



# Faculty of Education

## MEd Student Guide

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# 1 Welcome from Graduate Program Director

On behalf of all the faculty members and staff associated with the MEd Program in the Faculty of Education at Brock University please let me welcome you to the program! I look forward to working with you as you complete your studies and progress toward your personal learning goals.

This MEd Student Guide is designed to provide you with a detailed overview of the program. It also provides information about the various facilities, services and supports that are available to you as a MEd student. From program timelines, to the location of forms, to exit requirements, it's all in this Guide! If you have a question about the program, are wondering who to contact about a specific issue, or are looking for a specific service, this Guide is a good resource to utilize.

Please take a few minutes to acquaint yourself with this Guide and if you have any further questions, the faculty, staff and I are happy to help you!

I wish you all the best on your academic journey!

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Savage, Ph.D., C. Psych  
Graduate Program Director, MEd Program

## 2 Academic and Administrative Supports

Academic and administrative support is provided throughout your program of study. Faculty members serve in a number of support roles during all phases of the program as listed below.

### 2.1 Graduate Program Director

The Graduate Program Director (GPD) is responsible for overseeing the general progress of students in the MEd program, for administering the program, and for representing the interests of the program to appropriate units in the university. The GPD liaises with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA) on student related matters, enrolment planning and student recruitment, and consults with the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies on an ongoing basis. The GPD chairs the MEd Graduate Program Committee (GPC), which is comprised of everyone who teaches in the program. The GPC is responsible for the academic quality of the program.

The GPD signs off on student requests to make changes to their program, to complete independent studies, and to complete a Thesis or MRP. The GPD also signs off on student grades and ensures students have met their degree requirements to graduate.

### 2.2 Program Consultation

Incoming MEd students plan their own program of study based on their goals and objectives. If they have questions regarding the courses that are offered, they may consult with the Program Director, the Graduate Student Coordinator and faculty members instructing the courses, or their Research Supervisor for MRP or Thesis-based Pathways

Students in the research pathway who are completing either an MRP (EDUC 5D91) or thesis (EDUC 5K95) are required to find a research supervisor. To assist them faculty members who are available for supervision are indicated on the Faculty of Education site, under Student Resources. The Research Supervisor will:

- Familiarize students with all academic regulations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, as presented in the Graduate Calendar and the *Master of Education Student Guide*, and with criteria for acceptable research activities
- Ensure that the student and other committee members follow the Graduate Program Committee's procedures for MRP and thesis completion process and timelines
- Be available to supervise the work until such a time that all exit requirements are met
- Plan for advisement to continue without interruption, either by scheduling into leave plans or by arranging for a different supervisor when taking a sabbatical or other leave

Students who are unable to secure a supervisor should consult the Graduate Program Director (GPD) who will distribute the student's request and area of research interest to all full-time members in the Faculty of Education.

Students should contact potential supervisors as far in advance of starting their MRP or thesis as possible. Faculty members may have to decline from working with students if they do not have expertise in their area of interest, are planning a sabbatical leave that could interrupt the process, already have a full advisement load, have scheduling constraints, or have future intentions of leaving the institution.

Students make the final decisions about the choice of supervisor and research topic. Students have the right to change research supervisors if they wish. The GPD is available to consult with students regarding their supervisor, topic choices, and issues.

## 2.3 Graduate Student Coordinator

The Graduate Student Coordinator is the first and last point of contact for graduate students and advises students on MEd program logistics, how the program is organized, and whom to contact for what. The Graduate Student Coordinator processes program forms and applications for Independent Studies, Educational Internships, MRPs, and theses and works closely with the Graduate Program Director in providing student information as required. This position liaises with administrative support personnel in the FGSPA.

The Graduate Student Coordinator provides Academic Advisement regarding meeting degree requirements, program status, leaves of absence, process forms, etc. Advisement appointments can be arranged, please contact Wanda Burger directly to set up an appointment.

([med@brocku.ca](mailto:med@brocku.ca) or x5496)

## 2.4 Administrative Coordination

Eriona Tarelli provides graduate students with information on teaching assistantships and processes student contracts.

## 3 Student Rights and Responsibilities

Brock University policies on [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) are outlined in the Graduate Calendar. Students are required to understand the principles of academic integrity as they apply to student writing, research, and teaching. Academic integrity requires students to demonstrate respect by acknowledging the words and ideas of others. To ensure academic integrity is maintained, Brock has an [Academic Integrity Policy](#) as well as [information to assist](#) students in understanding the policy so students can complete their program with academic integrity. Students are strongly encouraged to review the policy and student information. Violating academic integrity policy can result in a student's removal from the program.

## 4 Program Planning

In planning their program, students must consider their Program Pathway and whether or not they wish to complete any optional concentrations. Students are encouraged to review course descriptions. Course descriptions are found in the [Graduate Calendar](#) . All courses are worth 0.5 credits except EDUC 5D91 (MRP) and EDUC 5K95 (thesis).

### 4.1 Program Pathways

Upon entry into the program, students are registered in one of the Course or Research pathways. All students are required to complete EDUC 5P92 (Introduction to Educational Research) in order to graduate. Additionally, there is an exit requirement for students in the Research pathway. The exit requirement for students in the Research Pathway is either a Major Research Paper (MRP) (EDUC 5D91) or a thesis

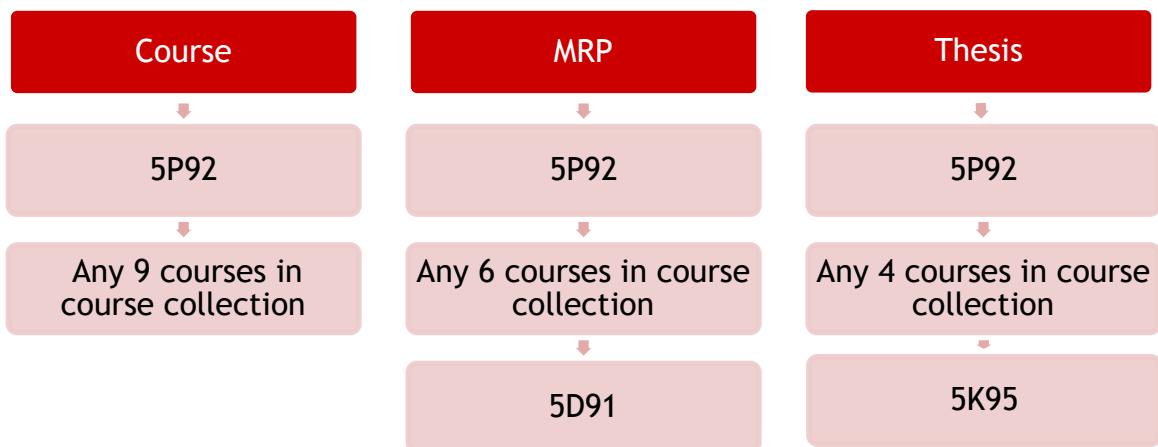
(EDUC 5K95). The Pathway Degree Requirements are outlined in the Graduate Calendar under [Program Pathway Options](#).

## 4.2 General MEd and Optional Concentrations

Students apply into a general MEd program and are able to register for any course offered in the program. Students may choose to focus their studies in a subject concentration or maintain a general program of study. The courses are offered at different times of the academic year over different timespans, and are denoted as D1, D2, etc., which refer to the courses' durations.

### 4.2.1 General MEd

- All concentration courses are in the 5P00 to 5P79 range, as well as 5V14, 5V40 and 5V57
- All general courses are in the 5P80 to 5P99 range and the exit courses 5D91, and 5K95.

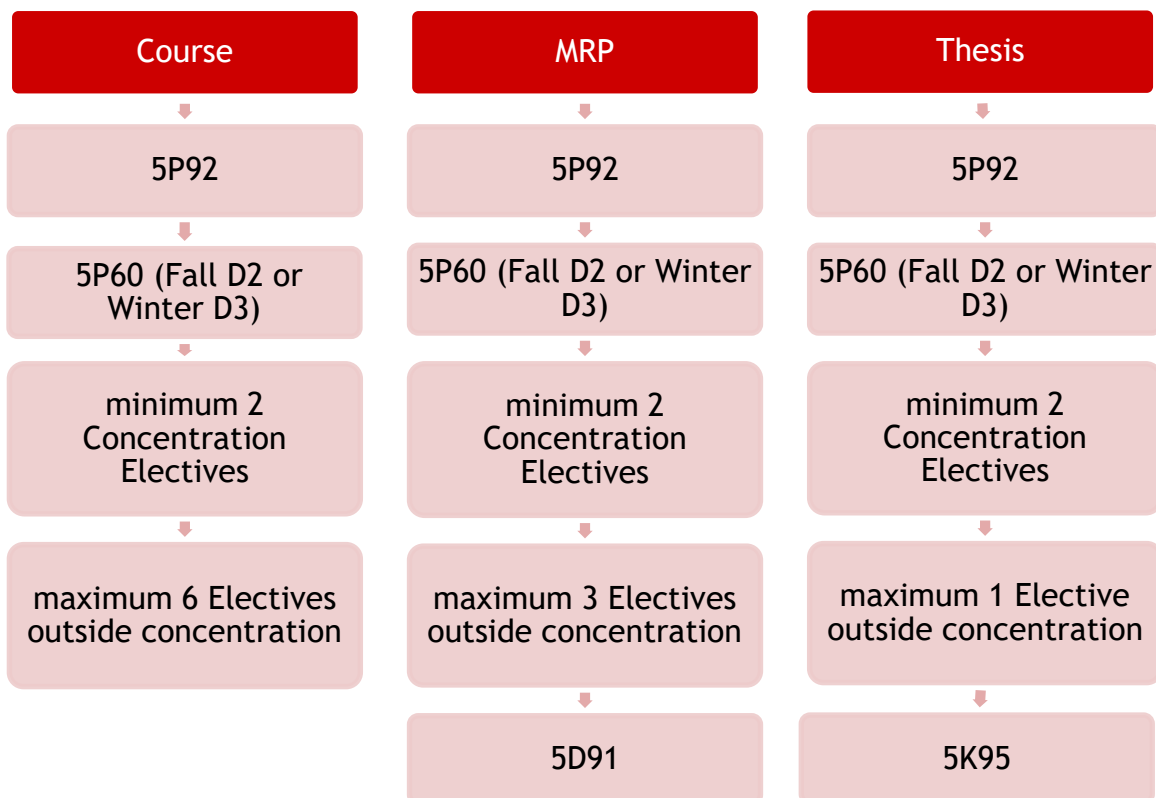


Most of the program's courses are clustered together into five concentrations that allow students to examine topics within particular areas of study. Each concentration has a core course, which provides foundational content for the concentration, and a selection of additional courses from which to choose. In addition to "P" courses, "V" courses are special topic electives that may be offered occasionally in response to student interest and may be taken as concentration electives. Students must complete

a minimum of three courses including the core course in a concentration in order to apply for a concentration designation on their transcripts. Students in the course-based pathway or the MRP option of the research-based pathway may complete one or two different concentrations, while students in the thesis option may complete one concentration of their choice.

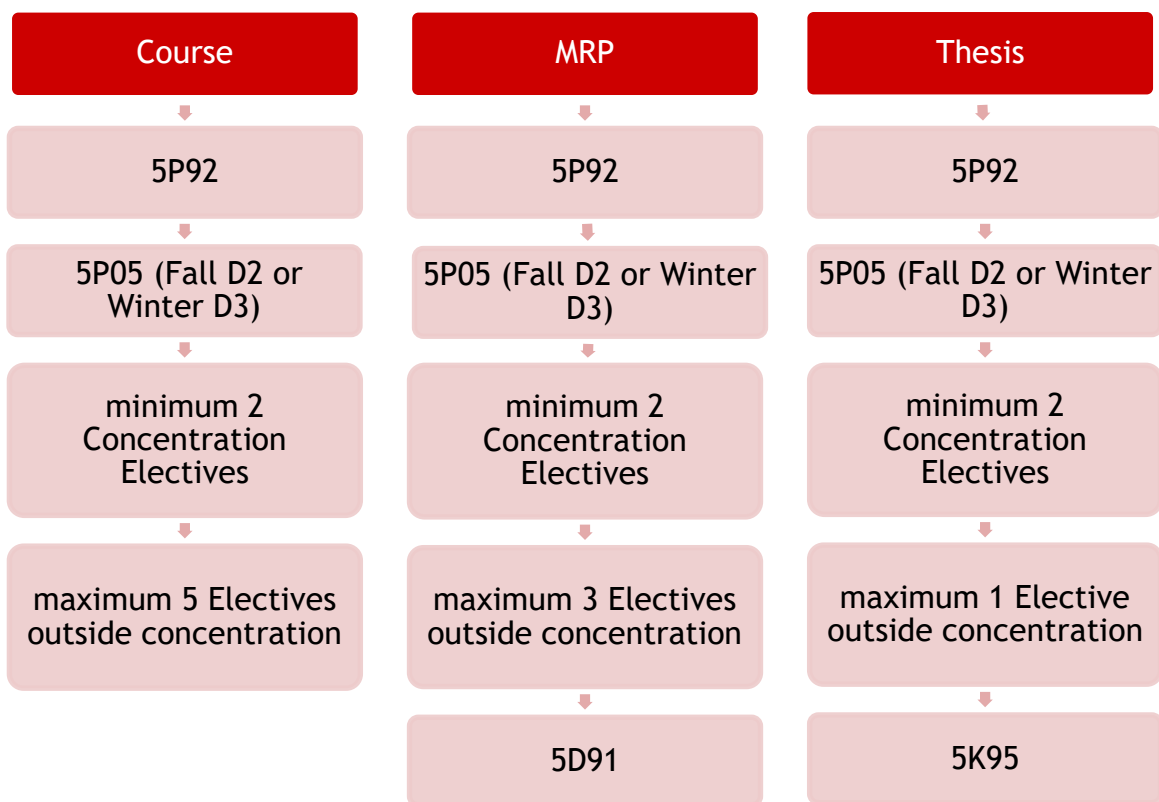
#### 4.2.2 Administration, Leadership and Policy

Students interested in completing a concentration in Administration, Leadership and Policy are required to complete the core course: EDUC 5P60: *Constructions of Organization*. They must also complete a minimum of two concentration electives. The concentration electives include: EDUC 5P62, 5P63, 5P64, 5P70, 5P72, 5P73, 5P74, 5P75, and 5P76.



### 4.2.3 Adult and Postsecondary Education

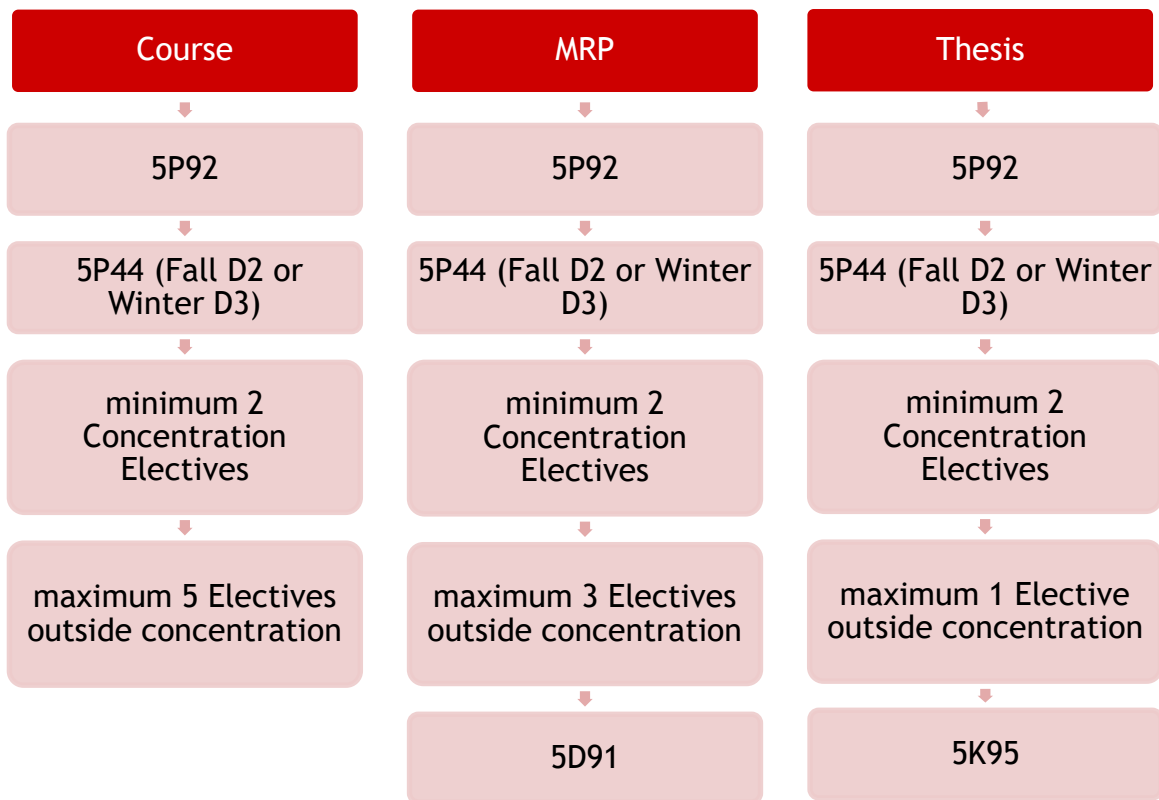
To attain credit for completing this concentration, students must successfully complete the concentration's core course, EDUC 5P05: *Foundations of Adult and Postsecondary Education*, and at least two other courses of their choice in the concentration (EDUC 5P14, 5P24, 5P33, 5P34, 5P35, 5P36, 5P51, 5P52, 5P84, and 5V40).



#### 4.2.4 Curriculum and Pedagogy

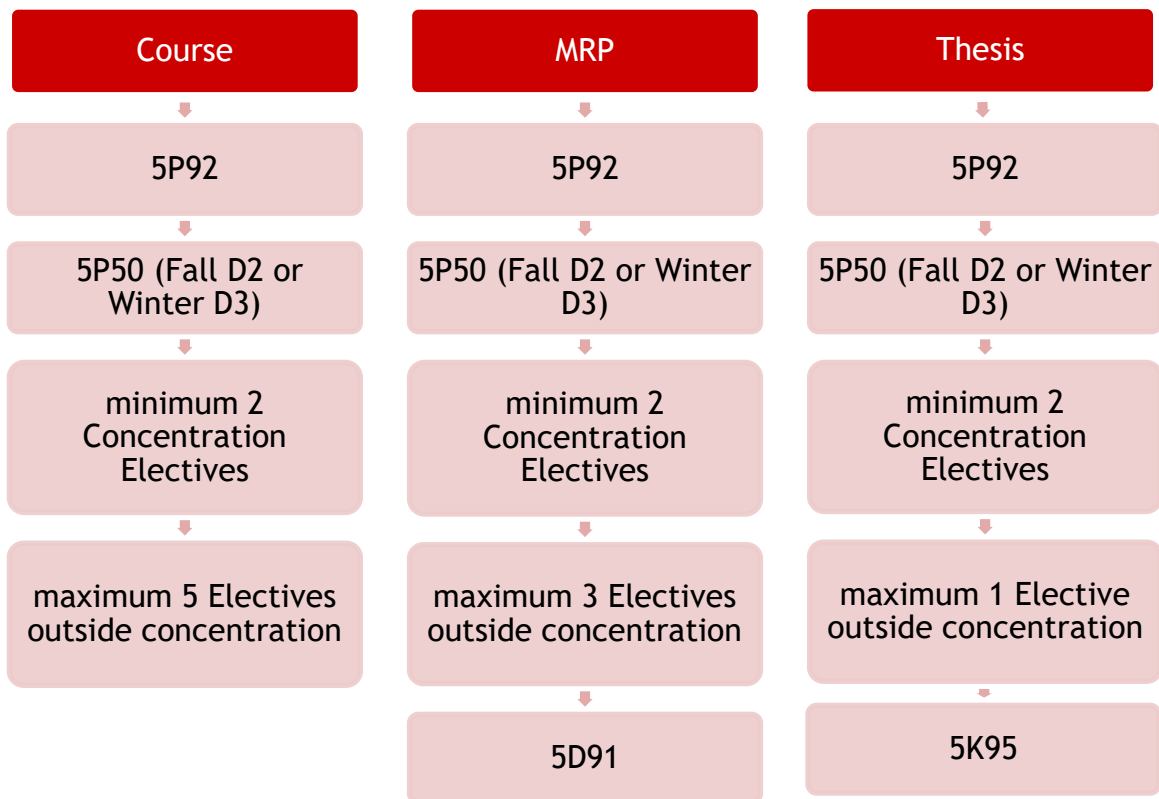
Students interested in completing this concentration are required to complete the core course: EDUC 5P44 (*Curriculum Design, Implementation and Evaluation*). They must also complete a minimum of two concentration electives.

The concentration electives include: EDUC 5P09, 5P22, 5P42, 5P43, 5P48, 5P55, 5P56, 5P59, 5V14 and 5V57.



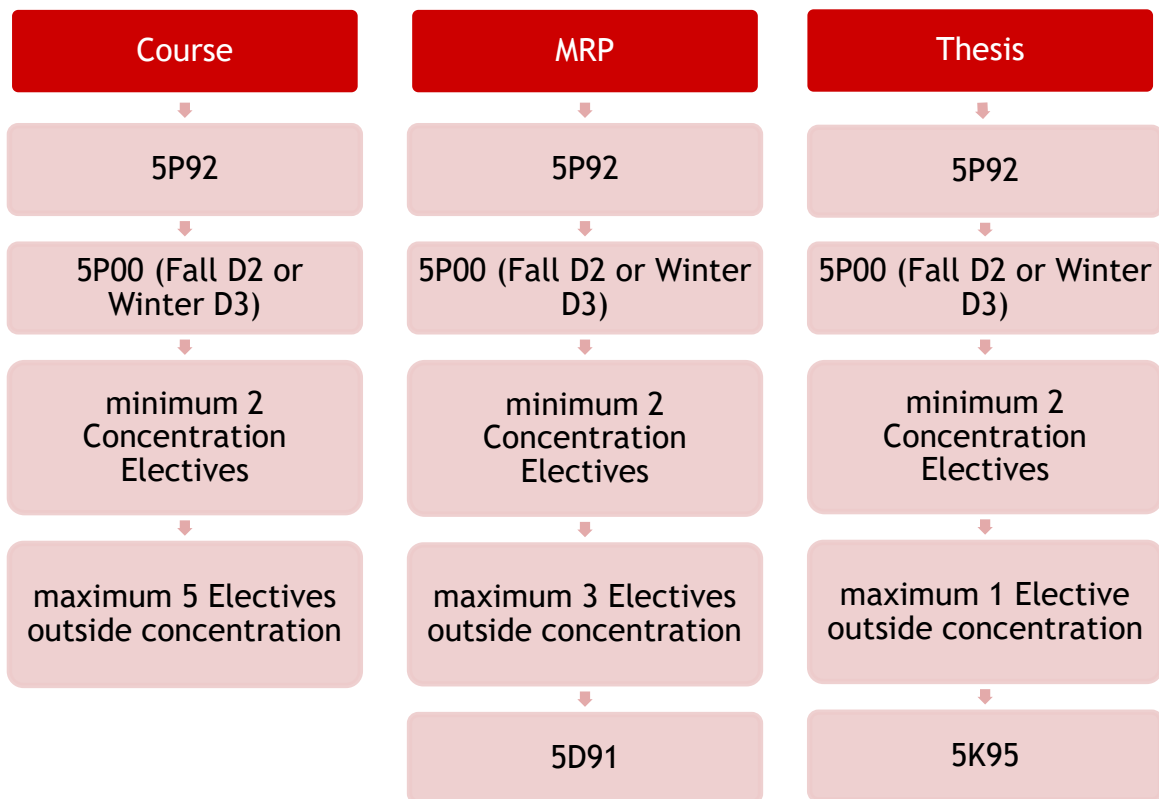
## 4.2.5 Educational Psychology: Teaching, Learning and Wellness

To attain credit for completing this concentration students must successfully complete the concentration's core course, EDUC 5P50: *Foundations of Educational Psychology*, and at least two other courses of their choice in the concentration. The Educational Psychology elective courses include: EDUC 5P31, 5P32, 5P33, 5P37, 5P39, 5P45, 5P46, 5P47, 5P87, 5V40.



## 4.2.6 Social Justice, Power and Politics in Education

To attain credit for completing this concentration students must successfully complete the concentration's core course, EDUC 5P00: *Introduction to Social Justice, Power and Politics in Education*. They must also complete a minimum of two concentration electives. The concentration electives include: EDUC 5P01, 5P07, 5P11, 5P15, 5P17, 5P20, 5P21, 5P24, 5P25, 5P62, and 5P64.



## 4.4 Independent Studies and Internships

Students will find two courses listed on the academic timetable that are not offered as classes but rather are completed independently under the guidance of an approved supervisor. Both the Independent Study (EDUC 5P98) and the Educational Internship (EDUC 5P96) allow students to work in an area of study that is of interest to them, and that is not available as a regularly scheduled course. To complete these courses students must find an approved faculty supervisor, and for the Internship, both an approved supervisor and a field mentor.

Students may take either an Independent Study or an Internship, but not both.

The Independent Study and Internship courses do not involve students in research with human participants (which would require Research Ethics Board approval) to avoid the approval periods required for REB clearance and the possibility of delayed course completion. Since both courses are to be completed during one academic term, students registered in these courses cannot be assigned an “In Progress” (IP) grade.

### 4.4.1. Independent Study Course (5P98)

Students who wish to complete an Independent Study work under the supervision of an approved research supervisor to complete an [Independent Study Application](#). The Application outlines the general topic area, the background and rationale, major objectives, methodology, proposed timelines, proposed course evaluation, and key academic references that will guide the study. It must be signed by the student, the approved supervisor, and by the MEd GPD. Once approved, students are provided with an override allowing them to register online (or if submitting a late registration students complete a [Course Registration/Withdrawal Form](#)).

Under exceptional circumstances, students may request to complete a regularly scheduled course as an independent study when calendar courses are not scheduled that term. The student must submit a written request, accompanied by the reasons for the request, to the course instructor or another faculty instructor who will make the final decision. The instructor’s decision should be informed by two guiding principles: (1) compelling grounds (e.g. a student’s employment or health issues), and (2) the instructor’s ability to construct an independent study option that does not compromise the integrity of the course nor cause undue hardship for the faculty member.

Before they are able to register for this course, students must send the completed and signed [Independent Study Application 5P98](#) to [med@brocku.ca](mailto:med@brocku.ca) for approval by the GPD. The GPD must approve the Independent Study Applications so that students can receive an override to register for the course. Students are asked to write “Independent + their last name” on the subject line of the email. Please allow up to 5 business days for processing. Further information is available on the application form.

### 4.2.2 Educational Internship Course (5P96)

The Educational Internship course provides a one-term duration field placement experience that allows students to work with their approved faculty supervisor and a field mentor. In addition to focused fieldwork, students are expected to write a reflective analytical report and conduct a critical self-performance evaluation. The field experience allows students to apply theory to practice and vice versa. The student is expected to meet with their approved faculty supervisor on a regular basis. Students must find their own field placement.

Before they are able to register for this course, students must send the completed and signed [Educational Internship Application EDUC 5P96](#) to [med@brocku.ca](mailto:med@brocku.ca) for approval by the GPD. The GPD must approve the Educational Internship Applications so that students can receive an override to register for the course. Students are asked to write “Internship + their last name” on the subject line of the email. Please allow up to 5 business days for processing. Further information is available on the application form.

## 4.5 Registration Requirements

Included here are some of the most asked questions about the program registrations.

### 4.2.3 Time to Completion

MEd Full-time students in the course-based pathway are expected to complete the program in 3 semesters (one year). Full-time students in the MRP pathway are expected to complete the program in 4 semesters and Full-time students in the thesis pathway are expected to complete the program in 6 terms (2 years). All Full-time MEd students have a maximum of 3 years to complete their program. MEd Part time students have a maximum of 5 years to complete their program.

Students must maintain continuous registration in each consecutive term from the time of initial admission until degree requirements are met. Students must register each term: Fall (September-December), Winter (January-April), and Spring (May-August). The most up to date academic timetable and course schedules can be found in the [Graduate Student Registration Guide](#).

Students with an acceptable reason who wish to take one, two or three terms off may request a Leave of Absence. In rare cases where the program cannot accommodate the student with a course the student may request an Inactive Term. In both cases, the request must be approved by the GPD and the Dean of the FGSPA. The university policy that governs requests for a Leave of Absence and an Inactive Term are located in the Graduate Calendar under [Student Status](#). Forms are found of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs website under [Student Forms](#).

Continuous registration must be maintained by students registered in the MRP (EDUC 5D91) and Thesis (EDUC 5K95). Each term students are registered in an MRP or Thesis they will receive a grade of “In Progress” (IP) until their research is completed. Student who fail to maintain continuous registration will be automatically withdrawn from the program.

Students who have completed a final draft of their MRP or Thesis may apply for a one-time Final Stage Status, which will reduce their tuition for 1 term. This status must be approved by the Research Supervisor, the GPD, and the FGSPA. Information and the Final Stage Status Form can be found of the Faculty of Graduate Studies website under [Student Forms](#).

#### 4.2.4 Withdrawals and Reinstatements

If circumstances warrant, students may elect to voluntarily withdraw from the program. Information and a link to the form are located in the Graduate Calendar under [Voluntary Withdrawals](#).

To be reinstated within 10 consecutive years of the withdrawal date, the student must complete a [Request for Reinstatement](#). Applications for readmission are examined on a case-by-case basis by the GPD. A student applying to be readmitted to the program after an absence of more than 10 years must meet specific academic requirements as a condition of readmission. This will include completing a new application process and may involve re-registering in some or all the course work previously completed.

## Part-time Students

Students who are registered part-time normally enroll in one or two courses per semester. Like full-time students they must maintain continuous enrolment (i.e. they must register in at least one course per semester).

### **Changing from Full-Time Course- to Research-Based Studies**

Due to a variety of factors changing from the course-based pathway to the research-based pathway is not possible

### **Changing from Full-Time Research- to Course-Based Studies**

While it is not encouraged, it is possible for a student to switch from the full-time research-based pathway to the course-based pathway. In order to do this the student must fill out the Request to Change Degree Pathway Form. Please contact the Graduate Student Coordinator (med@brocku.ca) for consultation and the form.

It is important to note that students switching from the full-time research-based pathway to course-based studies will be required to pay back any funding they received to date from the Faculty of Graduate Studies Postdoctoral Affairs.

## 4.6 Program Stages

### 4.2.5 Stage One: Entry to the Program

All students are encouraged to attend the MEd Student Orientation. This is a great opportunity for students to meet professors and administrative staff, as well as learn more about the program.

### 4.2.6 Stage Two: Coursework

MEd Students should:

- Select courses that interest them
- Register for courses as soon as possible to avoid course cancellations
- For research-based pathway students complete the EDUC 5P92 *Introduction to Research* course before beginning their exit course (EDUC 5D91 or EDUC 5K95).

- Ensure they complete the minimum number of required and elective courses. If students choose to complete one or two concentrations, they make sure they have completed the requisite number of courses and inform the graduate student coordinator of their intention for their concentration(s) to be recorded by the FGSPA.
- Try to take courses with as many different faculty members as possible.

All students should attend as many discussion groups, workshops, seminars, research colloquiums, and meetings as possible. This will aid in refining their research topic and finding a suitable MRP/thesis supervisor.

#### 4.2.7 Stage Three: Exit Requirement (Research-based Pathway Only)

The exit requirements are discussed in a later section of this guide.

## 5 Master's Level of Scholarship

Students are expected to achieve a master's level of scholarship as they progress through their program of study. Feedback on course assignments is intended to help students develop their knowledge of content areas and their academic writing skills.

### 5.1 Scholarly Criteria

Students are expected to demonstrate:

- An in-depth understanding of the knowledge in an area of study - an ability to think deeply, comprehensively, conceptually, and critically about key issues, debates, and theories in an area of study and in education more generally;
- A conceptual and theoretical understanding of different research designs, methods, and traditions;
- An ability to:
  - work and think independently
  - relate personal work to a scholarly work in the field of education

- make personal and global connections among different theories and/or different sources of information
- make connections between theories and practice
- critically reflect on personal constructs, practices, and theories to generate new conceptualizations
- conduct original research and/or to develop and articulate an original and coherent learning record
- generate a finished product that demonstrates the expected skills and knowledge for a master's graduate

## 5.2 Scholarly Writing

Academic writing requires that students follow a recognized style guide. Unless otherwise approved by a course instructor or research supervisor, all program assignments follow the style outlined in the Publication Manual of the [American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#) (7th ed.). Brock's library has [helpful information](#) on APA's style guide as well.

### 5.2.1 APA Style

Students are expected to purchase the APA Manual at the beginning of the program, as APA formatting is the standard followed in this program. Details are provided in your EDUC 5N99 course and on the website. There are many on-line supports and tutorials available to assist students learn and use APA style. The APA has [free basic tutorials](#) on its website as well as an APA Style Blog (<https://apastyle.apa.org/blog>).

For example, this [tutorial](#) demonstrates how to format a document in APA Style.

Students who follow an alternative style guide, as approved by their instructor or supervisor, are expected to adhere strictly to its formatting, referencing, and stylistic convention.

Qualities of good writing include:

- accurate interpretation and understanding of key concepts
- insightful application of concepts to personal areas of research
- a critical, personal perspective on and contribution to the issues raised
- clarity and coherence in written expression

- originality and creativity in approach

## 5.2.2 Writing Supports

Students are expected to follow the conventions of formal written English. Many style guides are available, including Strunk and White's (2007) *The Elements of Style*, Swan's (2008) *Practical English Usage* or other guides recommended by the instructor or research supervisor. Campus resources include:

- [Academic Writing Supports](#): The FGSPA offers dedicated writing support to assist graduate students. Students can book one-on-one sessions (in-person or online) or groups of students can book workshops tailored to their specific needs. The FGSPA also offers a weekly Writing Café. All of these services are free of charge.

Students having difficulty with academic writing can also contact Brock University's [Learning Services](#) regarding the availability of remediation services.

Final exit projects (whether thesis or MRP) must conform to FGSPAs [E-MRP](#) or [E-Thesis](#) requirements. Consequently, students should consult with their supervisor and might need to undergo professional proof-reading to ensure proper compliance.

## 6 Evaluation of Student Work

The preferred approach to evaluation of student work is to provide comprehensive feedback to support students' progress throughout the program and to help them attain a master's level of scholarship. These criteria should be kept firmly in mind, whether working on course assignments or exit requirements. In addition to these broad criteria, the Graduate Program Committee has developed specific grading guidelines for course work and for the exit requirement.

### 6.1 Grading System

Transcripts show both the numeric and letter grade (e.g., 85A) received in the course. Grades of 60 to 100 are considered passing grades, but only grades in the B (70-79) and A (80-100) levels are granted graduate credit. Students who receive a grade lower than 70 must either repeat the course or successfully complete an alternative graduate course. Any students having a standing of less than B in any half-credit

course or equivalent will be subject to review by the Graduate Program Director and/or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Although the University does not distinguish between an A and an A+ or between a B and a B+, the Department has generated grading criteria that separate grades into the four categories (A+, A, B+, and B). This separation alerts the students as to where their work is positioned on the grading continuum and gives them more information with which to establish future learning goals and growth plans. The grading criteria for coursework can be found on your course syllabi.

Incomplete (IN) is a temporary grade granted in exceptional circumstances. An IN must be requested in writing by the student to the instructor and approval is not guaranteed. A final grade must be submitted no later than 56 days from the last day of classes in each term. If the IN is not replaced by a letter grade within 56 days, the IN will be changed to the default grade indicated on the Report of Incomplete Grade form and recorded on the statement of grades.

In Progress (IP) is granted for the thesis or MRP. No other half-credit graduate course can carry an IP grade at any time. Students who receive an IP grade must be reregistered for that course in the term following that for which they receive an IP grade and must pay a continuation fee.

## 6.2 Grading of Exit Requirements

The criteria for assessing the research-based exit requirement are the same regardless of the route chosen for completing this part of the program (e.g., thesis or MRP). The criteria are listed [here](#), and students should refer to these criteria frequently as they work on various drafts of the exit document. The MRP is assigned a numeric and letter grade (e.g., 80A) whereas the thesis receives a Pass or Fail.

## 6.3 Statement of Grades

All grades can be found online at the Student Self-Service Web Site. Grades are posted approximately 6 weeks after the last class. If you require a Confirmation of Enrolment Letter for any reason, you should access the [forms link at the Faculty of Graduate Studies](#) and Postdoctoral Affairs website, who will provide you with a letter.

## 7 Exit Requirements

Research Pathway students complete a Thesis or a MRP as their exit requirement. Information relevant for each exit requirement is outlined below.

### 7.1 Thesis and MRP

Students in the Research-based Pathway decide to complete a Thesis or an MRP as their exit requirement once they have completed at least one term in the program. The Thesis and MRP allow students to conduct research and to integrate theory and knowledge acquired throughout their program and in their practice.

#### 7.1.1 Thesis Versus MRP

In deciding whether to complete a Thesis or an MRP, students may wish to note the following differences:

- The Thesis is overseen by a Research Supervisor and a Supervisory Committee of at least two faculty members.
- The MRP is overseen by a Research Supervisor and a Second Reader.
- Both a Thesis and an MRP require students to develop a written proposal, but:
  - The Thesis proposal must be presented to the Supervisory Committee at a formal meeting.
  - The MRP Proposal must be approved by the Research Supervisor and a Second Reader and may not require a formal meeting for approval.
- A Thesis must be reviewed by an External Examiner and must undergo a public defense with the Thesis Committee and an External Examiner, whereas an MRP is evaluated by the Research Supervisor and a Second Reader.
- A Thesis is expected to deal with theoretical development, whereas an MRP may focus on questions of practical importance.
- A Thesis must be research based (broadly defined) whereas an MRP can be developmental, evaluative, or non-traditional in nature. Students are encouraged to consider innovative formats for completing the exit requirement.
- Thesis, MRP, and culminating paper are expected to be soundly documented and built on relevant and current literature. The literature foundation for each

type of exit requirement should be negotiated with the supervisor and/or instructor as the case may be.

- An MRP may use quantitative, qualitative, or conceptual research designs as listed for the thesis. It is expected to be of the same academic rigor as a thesis but not necessarily of the same scope or scale.

### 7.1.2 Application to Compete Thesis or MRP

In order to register in the Thesis or MRP, students must find an Approved Research Supervisor (<https://brocku.ca/education/faculty-and-staff/>) and complete a [MRP Application or a Thesis Application](#). This application is not the student's research proposal, which is more comprehensive, and which must be approved by both the Research Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee or Second Reader. The application provides a brief overview of the tentative research. The GPD must approve the application before students can be given an override allowing them to register for the course. The student must email the completed and signed Application to [med@brocku.ca](mailto:med@brocku.ca) with subject heading: "MRP Application or Thesis Application and the student's last name."

Please allow up to 5 business days for processing.

### 7.1.3 Topic Selection

A wide range of issues are appropriate for study. Research may address populations throughout the lifespan, from early childhood to the elderly. All topics must address an **educational issue** and must be approached from an educational perspective. Although students typically choose the topic of study, the Research Supervisor must agree that it is an appropriate and acceptable topic for a Master of Education degree. It also is helpful if the topic lies within the Research Supervisor's academic expertise. During consultations between the student and the Supervisor, it may be determined that some topics are either too broad and general or too narrow and specific to be easily investigated, and the Supervisor might suggest a different topic or a different focus.

Students may find ideas for topics by examining current educational journals, as well as MRPs and Theses available online in the Brock University Digital repository.

As early as possible in their program of study, students should reflect on what their chosen area of research interest could involve. In most cases, simple questions may work best. The progression of both the informal thinking phase and formal writing phase for proposal development includes the following steps:

- **Introduction:** What is the problem context and unknown domain?
- **Literature base:** What have others written about this question? What seems not to have been written?
- **Methodology:** How could/should the question be answered?
- **Findings:** What is likely to be found or worked out using this approach?
- **Importance:** What might the results mean, to whom might they have meaning, and where might they lead?

#### 7.1.4 Research Designs

The list below is not a comprehensive list of options, and students are encouraged to consult with their Research Supervisor if they wish to work with a format that is not included below.

##### 7.1.4.1 Quantitative Research Designs

- Survey
- Experimental
- Quasi-Experimental
- Correlational

##### 7.1.4.2 Qualitative Research Designs

- Action Research
- Biography/Autobiography
- Interpretive
- Ethnography
- Grounded Theory
- Narrative
- Phenomenology
- Case Study

#### **7.1.4.3 Conceptual Research Designs**

- Deconstruction
- Historical Analysis
- Conceptual Analysis
- Philosophical Treatise

#### **7.1.4.4 Development Designs**

- Curriculum Unit
- Handbook/Manual
- Workshop

#### **7.1.4.5 Evaluative Designs**

- Instruction/Program Assessment
- Instrument Development
- Needs Assessment

#### **7.1.4.6 Non-traditional Designs**

- Comprehensive Portfolio
- Program Synthesis
- Individual Designs
- Narrative
- Personal Journals
- Refereed Article

### **7.1.5 Research Proposal**

Before research can begin, a research proposal must be submitted and approved by the student and the Supervisory Committee or Second Reader.

In a preliminary consultation, the supervisor and the student determine the nature of the question the student wishes to address, the approach the student wishes to take in addressing the question, a methodology that is appropriate for the approach, and a format that is appropriate for the methodology.

The proposal is intended to specify what the student wishes to study, why this is worth studying, who stands to benefit from the results of the study, how the investigation

will unfold, and why this is an appropriate approach to the investigation. Usually the proposal is written in future tense (as the work is not yet done), except for the review of relevant literature which is written in the present or past tense. Refer to the APA guidelines, or those of their chosen style guide, regarding verb tense.

### **7.1.6 Proposal Formats**

Three different research proposal formats may be used, a paper format, a chapter format or a portfolio chapter format. Each format is outlined below.

#### **7.1.6.1 Paper Format**

The paper format is appropriate for studies using qualitative methodology or for innovative projects. This format typically yields a 20-30 page proposal that organizes the information under appropriate headings. Although students should follow their supervisor's suggestions for the headings that will be used to guide the development of the proposal, the following outline is one that has proven helpful in the past. The page length under each heading is an indication of the minimum pages expected for that section.

##### **7.1.6.1.1 Introduction**

This section states what the investigation is about. It is a brief and concise overview of what the student plans to study and how this area of investigation is situated in an educational and/or social context.

##### **7.1.6.1.2 Literature Review**

This section is a brief, critical review of the literature that pertains to the topic under investigation. Because of the nature of this assignment, students may propose to review certain areas of the literature and not actually include a detailed review in this document. The review should be organized conceptually or thematically, which sets out a framework that can serve as a preliminary guide for the investigation.

More recent articles should dominate the review of the literature. The most useful databases for academic research in Education are, CBCA Complete, Academic Search Premier, Sociological Abstracts, and PsycINFO; however, other subject-specific resources for all disciplines taught at Brock are also available.

#### 7.1.6.1.3 Conceptual Framework

In this section, students specify the set of concepts that capture the dominant themes underpinning the area of research interest. The concepts may be derived from the themes or concepts used to organize the review of the literature. Alternatively, students may select a conceptual framework that has been previously developed and described in a scholar's published work. Regardless of the source, the conceptual framework should be used to develop the empirical questions, to structure data collection instruments, and to organize initial data analysis.

#### 7.1.6.1.4 Problem/Research Context

This is the reason for doing the study. It should be derived directly from the literature or from compelling personal or professional reasons for pursuing the investigation. It could be related to one or more of the following situations:

- A professional conundrum
- A current debate in the field
- A gap in the literature
- A lack of recent studies
- A lack of Canadian studies
- Inconclusive results
- Ambiguous terminology and/or definition
- Poor measurement devices (weak instrumentation)
- Missing factors
- Debatable statistical analyses

#### 7.1.6.1.5 Purpose Statement

There are two components to every problem. The first is a general statement telling the reader exactly what is expected to be the research focus. The second component is more specific. Often, it is stated in the form of a series of empirical questions, that reflect the conceptual framework developed from the review of the literature or selected from an author's published work.

The purpose should be of real interest to the student as it will "live with them" for at least one year. If the work does not inspire deep intellectual passion or curiosity, it might result in a weak project.

#### 7.1.6.1.6 Methodology/Research Design

The student uses this section to describe the research design chosen to frame the study (e.g., case study, experimental design, field research, narrative, and action research) and to justify this design by linking characteristics of the design, as found in the research methods literature, to aims and objectives of the student's investigation. This section also outlines and describes the chosen methodology or approach (e.g., positivist, interpretivist, and critical theory) underpinning the design and the methods (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, conceptual, and philosophical) by which data will be collected and analyzed. This section requires explicit links to information from research methods literature.

#### 7.1.6.1.7 Data Collection

This section specifies the instrument that should be used to collect data and the procedures that will be followed. Instruments can be borrowed from others or developed by the researcher. For quantitative studies, if students develop their own questionnaire, it should be pilot tested and checked for content and face validity. If instruments are borrowed, written permission must be sought for use. If possible, students should only use instruments that are valid and reliable. Statements about validity and reliability must be included in the proposal.

For qualitative studies, students must outline the questions they expect to ask in an interview or the types of items they will look for in an observation. These must be accompanied by an explanation of how the student decided on these questions/items (e.g., from specific concepts in the literature, from a previous study, or from some other source). If the students plan to analyze documents, the proposal must specify which documents will be collected, where they can be found, and how the documents advance the investigation.

#### 7.1.6.1.8 Sample and Population/Site and Participant Selection

When relevant, this must be identified for all research designs. Students should specify the type of sampling that is expected to be employed and should describe the steps that will be taken to gain access and to solicit participation. Sampling options include:

- Simple random sampling
- Stratified random sampling

- Cluster sampling
- Systematic sampling
- Convenience sampling
- Purposive sampling
- Snowball sampling
- Reputational sampling

#### 7.1.6.1.9 Data Analysis

The proposal must indicate how the student plans to analyze the data to generate answers to the research question. It is helpful to think about analysis in relation to the empirical questions listed in the Purpose section. Students should consider which elements of data are likely to address each of the empirical questions and what they might do with the data to derive an answer.

Quantitative analyses should be attached to research hypotheses and can include descriptive, parametric, and nonparametric statistics. The type of test that will be used should be specified for each hypothesis, and students might also provide a preliminary version of the form within which the findings will be displayed: chart, graph, and/or table. It is essential that quantitative terminology and statistical tests are clearly understood and appropriately used in the research proposal. Therefore, students planning on using quantitative methodology are well advised to take an advanced statistics course (e.g., EDUC 5P82) or consult with a quantitative researcher prior to writing the proposal.

Qualitative analyses can be approached from a within-case and/or cross-case perspective and using an inductive and/or deductive approach. The type of analysis should be matched to the purpose of the study and to specific study questions. Students should also give some consideration to how the data will be organized and displayed. It is essential that qualitative terminology and analytic tools are clearly understood and appropriately used in the research proposal. Therefore, students planning on using qualitative methodology are well advised to take a qualitative research course (e.g., EDUC 5P95) or to consult a qualitative researcher prior to writing the proposal.

#### 7.1.6.1.10 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This section is intended to set out the parameters or boundaries within which the study is being conducted. In quantitative studies these are concerned with the external and internal reliability and validity of the work. In qualitative research these include a discussion of the researcher's preconceptions, credibility, trustworthiness, and epistemological stance.

Every undertaking has specific conceptual limitations and the researcher must acknowledge their existence. External validity is related to selection, testing, and treatment biases. Internal validity is confined largely to experimental studies. Here, concern is with the effects of extraneous variables on the dependent variable. Factors to consider include a) maturation; b) statistical regression; c) experimental mortality; and/or d) deviations in the procedures for data collection;

In qualitative studies, the researcher's preconceptions must be addressed with regard to their previous experiences in the area under investigation, their social location vis-à-vis those researched, and their understanding of the situation prior to undertaking the work. The epistemological stance includes a discussion of the tradition of research within which they have chosen to work and a clear indication of the assumptions upon which this work is based.

No one investigation can encompass all the relevant factors, sites, people, or issues embedded in a topic of study. Researchers, therefore, must delimit their study by establishing specific boundaries within which they will collect data. Students must acknowledge their boundaries in terms of site and sample limits, time limits, data collection limits, and any other delimitation they impose on their work. Each of these choices will limit the extent to which the results can be applied. Students must acknowledge these limitations and indicate why they are appropriate for the chosen research design.

#### 7.1.6.1.11 Importance of the Study

The proposal should describe the potential impact of the study on participants, on the field, and on the knowledge base. It is helpful to think in terms of why this study needs to be conducted, who stands to benefit from the results, and how those benefits might be expressed. Potential implications for practice and/or recommendations for changes that might emerge from the results could be noted.

#### **7.1.6.1.12 Ethical Considerations**

The proposal should include a discussion of the ways in which the participants might be at risk in this study and the steps taken to protect their rights. Reference should be made to the ethical review processes that must be conducted prior to commencement of the study, including seeking approval from the Brock University Research Ethics Review Board and other relevant Research Ethics Review Boards.

#### **7.1.6.1.13 Dissemination**

The proposal should inform the reader of how distribution of results, conclusions, and/or recommendations will be made. This can be achieved through workshops, presentations, newsletters, and/or journal articles. Students should identify specific venues for dissemination.

#### **7.1.6.1.14 Feasibility**

This section states:

- The cost factor: All necessary resources required to complete the study should be listed to generate an expected expense. For example: printing fees for permission forms and or surveys if applicable envelopes and mailing fees.
- The time factor: List all stages of the study and state what needs to be done at each stage and how much time is required to complete each stage.
- Accessibility of data: State how much traveling is required or how much time is needed to secure resources.
- Inconvenience to participants: State whether they are going to be expected to travel or detained for extended periods of time.

#### **7.1.6.2 Chapter Format**

The proposal can follow the outline used for the first three chapters of the completed MRP or thesis. This format is most appropriate for studies using quantitative or qualitative methodologies or for evaluative or developmental projects. The following is a typical outline for the chapter format. Page length for the various headings will be similar to the page length outlined in the Paper Format section (8.1).

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

- Introduction
- Background of the Problem
- Statement of the Problem Situation
- Purpose of the Study
- Empirical Questions or Research Hypothesis
- Theoretical Framework
- Importance of the Study
- Scope and Limitations of the Study

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section is a critical review of the literature that pertains to the topic. The chapter should be sufficiently comprehensive to map out the literature foundation on which the study is situated. The review should be organized conceptually or thematically, which establishes a framework for the investigation. More recent articles should dominate the review. The most useful databases for academic research in Education are ERIC, CBCA Complete, Academic Search Premier, Sociological Abstracts, and PsycINFO; however, other subject-specific resources for all disciplines taught at Brock are also available.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

- Introduction - remind the reader of the purpose of the study, its importance, and the general methodological decision.
- Research Design - describe and justify the design choice (e.g. experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, case study, phenomenology, ethnography, descriptive, interpretative, evaluative, or developmental)
- Site and Participant Selection - include as in Paper Format
- Data Collection - include as in Paper Format
- Data Analysis - include as in Paper Format
- Reliability and Validity/Establishing Credibility - describe the steps that will be taken to enhance the quality of the data and the knowledge claim arising from the data

- Methodological Assumptions - include as in Paper Format
- Ethical Considerations - include as in Paper Format
- Summary and/or Restatement of the Purpose

### **7.1.6.3 Portfolio Chapter Format**

One innovative MRP option is the completion of an academic portfolio, which is a selective record of the student's learning and accomplishments attained during the Master of Education program. Except for margins, font, formatting matters, and reference to identifying information, the artifacts are to be included in the document as they were submitted during the courses in which they were completed. Students should therefore ensure that all selected artifacts are as free as possible of grammatical, spelling, and style errors. Proofreaders who review the final portfolio document will not edit the artifacts or make any revision suggestions for them. This version of the proposal has been adapted to guide portfolio planning, but it can also be modified to guide proposal development for other innovative project formats. This format should also yield a 20-30 page proposal, which does not include the portfolio artefacts themselves.

#### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO**

This chapter positions the portfolio in relation to the area of academic focus of the portfolio, the theoretical concepts that organize the collection and analysis of the artifacts, and the significance of the portfolio for academic and professional development. It should include the following sections:

- Preamble and focus (overarching topic or theme)
- Purpose of the portfolio
- Conceptual framework and process of artifact selection
- Rationale or significance
- Outline of the remainder of the document

## CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND

This chapter positions the portfolio in relation to the literature from the area of study, which is explored through the student's educational philosophy and personal experiences. The chapter includes:

- Educational philosophy: beliefs, assumptions, values, understandings (derived from and analyzed through literature sources)
- Personal and professional autobiography: history, experiences, decisions, directions, and dreams (grounded in and reflected on through literature sources)
- Chapter summary

In preparation for this chapter, students might consider writing a current resume, which includes education, experience, awards, professional development, professional memberships, and other salient information. The resume can be included as an appendix.

## CHAPTER THREE: COLLECTION OF ARTIFACTS

Artifacts should be selected to reflect the focus of the portfolio as outlined in Chapter One and should demonstrate the student's learning in relation to the themes presented in the conceptual framework. Students should include material from courses, assignments, and activities that represent diverse learning experiences. The chapter should begin with a description of the process by which the artifacts were selected. Each artifact should be preceded by a summary of the artifact, a statement about the course for which the artifact was completed, and an overview of the knowledge and/or skills gained from the artifact. Items to consider as potential artifacts include:

- Term papers
- Class assignments
- Presentations
- Article critiques
- Internship reports
- Literature reviews

- Personal correspondence
- Photographs and graphic organizers
- Other

The chapter concludes with a summary that consolidates the learning from the artifacts in relation to the overarching topic or theme of the portfolio.

### 7.1.7 Proposal Approval Form

Once the student's research proposal has been accepted, a proposal approval form must be signed by the Research Supervisor and the members of the Supervisory Committee for a Thesis and the Second Reader for a MRP to confirm that the proposal submitted is acceptable,

It is the responsibility of the Research Supervisor to ensure that the signed [Thesis Proposal Approval Form](#) is submitted to the MEd Office. This can be done by submitting a hard copy to the Office, or by scanning a signed copy and submitting the copy to [med@brocku.ca](mailto:med@brocku.ca) with the student's last name and Thesis Approval in the subject line. This form is kept in the student's file.

It is the responsibility of the Research Supervisor to ensure that the signed [MRP Proposal Approval Form](#) is submitted to the MEd Office. This can be done by submitting a hard copy to the Office, or by scanning a signed copy and submitting the copy to [med@brocku.ca](mailto:med@brocku.ca) with the student's last name and MRP Approval in the subject line. This form is kept in the student's file.

### 7.1.8 Timelines for Completion

Students who wish to graduate in either the Spring or Fall Convocation must, prior to the deadline established by the University, complete all review stages and editing requirements for their MRP or Thesis and the documents must be approved for submission to the Digital Repository by the GPD.

Program deadlines have been established to give the Graduate Student Coordinator sufficient time to arrange all required review and defense procedures and to complete all required administrative documents prior to the University deadline. Students, therefore, should consult with the Graduate Student Coordinator ([med@brocku.ca](mailto:med@brocku.ca))

about the deadlines, should understand that these are firm deadlines, and should plan their work accordingly.

The following lists show the steps involved in MRPs and theses with approximate time spans required for their completion. Students can work backwards from their projected completion dates to determine when the process should begin. Students should allow at least 3 weeks for the supervisor to read and edit any submitted documents.

#### **7.1.8.1 MRP**

- Pilot testing, data collection, drafts, and revisions: One academic term
- Supervisor approval: 2 - 4 weeks on average
- Second reader approval: 6 weeks maximum
- Submit e-MRP for approval to Digital Repository
- Complete Thesis and Major Research Paper Copyright License Form

#### **7.1.8.2 Thesis**

- Pilot testing, data collection, drafts and revisions: Two academic terms
- Committee approval (or revision) of final draft: 3 to 4 weeks
- Submit clean copy of thesis for formatting and GPD's review
- Thesis defence: Department to schedule 2 - 3 months in advance
- Submit copies for distribution to all members of the examining committee at least 6 weeks prior to defence date. (If the GPD, or External Examiner has problems with the thesis that may inhibit a successful defence, the defence may be delayed.).
- Normally, students are given two to four weeks to complete minor revisions which are to be approved by the graduate advisor and four to twelve weeks to complete major revisions which are to be approved by the graduate supervisor and at least one member of the examination committee.
- Following a successful defence, submit e-Thesis for approval to Digital Repository. Note: All students must apply to graduate by July 1 (for fall) or February 1 (for spring).

Student apply online through their student portal.

## 7.1.9 Document Preparation

The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA Manual, 7th edition), is the preferred style guide for MRPs and theses completed for the Master of Education degree requirements. The APA Manual describes the style for writing in the social sciences with respect to spelling, grammar, language conventions, document format, and referencing conventions. The APA Manual is a required text for all intake courses. Students should get in the habit of conforming to APA conventions early in the program.

Although the APA Manual is the typical style guide used in the program, students may, based on prior familiarity and supervisor permission, use an alternative style guide. Regardless of the guide used, however, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the MRP or thesis document conforms to the conventions of the selected guide. Students using an alternative guide must still send their documents for final proofreading and will need to locate such services on their own. The APA Manual should be consulted with respect to all aspects of organizing, formatting, and writing the document.

Please see the [Faculty of Graduate Studies Formatting Guidelines](#) for the required format for compliance with the approved stylistic formats.

### 7.1.9.1 Thesis and MRP Document

This section presents only one possible organization for the document. Students should consult with their Research Supervisor before beginning the first draft of the MRP or Thesis and should follow the supervisor's guidance if it differs from the presented format.

The MRP or Thesis is normally written in the form of chapters although some innovative MRPs may follow an article format, as presented in the APA Manual. Research reports, developmental works, evaluative studies, and conceptual works all require individual consideration, and students should consult several examples of their specific type of investigation before selecting an organizational structure. In most cases, however, the report will be divided into the following five chapters. (Note the formatting conventions used in the chapter titles. In the actual document, chapter titles are centered rather than left-justified.):

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION (or CONCLUSIONS), AND IMPLICATIONS (or RECOMMENDATIONS)

The organization of a portfolio uses the following structure:

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND

CHAPTER THREE: COLLECTION OF ARTIFACTS

CHAPTER FOUR: REFLECTIONS ON THE ARTIFACTS

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, PROJECTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Included in a series of Appendices at the end of this Program Guide are sample pages from exemplary MRPs or theses written by various students. We have their permission to share these examples with you to give you an indication of what the final product should look like. Supervisors can recommend other exemplars for your review. [The Brock University Digital Repository](https://brocku.scholaris.ca/home) (<https://brocku.scholaris.ca/home>) offers an online listing of MRPs and theses for your review as well.

The remainder of this section sets out, in some detail, the purpose and a typical organization for each of the five chapters. Remember that headings will differ for different types of exit requirements. Supervisors are expected to provide suggestions on appropriate headings for the type of research being reported in the MRP or thesis.

#### Preliminary Pages

The preliminary pages of the document are identical for both MRPs and theses. Some of the pages are optional (e.g., Acknowledgements), and some may not be required

depending on the contents of the document (e.g., List of Tables and List of Figures). Pre-text pages are numbered in lowercase Roman numerals centered at the bottom of the page, beginning with the Abstract as page ii.

#### Pagination of Text

Beginning at Chapter One, pages are numbered in Arabic numerals at the top right (approximately ½ inch or 1.5 cm) from the top of the page and 1 inch (2.5 cm) from the right edge.) Page numbers are continued on each page in sequence throughout the entire manuscript, including references and appendices.

#### Title Page (required)

Counted as "i" but not numbered. ([Refer to Appendix D](#))

The title should be brief, to the point, and contain enough information about the contents to give readers a general idea of what is to follow. Two-part titles may be used profitably to arrange major concepts (e.g., Language Acquisition: A Case Study of Six Preschoolers).

The full name of the Department of Educational Studies is used.

In order to claim copyright, the author of a thesis and a MRP must ensure that all final copies of the document bear the International Copyright Notice at the bottom of the title page before the student's work is submitted to the Digital Repository. The notice consists of three elements printed on one line:

1. the letter "C" enclosed in a circle, ©;
2. author's name and year of graduation. ([Refer to Appendix D](#))

#### Abstract (required)

Counted as "ii" and numbered. ([Refer to Appendix E](#))

The abstract should describe all pertinent aspects of the study. It is intended to be a brief summary of what took place, including the methods used and the main results, and is written in the past tense. The abstract is written as a single paragraph without paragraph indentation and should not exceed one page or about 200 words in length. The label Abstract (bold) should appear in uppercase and lowercase letters, centered at the top of the page.

#### Acknowledgements (optional)

Counted as "iii" and numbered.

This page should not exceed one page in length and provides a space to thank all those who contributed to the work.

Table of Contents (required)

Counted as "iv" and numbered. ([Refer to Appendix F](#))

Students must ensure that there is consistency between the chapter titles and headings as they are listed in the text and in the Table of Contents. Usually only chapter titles and first-level headings are included in Table of Contents. Note: The Table of Contents pages are not included as items in the actual Table of Contents. If the Table of Contents exceeds one page, additional pages are numbered sequentially in Roman numerals.

List of Tables (if any are used)

Pagination is in Roman numerals which continue in sequence following the Table of Contents.

The numbering, titles, headings, and pagination of the tables listed on this page must agree with those in the document.

List of Figures (if any are used)

Roman Numeral pagination. ([Refer to Appendix J](#))

It is important that numbering, titles, headings, and pagination of figures in the list coincide with the text of the document.

Placement of Optional Pages

Dedication can be placed following Acknowledgements

Prologue can be placed prior to first page of Chapter One. It should be included in the numbering of the front pages. Chapter One should begin with page 1.

Epilogue can be placed immediately following Chapter Five (final chapter).

Selected Bibliography is placed immediately following References

For your convenience, we have included the following samples:

Sample of Chapter Heading and 3 Levels of Heading ([Refer to Appendix L](#))

Sample of Quotations ([Refer to Appendix M](#))

Sample of References ([Refer to Appendix N](#))

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In this chapter, the student describes the character of the issue, puzzle, or problem under investigation. This chapter sets the stage for what will follow in the remainder of the document, and the first sentence should alert the readers to what they can expect to discover in the document. It is recommended, therefore, that the first sentence be used to precisely and promptly locate the problem or puzzle for the reader by using a phrase such as "This is a study of . . ."

The following sections may be included in the first chapter.

**Introduction:** "This is a study of . . ." The first sentence of the document should clearly identify the general topic of the study. This statement should be repeated several times throughout the document, and each repetition should remain consistent with the first iteration. The introduction section should also locate the statement within broad social or educational trends.

**Note:** The APA Manual does NOT allow the use of a heading called Introduction. The first part is assumed to be an introduction by virtue of its placement under the chapter title. This expectation holds for the beginning of all chapters.

An introductory paragraph that sets out the general purpose and shape of the chapter immediately follows the chapter heading. This paragraph is not preceded by any heading other than the chapter title. First-level headings begin at the end of the introductory paragraph(s).

**Background of the Problem:** Describe the problem as it occurs in its existing context. There may be educational trends, unresolved issues or social concerns that provide background information and thus locate the context of the problem for the reader.

**Statement of the Problem Context:** This will include the specific difficulty, unknown aspect, professional conundrum, area of concern, or felt need that the student has chosen to address. While a problem in its entirety may have provided impetus for study, exhaustive descriptions may only serve to confuse if the statement lacks precision. This section focuses on the specific concern or problem for which the work has been undertaken.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose statement should be goal-oriented with an emphasis on practical or theoretical outcomes or products. It may be useful to frame this as specifically as "The purpose of this study is..."

**Questions to be Answered or Objectives:** This refers to: (a) empirical questions that address broad conceptual aspects of the purpose statement, (b) the questions asked in developmental work or in studies of a more qualitative nature for which hypotheses are not usually written, and (c) the larger questions that conceptually drive quantitative studies. Usually, in theses and MRPs, the hypotheses are NOT posed at this stage. Hypotheses logically arise from your consideration of the literature and can be stated with precision at the end of Chapter 2 or the beginning of Chapter 3.

**Rationale:** The rationale explains why this problem should be investigated (i.e., a need to know). The need may be perceived by the student, by the educational community, or by a professional organization. The rationale should also outline the importance of the study by describing who might be interested in the results (and how), and what areas of theory and/or practice are likely to be informed by the results.

**Theoretical Framework (optional):** If theoretical areas are being brought together to form a framework for the study, they should be described here briefly and elaborated later in the Review of Literature - Chapter 2. This framework should be reflected in the empirical question.

**Scope and Limitations of the Study:** This section usually discusses the boundaries of the inquiry, specifically in relation to what is being included and what is excluded in the study (and why).

**Outline of Remainder of the Document:** A brief description (one paragraph per chapter) of what each subsequent chapter will contain and its relation to the study is provided in this section. This section is intended to serve as an advance organizer for the reader.

**Definitions of Terms:** A separate section of definitions should not be included in Chapter One. Instead, unusual and technical terms should be defined when they are introduced in the text. Sometimes a glossary of terms may be included as an appendix. When relevant, citations of the literature source for the term should be specified.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of the literature is not intended to provide an author-by-author summary of what has been written about the topic. Instead, it is expected to provide a critical review of the existing knowledge base on the topic, and the chapter should be organized conceptually or thematically. Authors are to be incorporated into the review as they speak to specific concepts. Special attention should be given to most recent and relevant literature on the topic and to Canadian studies or sources, if available.

The review of the literature should include analytic comments on how knowledge claims in the area of study have been made and defended. For example, a critical review of an empirical study should include an examination of the methods used in the study and the strengths and weaknesses of the knowledge claims as a consequence of the specific methods. Note: Although the student should refer to specific information from specific authors, overuse of direct quotations serves to weaken the review by creating an impression that the writer has insufficient knowledge of the topic or familiarity with the research to be able to speak for him/herself.

The literature review is intended to:

- Map out the current state of knowledge about the topic of study through appropriate conceptual categories;
- Present results of contemporary studies relevant to the topic;
- Describe and assess methods, analyses, and implications of these studies;
- Identify points of debate, uncertainty, ambiguity, or mystery in the existing knowledge base; and
- Demonstrate the basis for the positions taken, the framework used, or the questions asked in the student's line of study.

The organization of Chapter Two should emerge from an analysis of common concepts or broad areas of interest found in the literature. The headings for the chapter should reflect these broad concepts, and literature should be described and analyzed in terms of how the authors define, address, investigate, and debate the concepts. The chapter should end with a summary in which the student highlights the major debates in the literature and identifies the debate field within which the student's study is located. The summary should set the stage for the description of methodology in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

There is a difference between methods and methodology. Methods are those means by which data and information are gathered. Methodology combines methods with the philosophy underlying the methods. It has to do with the epistemological/ideological basis of the study.

Methodologies and procedures will vary according to an individual supervisor's requirements and preferences, the topic area, and the type of MRP or thesis. Except for conceptual investigations, the contents of Chapters 1, 2, and 5 usually follow the same format for most MRPs and theses. However, Chapters 3 and 4 will vary considerably between research, developmental, evaluative, and conceptual studies.

The following outline for Chapter 3 includes separate sections for examples of the different types of MRPs and theses: research, developmental, and evaluative. The writer must bear in mind that the keys to carrying out the study are in Chapter Three. Should another researcher wish to replicate the study, sufficient information and detail should be included to facilitate replicability.

### **Research-Based Studies**

Most theses are grounded in empirical research, though some are philosophical documents. The following headings may be relevant for theses and MRPs that are qualitative, quantitative, historical, or case studies.

**Overview:** This will acquaint the reader with the specific direction the chapter will take. As in all other chapters, this section should not have its own heading.

**Research Methodology and Design:** This section presents information from research literature to highlight the characteristics and qualities of the chosen methodology (e.g., experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, survey, auto/biographical, ethnographic, narrative, conceptual, phenomenological, case study, action research). Students are expected to justify the selection of this approach by identifying the characteristics or elements that will be used for the student's line of investigation and demonstrating the appropriateness of those elements for the large purpose of the study. For quantitative studies, this section also sets out the dependent and independent variables and the operational research questions or null hypotheses.

**Pilot Studies:** Described here are the studies used in the development of the research design, instruments used (including subsequent modifications), data collection techniques, methods of analysis, findings, and characteristics of the pilot study participants.

**Selection of Site and Participants:** This section is concerned with the characteristics of the sample and population involved in the study and how and why they were chosen (i.e., sampling procedures). It should specify how access to the site(s) was obtained, how participation was solicited, how responses were received from potential participants, and how actual participation was determined.

**Instrumentation (if appropriate):** Descriptions of tests, measures, observations, scales, questionnaires, interview guides, observation guides, and document characteristics should be included. For self-developed instruments, detailed information is required on the sources used and process followed to develop the instrument. Evidence of validity and reliability of test instruments should be provided. Specific instruments and/or adaptations should be included in an Appendix of the document and referred to here.

**Field, Classroom, or Laboratory Procedures (if appropriate):** When special instructions are necessary, or distribution of materials is part of the research design, these should be included here. Note that procedural variations may corrupt replications; therefore, directions should be sufficiently exact to facilitate subsequent studies.

**Data Collection and Recording:** Detailed descriptions of how data were collected and recorded are included in this section. It should specify the exact procedures that were followed, the order in which they were conducted, and the timeline within the process unfolded.

**Data Processing and Analysis (if appropriate):**

**Quantitative:** All methods of processing and analyzing data should be described.

Statistical tests should be described in relation to research questions or hypotheses.

**Qualitative:** Qualitative studies present great complexities in the assessment of data. The defensibility of analytical methods should be specific and draw on methods with broader acceptance and precedence (e.g., key word or key phrase analysis, content

analysis, and constant comparison analysis). Should external raters be used, details of their qualifications and the instructions for independent analysis should be specified.

**Methodological Assumptions:** Research in education cannot control all aspects of the methodology and any assumptions about the data that have been made and have a potential or actual bearing on the outcome of the study should be clearly stated.

**Limitations:** The description of limitations of the chosen methodology acknowledges the potential weaknesses of the study. This section should clearly outline the limitation and present the steps taken by the researcher to reduce potential threats to the result.

**Establishing Credibility:** The procedures used to ensure that results are credible should be outlined. In quantitative studies, the procedures include reliability and validity measures of the instrument. In qualitative studies, the procedures include triangulation, thick description, prolonged engagement, member checks, peer debriefing, and audit trails.

**Ethical Considerations:** Research with human participants requires careful attention to the rights and protections that will be ensured for the participants. The researcher must acknowledge any ethical risks in the study and outline the ethical guidelines followed to ensure that the participants have been protected. If clearance was required from Brock University Research Ethics Board, the file number of the certificate must be included in the methodology (or equivalent) chapter. The researcher must also follow the requirements for [confidentiality and copyrights](#).

**Restatement of the Area of Study:** This section brings the reader back to the main purpose of the investigation. For quantitative studies, the purpose statement from Chapter One is restated in operational form and linked back to research hypotheses and methods. For qualitative studies, the purpose statement is repeated and empirical questions are linked back to specific data collection and/or analysis strategies. This section is intended to serve as a segue into Chapter Four, where the hypotheses or empirical questions should frame the presentation of results.

### Developmental Studies

Developmental studies are possible subtypes for MRPs. Handbooks, manuals, workshops, and curriculum design units are examples of developmental work.

The following list of headings can be used in Chapter 3:

**Need for the Product:** In this section the handbook, manual, workshop, or curriculum unit is justified within the context in which it will be used. This is based on preliminary data collection (i.e., needs assessment or pilot studies), which situates the need for the product in terms of the expressed needs and/or opinions of the larger community for whom the final product is intended.

**Process of Development:** A detailed step by step description of the student's work in developing the final product is provided.

**Pilot Testing:** The description of the pilot test(s) includes information about the sample and methods used for data collection. Please note: not all developmental products will be pilot tested. Product evaluation can be conducted after the product has been written.

**Implementation:** The implementation of the workshop or curriculum unit is described in detail including location, circumstances, and target sample.

**Evaluation:** Evaluation by those who have used or are likely to use the handbook or curriculum unit or those who have participated in the workshop is included. The candidate also evaluates the final product for its use or application in the intended context.

**Revision Criteria:** The results and expected implications of the pilot test and/or evaluation process are discussed in terms of possible revisions and possible influence on the final product.

### **Evaluative Studies**

These will include MRPs that examine needs assessments and/or evaluate curriculum units, programs, or other existing instructional materials (e.g., evaluation of a computer program, evaluation of teaching, etc.).

The following headings can be used in Chapter 3:

**Aspects of the Program to be Evaluated:** The specifics of what is to be evaluated are described here (curriculum unit, etc.).

Sources of Information: The sources of information that will be used for evaluation are described in this section. These may include students, parents, teachers, administrators, and school or other records.

Data Collection Techniques: Qualitative or quantitative methods used to gather data are detailed (e.g., questionnaires, interviews, and analysis of materials).

Criteria for Evaluation: The criteria that will be used to make decisions or improvements are described in detail.

Analysis of Data: The types of analyses used to summarize and report on the data collected in the study are described.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the investigation. The chapter should begin with an introductory paragraph that reminds the reader in a very brief summary of the purpose of the investigation, the chosen methodology, the data collection strategies, and study participants. It should specify the type of analysis that was undertaken (e.g., descriptive statistics, constant comparison, content analysis, etc.) and indicate that the chapter will provide details on the results emerging from the investigation.

The body of the chapter represents the new knowledge claims being made by the researcher in light of what was discovered from the data. In quantitative studies, the chapter should be organized in relation to the research questions and/or hypotheses. In qualitative studies, organization of the results should reflect the primary categories used for a deductive analysis or the major themes emerging from an inductive analysis. Before beginning to write this chapter, it is helpful to begin with an outline of the major themes or questions, the main points (knowledge claims) to be made about each one, and the data and/or statistical evidence for each point.

In developmental investigations, Chapter Four is the product itself (workshop, curriculum unit, or handbook). This chapter may be structured to stand independently of the rest of the document to facilitate the distribution of the product. If the product contains referenced material, it should include its own Reference List. The materials referenced in the product do not necessarily need to be included in the Reference List at the end of the MRP, but the student should follow the supervisor's preference on this decision.

One of the most common problems with Chapter Four is an entanglement of the findings from the data with the previous knowledge of the researcher. In both quantitative and qualitative research reports, therefore, findings from the data must be clearly distinct from any personal experiences, interpretations, inferences, or evaluations of the researcher. It is essential that the reader be able to clearly detect what knowledge claims are grounded specifically in the data and what claims stand outside the data, coming either from the researcher or from other authors in the literature base.

When it is appropriate, results can be displayed in tables or charts. As no graphic presentation may stand alone, a brief explanation of the table or chart must be included in the text. Tables and charts can help to present information in a clear, efficient manner. They should not, however, be used as a substitute for presenting results in written form, nor are they necessary when the information in the text is clear and easily understood. It is good to be frugal in selecting the number of tables and charts to be included in the document.

#### CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION (or CONCLUSIONS), AND IMPLICATIONS (or RECOMMENDATIONS)

Chapter Five is the "So what?" chapter of the MRP or thesis. This is where the student draws out and discusses the knowledge claims made in Chapter Four, thereby highlighting the contribution this investigation makes to the knowledge base. Although this has been found to be a difficult chapter for many students to write, it is an important one because this is where the information from previous chapters comes together and stands on its merits and where the student's work is connected to the existing literature on the topic. Students might think in terms of a research report in a journal, and plan this chapter similarly.

**Introduction:** This section reminds the reader of the general problem or puzzle context, the purpose of this study, and the type of investigation undertaken to explore the puzzle and to address the purpose.

**Summary of the Study:** Here the student presents a brief overview of the overall design of the investigation, the data collection and analysis strategies, and the results of the study. This section should represent a summarized version of Chapters Three

and Four but without the supporting data evidence. It sets the stage for the discussion to follow.

**Discussion/Conclusions:** This section highlights the interesting, surprising, exciting, or illuminating results and positions them within the current debates in the field. This section should NOT be a finding-by-finding replay of the results. It is intended to serve as a critical reflection on how this investigation has contributed to the knowledge field, how it speaks to other authors (whether in harmony or in counterpoint), and how the results might be interpreted or evaluated. Think in terms of each paragraph in this section establishing and/or clarifying a position, confirming or questioning a result, or offering an alternative meaning or interpretation. This section is the core of the contribution your work makes, so make the most of it that you appropriately can.

**Implications:** This section relates to how the outcome of the research questions influences or changes understanding about the topic under examination. It may be useful to use sub-sections within this section. For example:

**Implications for Practice:** Do the findings and conclusions drawn affect our understanding of the issue under study? Will the findings have an impact on direct practices related to the issue? In other words, of what use is this research for educators and what might/should they now do differently?

**Implications for Theory:** How have the findings extended, confirmed, or refuted the theoretical basis used in the study?

**Implications for Further Research:** What new questions can now be developed or addressed for additional and deeper research into the topic under examination?

Limitations which have constrained the study may be cited and ways of overcoming them in future research may be addressed.

OR

**Recommendations:** This heading is another way of addressing the material discussed in Implications. Practical suggestions may be made about how to implement your findings and how to conduct additional research on the topic.

**Final Word/Conclusion:** This section should bring the entire document to a satisfactory close. It should highlight what the author would like readers to think about or remember when they close the book.

## INFORMATION PAGES

After the body of the MRP or thesis text is complete, a number of ancillary information pages must be included. Other than the reference list, the remainder of the pages noted in this section will differ according to the nature of the investigation.

**Reference List:** This section includes all sources that have been cited in the text of the document. Only those works that have been cited in the text are included in the reference list, and all works that have been cited must be included. References are listed alphabetically. Completing the reference list requires careful attention to the APA Manual or the chosen alternative style guide, which can have financial payoffs at the editing phase. This is where proofreaders often spend countless hours correcting style violations and uncovering discrepancies between the references in the list and the citations in the text, and careful APA work by the student can reduce editing costs considerably ([Refer to Appendix N](#)).

**Appendices:** Support material that clarifies or provides examples is not typically included in the text of the document but is attached as an appendix. Examples of such material include data collection instruments, tests, correspondence, and samples of data. These items provide the reader with background information and materials that help to clarify the investigation but would interrupt the flow of the text if inserted into the chapters.

### 7.1.10 Changing from a Thesis to an MRP

Changing from a MRP to a thesis or vice versa requires the permission of the supervisor and the Graduate Program Director. Because of the difference in required credits, students should be aware that if they are changing from a thesis to a MRP they will need to take 2 additional .5 credit courses to fulfil the 10 half-credit course requirements of the program. Students may also be required to pay back any funding received from the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs.

### 7.1.11 Electronic Submission of the Document

All final MRPs and theses are required to be submitted electronically in .pdf format to the Brock University Digital Repository. This is a university process, and you will find submission information on the Faculty of Graduate Studies Postdoctoral Affairs website, under Current Students [MRP](#) or [Thesis](#).

## Conducting Ethical Research

The ethics of information-gathering methods is relevant to most MRPs and theses. Whether the end result is a handbook, a curriculum unit, or a qualitative or quantitative research study, the collection of data or information may have ethical implications for the people and/or organizations involved in the process.

The Senate of Brock University has established ethical guidelines for planning and conducting research involving human participants. The process of submitting research proposals to the Ethics subcommittee is intended to protect the people who will be involved in the study.

Information regarding Brock University policies and standards for research with human participants is available at the website for the Office of Research Services: <https://brocku.ca/research-at-brock/>. The information can be found by clicking on the Ethics & Research Reviews link. Students who plan to collect original data from people must apply for approval to the Brock University Research Ethics Review Board before beginning the project. A minimum of 6 weeks is required for the review. Forms are also available on this website.

Most organizations have an internal ethical review process that must also be followed prior to research being conducted in the organization. Students are expected to contact the appropriate department of the organization where they plan to conduct their research and to comply with required procedures for approval to carry out their research. Such contact should be made with the permission and endorsement of the academic supervisor (a written letter of support can assist). This information and the appropriate procedures should be communicated to readers through documents appended to the final MRP/thesis.

The file number of the certificate from Brock University's Research Ethics Board must be included in the methodology (or equivalent) chapter.

In addition to the institutional requirements, the Faculty of Education has adopted a **Confidentiality Policy** that requires students to exclude from their MRPs or thesis any features or information that could identify participants or location. There is also a new copyright policy on the **Use of Reproduced Materials**. ([Please refer to Appendix C](#))

## 8 Authorship

In normal circumstances, as a condition of engaging in graduate studies at Brock, the author of a thesis grants certain licenses and waivers in respect the circulation and copying of the thesis to:

- the University Library: permitting the consultation of the thesis as part of the library collection and the making of single copies for another library or similar institution or for an individual for private study and research
- the National Library of Canada: permitting the microfilming of the thesis and the lending or selling of copies of the film. Forms are signed following a successful thesis defense.

### 8.1 Publication

Graduate students are encouraged to publish not only their research findings but also course papers when they are of suitable quality. In most cases, collaboration with faculty culminates in the final product. It is, therefore, essential to consider authorship of the work before submission for publication.

Collaboration may be in the form of intellectual and scholarly conversation between supervisor and a student regarding MRP or thesis work, or it may be in the form of extensive editorial commentary. In such cases, joint authorship should be considered. For the most part when a paper addressing a MRP or thesis work is submitted for publication, the student will be first author and the supervisor(s) will be second author.

At other times, the supervisor or faculty member may be first author and the student the second author. This would usually occur when the faculty member has made a significant contribution by providing additional research, analysis, or writing to bring the paper to acceptable publication levels. The University has [a policy on student-generated materials](#) that you should study and discuss with your supervisor.

Students who have been employed as research assistants may expect joint authorship when they have made significant contributions to the research program resulting in a published document.

Discussion of joint authorship between faculty and graduate students should ensue before any collaborative work begins. Similar consideration should be given to authorship of paper presentations.

## 8.2 Paper Presentations

Students are encouraged to present their work at various conferences when the opportunity arises. Currently, full-time graduate students may submit to the Associate Dean of Graduate Student Services, Research and International in the Faculty of Education, a request for financial assistance to attend a conference in order to present their work. In the request, students are to list the expected costs to be incurred for travel, lodging, and registration fees.

## 9 Important Resources

A host of facilities and services are available to graduate students. For a complete listing please refer to the Graduate Calendar.

### 9.1 Faculty of Education Funding Opportunities

#### 9.1.1 Faculty of Education Fellowships

A number of graduate fellowships are awarded each year to new and continuing full-time students in the Master of Education program who have achieved high academic standing. Prospective candidates for fellowships will be considered on application for admission to the Master of Education program. Continuing students will be considered after successful completion of their first year of study. In order to qualify, students must be registered as full-time students.

#### 9.1.2 Jack Noble Book Prize

The book prize is awarded every year at both the Spring and Fall convocations to a Master of Education student who achieves the highest academic standing in the MEd program. The prize is awarded in the name of Jack Noble on the recommendation of the Faculty of Education.

#### 9.1.3 Graduate Assistantships: Research and Teaching

Research Assistantships consist of graduate students completing various tasks for specific faculty members. Duties may include literature searches, data collection and/or data entry, interviewing participants, transcribing interviews. Any data collected by students for a faculty member may be used by students and incorporated into their project or thesis work.

Teaching Assistantships consist of students becoming seminar leaders and/or assisting a specific faculty member with any other teaching requirements such as marking essays and exams.

TAs are members of CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) and their normal workload for a one-term contract is 60 hours per half-credit course.

The number of hours required for the assistantship determines the amount. Normally a Research Assistant contract is for 5 hours per week per term for a total of 60 hours over a 12-week period. Contracts run for one full term only.

Other Brock University Funding Opportunities are available by consulting the [Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs](#).

## 9.2 Graduate Student Association (GSA)

At Brock University, the Graduate Student Association (GSA) represents the interests of graduate students. The purpose of the association is to promote the interest of graduate students in academic and social matters, to facilitate interaction among graduate students from all departments, and to enhance the profile of graduate students internal and external to the university community. All graduate students are members of the GSA and are automatically charged a membership fee at registration.

Each year, the Ralph Morris Graduate Student Award, established by the GSA in 1995, is presented to a graduate student who has exhibited exemplary activity that contributes to the GSA membership. Applications for this award are available from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

The GSA makes yearly donations to the James A. Gibson Library in an effort to ensure journals required by the graduate students remain on the shelf. Along with this, a portion of the GSA membership fees are proportionately distributed to the various graduate departments to help offset travel and conference expenses incurred by students. This money is made available in addition to what is provided by individual departments. Graduate students are required to fill out application forms for financial assistance to cover conference/travelling expenses. These forms can be obtained by contacting the department representatives. The amount of money received depends on the number of graduate students applying for financial assistance and the amount of money reserved to cover such costs.

The GSA is active in gaining representation for graduate students at the various levels of administration at Brock. Elections for GSA executive positions typically occurs in early spring. There are ample opportunities for graduate students to become involved with the Brock community beyond the classroom. However, it is only through continued involvement with the GSA that our representation at the various levels of

administration can be sustained. Without this type of representation, decisions at these various levels can be made which may have a direct impact on the experiences of the students enrolled in the Master programs at Brock. Master of Education students are encouraged to make use of the graduate student offices located in the James A Gibson Library, 6th floor. Lock boxes are now available in MCD419. Please contact the Administrative Coordinator if you are interested in obtaining one.

### 9.3 Computer Services

All Brock Students, including MEd students are required to enable their Brock email accounts. All electronic communication with the students will occur through this account. It will be the responsibility of the students to manage their accounts.

In addition, Master of Education students are eligible for computer access in Computer Lab (WH76) as well as the Master of Graduate Student workroom (WH309). The access to the computers in these rooms is based on first-come, first-served basis, and permission for swipe-access is granted by completing the online request at:

<https://secure3.ed.brocku.ca/prox/>.

Printing is available on a charge-per-page basis. Laser printing accounts can be purchased at the Brock Bookstore on the St. Catharines campus, and at the IRC at the Hamilton campus. An accounting mechanism is installed to charge 10 cents/page.

### 9.4 Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA)

As a graduate student you will belong to two faculties, the Faculty of Education, and the [Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs](#) (FGSPA). FGSPA acts as the Registrar for your program as well as providing professional development opportunities. They will provide an orientation at the beginning of the Fall term.