Below are general guidelines for formatting your master’s thesis in the College of Education. Please consult the University Thesis Guidelines and confer with your thesis chair for additional guidance.

PRELIMINARY PAGES
Please consult with the University Thesis Guidelines for the Title and Signature/Approval template pages that are included in your thesis.

ABSTRACT
This is a one-page (150 words or less) summary of the problem or topic, the questions explored, the methods used, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Abstracts introduce the study to the world. It is published as the first item one will read when your dissertation is searched in Proquest.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION
In this section you will set the stage for your research. You will provide the background for the issue being investigated, and describe it in light of current research. This will lead you into the Problem Statement section where you make the case for your study and describe what needs to be known about the issue under investigation. This is also the section where you pose your research questions, which stem from thoughtful analysis and consideration of the problem or topic under study.

Subsections for Chapter I (10-15 pages)
- Background to the general, overall problem or topic. Description of the specific problem or topic you are studying.
- Problem Statement. Based on your narrative of the problem or topic, focus on describing what is not known, but needs to be. In other words, what remains problematic within the overall context of the background of the study? This section is highly significant because it demonstrates your ability to identify and develop a problem or issue that is worthy of investigation and future research. The statement of the problem explains what needs to be known.
- Purpose of the Study. The purpose of the study describes what the study will do and is a direct response to what needs to be known. Consider beginning this section with, “The purpose of this study is to investigate....”
- Research or Guiding Questions. Specific research or guiding questions and/or hypotheses must be clearly stated and in researchable terms. Choose the number of research questions wisely. Whatever you ask, you must answer in your thesis. Whatever you answer must have sufficient data to support the assertions made.
- Significance of the Study. This section describes how your study contributes to the literature or the overall field. Why is this study important?
Theoretical/Conceptual Framework/Orientation (optional). In consultation with your chair, you may demonstrate how your topic relates to a theoretical or conceptual framework and in some cases, how it relates to both. A theoretical framework (e.g. specific elements of leadership or organizational theory) provides a lens through and against which your issue or problem can be analyzed and/or compared. In comparison, a conceptual framework is often constructed from diverse strands of information from various sources (research literature, single or multiple theories, practical experience, policy). The conceptual framework then becomes the analytical tool that facilitates comparison or analysis. In some cases, both a specific theory and a conceptual framework or orientation are chosen to ground the discussion of the overall problem or issue.

Definitions of terms that will aid the reader in understanding the study.

Assumptions, Delimitations, Limitations. Assumptions you make in the design and execution of your study. Delimitations draw boundaries around your study- tells us what your study is not, sets expectations for the reader. Limitations outline what you already foresee or experienced as limits to the conclusions you can draw from your study.

Conclusion

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
This section identifies and describes what has been discovered and reported in the research literature with regard to the issue that you are investigating. It requires a thorough search of the literature and a careful analysis. Only those articles, books, and manuscripts directly related to your problem or topic are included. The discussion of the literature is related to the questions to be answered by your study. It is not to be written as an annotated bibliography. It is not simply a laundry list of what various authors have said about the topic. The most successful literature reviews are tightly coupled to the various areas generated by the research questions; the literature should inform and explain these areas. The summary of the literature review leads into your comments about how your study will contribute to and expand on this body of knowledge. Overall, the literature review should be an informed study of what others have written on the topic, but it should also include the imprint of your own thinking. Both are important. How you weave these two qualities together is one of the central challenges of writing an excellent review of the literature and producing an exceptional Chapter 2.

Subsections for Chapter II (20-30 pages, depending on nature of investigation)

- Introduction. This is generally a roadmap to alert the reader to the various themes that will be covered in Chapter II.
- Review of the Literature. Sub-headings can be related to the research questions to be answered or areas to be explored by the study; organize the literature review by common themes that link the research studies together. Include your critique and commentary with reference to the studies cited.
Summary of the major points discovered in your review. Look at each of your subsections, summarize the major points presented in a few sentences for each subsection. These sentences form the basis for your summary of the literature. In this section, be explicit regarding how the literature contributes to your study. This section is short and focused.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Restate the questions to be answered by this investigation. Describe in detail how you will gather the information to answer your study questions and the rationale for choosing these specific methods.

SUBSECTIONS FOR CHAPTER III (7-10 PAGES)

- Introduction with a brief review of the problem or topic and research questions.
- Description of Research Participants & Site. Describe in detail the site where your research was conducted and the participants involved. How were participants chosen? What were your sampling criteria? What are the characteristics of your sample – e.g. age ranges, gender, years teaching, or any other distinguishing characteristics. If applicable, describe the site where your research was conducted. Depending on the methodology chosen, this may include a description of the physical characteristics of the site, a demographic profile, or even a performance profile of the institution or organization.
- Procedures/design. This section should describe any operational details that another researcher would need to know to replicate the study. Such details usually include 1) the specific order in which steps to carry out the research were undertaken, 2) the timing of the study - when it occurred and how long did it take (include specifics), 3) instructions given to participants, and 4) briefings, debriefings, or safeguards taken. It also describes your study design – is it an experimental study? If so, discuss the experimental design you used. Is it a qualitative study? Discuss why this method was chosen and the steps taken to carry out the study.
- Data Collection Methods. Describe in detail each data collection strategy (i.e. interviews, surveys, collection of scores, participation/observation) – this is the section where you demonstrate your knowledge about the actual data collection strategy(ies). Discuss the strategies’ merits and why you chose these specific data collection strategies.
- Instruments Used. Did you use a survey, a questionnaire, a pre-existing document? Where did you get it? Why did you decide on this particular instrument? What information is available about the qualities of the instrument? If your own, describe in detail how it was constructed. If a survey, describe which survey questions relate to which overall research questions or your hypotheses.
- Data Analysis. Provide a detailed description of the data analysis techniques and process used. Write this section for someone who would want to replicate what you have done, and explain your rationale for the data analysis procedures used.
Positionality (optional). This is the section where a qualitative researcher’s positionality and level of influence in relation to the data are described. The researcher also reports how positionality and influence will be managed and minimized in the study.

Validity, Reliability, Credibility, Trustworthiness. Describe the methods utilized to insure validity and reliability of your data. If using a secondary dataset as part of your study, the appropriate statistical procedure must be performed to insure its reliability and accuracy. If working with qualitative data, it may be appropriate to use a colleague or someone with qualitative data analysis skills to code a selected sample of your fieldnotes to corroborate your coding strategies.

Limitations to the Study. Describe the limitations to the study and the way it was designed or carried out, specifically the events that occurred that were beyond the control of the researcher.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS/RESULTS
What did your study reveal? What were the results from your data collection efforts? Use appropriate graphics such as charts, graphs, tables, drawings, etc. to present your data. Keep in mind that a cross analysis where data is continually compared from all sources tends to produce the most reliable results. Also remember that your findings should address your research questions.

SUBSECTIONS FOR CHAPTER IV (AS LONG AS IT TAKES)

- Introduction with a brief review of your data collection/analysis procedures. This section (and usually the sub-sections that follow) should also contain a roadmap to help walk the reader through the chapter and its organization.
- Results/findings. Organize this section by research questions or by emerging themes. Use tables and charts to help illustrate your findings. Review sample theses and work closely with your chair to determine the structure of the results/findings.
- General Discussion. What have you discovered and what does it all mean? An overall analysis of the findings as they relate to the research questions should be included. This section will set up the information required in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY
This is the section where you use the findings to come to conclusions and propose a solution to a problem or a recommendation on how to build a program, a process, or a policy that will potentially remedy all or part of the issue. The significance of this section lies in the discussion of the implications. The identification of areas where more information is needed and therefore where further study is required should be discussed in this chapter as well.

SUBSECTIONS FOR CHAPTER V (10-15)

- Brief Summary of Findings and Interpretation
- Implications. What are the implications of your research findings? This is neither a representation of data nor recommendations. It focuses instead on what your findings
mean for the area that you researched, identifies why and how the analyses and interpretations were made, and the way key concepts in the analyses evolved.

- **Recommendations for Policy or Practice.** What policy and practice recommendations do you have based on your research findings?
- **Recommendations for Further Study.** Offer recommendations for further research in this area. Describe what could be done differently in future studies.

- **References.** Include a complete reference list of all documents cited in the study in APA format.

**APPENDIX (IF APPROPRIATE)**
Include in the appendices any items that support the study that would interrupt the flow of the text of the project if included in the narrative. Interview or survey instruments utilized, correspondence with participants, copies of relevant policy documents, etc. are good examples of what to place in the appendix. If you are doing a qualitative study, appropriate field notes could be included in this section.