

Department of Integrated
Studies in Education

**Masters
Project
Supervision
Guidelines
for Students
& Supervisors**



Part A: Expectations (PROJECT)¹

The M.A. Non-thesis Option – Project consists of both coursework and two 6 credit projects, for 12 credits of the total 45 credit master’s program. The project is less research-oriented than the thesis option and suitable for practitioners interested in professional development with a theoretical orientation.

Minimum expectations:

According to the McGill GPS Policies and Guidelines on Student Advising and Supervision:

Responsibilities of the MA Project Supervisor

- Guide students during the project course(s)
- Assist students in clarifying their guiding questions or objectives and outcomes
- Ensure that students have a clearly formulated project plan (1-2 pages) included in the project course contract. The contract can be found in the ‘Forms’ section of any program in the ‘Current Student’ section on the DISE website: www.mcgill.ca/dise
- Provide ongoing feedback (formative assessment) as the student develops and completes the project(s)
- Assess the completed project(s) with written comments/feedback

Graduate master’s student (PROJECT):

- Obtain a faculty member to supervise the project (please note: you do not need the same supervisor for both projects)
- Enroll in and complete two 6 credit project courses (total value of master’s project is 12 credits)
- Inform themselves of program requirements and deadlines
- Work within these deadlines
- Communicate regularly with the supervisor

¹Throughout these guidelines, the pronoun ‘they’ has been used in both singular and plural contexts so as not to advance one gender over another.



Part B: Project Procedures

Obtaining a project supervisor

Master's students must secure the collaboration of a prospective project supervisor prior to enrolling in either project course. To identify a supervisor, master's students are encouraged to browse the department's website under the 'About us' tab. Here they will find a list of departmental professors along with a description of their research interests. Once the master's student has identified a potential supervisor, they are instructed to initiate contact via email. Potential supervisors may request a CV, transcript and/or project summary. Masters students are advised to tailor contact to each professor. The student should state why they are approaching this particular professor, and why their project interests and goals are a good match. The project supervisor and the student must submit a Master's Project Contract (see Appendix A). The project proposal should clearly identify:

- Contact information for the supervisor and student
- Project description
- Learning objectives
- Project outcomes
- Evaluation Criteria and Reading list

The master's student must submit a signed copy of the Master's Project Contract to the Graduate Program Coordinator who will in turn submit the contract to the Department Chair or Graduate Program Director for approval. Once the course is approved, the Graduate Program Coordinator will assign the CRN for the project course in which the master's student must enroll. Project courses follow the academic calendar and are usually completed within the semester the course is registered. However, for those students engaging in a larger scale project that requires more than one term for completion, the supervisor can enter a grade of "HH" (extension) until the project is complete.

Notes:

- Project courses are supervised in addition to a faculty member's assigned workload for no workload credit though project supervision may be considered as part of the annual merit assessment. Course lecturers are not permitted to supervise master's projects.
- A master's student may only change from thesis to non-thesis or vice versa, once during the course of their master's degree.
- Full time master's students have three years to complete their degree; part time master's student's have five years to complete their degree. If at any time a student enrolls in a term as full time (12.0 credits), that student will be considered full time for the duration of their program and fall under the 3 years to completion rule.



Part C: Project Details²

Students in the Master of Arts in either Education and Society or Educational Leadership program who are electing to submit a master’s project in partial satisfaction of degree requirements must enroll in TWO project courses:

Education and Society:	(1)	EDER 633: Project 1
	(2)	EDER 634: Project 2

Educational Leadership:	(1)	EDEM 625: Project 1
	(2)	EDEM 627: Project 2

Students may complete the course concurrently or separately depending on the nature of the proposed project. Some students elect to complete two separate projects while other students elect to complete one larger project. The total credit value (12.0) of the project is half of that of a master’s thesis (24.0). Students may enroll in project courses while completing required, complementary and elective coursework though it is recommended that students enroll in project courses in year two of the program.

Assessment

Project courses can be graded using the Graduate grading scale (see below). Alternatively, project courses can be assessed on a Pass/Fail basis. This should be agreed upon by the project supervisor and graduate student when submitting the project contract.

In terms of assessment, the project will be evaluated based on how well it demonstrates the student’s ability to:

- succinctly define an issue or problem;
- discuss the problem within the context of practice and/or policy in Canada or globally;
- critically review the research literature of relevance to the topic;
- develop a persuasive, evidence-based argument;
- where and when appropriate, describe the methodology employed or proposed (e.g., data sources; data or policy analysis, case method analysis, program evaluation, etc.);
- explain findings in a style appropriate for practice or scholarly publication;
- analyze and interpret findings and make appropriate conclusions and recommendations for policy/practice.

² Please note, the project option is not available to master’s students enrolled in Second Language Education.



Graduate Grading and Grade Point Averages (GPA)

GRADES	Grade Points	Numerical Scale of Grades	Descriptors
A Exceptional	4.0	85-100%	Expectations of the assignment have been surpassed and demonstrate creativity and originality. Work shows in-depth understanding and critical awareness of links between the individual assignment and other class readings and activities, in line with the goals and major themes of the course itself and goes beyond the course content and material. Language and format of the work are exceedingly well-structured, eloquent and error free.
A- Very good	3.7	80-84%	Understandings and insights in the work are apparent, and there is evidence of critical engagement with the subject matter. Expectations are met, and some are surpassed. The language and format of the work are very well-structured and error free.
B+ Good	3.3	75-79%	Expectations of the assignment have been met. Understandings and insights are apparent, and there is some evidence of critical engagement. The language and format of the work are well structured but may contain a few errors.
B Acceptable	3.0	70-74%	Basic expectations of the assignment have been mostly met. Understandings, insights and evidence of critical engagement are somewhat apparent. The organization and structure of the work lack consistency and the work contains more than a few language errors.
B- Adequate:	2.7	65-69%	Some expectations of the assignment have been met. Work lacks organizational structure, logical coherence and clarity with frequent language errors.
F (Fail)	2.3	0-64%	Fail. (inadequate): Does not meet expectations

Additional Grade Options (must be approved by DISE office):

- **J (unexcused absence, fail):** the student is registered for a course but does not write the final examination or do other required work; calculated as a failure in the TGPA and CGPA
- **K (incomplete):** deadline extended for submission of work in a course (K contract must be submitted, signed by student and instructor).

Purpose of the Project

The master's project is meant to provide an opportunity for students synthesize and integrate the knowledge they have acquired in coursework and other learning experiences throughout the master's program. It is expected that in the project students will demonstrate understanding of a body of knowledge related to their Education and Society or Educational Leadership concentration and, of importance, demonstrate an ability to apply theory and principles to some aspect of professional practice. The overarching principle for determining suitability of a master's project is whether it provides students the opportunity to apply the skills and competencies acquired in the Education & Society or Educational Leadership program to a problem/challenge/issue likely to be encountered in educational practice

Under the guidance of a supervisor, students develop and clarify an inquiry question, research and gather resources to support an examination of this question, synthesize and consolidate their findings. Completed projects may be presented to peers, colleagues, or to the public in a student showcase, or a mini-conference.

The MA Project allows students to:

- Synthesize and construct knowledge from their coursework and practica
- Reflect upon their personal practice as teachers
- Engage in independent inquiry
- Develop expertise as they learn more about a topic or issue
- Further develop their inquiry skills



- Enhance their professional portfolio with a record of independent project work

In the Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE), the culminating experience consists of the supervised preparation of two 6 credit comprehensive scholarly projects. Please note that regardless, students MUST register for BOTH project courses (Leadership: EDEM 625 and EDEM 627; Education and Society: EDER 633 & EDER 634). The project will generally involve a critical investigation of an educational issue or problem based on original analysis. It should approximate what would be required of an education practitioner engaged in professional practice.

Preparing the project

The project paper must be presented in a form that is amenable to evaluation and review. This means that documentation of the research or inquiry process must be provided in a form that allows others to follow the line of reasoning and to evaluate the credibility of the work. At minimum, the project must meet the criteria of content and presentation that are as rigorous as those applied to work done in a professional setting. Some projects can be written in a publishable style appropriate to the discipline. Students should consult with their supervisor about writing style early on in the process.

Although the format and topics included in a project will vary according to the form the project takes, the following serves as a guideline for determining equivalencies depending on the nature of selected projects:

- 1) Title page and abstract
- 2) Introduction to the context: i.e. "why is this important? To you? Others?"
- 3) Positioning yourself in the context i.e. "what are your motivations for this project?"
- 4) Purpose of the project, clear statement of the topic or problem
- 5) Critical review of relevant literature (does not have to be a separate chapter like in a thesis)
- 6) Methods as appropriate to the form of the project
- 7) Critical reflection on process and product
- 8) Implications and recommendations for educational practice and/or policy
- 9) References should be completed in American Psychological Association (APA) 6th edition

Depending on the nature of the project and its intended purpose, an alternative structure and sections of the project may be warranted (e.g., in the case of a critical essay or commentary or creation of a website). If so, this should be discussed with and agreed to by the supervisor. In the discussion section students are expected to integrate their findings with relevant literature, discuss the strengths and limitations of methods/approach/analysis and consider the implications of their work for practice.

A student's critical reflection of their role as a practitioner could include answers to the following: What you learned about yourself in the process of doing the work? How did your research/practice influence others? What would you do differently?



Part C: Project Examples

The master's project can take many forms including one of the designs below, an *expansion* of a course project, or an internship or practicum opportunity. Ultimately the parameters and form of the project are a matter of negotiation between master's student and supervisor. Some master's projects take the form of a more conventional report or substantive paper, others have included an art exhibition, a dance performance, the writing of a play, or a school-based study, the production of an illustrated children's book on social justice issues, and the development of an interactive website and curricula for community organizations. Some additional examples of formats or designs for the project include:

Critical Literature Review

The project would be a critical, practice-focused analysis of an important education related problem through a survey of current literature on the topic. The project would include sections that clearly describe the problem, assess the problem and its magnitude, evaluate its causes and determinants, and discuss prevention and intervention strategies.

Program Plan

The project would involve the development of a plan to implement an educational program within a defined population or community. The paper will develop the current state of knowledge about the problem to be addressed, present an implementation methodology, and identify a framework for monitoring and evaluation. The program plan could also address issues such as management, fiscal, ethical and logistical issues.

Program Evaluation

The project would involve the evaluation/monitoring of an existing educational program, such as process evaluation, monitoring of outputs and outcomes, impact assessment, and/or cost analysis.

Policy Analysis

The project would involve analysis of the educational implications of a current or proposed policy or law. The project might include perspectives on economics and financing, need and demand, politics/ethics/law, or quality/effectiveness.

Research Proposal

The project would simulate a grant proposal or research plan. The project would include a clear statement of the research question, the specific aims of the proposal, review of literature, study design, methods of analysis, implications and significance of the work. The research question must be one that is encountered in professional work, such as the evaluation of an educational intervention.

Research Report

The project could involve the collection, analysis, and/or interpretation of data to address an educational problem. The research report should include sections on the research question, study design, data collection procedures, data analysis, interpretation, and significance of findings.



Secondary Data Analysis

Typically, a project research report is in the form of a secondary data analysis, using an existing data set. Please note that the appropriate ethics approval may need to be obtained for any paper that uses data gathered from human subjects. Even in cases where the data is de-identified, a determination should be sought from the McGill Research Ethics Board.

Primary Data Analysis

Work for the master's project may also involve the primary collection and analysis of data. Data collection for the project is usually in the context of an ongoing study, but it is also possible (although not recommended) for students to initiate an original study under the guidance of a faculty member.

School-based projects

Example #1: Some master's projects have been carried out by teachers who implemented or developed something in their school. For example, one former student called his project "Developing a sacred space in a secular school." The student transformed one of the rooms into a space that could be used to meditate, pray or relax, or for guest speakers. The student also used the room to discuss matters students considered important but found no other space in the school where they could voice their concerns. The student's project consisted of 1) the creation of this space, and 2) a written report in which they explained their rationale, examined anthropological literature on the notion of sacred spaces, and gave an overview of the implementation process and outcome.

Example #2: One student taught science in an Indonesian University. They were concerned that the science program had no courses in bio-ethics. The first part of their text provided a rationale and reviewed literature in bioethics. They then went on to give the design for a bioethics course. Another student (a high school teacher) felt that teachers in their school were ill-equipped to respond to the death of someone in the school community. A student in their school had died recently and they found that most teachers did not know how to respond. Their project was a written document about a new workshop in which they explained their rationale, reviewed relevant literature and provided an outline of the workshop.

Community education

Example #3: A student created a guide for primary and secondary school educators exploring ways to be more inclusive and supportive of transgender and gender variant students. More and more research and publications exist on this topic, but a great deal of it is not particularly accessible or comprehensible to people without a background in this area –so the student set out to compile all of the facts and statistics, personal narratives, and recommendations that might be useful for schools just beginning to focus on these issues. The guide changed shape over time, as the student realized what was and was not feasible, so the student appreciated the flexibility of the project option. The student was able to explore an issue that is personally, politically, and academically very important and interesting and to create a finished product that the student felt was most needed by educators and students. Part of the research involved interviewing some educators about their own experiences and thoughts about trans inclusion and sensitivity in their own schools, and what they thought might be most useful to improve their schools for the safety and comfort of their students.



Example #4: Another student's project was split between curriculum and organizational development W.O.R.D. (Writing Our Rhymes Down, a literacy-through-hip hop project) and a management / development / editor / writer for Heads and Hands Sense website project on/for youth and sexuality/sexual health. They did a great deal of work in both organizations and met regularly with their supervisor throughout the course of their project (and sometimes with coordinators from H & H, and W.O.R.D.) to discuss progress, learning, dilemmas and so on. They sent in monthly reports on their progress, and their work elicited excellent feedback from coordinators of both projects. In this case, apart from the reports and updates, and meeting up to discuss their learning with her supervisor, there was no final paper or tangible end product.