this document includes an example of how to incorporate the signature page into your manuscript.