

*Warner Graduate School of Education and Human
Development
University of Rochester*

*Guidelines for the Master's Capstone Project/Thesis in School Counseling and Community
Mental Health Counseling*

Counseling Master's students are expected to register for and successfully complete the Capstone Exam as their Master's degree capstone experience. However, if students from the 2024/2025 cohort have a strong interest and rationale for replacing the exam with a master's thesis, they may apply to a faculty member for permission and thesis sponsorship. Students must complete the thesis approval form and submit it to their internship instructor by October 22nd, 2024 to be eligible for the master's thesis capstone project.

Philosophy and Purpose: Professional Scholarship and Practice

The Master's Capstone project/Thesis affords the opportunity to exercise and demonstrate scholarly and professional competence. Scholarly understanding of the subject matter, relevant articulation or performance of professional practice and evident devotion to professional values and ethics must be apparent in the capstone/thesis project irrespective of the chosen form, for successful completion of the degree.

The Master's Capstone project/Thesis is intended to intersect the interests, values and needs of the candidate, the Warner School/CHD, the Counseling profession and the communities that directly or indirectly have supported and that validate the work of the candidate, the Warner School/CHD and the Counseling profession. The execution and completion of a capstone project/thesis commemorates the sacrifices and investments of the candidate and of many others in the undertaking of a professional career.

Planning and Initiation: Exploration, Sponsorship, Selection and Proposal Submission

Planning for the Thesis/Capstone project optimally begins with the commencement of graduate education as candidates explore the theoretical and clinical traditions in counseling and establish reflective conversations with colleagues, community professionals, clients and their own life experiences.

After the completion of EDU 450—Practicum and during EDF 458—Internship, a candidate must define and formalize their areas of interest for the Thesis/Capstone project and choose one of the options described in this document. As outlined above, the thesis sponsor (**who may be, but is not necessarily, the program advisor**) should be invited by the candidate to assist in the formation of the area of interest and the capstone option. All candidates who are approved for this capstone options must successfully complete their Master's Capstone project/Thesis prior to graduate from the program.

Capstone Project/Thesis Work: General Directions to All Candidates

Candidates should maintain regular and adequate communication with their project advisor, submitting drafts, plans and programs for preliminary review. Consultation with the faculty advisor is intended to promote the success of a capstone project/thesis and candidates should expect revisions and alterations from the progress of their work. The capstone project/thesis work is a realization of the candidate's professional abilities and interests and part of the stewardship of thesis advisors is to honor and support the candidate's area of interest and thesis modality, consistent with the purposes and values of the capstone experience. A sample *timeline* is provided to assist you in making steady progress on your project and help you meet graduation-related deadlines throughout your culminating year of study.

The work of the master's capstone project/thesis is personally and professionally challenging. Such work is not solely the singular responsibility of the candidate but is also a community responsibility that exemplifies the life-long and supportive nature of professional involvement among colleagues.

The literature review portions of Options A and B and the entire thesis (Option C) will be completed (e.g. type face, format, abstract page, author-date **citation and references**) in accordance with the criteria of a review article manuscript being submitting for publication with a peer reviewed professional journal as described in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), 7th Edition.

The title page of the thesis/capstone, the abstract and the table of contents are formatted according to the UR guidelines for theses and dissertations. See appendix A for notes and examples of this manuscript formatting style.

Thesis Options

Thesis Option A: School/Community Interventions and Education Training

Tasks for Option A: (Education & Training, Consultation, Advocacy)

1. Investigate and document needs, resources and/or practices in reference to a specific school or community organization
2. Propose and explain an education intervention plan, including curriculum, pedagogy and purpose in relation to (1)
3. Identify and justify the proposed participants/recipients of the intervention outlined in (2)
4. Identify and prepare a means to evaluate the intervention and its execution
5. **Summarize these four steps in a proposal document not to exceed 10 pages**
6. Obtain Site Sponsorship of the candidate's proposed plan indicated by a signed approval form from the school or community site
7. **Schedule, organize and execute the proposed counseling education plan, including the evaluation process.**
8. The faculty advisor will attend the candidate's counseling education session and provide live consultation which can assist with the self-evaluation (Optional: Videotape the session and submit tape to the thesis advisor for later review)
9. **Complete a self-evaluation of the intervention**, following the evaluation plan and submit in a written document not to exceed five pages

Thesis Option B: Professional Resource Development

Tasks for Option B: (Best Practices Expertise, Resource/Product Development)

1. Identify a constituency (a client population or a community of interest) and a topic of interest and **write a rationale for your choice in a Rationale Statement of not more than ten pages that is to be submitted** to your thesis advisor for Approval.
2. Develop the resource as a **tangible media product**. This may be in the form of a booklet, video, power-point, curriculum guide or program manual or any other variety of communication product chosen in relation to the audience for which it is prepared or by virtue of the nature of the topic itself.
3. Include as an addendum, a **five-page bibliography** which provides information from both public discussion and professional literature, relative to the candidate's formulation of the resource and supportive of the topic and audience need for information. The primary value of the product results from the candidate's ability to discern, summarize and interpret the dimensions of a public problem of importance to the identified constituency and to prepare material for professional and community/client utilization which draws on the body of previous discussion and professional literature to provide an expert resource guide for future use.
4. Invite at least one non-Warner community participant to review the product, provide feedback and attend the Master's Symposium

Thesis Option C: Master's Thesis

Tasks for Option C: (Counseling Research and Scholarly Inquiry)

Thesis Option C addresses the responsibilities and values of the counseling practitioner as a professional participant in traditions of inquiry and scholarly dialogue. Here candidates engage in research investigation, analysis of theory or findings, and **the development of an argument representing an informed standpoint with respect to a problem, policy or need of importance to the profession of counseling**. Option C concentrates effort on the need for practitioners to continuously inform their practice with inquiry and to contribute to the development of practitioner scholarship that fosters the profession's capacities to serve the public good. There are three parts to Option C as follows:

1. Submit a **thesis prospectus of 5-7 pages** to the thesis advisor. This prospectus is an outline of the thesis problem with a conceptual plan related to key sub-topics, a preliminary bibliography and a projected time schedule of work.
2. Upon faculty advisor acceptance, complete the thesis investigation and organize and prepare the **first draft** of the manuscript in accordance with the current APA publication manual guidelines.
3. Submit the first draft of the manuscript to the thesis advisor and to one peer selected by the candidate. Such a peer may be a colleague within the candidate's program, a professional colleague available to the candidate through work/life experiences or a party exceptionally well prepared through work/life experience (for example, in a thesis concerning the socio-cultural history and treatment of children with autism, a parent of a child with autism or an adult with personal experience of autism would qualify).
4. The candidate-selected peer provides the candidate and the thesis sponsor with an email commentary on the thesis draft in a brief (one page) response.
5. Revise the thesis to create a **final draft** of the document which demonstrates responsiveness to both sponsor and peer reviewers, and submit.

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Warner Milestone Assessment—For Counseling Students
Master’s Student Thesis/Capstone Project

Note: *For each item below, a rating must be identified indicating the level of student mastery. No questions can be skipped.*

1=Insufficient 2=Emergent 3= Proficient 4=Exemplary

(All scores of “1” require a comment reporting how/when remediation was accomplished)

Question ID	Question Language	Comments	1	2	3	4
WM-CHD Ths 1	Clearly articulates significance of the problem (rationale)		1	2	3	4
WM-CHD Ths 2	Includes a relevant and detailed review of literature appropriate to the topic (lit. review or bibliography)		1	2	3	4
WM-CHD Ths 3	States a position and supports it with evidence (thesis)		1	2	3	4
WM-CHD Ths 4	Included implications for counseling practice, theory and research (application)		1	2	3	4
WM-CHD Ths 5	Demonstrates ability to create written & or visual/graphic representation of work for a professional audience		1	2	3	4
WM-CHD Ths 6	Demonstrates ability to orally present a poster/product to a professional audience		1	2	3	4
WM-CHD Ths 7	Paper and/or Poster use APA formatting, including proper referencing		1	2	3	4

Wm-CHD Ths 8	Paper/Product is logically organized and meaning is clear to reader	1	2	3	4
WM-CHD Ths 9	General writing mechanics (sentence structure, punctuation, syntax etc) appear at a graduate level	1	2	3	4

Notes:

Understanding Self-Injury in Adolescents
With Implications for School Counselors

By

(Your Name)

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the

Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Supervised by Professor Martin Lynch

Margaret Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development

University of Rochester

May 2020