MSME Culminating Experience

Thesis Option

A thesis is an original scholarly contribution to the student’s field based on a systematic study of a significant problem. Although it may be part of a larger research program, each thesis is unique and written by a single student. The thesis typically explains the problem, sets forth the methodology that was used to address the problem and the limitations of the methodology, reports the results whether those are an analysis of data or a presentation of theory, and explains the significance of the findings in the context of previous work on the topic. The thesis research culminates in an oral presentation (thesis defense) to the thesis committee, faculty and students. The thesis track is ideally suited for MS students intending to pursue doctorate degrees or those interested in research and development careers.

Thesis proposal

Students must prepare a proposal outlining the tasks they expect to undertake for their thesis research. Before the research begins and the initial proposal is written, the student and the advisor should agree on the proposal. The proposal should be presented to the thesis committee by the end of the first semester in which the student signs up for thesis credit. The proposal will serve as guide while the student is working on the thesis. It will establish the tasks that need to be done for the completion of the thesis. This does not mean that the proposal is cast in concrete. If the original ideas are not working out, the proposal may be modified so that other avenues that are more productive may be pursued. The modified proposal should be sent to the thesis committee before scheduling thesis defense.

The proposal should consist of the following items:

- Title page with thesis title
- Outline (table of contents)
- Introduction
- Schedule & deliverables
- Bibliography

In the introduction section, here are some questions that should be addressed by the student:

1. What is the subject area?
2. Why is it important to study this subject?
3. What are the findings of previous research in this field?
4. How have these results been obtained?
5. Which questions remain unanswered so far?
Thesis committee

The members of the thesis committee are selected by the student in concurrence with the advisor. Traditionally, two other full-time faculty members with expertise in the chosen area are selected. One member on the committee may be from outside the department, but this is not a requirement. Students should provide the committee members with a copy of the initial proposal for their review and comments.

Working on the thesis

There should be weekly contact between the student and the committee chair/advisor. This may be done through visiting the advisor’s office, telephone calls, email, or any combination of the above. Many graduate students have a hard time completing their thesis because external demands on their time make it easy to put off working on their research project. Regular weekly contact, including a progress report, will keep the student on the path to completing the thesis and the degree.

Students should not enroll in all six units of thesis credit during any particular semester.

Although students are expected to do their own work, it is permissible to seek editorial help in writing the thesis, particularly if English is not the native language. The campus Learning Resource Center (http://www.csun.edu/lrc/) can provide excellent guidance and assistance in this regard.

Deadlines

The student should discuss an outline of the thesis with the advisor prior to the thesis write-up. It is suggested that the first draft of the thesis be submitted to the advisor at least two months before the end of the semester in which the student expects to graduate.

The student is required to schedule a thesis defense of their work. The defense should take place about a month before the deadline for submission of final thesis to Graduate Studies. The scheduled time and day should be selected in consultation with the committee members. A notification should be sent to the Department office and graduate coordinator along with the title and abstract of the thesis so that other interested faculty members may be invited to attend. Committee members should be provided with a copy of a completed draft of the thesis at least two weeks prior to the date of the defense. The student should confirm the time required by each committee member to review the thesis.

The student should be aware of the deadline by which the thesis must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies. It is wise to consult with Graduate Studies regarding the proper requirements and formatting well in advance of the final submission date. Late submissions will not be accepted and failure to meet this deadline will extend your enrollment by an additional term. For more information, see https://www.csun.edu/graduate-studies.

The student may switch to Comprehensive Exam option with approval from the graduate coordinator in case of failure in thesis defense.

NOTES:
• The "RP" grade for your thesis course must be converted by faculty advisor in order for your graduation process to be completed.
• You must be enrolled at CSUN during the semester in which you intend to complete your final degree requirements. This means that if you have completed all of your course work and both enrollments in ME 696 then you will still need to be registered during the semester in which you will be turning in your thesis document to Graduate Studies. Check with the Graduate Coordinator regarding Culminating Experience Enrollment if you must extend your completion deadline.
• Theses must be completed, filed and approved within 2 years of the first enrollment in culminating experience.
• Students who have already received an “RP” grade in 696 and 698D (thesis/project) but still require an additional semester to complete their thesis may enroll in A/R 601 with department approval. This form allows the student to remain enrolled in the University and provides library privileges, but no health center services and has no unit value.