

Master of Education (MEd)
Research Project (MEDD8008) & Professional Portfolio (MEDD8009)
Guidelines and Timeline

I. Introduction

Students can choose to do a Research Project (12 credits) or a Professional Portfolio (12 credits) as their capstone. Both options require students to apply what they have learned in the programme and demonstrate their achievement of the programme learning outcomes. In particular, students are expected to engage in an inquiry process during which they will apply their disciplinary and research knowledge to address an issue or question related to their research/professional context with evidence. The following key elements are expected for the capstone:

- identify a relevant topic or question for further inquiry
- locate, synthesise and critically review relevant literature
- collect data or evidence to address the question
- analyse, interpret and discuss the collected data or evidence
- reflect on the inquiry process and its implications for future theoretical development and/or practical improvement

II. Capstone options

Option 1: Research project

Students are required to conduct a research project on a topic of their choice. They are expected to:

- identify a significant research topic and design viable research questions
- locate, synthesise and critically review relevant theoretical and empirical literature
- collect and analyse research data in light of best methodological and ethical practices
- discuss the research findings in relation to previous literature
- reflect on the significance and implications of the research for future theoretical development and practical improvement

Prerequisite:

- Students are required to enroll in one elective under the category of "Advanced Research Methods" (6 credits) in Semester 1 or 2. These electives focus on quantitative or qualitative research methods and data analysis (e.g. "Introduction to Statistical Methods", "Qualitative Methods"), which help to strengthen students' research concepts and skills.

Option 2: Professional Portfolio

The portfolio provides students with an opportunity to apply what they have learned in the programme to practices, and then evaluate such practices. It can be regarded as a practice-based inquiry process. Students are expected to:

- identify an issue/question related to their professional context (e.g. schools, classrooms, learning centres, NGOs)
- locate, synthesise and critically review relevant literature to discuss different ways to address the issue/question
- based on the literature review, propose how to address the issue/question discussed
- apply the proposal into practice or present the proposal to relevant stakeholders
- based on the try-out experience or feedback collected from stakeholders, reflect on the extent to which the proposal has addressed the issue/question, and how it can be further improved

Some examples of the proposal include:

- A new curriculum design
- A teacher training intervention package
- Leadership guidelines for primary school principals
- Education policy recommendations to address an educational issue (e.g. inclusive education, shadow education, access to education)
- An e-learning package for a company's employees
- A strategic plan to Government employees training
- UNESCO's regional education intervention
- An advisory paper to a specific public body/agency on educational measures for promoting social justice or equity
- A strategic proposal for coping with an increasingly aging population in the society
- An educational toy design for children with special educational needs

The actual proposal will be attached in the appendix of the portfolio, while the portfolio itself will present the rationale, process and reflection of the proposal.

III. Coursework and hurdle requirements

1. Coursework requirement

Students will attend 5 seminars (3 hours each) to learn how to do the capstone and write their research project or professional portfolio.

2. For either option of the capstone, students are required to complete:

(i) A final paper of 10,000 – 12,000 words; and

(ii) Presentation of their research project/professional portfolio (8-10 minutes) on the capstone presentation day. The presentation would be in the form of poster presentation. Research project students will present their research topic, research questions, methodology and findings; professional portfolio students will present the issue to be addressed, its relevance or importance, their proposal and feedback on their proposal. The presentation will not contribute marks to the final grade but it has to be completed as a hurdle requirement.

3. In general, a final paper would comprise the following component:

Part 1: Introduction

Statement of the research problem for research project; or the identified issue related to a professional context. This should be in the form of a brief description, which is easy to comprehend. The topic to be studied should be contextualised in terms of the field. It is important that this section should establish the final paper, that is, the proposition or argument to be investigated, substantiated and articulated. This includes an introduction to the broad theoretical perspectives you have chosen, related research/issues and the actual context in which the study will be conducted.

Part 2: Literature Review

This should show that a) you are conversant with the relevant literature; b) the topic has academic substance in which it can be grounded and to which it can contribute; and c) you have sufficient critical, analytical and literacy skills to develop and write a paper. It should be argumentative and analytical, and not merely describe the literature uncovered.

Part 3: Research methodology/Proposal for the issue

For Research Project, it would be the discussion of the methodological literature. This should be relevant to the research undertaken and should demonstrate that you are aware of the methodological and ethical issues and criticisms connected with the methods chosen, and that you can defend their selection

as appropriate for your research and its context. This section also includes exactly how you undertook the research, often as a subsection entitled “Methods”. This would allow a researcher following up on your work to perform the same research to validate, or otherwise, your findings, perhaps in a different context.

For Professional Portfolio, it would be the discussion of the proposal to be applied into practice or presented to relevant stakeholders in the professional context. The identified issue and the proposal should be based on the literature review, and you should demonstrate how the proposal could address the issues. You should also demonstrate awareness of any ethical issues involved in the proposal and how you would handle those issues. This part summarises the rationale and key points of the proposal, while the detailed proposal will be attached in the appendix.

Part 4: Results

This part summarises the main findings of your research, or the feedback on your proposal. The results should not contain raw information, but transformed to be comprehensible to a non-specialist reader, which can be presented in format of tables and other graphical organisers. Some indication of how the data might come together in the overall conclusion might be given here.

Part 5: Discussion

This is the part where you interpret your findings. You need to briefly summarise your findings (like an executive summary) and discuss why they are consistent/inconsistent/significant/important/useful. Discuss your interpretation of the findings and link it back to your research questions/identified issues and the reviewed literature. You should explain the interactions among the sources very clearly, without restating your results in detail. If possible and available, theoretical frameworks could be used to better interpret your findings. For Professional Portfolio, you can also discuss how the proposal could be further improved.

Part 6: Conclusion

Normally, this final part has three main components: conclusions, limitations, and implications. Firstly, it should include the conclusions of your study (better in the form of bullet points). Secondly, it should discuss the limitations of your research/experience, data, or results. Thirdly, it could analyse the implications for theoretical development, practical improvement of e.g. teaching strategies, or future research.

4. Please refer to Annex II or the assessment criteria and Annex III for the feedback sheet.

IV. Timeline

Timeline	Activities
August	<p>Course enrollment Full-time and part-time Year 2 students are required to enroll in either Research Project (MEDD8008FY) or Professional Portfolio (MEDD8009FY) during the enrollment period in mid-August. Part-time Year 1 students would enroll in their Year 2 studies.</p> <p>Students may apply to change their choice after August, upon supervisors' endorsement, by sending application to the Programme Office (medu@hku.hk). Students changing from Professional Portfolio to Research Project are required to enroll in one “Advanced Research Methods” course, subject to the availability of the courses and places at the time of changing enrollment.</p>
October/November	<p>Notification of supervisor and ethical reviewer Specialism Coordinators will arrange supervisors and ethical reviewers for</p>

	<p>students. The information will be announced via email and Moodle by end of November.</p> <p>Students should keep constant contacts with their supervisors to work on the research project/professional portfolio. Communication can be made by any means, such as face-to-face, by phone or email, whatever appropriate.</p>
October to June	<p>Capstone seminars</p> <p>For either option of the capstone, students will attend 5 seminars (3 hours each) to learn how to do the capstone and write their research project/professional portfolio. The seminars will be scheduled throughout semesters 1, 2 and summer, and may take place during the Reading Week, semester break and on Saturdays.</p>
There is no deadline for completing Ethical Clearance but students are required to complete the whole procedure before data collection	<p>Submission of application for ethical clearance</p> <p>Students are required to complete ethical application regardless of whether it involves human participants. (Please refer to the application procedure in Item V below)</p> <p>Any research data collected prior to the completion of ethical clearance must not be used in any part of your research project/professional portfolio. Capstone submitted without completing ethical clearance properly before data collection would be given fail grade.</p>
Late June	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Students are required to present their research project/professional portfolio (8-10 minutes) on the capstone presentation day. The presentation would be in the form of poster presentation. Research project students will present their research topic, research questions, methodology and findings; professional portfolio students will present the issue to be addressed, its relevance or importance, their proposal and feedback on their proposal.</p> <p>The presentation will not contribute marks to the final grade but it has to be completed as a hurdle requirement.</p> <p>The presentation schedule and arrangement will be announced in due course.</p>
July 31	<p>Submission due date</p> <p>Final paper should be submitted to the respective Moodle course room of either MEDD8008FY for Research Project or MEDD8009FY for Professional Portfolio.</p> <p>If teachers require you to submit a hard copy in addition to the Moodle copy, you may drop the hard copy to the MEd Assignment Box outside the Programme Office at Room 420, Meng Wah Complex.</p>

V. Ethical Clearance

1. Ethical requirements

All members of the University, including staff members, research postgraduate, taught postgraduate and undergraduate students, are under an obligation to observe the highest standards of professional

conduct. Failure to do so, not only defeats the object of scholarly enquiry, but brings both the researcher and the University into disrepute.

The Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) is responsible for safeguarding research participants, students conducting research projects and researchers in or affiliated with the Faculty of Education by formally applying accepted principles and procedures for the conduct of research involving human and animal subjects. Staff members and students are required to obtain ethical clearance to undertake any study involving human or animal subjects before any data collection is undertaken. Details of the procedures, application guidelines and application forms can be obtained from:

<https://web.edu.hku.hk/research/ethics-application>

2. Application procedures for ethical clearance

Students are required to complete ethical application regardless of whether it involves human participants. To apply for ethical clearance, students are required to:

- (i) complete an application form FE75/122 (Annex I), which can be downloaded from the Moodle course room or the website: <https://web.edu.hku.hk/research/ethics-application>
** If your paper does not involve human participants, you may tick "No" in Item 10 in the application form and submit it with a one-page summary of your work.
- (ii) discuss with your supervisor and seek his/her endorsement signature on the application form.
- (iii) send the form with all the supporting documents to your respective Ethical Reviewer and seek his/her endorsement signature on the form.
- (iv) send the signed form with all the supporting documents to Miss Wing Pau (swing.pau@hku.hk) of Office of Research for record.

The names and contact information of supervisors and ethical reviewers would be uploaded on the Moodle course room once available in October/November.

Ethical clearance has to be completed prior to data collection. Capstone submitted without completing ethical clearance properly before data collection would be given fail grade.

VI. Writing References

You need to provide a complete and accurate set of references according to the required style. You should, therefore, start to keep a full reference of everything you read. If you have access to referencing software, e.g. EndNote, this will reduce future difficulties you may face when you come to produce your final list of references at the end of your project report. The recommended style manual for the capstone is the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th edition). An introduction to APA referencing is at: <https://apastyle.org/about-apa-style.aspx>.

Please contact your supervisor for more specific information.

VII. Format and submission of final paper

1. Final paper shall be computer/type-written on International A4-sized paper, 297 mm x 210 mm (except for drawings, maps, or tables on which no restriction is placed), with a margin of not less than 25 mm on the left-hand edge of each page.
2. The paper should be submitted to the respective Moodle course room. If your teacher requires you to submit a hard copy in addition to the Moodle copy, you may drop your paper to the MEd Assignment Box outside the Office at Room 420, Meng Wah Complex.

VIII. Plagiarism

Please note this warning! Plagiarism is perhaps the most common and the most avoidable reason for an assignment or a capstone to be failed.

According to the University's Regulations, "A candidate shall not engage in plagiarism nor employ nor seek to employ any other unfair means at an examination or in any other form of assessment. Plagiarism is defined as the unacknowledged use, as one's own, of work of another person, whether or not such work has been published". This includes published books, journals, articles, materials on websites, unpublished lecture notes, teaching materials of other teachers, and any work of other students.

Hence, all sources and reference materials used for assignments, including main texts, appendices and diagrams, must be fully acknowledged in the assignments themselves. Extracts from published sources should be properly referenced and set in quotation marks if included in original writing. If they form part of the teaching materials submissions, their source must be clearly stated. It is not sufficient to include a list of all sources only at the end of a piece of work.

Please refer to the following University's documents that provide additional information on plagiarism: <https://tl.hku.hk/plagiarism/>.

Students should examine the Turnitin report and declare that they have already read the mentioned information, duly acknowledged other sources in their works, reviewed the Turnitin report and revised their work as necessary to ensure that it is free from plagiarism.

Academically, it is almost certain that the plagiarised work will receive a fail grade and the students concerned may, as determined by the Board of Examiners, be reported to the University Disciplinary Committee, and may be required to present themselves for an oral examination. The University does not allow plagiarism. Any act of plagiarism is a disciplinary matter that can result in serious consequences, including reprimand, fine, withdrawal from academic or other University privileges, suspension, or expulsion from the university (See Regulations Governing Conduct at Examinations in the University's Calendar).

Plagiarism is a serious matter. If you are unsure of any aspects of the preparation, presentation or submission of assignments, you should consult your teachers for guidance as soon as possible.

Warning: Submission of the Same Work More Than Once

Submitting an exact copy or significant portions of another assignment in more than one course without explicit acknowledgement is not acceptable and may result in a Fail grade. However, in the final report you can re-use sections and passages from your research proposal, as appropriate. This is because the purpose of the research proposal is to prepare you for the research project/professional portfolio, and it is understood that there are overlaps in the sections of a research proposal and the final report. You are advised to communicate with your Supervisor regarding the Turnitin similarity report.

**Application Form for Ethics Review of
Taught Postgraduate Independent Project**

Note 1: Every student who undertakes an Independent Project (also known as Capstone Project in some programmes), regardless of whether or not it involves human participants, should complete this form and send it with the required supporting documents to **the supervisor for endorsement**, and to **the designated reviewer for the programme for final review and approval, before the data collection process of the proposed project begins.** (*Please contact the Programme Office for the name of the reviewer and timeline for submission of applications.*) The approved application with full documentation should be emailed to the Office of Research (Attn: Ms Wing Pau, swing.pau@hku.hk) **before the commencement date of the project.**

PART A – TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT

1. Name of student investigator: _____ 2. Programme: _____
3. U. No.:

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 4. HKU email address: _____
5. Name of supervisor: _____
6. Supervisor's email address: _____
7. Project title: _____
8. Expected commencement date of this project: _____
9. Expected completion date of this project: _____

10. Does your project involve human participants?

Yes → Please provide the following supporting documents:

- (a) A one-page summary of the proposed research including methodology. In this summary, please briefly describe the goals of your research study, your planned action, and a brief sequential description of the procedures to be adopted (i.e., data collection);
- (b) the consent form(s) (in English and the first language) for school principals, teachers, students and/or parents (for school-based studies of children below the secondary level), if applicable. You are strongly advised to refer closely to the sample forms at: <https://www.rss.hku.hk/integrity/ethics-compliance/hrec-forms>; and
- (c) the questionnaire(s) and/or interview questions to be used should be enclosed or at least described in a separate document.

No → Please provide the following supporting document:

- (a) A one-page summary of the proposed research including methodology. In this summary, please briefly describe the goals of your research study, your planned action, and a brief sequential description of the procedures to be adopted (i.e., data collection).

11. I confirm that I have discussed the ethical implications of the project with my supervisor.

Signature of Student Investigator

Date

PART B – TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SUPERVISOR

I have discussed this project with the applicant and checked all of the documents submitted with this application. I endorse that this application be submitted to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) for formal review.

Signature of Supervisor
(Name: _____)

Date

PART C – TO BE COMPLETED BY THE REVIEWER

If amendment(s) is/are required:

I have reviewed this application and request that the applicant make the following amendment(s):

Signature of Reviewer
(Name: _____)

Date

Note 2: The student should amend the application according to the above-mentioned advice given by the reviewer, and send the amended application to the reviewer for final vetting and approval. The reviewer should complete the section below to indicate approval.

If amendment is not required OR after the required amendment(s) has/have been made:

I have reviewed the application and hereby confirm that the project design and consent form(s) (if applicable) are in line with the guidelines stipulated by the [Human Research Ethics Committee \(HREC\)](#).

Signature of Reviewer
(Name: _____)

Date

Note 3: After obtaining the reviewer's approval signature, the student should send the full application in soft copy to Ms Wing Pau at the Office of Research (swing.pau@hku.hk).

Research Project (MEDD8008) & Professional Portfolio (MEDD8009)
Assessment criteria

Annex II

Criteria	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Satisfactory (C+, C, C-)	Pass (D+, D)	Unsatisfactory (F)
Understanding of the task and key concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an excellent understanding of the task with a well-balanced and integrated response • Depth of reflection and analysis goes beyond what is expected but remains relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows a good understanding of the task with a generally balanced and integrated response • All the points and arguments presented are relevant to the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows a basic understanding of the task and attempts to achieve balance and integration in the response • Most points and arguments presented are relevant to the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows a basic understanding of the task • Some points and arguments presented are relevant to the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misunderstanding of the task with an imbalanced response • Most points and arguments presented are not relevant to the task
Use of literature including research and professional literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructive use of a wide range of sources and evidence including research, professional literature and other sources to substantiate arguments and explanation • Literature and other sources are well selected; relevant and used appropriately and critically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructive use of an adequate range of sources and evidence including research, professional literature and other sources • Literature and other sources are properly selected; mostly relevant and used appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some relevant sources of information used • Literature and other sources are used appropriately most of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few relevant sources of information used • Literature and other sources are used appropriately sometimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of reference to research, professional literature or other sources • Literature and other sources are irrelevant and/or inappropriately used
Use of appropriate evidence for reflection and theory-practice integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent and relevant use of evidence (e.g. data collected) that demonstrates a high degree of reflective thinking and theory-practice integration • Sources of evidence well understood, reflected upon and critically evaluated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good use of relevant evidence (e.g. data collected) that demonstrates some reflective thinking and theory-practice integration • Sources of evidence understood and reflected upon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of relevant evidence (e.g. data collected) with some explanation • Some reflective thinking and theory-practice integration reflected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of relevant evidence (e.g. data collected) with limited explanation • Some attempts to demonstrate reflective thinking and theory-practice integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate use of evidence • Little to no use of evidence to attempt the question/task; no attempt to demonstrate reflective thinking or theory-practice integration
Depth of analysis and/or critique as an inquiry-oriented and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original perspective on the task • Perceptive and thorough critical analysis with strong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate analysis using relevant evidence and materials • Some critical analysis with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some evidence of critical awareness but arguments are sometimes superficial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superficial analysis and arguments which are sometimes supported by evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrelevant comments and/or personal assertions which are not supported by evidence or materials

reflective response	arguments and explanations supported by evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong evidence-based discussion 	appropriate arguments and explanations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good evidence-based discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some evidence of evidence-based discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some attempts to demonstrate critical awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of critical awareness and analysis
Structure and coherence of response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very well-structured and organised response with a logical line of reasoning • Consistent academic referencing and citing • Appropriate length 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good structure and presentation with coherence • Generally accurate spelling, word choice and grammar • Generally consistent referencing and citing • Appropriate length 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear structure and presentation, some problems in organisation and coherence which do not impede communication • Comprehensible spelling, word choice and grammar; inaccuracies do not impede meaning • Appropriate length 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally clear structure and presentation, some problems in organisation and coherence which sometimes impede communication • Some inaccuracies in grammar, word choice and spelling, which sometimes impede meaning • Appropriate length 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unstructured presentation and/or lack of coherence which impedes understanding • Major inaccuracies in grammar, word choice and spelling. • Little or no attempt at any consistent referencing • Problematic length

Master of Education (MEd)
 Research Project (MEDD8008) & Professional Portfolio (MEDD8009)

Feedback Sheet

Student name:

Topic:

Assessment criteria	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Pass	Unsatisfactory
Understanding of the task and key concepts					
Use of literature including research and professional literature					
Use of appropriate evidence for reflection and theory-practice integration					
Depth of analysis and/or critique as an inquiry-oriented and reflective response					
Structure and coherence of response					
General comments:					

Examiner:

Recommended grade: Date:
 {Please note that grades cannot be released to students before the Board of Examiners' approval}

NB: The ticks in the various boxes are designed to provide feedback students; they are not given equal weight in determining the recommended grade. Depending on the nature of the assessment task, examiners may also contextualise and/or amend these specific criteria. The recommended grade is tentative only, subject to moderation processes and approval by the MEd Board of Examiners.