

MASTER'S IN EDUCATION POLICY
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

FINAL PROJECT GUIDELINES

The master's project provides an opportunity for candidates to conduct a field based policy project or to develop a well-organized essay on a significant topic in the field of education policy.

The master's project includes the following options:

• **Field Research Project (typically 3 credits)**

Through this option candidates will address a specific educational policy issue or problem or will take on multiple policy-related tasks. Candidates must commit to 12-15 hours/week for the entire term for a 3-credit project (more hours if more credits are involved) and they may be required to prepare a final written report depending upon the scope of the project and needs of their faculty sponsor or external organization. If no culminating report is necessary, the candidate will compile a portfolio and include a written summary of the field based project to demonstrate the policy-related knowledge and skills acquired during the field project. See Appendix A for required sign-off forms.

The field project may involve a project with a faculty member at the Warner School or a project designed in conjunction with an external organization. Through this project candidates may examine a specific policy issue, ground the issue through a review of the literature, and collect and analyze data (possible but not required). For example, a student may study the qualifications of pre-K teachers in the Rochester City School District compared with pre-K teachers in private settings or K-12 teachers for a faculty member. Or the student may study the implementation of smaller learning communities in Rochester's high schools for the Rochester City School District. Alternatively, the student may work at a policy-related organization on multiple tasks as assigned by the organization.

During the term prior to conducting the field project—normally the 2nd term of the 3-term full-time program-- the student must work with the advisor to determine the boundaries and focus of this project and the culminating report (if necessary). This option requires a more active role of the advisor given the unique nature of these projects, particularly in negotiating the scope of the project and timeline with the external organization and making sure that the student has the capabilities to complete the expected tasks. The advisor should ensure that the work will contribute to the external organization while also supporting the student's own development of knowledge and skills relating to educational policy. The advisor and external organization's representative, who will serve as the field supervisor, will meet prior to the start of the project to discuss the role of the student, expectations of the field-based project, and timeline of the work. The required hours each week do not necessarily have to be completed at the external organization or Warner School – this will vary by organization and project and therefore these expectations should be worked out with the advisor and field supervisor. For a spring internship,

the expectation is that students will begin their field project during the first week of classes in January and complete the work during the last week of classes in April unless another plan is worked out by the student, advisor, and field supervisor. See Appendix B for additional guidelines for the master's field project.

The student must submit a 2-page proposal during the term prior to conducting the field project that outlines the expectations for the project and level of commitment involved. The proposal must be signed by the advisor and representative of the organization. This proposal should outline the scope of the project and any formal reporting requirements, e.g., a written report or final presentation to the organization. All work completed as part of the field project should be done under the guidance of the field supervisor although the advisor will help the student navigate the process and should meet with the student at least once during the course of the term to make sure everything is moving forward as expected.

Upon completion of the project, the student must either prepare a written culminating report or complete a final project portfolio regarding what he/she did during the field experience, which may include written memos or literature reviews for the organization, presentation of data analysis, etc. The written report or portfolio must be submitted to the advisor and second reader no later than the last week of the semester. Both readers must award a pass for the student to successfully complete the master's research course, which is a requirement for graduation from the master's in policy program. It is our expectation that this option will provide a more authentic learning opportunity for candidates, but may require more in-depth work by the student which is why this potentially involves up to 3 more credits than the master's essay depending on the scope of the work.

• **Master's Essay (3 credits max.)**

Candidates will write an essay that identifies and analyzes a significant issue or problem in contemporary U.S. education policy. The expected length is 25-35 double-spaced pages, excluding references. The essay requires that candidates review the relevant research as they discuss the policy problem and argue for a particular policy solution, using conceptual arguments or empirical evidence. The implications for policy, research, and practice should be clearly stated.

This project will involve a thorough review of the related research, including both theoretical and empirical work on a particular area, as well as integration of key policy literature. For example, a student may write an essay on whether NY State should require full-day kindergarten for candidates in the state. The student would discuss the literature on mandatory kindergarten, full-day kindergarten vs. half-day kindergarten, and other related topics.

During the term prior to conducting the master's essay—normally the 2nd term of the 3-term full-time program-- the candidate must submit for approval by the advisor the general topic area the student wishes to pursue. Upon approval the student must prepare a reading list for the essay. The advisor will approve this and recommend additional readings, as necessary. Finally, the student must submit a 2 page proposal describing the scope, rationale, and organization of the essay. These steps must be completed before the end of the term prior to conducting the master's

essay (e.g., by the end of the fall term). The advisor will work with the student to discuss the boundaries and focus of this paper as part of the proposal process. Once this proposal is approved the student can move forward with the essay. See Appendix A for approval form.

The first reader of the essay will always be the candidate's advisor. The chair of Educational Leadership, in consultation with advisor, will determine the second reader. Both readers must approve the essay for it to pass.

The student may meet with the advisor on occasion to discuss his/her work on this essay. Upon completion of the essay, the student submits it to the advisor for review. The student must submit a full draft of the essay no later than week 12 of the semester in which he/she expects to graduate. The advisor determines whether it needs additional revision or is "final" and thereby ready to move forward to the second reader. If revisions are required, the student must submit a revised draft to the advisor. The essay must be submitted to the second reader no later than the last week of the semester. Both readers must award a pass for the student to successfully complete the master's degree and graduate from the master's in policy program. See Appendix C for additional guidelines for the master's essay.

If a student does not successfully complete the work agreed upon by the external organization's representative, the faculty member, and the student, for the field project or the master's essay s/he will fail the final project and be withdrawn from the program.

Appendix A: Master's Project Approval Form

Candidate Name: _____

Name of Advisor/First Reader: _____

I. PRE-APPROVAL

1. Area of Focus Approved _____ Date _____ Advisor _____
2. Reading List Approved (essay only) _____ Date _____ Advisor _____
3. Proposal Approved _____ Date _____ Advisor _____
_____ Date _____ Field Sup. (field
research project only)

Proposal must be attached to this form.

Date of Expected Graduation: _____

II. FINAL APPROVAL:

Date Essay or Report/Portfolio Submitted: _____

First Reader Evaluation: (Circle One)

Pass No Pass

First Reader: _____

(Signature) (Date)

If No Pass, Deadline for Submission of Revised Paper: _____

First Reader Evaluation of Revision:

Pass No Pass

(Signature) (Date)

Second Reader Evaluation: (Circle One)

Pass No Pass

Second Reader: _____

(Signature) (Date)

Appendix B: Additional guidelines for the master's field project

1. You are representing the Warner School. Therefore, we expect that you will act and dress professionally and appropriately.
2. You should keep records of the hours worked each week and the type of work you do and when, e.g., meetings you attend, the purpose of these meetings, etc. You should maintain copies of any memos or summary documents you write as part of the project. If you collect data, keep records of the type of data you collect, the process for acquiring these, etc.
3. Your final written report or portfolio should be compiled in a clear and logical way.
4. If completing a portfolio, you must include a short (4-6 page) paper in which you reflect on your experience and what you learned during the process.
5. Include a Table of Contents as appropriate.
6. Include a running head with your name and abbreviated title.
7. There should be no grammatical or mechanical errors.
8. Use an attractive binding for your final product.

Appendix C: Additional guidelines for the master's essay

1. The final product should have a clear introduction, identifiable argument, logical structure, and effective use of evidence (from the research literature or empirical data).
2. Use an engaging title.
3. Include a Table of Contents.
4. Include a running head with your name and abbreviated essay title.
5. Follow APA bibliographic, citation and subhead style.
6. Double-space and paginate your essay, including appendices.
7. Use subheads generously.
8. There should be no grammatical or mechanical errors. Find someone to do a final proofreading.
9. Change all names of school districts, schools, teachers, and candidates to pseudonyms.
10. Use an attractive binding.