SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Special Project Capstone (Plan C or E)

A HANDBOOK AND WRITER'S GUIDE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS

To facilitate active and ongoing participation, community, and interaction of faculty and students around a shared commitment to the advancement of knowledge through innovation and research.

Revised February, 2020

The Special Project as the Capstone Experience

Table of Contents

Introduction

Congratulations! You are going to engage in the Special Project, one of the graduate capstone experiences at Central Connecticut State University for students in master's programs. Your project will be a demanding and intellectually challenging task. You will learn and practice the skills required for organized research and documentation, analysis of information and effective communication. In doing your project you will be making the transition from one who is a <u>consumer</u> of knowledge to one who actively <u>contributes</u> to the knowledge base of their field or discipline. *You are becoming part of the Graduate Studies Community of Scholars by advancing knowledge through innovation and research.*

This handbook contains general guidelines for completing the Special Project capstone. However, since Special Projects can take multiple forms, such as *applied research, action research, exegesis, exhibitions, performances, and curriculum design and development,* the students should consult their departments for specific guidelines for the various approaches.

The Special Project Handbook has three chapters, and reference forms which can also be found on the Graduate Studies Forms webpage; http://www.ccsu.edu/grad/resources/capstone.html. Chapter 1 provides general guidelines that govern all Special Projects, regardless of the approach used by the department. Chapter 2 discusses specific standards (policies and requirements) required by the School of Graduate Studies regarding Special Projects. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the courses designated as Special Projects and the approaches that departments may choose for their Special Projects. The forms found on the website provide important information. These cover the Institutional Review Board and Institutional Animal Use and Care Councils, as well as sample forms and documents that are needed for your Special Project. The Special Project Rubric is a rubric developed and approved by the Graduate Studies Committee meant to inform you of criteria by which your Special Project will be assessed. Lastly, is the Graduation/Program Completion Application. This form must be completed and submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in order for your planned program to be audited and processed for graduation.

Many thanks to the Graduate Studies Policy Standing Committee and all faculty members who contributed information to this handbook to help students successfully complete their capstone.

While every effort will be made to keep this *Handbook* up-to-date, please confer with your graduate advisor about any recent changes that may have taken place. Please contact the School of Graduate Studies at 860-832-2363 if you have questions.

Writing a Special Project takes time, hard work, and patience. Nonetheless, you should find it to be a worthwhile and rewarding endeavor. I wish you successful completion of your Special Project work.

Christina A. Robinson

Christina A. Robinson, Ph.D.
Interim Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies, Research and Faculty Development

Chapter 1

The Special Project as the Capstone Experience

The Special Project is a culmination of the Master's Program for students who elect Plans C or E for their Graduate Studies capstone experience at CCSU. Specific guidelines depend on the approach the Special Project takes within the individual departments. Nonetheless, all Special Project Capstones provide an opportunity for students to complete an academically rigorous, professional project that contributes in some meaningful way to the discipline and communities to which they belong. The Project should reflect an understanding of knowledge related to the discipline or field and an ability to apply this knowledge. The capstone represents the student's ability to demonstrate a synthesis of the master's program. Students completing Plan C receive valuable mentoring by their faculty supervisor and committee members. Students in Plan E are in classes with other students who are all working on similar approaches to the Special Project, led by an instructor who provides mentoring and guidance.

Registering for the Special Project

To register in the Special Project capstone, **Plan C,** you must complete the Graduate Capstone Course Registration and obtain the necessary signatures. The Dean, School of Graduate Studies or designee, is the <u>last</u> person to sign the form which must be submitted to The School of Graduate Studies. You should register for the Special Project in the registration period for the semester you intend to begin work with your Special Project advisor on the <u>proposal</u>. You must register using the *Capstone Course Registration Form* during the regular registration period. No capstone forms will be accepted after the add/drop registration period ends (i.e., after the third week of classes).

To register in the Special Project capstone, **Plan E**, you must register for the department's designated course during the regular registration period as you would for any other coursework. (Some departments require special permission by the department chair.)

In order for you to register in the Special Project Capstone (whether plan C or E), graduate policy requires that you have at least a 3.00 overall GPA and that you have completed 18 credits in programs with 30-35 credits or 24 credits in programs with 36 or more credits.

Students only register for their Capstone one time. If the student receives a grade of incomplete (INC) and then does not register for any other course work, the student must then register for CREG 001 each fall and spring semester until the project is completed and a grade change has been submitted to the Dean's office. This allows students continued access to computer facilities, the library, parking, and the faculty.

Special Project Guidelines

Each Special Project, regardless of the form it ultimately takes, must contain the following:
1. Abstract
2. Definition of the Project
3. Project Objective (its purpose, a rationale for conducting the project)
4. Review of Literature
5. Research Methods or Plans for conducting the Project
6. Results and/or Findings
7. Summary/Conclusion
8. Bibliography/References
9. IRB/IACUC approval or exemption if appropriate
10. Appendices as appropriate (For maximum clarity, please provide a title for each appendix in the table of contents; example- Appendix A: IRB Forms, Appendix B: Participant Questionnaire, etc.)

Approaches to the Special Project

Various approaches exist for completing Special Projects, such as those that follow:
1. An extended research paper, based on primary and/or secondary sources.
2. An artistic exhibition or creative performance.
3. An action research project in a classroom or professional setting.
4. An applied project of practical research that includes details of the design and implementation of a product.
5. An internship with an accompanying paper that documents the experience and includes descriptive data with analysis.
6. A curriculum project that is designed, implemented, and evaluated.

As indicated above, what constitutes an appropriate Special Project varies between disciplines and among the departments offering this option. Although no single description of a Special Project exists, each is an exercise in rigorous research and application to the discipline.

Common Characteristics

A Special Project is an exercise in applied research. Special Projects stress problem solving and knowledge application. They normally consist of an expansion or synthesis of work from courses within the student's planned program. In this regard, to complete the Special Project successfully, the student must demonstrate mastery over both the specific content area and the methodology of the discipline.

A second common element to all Special Projects involves examining a specific topic of interest related to the discipline, chosen with the Special Project faculty supervisor. The topic should focus on a limited area and explore an issue or question related to their discipline. Students are asked to demonstrate their skills in using the methodologies of their fields and applying their knowledge to the selected topic of interest. It also requires the student to have an in-depth understanding of the particular area of interest. The student must know the current "state of the art" or literature if they are to add to it.

Third, a Special Project represents an opportunity to work closely with one or more faculty members in your field. One characteristic of good graduate education is the opportunity for faculty and students to work together

in a close relationship characterized as mentoring. Nuances, connected to the discipline, are best conveyed in the context of a close working relationship. Working on a Special Project under the supervision of faculty provides an opportunity for learning that goes beyond what is found in other graduate school activities.

A final characteristic of a Special Project is more personal in nature: a Special Project is an exercise in self-discipline. Completing a Special Project requires sustained initiative and focus for an extended period of time. YOU, the student, provide the structure of your work. The choice of topic is largely yours. Faculty will generally look to you to be the initiator of your Special Project work. A Master's degree acknowledges you as a professional in your field; the mark of a professional is the ability to be self-motivated and self-directed.

To recap, a Special Project is a document that entails independent activity, with research that is integrated into its application. The Special Project is undertaken to explore an issue, problem or topic of interest that is applicable to the discipline or field. The goal of this activity is to synthesize what you have learned throughout your planned program of study, to add new or replicated knowledge to the discipline, and to demonstrate competency and worthiness of an advanced degree in the field.

The Special Project Process

Major steps for the planning, executing, and writing processes are presented in Figure 1. While the tabular presentation implies a linear progression, in fact, it rarely happens that way.
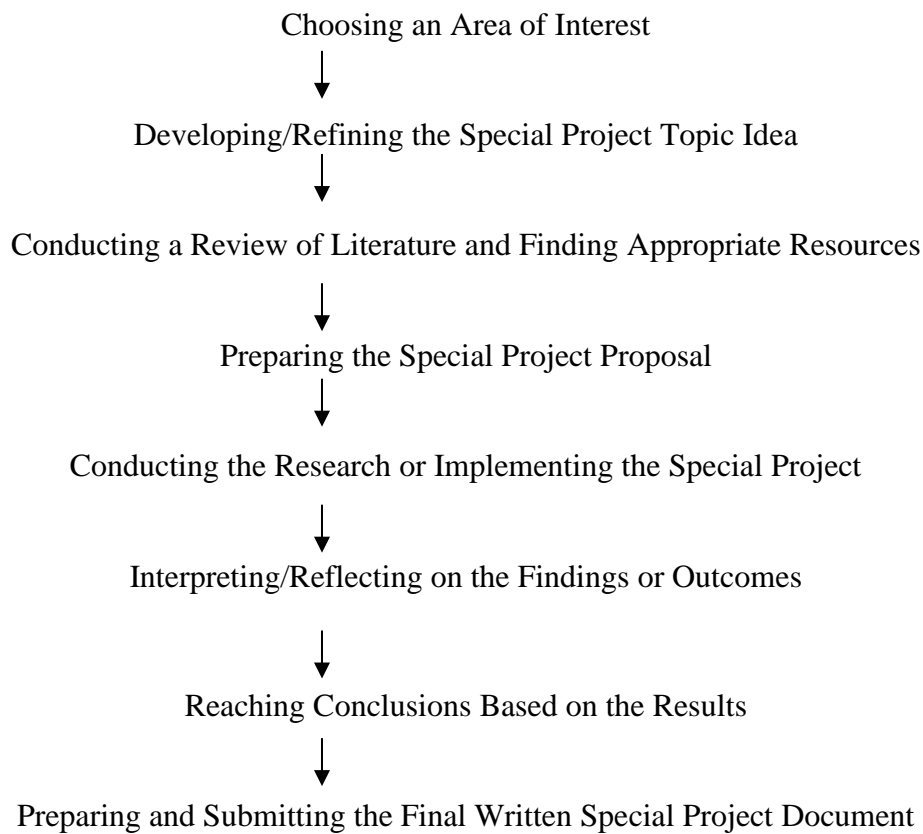
The first and often most difficult step for many students is selecting an idea or focus for the Special Project. Many students expect that a Special Project topic should suddenly come to them as a result of their own reflection. While at times this does happen, a more common process is that a person first identifies a general topic area and, then, following more examination of that area and through consultation with his/her advisor, the student begins to focus more specifically on a topic that is appropriate for a Special Project. The sources from which the topic emanates are varied: it may represent a topic in which a student has had a long-standing personal interest; it may be a topic found stimulating in one or more classes; it may arise through discussions with instructors, advisors, or classmates; it may come from reading current books or journals in your field; or it may come from some organization or group that presents a problem or issue for resolution. Students should expect to spend time and patience refining their Special Project topic.

Some "Dos" and "Dont's" for Selecting the Special Project Topic[1]

1. **Do** choose an idea that can sustain your interest over a long period of time.

2. **Do** write down interesting ideas, thoughts and quotations as you come across them in your readings as well as notes on discussions with faculty and peers, etc.

3. **Do not** choose topics that are overly ambitious. No project will be the final word on any particular topic.

4. **Do not** go it alone. Coming up with a topic is a negotiated effort between you and your advisor. Regularly talk with your advisor about your ideas.

[1]adapted from Rudestam & Newton, 1992.

Figure 1
Steps for Planning, Executing, and Writing the Special Project

Choosing an Area of Interest

↓

Developing/Refining the Special Project Topic Idea

↓

Conducting a Review of Literature and Finding Appropriate Resources

↓

Preparing the Special Project Proposal

↓

Conducting the Research or Implementing the Special Project

↓

Interpreting/Reflecting on the Findings or Outcomes

↓

Reaching Conclusions Based on the Results

↓

Preparing and Submitting the Final Written Special Project Document

A key part of refining your topic of interest involves a critical literature review of the field. This review does several things: (1) makes you aware of the current "state of the art" and knowledge base of the area; (2) helps you to identify gaps, *i.e.*, key issues or questions around this topic that need to be explored; and (3) informs you about the kinds of methodologies that have been used to explore aspects of this topic. Keeping good notes on the material you read (including all information needed for a proper bibliographic citation in the style utilized in your department) will help you when you write your Special Project.

Today, almost all literature searches begin with (but are not limited to!) electronic search techniques. Many journal abstracts are computerized and can be searched via author, subject, and/or keywords. A complete description of how to use the various electronic databases is beyond the scope of this manual, but Burritt Library provides specific instructions on using the many databases on *Consuls* and in the reference section (third floor) of the library, as well as regularly offering classes in search techniques. Please consult with the reference librarian for further information.

Five Key Issues

As you read through the literature, you will gain a better understanding of what is known about your topic. At this point, it is advisable to begin discussing your ideas with departmental faculty (either within the specific class for Plan E or with designated faculty for Plan C). The suitability of your topic refers not only to the quality of the idea, but to logistical considerations that will have an impact on your ability to complete the project. Indeed, students often have good research ideas which, for a variety of reasons, they may be unable to carry out. Five key issues to consider: (1) time, (2) cost, (3) access to needed resources, (4) faculty support and (5) approval.

The first consideration is **time**: How long will the project take? A Special Project should represent a substantial effort on one's part, but it is not expected to be one's life work. While there are no hard and fast guidelines, a Special Project (once a workable idea is developed) should take no more than one to two semesters. A student who puts in regular, consistent effort on the project and meets regularly with their faculty advisor should be able to bring the Special Project to a successful close. If it seems that a possible topic would take a longer time to complete (assuming regular effort), you should consider narrowing the topic or selecting another topic.

A second consideration is **cost**. Will the project entail considerable out-of-pocket expense? Most students expect to (and do) spend some money on research expenses, but the amount should not be excessive. If your project requires extensive travel or the use of expensive materials, you should explore possible sources of financial support. For example, the Graduate Student Association (GSA) offers scholarships to help support student research. (Visit the GSA web site http://www.ccsu.edu/gsa and click on funding information.) Your Special Project advisor may know of research funds to help defray your costs. Depending on your topic, you might be able to get some support from business and industry, and/or professional associations. If funds are not available, and there are substantial costs involved, you may want to rethink your project.

A third consideration is **access** to needed resources. If your work depends on access to certain library materials or other documents, a key question is whether the materials are available. If certain materials are essential for your research, you should check whether these are obtainable before extensive effort is made in planning the project in more detail. You may want to set an arbitrary time limit on securing key material. If, for example, the materials you need are under another person's control, such as a school principal or agency director, you may choose to pursue the project (assuming other factors make it seem worthwhile) for what you and the advisor consider a reasonable amount of time. If after that time, no clear progress has been made in obtaining the needed materials, it may be prudent to rethink the feasibility of the project.

A fourth issue that falls under the heading of feasibility is the availability of **faculty support**. It is in your best interest to connect with at least one faculty member in your program who shares an interest in your proposed topic and who has expertise in this area. If no one in the department has the interest or expertise to assist you, your project probably won't get off the ground.

A final and very important concern involves clearance of a research proposal through our institutional review procedures. Before submitting your proposal for review to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, your Special Project advisor needs to review and sign the related forms. While CCSU has its own set of Human Studies and Animal Care review processes, if your research involves another institution (e.g., school, hospital laboratory), your research proposal may also require the review and **approval** of that institution. It is of critical importance that you identify the nature of the review mechanism, collect or prepare the documents you will need to submit, and allow sufficient time for review. Failure to submit your project for review at the appropriate time may seriously delay your schedule. It is important to remember that clearance from IRB or IACUC must be obtained **before** you begin any data collection.

You might already know who will serve as your advisor or, if appropriate, on your committee. However, if you are in a **Plan C** Special Project and have developed your Special Project idea without consultation with faculty (which is not recommended!), you may not have a clear idea of who should serve as your Special Project advisor. In this case, you should talk with your program advisor and the department chairperson who will know how to direct you to appropriate faculty who have expertise and share an interest in your topic. The purpose of the Special Project advisor (and committee) is to help you develop and shape your Special Project idea, to mentor you as you work on the project, and to evaluate the finished project that you produce.

For either Plan C or E, as you refine your interest area into a specific Special Project topic, you will develop specific research questions and the research methods for your project. Typically, this is an iterative process that cycles between reading the literature and discussing it with your advisor. It is during this period that you will be completing your critical review of the literature.

All the reading, deliberation and discussion with your advisor should culminate in the writing of your Special Project proposal. Special Project proposals go through several revisions, reflecting both conceptual and stylistic changes. While the proposal is essentially an action plan, it can also represent, if done carefully, the first of several chapters for your final submission of the Special Project, the definition of the project, its objective, and the review of literature.

Once research methods or plans for conducting the project have been agreed upon, you and your advisor must submit appropriate forms to the Institutional Review Board or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee if the project involves either human or animal subjects. Approval from the appropriate committee is <u>required</u> <u>before</u> data collection/research can begin. Indeed, starting your research without human or animal subject approval is unethical and potentially exposes you and the university to legal complications.

For students in **Plan C and Plan E**, the Special Project proposal must be reviewed and accepted by your advisor (committee). For students in **Plan C** the Dean, School of Graduate Studies or his/her designee should receive a copy of the proposal and a signed <u>Capstone Proposal Form</u>.

Following submission of the proposal (and approval from the Graduate School Dean or designee for Plan C) the research effort is begun in earnest: experiments or interventions are conducted; surveys are distributed; historical works are examined; curriculums are evaluated; artistic or performances are begun, etc. No research should begin prior to approval from Dean, School of Graduate Studies or designee.

For many students this part of the process, which they expect to be tedious, turns out to be exciting. The intellectual challenge of the research endeavor is experienced in a way that is <u>never</u> captured in the dry accounts that typify most academic journals and books.

While engaged in this phase of your Special Project, you should keep in close touch with your advisor (committee). Problems or questions will often arise (hopefully minor) that may require some modification of your research plan. Consulting with your advisor about possible changes will minimize misunderstandings about such alterations later.

The analysis and interpretation of one's results are often the most challenging parts of the project. As the results are examined and initial expectations are confirmed or negated, students begin to understand, more clearly than ever before, the human side of the research enterprise. Results are never as clear cut as they seem to be in print; different interpretations now seem plausible; shortcomings in methods are seen in hindsight; and directions for new research emerge. Once again, it is important to consult with your

advisor as you formulate the conclusions and recommendations that your work will add to your field or discipline.

<u>**Writing Strategies**</u>

If producing and interpreting the data is more exciting than most students expect, writing the Special Project is often more painful than students anticipate. Simply put, writing is hard work. If it is any consolation, it is hard work for everyone. There are, however, several strategies that you can follow that will make you more productive.

First, understand that revisions are inevitable and using and saving copies to your computer will make that task relatively painless. Also, all word processing packages contain spelling and grammar checks which can help with the writing process. Moreover, there are now specialized word processing programs available that can help you with formatting issues. (If you do not own or have access to a computer, computers are available on the campus, primarily the Micro Computer Lab in Marcus White Annex. Also, the Micro Computer Lab regularly conducts classes on word processing packages.)

The second trick is to <u>write something every day</u> –even if it is only a few paragraphs. Getting something down on paper (stored on the computer) is the hard part; it is always easier to revise once you've gotten the basic idea down. Don't worry if it doesn't sound "right" in its original form--that's what revision is for. If you've done a good job in putting your proposal together, you probably can use most or all of the proposal with some modification in the actual project that will be submitted.

Thirdly, don't feel that you have to write the whole Special Project before you can ask your advisor for feedback on what you've written. It is best to submit materials in intervals; your advisor is there to help.

A word to procrastinators. You really want to finish and get that degree. If it feels like you just never get down to writing, put pressure on yourself. Finding other students who are writing their projects can also be a good source of encouragement. Call regularly. Set small but realistic goals.

Also, keep in mind that each semester you have not completed the Special Project, you must register for the Continuing Registration Course, (if have not registered for any other courses). The course fee includes the university registration fee and the $40 continuing fee. Students are responsible for course registration.

Some departments require that students completing the Special Project must make an oral presentation before the department will officially accept the Special Project. The oral defense is done after a completed version of the Special Project has been read by the advisor or committee members. The department will explain the format to follow for the oral defense.

Once your advisor (committee) has approved your Special Project, you will need to make an official copy, including an abstract for submission. For students in **Plan C,** your advisor (committee) will sign a <u>Final Capstone Submission Form</u> which will be turned in with your copies to the Dean, School of Graduate Studies or designee.

It is always a good idea for you to check with your advisor or the Dean, School of Graduate Studies or designee after your Special Project has been submitted to be sure that you have completed all requirements for graduation. If you haven't completed a Graduation/Program Completion Application, be sure to do so.

That's it! Go home, tell everyone you know to celebrate with you. You've earned it!

Chapter 2

School of Graduate Studies Policies and Requirements

<u>**Submission Requirements**</u>

Central Connecticut State University follows certain procedures regarding approval of Special Projects (see below). Individual departments may set additional criteria. (See Chapter 3.)

After a **Plan C** Special Project has been approved by your Special Project committee, the chair of the committee or the student must submit:

1. An <u>original copy</u> of the Special Project bound by means of a clamp-style binder or large binder clip (in which case place it in a labeled envelope). Be sure your abstract is included!
2. <u>Final Capstone Submission Form</u> signed by all members of the Special Project committee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies or designee;
3.

(**Plan E** projects are handled differently per department policies.)

In addition to the original and copy of the Special Project, students may prepare final copies of the Special Project for their Special Project advisor, other members of their committee, and themselves.

The School of Graduate Studies also has certain guidelines that govern each of the items on the following pages:

<u>**Special Project Cover Page**</u>

Each Special Project must include a cover page of pertinent information. The cover page should contain the following elements (items in italics require you to put in accurate information):

<div align="center">

Title of Special Project

Your Name

A Special Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of *(list your degree)*
In
(list your program)
Department of *(list department)*
Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, CT

Month, Year

Special Project Advisor: *Advisor Name*

</div>

Abstract Cover Page (See Same Abstract Cover Sheet, http://www.ccsu.edu/grad/resources/forms.html)

Each Special Project must include an abstract that summarizes the purpose, methodology, findings and conclusions of the study. The abstract should be written with approximately 200-300 words. As a summary of the Special Project, it should contain the following elements: (1) a summary of the project's purpose; (2) brief statements regarding the methods of investigation or the planning of the project; (3) a description of the results or the findings, including where and how you obtained them; and (4) conclusions and/or recommendations, which relate back to the original objective of the Special Project. When writing an abstract, it is important to be exact, concise, and unambiguous.

Biographical Note

It is your choice as to whether to include a short biographical note as the last page of your Special Project. At a minimum, you should summarize your academic background, honors and pertinent employment history. Additional information– about your family, your interests, and your long-term goals– is acceptable.

Special Project Deadlines

Submission of Special Projects follow the final examination deadlines for both fall and spring semesters. For students seeking summer graduation, Special Projects should be submitted no later than August 15.

Capstone Rubric

The Graduate Studies Committee has developed and approved a capstone rubric form. The rubric provides specific areas that all Special Projects should contain and indicates levels by which Special Projects will be assessed by committee members.

SPECIAL PROJECT CHECKLIST

The following checklist is provided to assist you with the organization of your Special Project. It is suggested that you check all the boxes below to be certain your Special Project contains each of the items before you submit your Special Project for review.

The paper format of your Special Project should be assembled in the following order

☐ **Special Project Cover Page**

☐ **Abstract** (The abstract size should be between 200-300 words.)

☐ **Text/Narrative, along with appropriate tables and figures**

☐ **List of References**

☐ **Appendices**

☐ **Biographical Statement** (If appropriate)

Submission requirements:

☐ **Capstone Proposal Form** (submitted prior to start of research)

☐ **Final Capstone Submission Form**

☐ **IRB or IACUC Approval forms, as appropriate**

☐ **Original Version**

Chapter 3

Specific Department Requirements

As noted in earlier chapters, The University's Graduate Studies Committee has established certain policies regarding the Special Project process. Beyond these requirements, individual departments may set additional criteria or policies regarding Special Project work. Departmental Special Project requirements may include committee size and/or composition, style, format, and evaluation process, such as an oral defense of Special Project. Table 1 presents a summary of these requirements for Special Projects that are considered Plan C. Table 2 presents a summary of these requirements for Special Projects that are considered Plan E.

Students should consult individual departments for these specific requirements.

Table 1: Plan C Requirements

Department	Program	Course Number	Type of Project	Committee Membership	Style Format	Other Requirements
Art	MS Art Education	ART 597	Exegesis (written component) and Body of Original Artwork	Two department members	APA or MLA	Exhibitions
Business Adm.	M.B.A.	BUS 580				
Communication	MS Strategic Communication	COMM 597	Applied Communication Project (Public Relations Campaign, Training Workshop, Communication Audit, etc.)	At least two department members with terminal degree	APA	Oral Defense
Computer Sciences, MIS, Comp. Electronics/ Graphic Technology	MS Computer Information Technology	CIT 595	Applied Practical Research, with written report that includes the design and implementation of a product	Two or more faculty who teach for the Program	APA	Oral Defense
Criminology/ Criminal Justice	MS Criminal Justice	CJ 597	Internship that documents Applied Research; Collaborative Project with Agency	Two full time tenure track department members	APA	Oral Defense
Design (Graphic Information)	MA Information Design	DES 597	Applied Practical Research, with written report that in-cludes deliverables (design and implementation of product)	Two or more faculty who teach for the program	APA	Oral Defense

Table 1 (Continued)

DEPARTMENT *PLAN C* SPECIAL PROJECT

Department	Program	Course Number	Type of Project	Committee Membership	Style Format	Other Requirements
Computer Science	MS Software Engineering	CS 595				
Geography	MS Geography	GEOG 595	Applied Research	Must be members of the department	Chicago	Oral Defense
History	MA Public History	HIST 595	Client or Academically Based Research (Exhibitions, Oral Histories Archival Preparation, Walking Tours, etc.)	Two or more Faculty members		
International and Area Studies	MS International Studies	IS 595	Applied Research	Full-time faculty who teach for IS program	APA or MLA	Oral Presentation
Manufacturing & Construction Management	MS Construction Management MS Technology Management	CM 595 TM 595	Applied Research	Advisor and at least one more faculty member	APA	Public presentation to faculty and students in the program
Mathematics	MA Math MS Math MS Data Science	TBD Math 590 DATA 599	Action Research	Two or more Faculty members	APA	Oral Defense
Modern Language	MA Modern Language	ML 595				
Music	MS Music Education	MUS 597A	Action Research	Two or more Faculty members	APA or MLA	
Music	MS Music Education	MUS 597B	Performance or Conducting Recital	Two department members	APA	Oral Defense
Psychology	MA PSY	TBD				

Table 2

DEPARTMENT *PLAN E* SPECIAL PROJECT

Department	Program	Course Number	Type of Project	Committee Membership	Style Format
Business Adm.	MBA	BUS 581/582			
Educational Leadership	MS Educational Technology	EDT 597	Applied Research	APA	
Educational Leadership	MS Teacher Leadership	ED 591 ED 592			
Geological Science	MS STEM	STEM 595	Action Research		
Physical Education	MS Athletic Training	ATR 590			
Special Education	MS Special Education	SPED 596 and SPED 597	Action Research	APA	
Teacher Education	MAT	MAT 550	Action Research	APA	Presentation

What is the Difference Between a Thesis and Special Project?

THESIS	SPECIAL PROJECT
All theses should be based on the compilation of knowledge and skills acquired throughout the student's graduate program.	Special Projects demonstrate mastery over both the specific content area and the methodology of the discipline.
The intent of a thesis is to make a contribution to the field. You are asked to demonstrate your skills in using the methodologies of your field to examine a topic of interest to your discipline.	Special Projects involve examination of a specific topic of interest related to the discipline, chosen with the Special Project faculty supervisor.
A thesis represents an opportunity to work closely with one or more faculty members in your field.	A Special Project represents an opportunity to work closely with one or more faculty members in your field.

To recap, a Special Project is a document that entails independent activity, with research that is integrated into its application. The Special Project is undertaken to explore an issue, problem or topic of interest that is applicable to the discipline or field. The goal of this activity is to synthesize what you have learned throughout your planned program of study, to add new or replicated knowledge to the discipline, and to demonstrate competency and worthiness of an advanced degree in the field.

References

American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th Ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Gibaldi, J. (1998). *The MLA style manual and guide to scholarly publishing*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.

Rudestam, K., & Newton, R. (1992). *Surviving your dissertation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

University of Chicago Press. (2003). *The Chicago manual of style: For authors, editors and copywriters* (15th Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.