

# WAGNER COLLEGE

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## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### **Thesis Guidelines**

#### **Wagner College Education Department**

Updated Manual: March 27th- 2020

This manual provides guidance for the preparation of the thesis completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degrees of Master of Science in Education and Master of Arts in Education at Wagner College, New York.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>UNDERSTANDING THE THESIS</b>	<b>2</b>	
MASTERY OF A BODY OF KNOWLEDGE		2
REFLECTIVE EXPLORATION OF A MEANINGFUL QUESTION		2
DEMONSTRABLE CONTRIBUTION		2
MEMBERSHIP IN THE PROFESSION		3
<b>HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FOR RESEARCH</b>	<b>4</b>	
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND		4
THE BELMONT REPORT: KEY PRINCIPLES FOR THE HERB APPLICATION		4
<i>Research versus Practice</i>		4
<i>Ethical Principles</i>		5
<i>Applications</i>		5
WAGNER COLLEGE AND NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DOE) APPROVAL PROCESSES		6
<i>Some General Pointers for HERB Submission</i>		6
<i>Guidance on Specific Application Questions</i>		6
<i>Necessary Documentation and Descriptions for Online Submission</i>		7
<i>IRB Processes for Research in NYC DOE Schools</i>		7
<i>Completion of Research</i>		8
<b>ORGANIZING YOUR THESIS</b>	<b>8</b>	
FRONT MATTER		8
THESIS CONTENT		8
<b>TIMELINES</b>	<b>10</b>	
ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH ED 624		10
ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH ED 699		10
A NOTE ON INCOMPLETES		10
<b>DEFENDING YOUR THESIS</b>	<b>11</b>	
READER FEEDBACK		11
DEPARTMENTAL APPROVAL		11
ORAL DEFENSE		11
<b>FORMATTING, PRINTING, AND BINDING</b>	<b>12</b>	
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>13</b>	
APPENDIX A: ADVICE FROM THE HERB CHAIR		14
APPENDIX B: SAMPLE CONSENT FORM		15
APPENDIX C: PRINCIPAL SUPPORT LETTER		17
APPENDIX D: ADVISOR SUPPORT LETTER		18
APPENDIX E: TITLE PAGE		19
APPENDIX F: SIGNATURE PAGE		20
APPENDIX G: READER FORM		21
APPENDIX H: INTENT TO DEFEND FORM		22
APPENDIX I: DIGITAL RELEASE PAGE		23
APPENDIX J: SUBMISSION FOR BINDING		24

## UNDERSTANDING THE THESIS

The thesis represents a demonstration of four accomplishments:

- Your mastery of a body of knowledge related to the degree you seek and the thesis topic you select;
- Your reflective exploration of a meaningful question resulting in significant personal and professional growth as an educator;
- Your demonstrable contribution to the field of knowledge and/or practice related to your area of study; and
- Your membership as a professional, not simply a student, within the field.

These are, admittedly, rather heady goals for a single “paper.” But they actually represent a set of goals that your entire educational career has prepared you to achieve. The thesis provides you an opportunity to bring all those years of preparation together to practice and apply what you know.

Let’s take each of the four accomplishments one by one to explore them.

### **Mastery of a Body of Knowledge**

*You have learned more than you might think; the thesis will help you solidify that knowledge base.* You will have completed an undergraduate degree and taken at least 30 credits of graduate-level coursework by the time you submit your thesis. You have also experienced professional situations and engaged in discussions about your field as part of your daily life. The process of completing a thesis allows you to bring together the vast array of information you have explored to solidify your knowledge base in coherent, professional ways.

As an early part of your process, you should take some time to assess your knowledge areas. Go back to course notes and syllabi, scan the tables of contents and abstracts of some key journals, ask faculty about some of the seminal works in your area they might recommend, schedule a visit with a reference librarian at Horrman—these are some ways you might go about filling in gaps and wrapping your head around the knowledge base in your field. Your research class, ED 624, will support you in this process.

### **Reflective Exploration of a Meaningful Question**

The goal of the thesis is not to write a big paper that gets bound; the thesis should provide you a significant developmental and learning opportunity as an educator. The Education Department’s orientation toward master’s theses assumes an action research approach (though more traditional approaches are not out of the question). Action research is grounded in practice, informed by current knowledge bases, and intends to address some existing problem or challenge through a systematic, documented, often recursive process.

**One of the most important qualities of your thesis will arise from your identification of a genuine question.** Unlike some laboratory experiments that test and re-test precise hypotheses to build an empirical knowledge base, action research situates itself inside complex human situations, seeking to make sense out of issues that participants need to address. Reflection on the research process and what participants learn and do is key in this approach, leading to work that ultimately should be meaningful and have an impact within your particular professional realm. **Again, ED 624 will support you in identifying a strong question and designing a project that will result in your own deep learning and development as an educator.**

### **Demonstrable Contribution**

By grounding your work in the existing body of knowledge and choosing a meaningful question within your field, your thesis becomes part of the academic tradition of building understandings through shared research. The conclusions you reach from your research—what you have learned, what you think educational professionals should consider—should connect back to the literature in your field. For example, based on your work, you might identify future areas for exploration, implications for practice and preparation, ideas for new frameworks to understand the work you engage.

As part of this academic tradition, your thesis will be bound and placed in the Education Department’s library and will be digitized and included in the Horrman Library’s permanent collection.

## Membership in the Profession

Your thesis project must demonstrate an understanding of and adherence to professional norms. These can be divided into three areas.

- *Responsibility.* Your thesis is yours. It is your responsibility to ensure you are meeting deadlines, using formats appropriately, following guidelines. Your advisor serves as a resource, not a second writer, editor, or project manager. Accordingly, you should not turn in careless drafts for your advisor to “correct”; if you need feedback on ideas, organization, or other formative aspects of your thesis, schedule an appointment for a discussion instead where, of course, you can share your early drafts without expecting written feedback. When you are seeking written feedback, your drafts should be your best effort and should reflect a document you believe to be near completion. **Use your time in ED 624 to establish a solid plan for your project (including regular feedback loops with your advisor) and manage your work and writing accordingly.**
- *Conventions.* **You will use the most current version of the APA** style manual for all citations and references and for questions of grammar, style, and punctuation. APA also provides recommended formatting guidelines for headings, tables, and spacing which, generally speaking, are those you should follow. To the extent your project merits deviance from any APA guidance; you should both have a strong rationale for that variation and consistently employ your alternative approach.
- *Integrity.* Your master’s work prepares you to join a surprisingly exclusive set of individuals. Roughly 8% of people in our country hold a master’s degree, and those who aspire to this honor and privilege are responsible for upholding the field’s standards. As ethical individuals, candidates in Wagner’s Education programs are known to be highly conscientious in this regard. However, two particular areas pertaining to the thesis merit specific attention. First, your human subjects protocol should represent the utmost in respect for study participants and care to follow all Office of Human Research Protections guidelines. Second, your use of resources throughout the thesis should meet both the letter and the spirit of all guidelines for protection against plagiarism. ED 624 will support you in these processes.

## HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FOR RESEARCH

*\*Please note Wagner's Education Department has their own Human Experimentation Review Board (HERB) for research being conducted by students completing their thesis. HERB is an Institutional Review Board (IRB)*

*\*All HERB applications must be submitted using taskstream.*

### Historical Background

Research involving humans is subject by federal law to review for ethical considerations to ensure the safety and well-being of participants. After World War II, the Nuremberg trials exposed the unethical medical experiments conducted during the Holocaust on unwilling participants that resulted in disfigurement, dismemberment, disability, and death. The [Nuremberg Code](#) established the first international guidance on ethical medical experimentation in 1947.

Sadly, the Code did not result in uniform ethical changes within the United States' research community. In the 1960's and 1970's, several high-profile cases of ethically questionable research raised concerns about researchers' ability to appropriately self-regulate their work. Among the more infamous include [Milgram's 1961 study](#) of compliance with authority, where study participants were instructed to increase dosages of electric shock to patients. Although the patient was a researcher and the shocks were not actual, the participants themselves experienced powerful negative effects because of their perceived responsibility to do something they found unethical. In 1970, [a Ph.D. candidate published research](#) that had been conducted using deception and potentially harming reputations of unknowing participants about casual male "tea room" sex in restrooms. The following year exposed the [Stanford prison experiment](#), where students took on roles of prisoner or prison guard, and guards' actions created psychological distress for "prisoners." Then, in 1972, a leak to the press exposed a 40-year ongoing government study, the [Tuskegee syphilis experiment](#), using uninformed poor African Americans to explore the development of untreated syphilis—even 25 years after penicillin had been established as a cure for the disease.

This revelation led to the establishment of the [National Research Act of 1974](#) and the subsequent [Belmont Report](#) in 1979 delineating guidelines for researchers seeking to use human participants in any field of research.

Knowing that historical ethical breaches in research prompted international and national regulations could give false confidence that research is now conducted with appropriate procedures. Unfortunately, every year we learn of new instances of unethical research. For example, recently the 50-year saga of cells taken without permission from Henrietta Lacks has [resulted in a requirement](#) that the descendants be part of approvals for any future uses of Lacks' cells. This agreement was reached only after a [bestselling book](#) had been published on the issue, exposing facts such as her descendants having been recruited for research studies secretly linked to Lacks' cells. In another study exposed in 2013, [premature infants were treated](#) with varying levels of oxygen during their hospital care. Although approved through an IRB review process, recent rulings have determined that parents were not as fully informed as they should have been about risks associated with the study. Researchers obviously have cause to maintain vigilance around questions of research ethics; your human subjects proposal that is part of the requirements of ED 624 will ensure the Wagner community acts ethically in our research pursuits.

### The Belmont Report: Key Principles for the HERB Application

The Belmont Report remains a crucial guiding document for anyone undertaking research. It establishes distinctions between research and practice and provides the framework for three ethical principles and their applications. The brief summary below captures key concepts but should not be taken as a substitute for being thoroughly versed in the report in its entirety.

#### *Research versus Practice*

Even though action research centers on questions of practice, the fact that your thesis will be published and shared classifies any human participation in the work as research. Unless clearly exempted by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP), research with human participation must be reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). **Wagner College's Human Experimentation Review Board (HERB) is the relevant IRB.**

OHRP Title 45 CFR part 46.101(b) specifies research that is exempt from IRB review:

Unless otherwise required by department or agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

- (1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
  - (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
  - (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

If any living human beings will be part of your thesis project and your project is not clearly exempt as described above, you must submit a proposal to the human subjects review committee—the HERB at Wagner College.

All thesis candidates will complete a HERB application to be reviewed by faculty within the Education Department. Projects identified as exempt by the Education Department will be forwarded to the HERB chair for final determination of exempt status. Projects determined to require expedited or full review will be reviewed by HERB.

### *Ethical Principles*

The Belmont Report establishes three key ethical principles all proposals must adhere to:

- *Respect for Persons*: Every human being has the right to self-determination thus must be assured the opportunity to make informed decisions about participation in research projects. Those who are unable to make fully informed decisions by virtue of age, disability, or other circumstances of disadvantage that may limit self-determination are entitled to more stringent oversight of researchers' projects.
- *Beneficence*: Research should do no harm and be likely to provide benefits to both the individuals participating and broader sectors of society.
- *Justice*: Those most likely to benefit from the research should bear the burden of any potential risks involved in the research. So, for example, research should not test a treatment with potentially dangerous side effects on a poor population if it is likely that only more affluent populations would benefit from new treatment possibilities.

### *Applications*

Following from the ethical principles, the Report establishes three applications of the principles to proposals for research involving human subjects:

- *Informed Consent*: Participants must have an opportunity to consent to being involved in the study, with researchers documenting their consent. Consent processes must include full disclosure of the study's intents, procedures, and data uses; consents must be comprehensible; and all activities must be voluntary with no penalties for non-participation. When children or cognitively impaired individuals are included as research participants, participation must be contingent upon informed consent from a legally authorized representative. When children or cognitively impaired participants are capable of assenting to the research, participation must also be contingent upon their assent.
- *Assessment of Risks and Benefits*: Researchers must detail all possible risks and all anticipated benefits. Review committees must apply their best judgment using systematic guidelines to ensure that benefits outweigh any risks for all participants.

- *Selection of Subjects:* Choosing subjects for a study because of their convenience—for example, prisoners or indigents, is not alone a valid rationale for subject selection. While convenience can figure into subject selection, participants in research should be able to benefit directly or indirectly from the research and/or have self-determination in the choice of pursuing participation.

### Wagner College and NYC Department of Education (DOE) Approval Processes

As a requirement for completion of ED 624, you will submit your human subjects protocol for review (or determination of exemption) through Wagner’s Human Experimental Review Board (HERB) \*IRB. \* The Education Department at Wagner has their own IRB. Please submit your IRB utilizing taskstream. Please consult with the professor teaching ED 624 and/or ED 699 if you have any questions regarding the process.

Once your \*IRB application has been finalized in consultation with the faculty of record for ED 624, the appropriate category of review will be determined by the faculty of record for ED 624 and/or the Department Chair. The three review categories and subsequent procedures are as follows:

- *Exempt:* The project clearly falls under OHRP 45 CFR 46.101(b) (as defined above), or the project does not include participation of human subjects or access to identifiable information about human subjects. Usually such projects involve analysis of de-identified data such as test scores or attendance information. Rarely are action research projects in this category.
- *Expedited:* The project poses no greater risk than normal activities. The activities of the project are all voluntary and do not present any risks beyond those minimal risks of discomfort encountered in daily life, such as participation in a survey or study group, keeping a log of activities, or documenting progress and challenges on a project. Expedited IRB-HERB review for research that includes participation only of human subjects fully capable of informed consent (e.g., adult teachers) will be reviewed by the IRB-HERB Chair or the Chair’s designee. Expedited IRB-HERB review for research that includes participation of children must meet guidelines described by OHRP Title 45 CFR Part 46.404. Such projects will be reviewed by a subset of the IRB-HERB.
- *Full:* Any project including activities that might have more than minimal risk involved must undergo full review.

### Some General Pointers for IRB- HERB Submission

- *Accuracy and Completeness:* Read all questions carefully and respond appropriately; inaccurate or incomplete responses could cause your project to go through higher levels of review and greatly delay your HERB approval.
- *Professionalism:* Take care with your application to use clear expression and present yourself professionally. Careless grammatical or editing errors reflect poorly on your potential integrity as a researcher, causing reviewers to question the care with which the study might be conducted. Further, such carelessness requires tedious, unnecessary use of HERB members’ valuable time.
- *Detail.* As a rule, you should provide more, not less detail so that external reviewers have a strong sense of the project. The language of your HERB application is very often directly transferrable into the text of your thesis, so the work you do here will provide you a strong start for your final thesis write-up.
- *Advice from the HERB Chair.* [Appendix A](#) provides a summary of common errors in education HERB forms. Address the issues here successfully before submission.
- *Revisions to the HERB application.* If your application is not approved, you will receive guidance on what must be addressed before you can move forward. You will need to resubmit your HERB, addressing specifically each of the conditions for approval.

### Guidance on Specific Application Questions

- *Primary Investigator:* You are the Primary Investigator.
- *Research with individuals considered having limited consent (e.g., minors under 18):* If your project is only conducted with teachers but is about children, the response to the question about children is “no.” If, however, you will be intervening directly with children to learn from that intervention, the response is “yes.”
- *Research that might place individuals at risk:* Your HERB application provides two options. If participants will not face any more than minimal risks associated with normal, everyday activities, such as discomfort when

disclosing our thoughts and practices, you should select “at no greater risk than that associated with normal, everyday activities.” You will, in your consent forms and applications for the DOE IRB, want to clarify how even these minimal risks will be mitigated, but for the purpose of classification of your HERB application unless your study exposes human subjects to risk beyond normal, everyday activities, you would not check the “at greater risk” box.

- *Access to subjects through a cooperating institution:* Generally speaking, the answer to this is “yes” for Education Department MSED theses since that work most often occurs in schools. For MA theses, the answer is generally “no” since those projects most often occur within the context of a GA position at Wagner College.

### *Necessary Documentation and Descriptions for Online Submission*

You should have the following ready before beginning the online application:

- *Purpose of Project:* This should provide a high-level overview of perhaps a paragraph about what you are proposing to study and learn.
- *Rationale and Specific Aims:* This section provides background on the project—why it is important, what we currently know, what needs to be learned. You are encouraged to include several key references to ground your project within the existing research. This statement would correspond to what is described below under “Chapter 1: Conceptual Framework” and “Chapter 2: Literature Review.”
- *Variables or Areas for Exploration:* Quantitative research proposals will follow standard definitions used in the social sciences for variables. In qualitative research, studies are not always framed in terms of variables, though clearly the constructs being explored guide qualitative research projects just as more traditional definitions of variables guide quantitative research. For this section, you will want to identify the constructs you will explore and how you anticipate learning about their interactions. For example, you might be studying how teachers’ sense of self-efficacy is influenced through a study group, or you might want to document the turning points in an organization’s implementation of a challenging strategic change process. While you will not need to delineate “dependent” or “independent” variables, you do need to demonstrate clarity in what you will be exploring. Accordingly, in this section you should share specific research questions that will guide your study.
- *Procedure:* This is a description of the methods you will use in the study, including the timelines and activities. This section corresponds to what is described below under “Chapter 3, Methods.”
- *Consent form:* You must upload your consent form, modeled after the document in [Appendix B](#), as part of your application.
- *Assent form or process:* If participants under 18 are part of your research project, you will also need an assent form or process which provides youth whose parents have consented to the study an opportunity to be informed of what the study is and to opt out if desired. Many examples of assent forms are available online; work with your advisor to gather samples and adapt appropriately.
- *Other uploads:* Any instrumentation you will use—questionnaires, observation protocol, project descriptions, or interviews, for example, must be ready to attach to the application.

### *IRB Processes for Research in NYC DOE Schools*

If you will be conducting any of your work in a New York City Public School, you will also need to complete an IRB process for the NYC DOE. Much of the process is similar, though you will need to provide some additional explanations and documentation for the DOE not required for the HERB. Begin the NYC DOE IRB process by following the instructions [here](#).

You will also need the following for the NYC DOE IRB approval:

- A letter of support from principals in whose school you might be working. As a courtesy, provide them a hard copy *and* an electronic draft of a letter to adapt and sign so they do not have to create something from scratch. See [Appendix C](#) for a sample.
- Printed material you will share with the principal and others about the project. Note that most of the content needed for such materials should already be in your consent form, but this document be framed as promotional or informational material.
- A letter of endorsement from your advisor. See [Appendix D](#) for an example.



- HERB approval, which will consist of a printout of the approval email you will receive from the chair of the HERB.
- Assurances of Human Subjects Training from [OHRP](#). You will need to print your certificates or take and save screen shots of them; they do not keep records of your completion.

### *Completion of Research*

You will need to complete an annual report on the status of your research project until it is completed. The HERB form is [here](#).

## **ORGANIZING YOUR THESIS**

There is no set rule about how to organize a thesis or about how many chapters a thesis should have; feel free, if your project warrants something different from what is suggested here, to work with your advisor to construct an alternative approach to the thesis.

Still, it's often helpful to have some idea of what you'll need to include and how you might organize it. The following is a common way to think about the chapters of a thesis.

### **Front Matter**

Introductory materials are paginated with lower-case roman numerals, with no page number on the title page. This (and several other practices) differs from APA formatting for manuscripts; your thesis is a publication, not a manuscript, which accounts for the differences.

#### **Title Page**

Please use the standard format used by the Education Department at Wagner College (see [Appendix E](#)).

#### **Signature Page**

This page will ultimately have original signatures on all copies (see [Appendix E](#)). You will also need to identify your advisor and readers during your ED 624 class (see [Appendix G](#)).

#### **Abstract**

Your abstract should, in one page, provide a brief summary of the entire thesis, touching on the substantive concepts from each chapter.

#### **Acknowledgements**

This is optional and the content is entirely up to you.

#### **Table of Contents**

You must include a Table of Contents with accurate page numbers and appropriately outlined subheadings. Front matter is included in the Table of Contents. Using Word's *styles* features will allow you to easily create a Table of Contents.

#### **List of Tables and/or List of Figures**

If you have Tables or Figures in your document, you must include a "List of Tables" and/or "List of Figures," as appropriate. This index is separate from the Table of Contents and uses different *styles* in Word, but using the *styles* appropriately again makes this task easy.

### **Thesis Content**

These pages should be numbered consecutively through the last page of the document.

#### **Chapter 1: Conceptual Framework**

Why is this important? This chapter usually focuses on broader theoretical literature, linking your research to big ideas--social change, learning, historical patterns, leadership, inequality.... and then moving on to a

problem statement. The chapter usually ends with your research questions.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

What do we already know about the specifics of your study? This chapter focuses on the existing studies related to the specific research questions you are asking. It often identifies uncontested perspectives (e.g., points nearly everyone agrees on), contested perspectives (points there is much disagreement about), and areas with gaps in the literature. It also can challenge the extant studies as being misguided, insufficiently researched, or lacking an appropriate methodological approach.

### **Chapter 3: Methods**

This chapter presents what you did, step by step. It includes processes for permissions, selection of sample, data analysis—everything. Your goal is for another person to be able to precisely replicate the study if desired. Note that for the thesis this section is in *past* tense, so materials you wrote for the HERB or IRB need to be shifted into past tense when you are writing up your final, more detailed descriptions of methods.

Very importantly, the Methods chapter must address questions of confidentiality. How were participants' identities protected? If participants allowed their identities to be revealed, how did you ensure they were comfortable with the final version of the thesis? What methods did you use to mask schools' or colleagues' identities? In action research, thinking through and documenting these processes is critically important, for our ability to learn from your work requires both trust and openness, which can be undermined if confidentiality is broken.

### **Chapter 4: Findings/Results**

This contains the actual analysis of the data you collected. If it's interview data, you will present analyses of the recurring themes and variances. If it's quantitative data, you will provide statistical presentations of the data. Whatever the study, this is where the data--reflections, historical docs, interviews, test scores--get presented in detail.

### **Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications**

This is the chapter where you get to have fun! Given the data findings, what should happen? What do we still not know? What limitations/weaknesses were there in the study that are worth further research so we can better learn something important?

### **References**

Every source that you cite must be appropriately included, using APA format, in your References section. Zotero, which you will learn about in ED 624, will support this task.

### **Appendices**

All your instrumentation and documentation (surveys, permission forms, HERB approvals, interview protocol, etc.) and any additional documentation (interview transcriptions, detailed analyses that do not support the flow of the main text but that might be of interest to some readers) go in your appendices. Each appendix should begin on a new page, and their order should follow the order in which they first are referenced in the text.

## TIMELINES

Departmental policy has established the following timelines for thesis processes:

### Activities associated with ED 624

ED 624 should be taken at least one semester prior to your intended graduation date. Note that ED 624 is not necessarily offered every term. Please plan your degree progression accordingly. We recommend taking ED 624 earlier if your schedule allows.

- Secure your thesis advisor and committee readers by the scheduled final for ED 624, or earlier if the faculty member for the class sets an earlier date.
- Secure your study site at least 3 weeks in advance of reading days.
- Submit your HERB application as outlined by your professor in ED 624.
- Submit your NYC DOE IRB application, if needed for your study, at least 2 weeks in advance of reading days. Note that you can amend your application with your HERB approval at a later date.
- Complete chapters 1 and 2 of your thesis and draft chapter 3 by the scheduled final or as outlined by your professor in ED 624.
- Participate in an oral presentation and discussion of your thesis with your advisors.

If any of these steps is not complete by the end of the semester, you will receive an Incomplete in the course, which must be complete before enrolling in ED 699.

### Activities associated with ED 699

ED 699 is taken in the last semester of your coursework with your advisor. During this term, you will carry out your study, complete your data analysis and thesis write-up, and defend your thesis.

- Block your calendar for the afternoon of the graduate thesis symposium and submit the Intent to Defend form by the third week of the semester ([Appendix H](#)). If there is no symposium scheduled in the term when you take ED 699, schedule a thesis defense date with your committee and inform Ms. Hicks so she can announce it to other faculty.
- Plan the timeline with your advisor to ensure ample opportunities for feedback on your progress and paper so that your readers can receive the completed thesis at least 2 weeks in advance of reading days.
- Complete the Submission and Permission forms, all associated fees, and your edited copies on approved paper/your copy for duplication by the scheduled final. Note that until your advisor has signed off on the submission form, you cannot receive a grade in ED 699. Please plan accordingly to ensure your advisor will be available.

If any of these steps is not complete by the end of the semester, you will receive an Incomplete in the course.

### A Note on Incompletes

While we encourage you to manage your work so that you do not receive incompletes, we also recognize that the undertaking of a major research project and creation of a quality thesis can sometimes require more time than the semester calendar allows. The Incomplete grade is an appropriate course grade in such circumstances. You will have until the end of the following regular semester (fall or spring) to complete your incomplete without penalty or fees. If you do not complete your work for the course within that time, your grade automatically converts to an F. Only in exceptional circumstances will the Registrar entertain extensions beyond the one semester, so in the event you find yourself needing an incomplete, ensure you have a solid plan to finish your thesis.

## **DEFENDING YOUR THESIS**

Your thesis approval includes three processes once your advisor has indicated your document is ready for review.

### **Reader Feedback**

You will provide your two committee readers with copies of your thesis in whatever format they prefer, hard copy or electronic. Please note that it is your professional responsibility to ensure you have given them the version that most facilitates their ability to provide feedback.

Your readers will provide you and your advisor with feedback on the thesis. It is your responsibility to appropriately address all feedback and work with your chair to approve the final revisions.

If your readers do not receive your thesis at least 3 weeks in advance of reading days, you may still complete your oral defense, but your thesis may not be able to be approved by the Department in time for you to receive a grade for the semester. In that case, you will receive an Incomplete and undergo Departmental Approval the following regular term.

### **Departmental Approval**

The Department holds weekly meetings, where advisors bring their Master's candidates' thesis to the department for recommendation for approval. Once candidates have submitted their theses to their committees and successfully completed the oral defense, the Department discusses the thesis and votes on approval. In the event you have not completed your oral defense before the Department discusses your thesis, you may receive conditional approval pending a successful oral defense.

Your advisor will notify you of the outcome of the decision. Without Departmental approval, you cannot receive a grade in ED 699.

### **Oral Defense**

The Department hosts a Graduate Thesis Symposium at the end of regular semesters for students completing the thesis. During the Symposium, candidates present their research for 5-10 minutes in a panel format and audience members ask questions about the work.

The Thesis Symposium is a public event, and you are encouraged to invite family, friends, colleagues, and study participants.

## FORMATTING, PRINTING, AND BINDING

Your document should be in 12-point standard serif font; Times New Roman is generally the most commonly used and is always acceptable. Your document should have a 1.5” margin on the left side (for binding) and 1” on all other sides. Headers and footers do not count in the margin if you use the standard default formatting of the word processor’s spacing. The document should be printed on one side only. All text, including block quotes, is double-spaced, indented .5” at the beginning of paragraphs, with no additional space after paragraphs. Exceptions can be made for tables, which for readability can be single-spaced; however, spacing should be consistent throughout for all similar kinds of tables.

Unfortunately, Microsoft Word’s *styles* do not have a default APA style format. The Department will be creating a style template that can be downloaded and applied to your papers; if you have used appropriate differentiations within *styles*, this template will be able to transform your document into an acceptable final format. You may also construct your own style, but please refrain from using colored fonts or fonts larger than 12 point.

At least two copies of your thesis will be bound, one for you and one for the Department, which the library will use for digitization. You must submit a signed Digital Release page (see [Appendix I](#)) in order for the thesis to be bound. In addition, you must send a .pdf version of your final thesis, with all materials in one file, to [education@wagner.edu](mailto:education@wagner.edu).

You must provide two paper copies of your thesis for binding, printed on high-quality paper (at least 20 lb. white bond, 25% rag or cotton content). If you wish to have the Department print the two copies of your thesis on the requisite paper, you must provide the final, error-free, appropriately formatted document in hard copy and add an additional \$.10 per page to the binding fee, multiplied by the number of copies you will have bound (two required, plus any additional you will purchase). Please include front matter in your calculations of printing costs. [Appendix J](#) provides the form for your binding submission.

Fees for binding are \$32, plus \$16 for any additional bound copies you desire. Checks should be made out to Wagner College. \*Please note fees may change- Please reach out to Ms. Hicks to confirm.

## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A: Advice from the HERB Chair

The HERB chair has provided the Education Department a helpful summary of common issues with Education HERBs. Be sure you have addressed these before submitting your HERB.

- When it comes to the education proposals where minors are subjects, the committee seems to focus most on clear, quality communication with parents (e.g. cover letters, consent forms). It is important that they can truly provide informed consent. Common problems in the past include
- Excessive use of jargon in communication with parents
- Lack of description of tasks the researcher plans for the child to participate in (as well as frequency & duration)
  - Lack of description of whether these tasks are in addition to or in place of activities the child would be normally doing
  - Lack of description of potential benefits/risks
  - Poor grammar & spelling, which reduces clarity of statements
  - When student subjects have been identified as having a learning disability or other problem of interest to the researcher, it is not always clear whether the parents have been informed at the time of the study and/or how involvement in the study may/may not identify the student as having a problem.
- The second group of problems includes incomplete proposals
  - Missing signatures
  - Missing materials. Everything shown to subjects (and parents if applicable) must be included in the application.
- Other issues
  - Incorrect information (for example, indicating subjects are not minors when, in fact, they are.)
  - Using sample consent forms without appropriately editing and adapting them. What you submit should be the final version you would share with participants or others, not a draft with consent form ideas.
  - Removing sections of the application/leaving parts of the application blank. "Not applicable" is never an appropriate answer to any of the questions on the form.
- Revision issues:
  - Not addressing all questions
  - Submitting a full proposal instead of only the changed sections
  - Not highlighting what was changed so reviewers can assess the revisions—use track changes, boldface, highlighting or some other approach to identify changes
  - Submission of revision without including the HERB proposal number

Appendix B: Sample Consent Form

# WAGNER COLLEGE

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Informed Consent

#### Form for Participation in Research: Adults

As part of my master’s degree requirements at Wagner College, I am conducting research on [XYZ] in order to learn [XYZ]. You are invited to participate in this research project, and this document will provide you with information that will help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Your participation is solicited, yet strictly voluntary.

For this study, I will be using an “action research” model, where participants are co-learners with me around an issue of practice. During the course of the project, I will [XYZ—be specific about what you will do]. If you were to participate, I would ask you to [XZY—be specific and include how much time it would involve]. All information you provide during the project will remain confidential and will not be associated with your name. My final thesis will also be cleared of any possible identifying information in order to ensure your confidentiality.

The project does not carry any foreseeable risks [optional: though it is possible that some participants might feel uncomfortable discussing some of the topics related to XYZ]. If for any reason you felt uncomfortable, you could leave study at any time with no penalty, and any information you may have provided would be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning this study please feel free to contact me at NAME@wagner.edu (phone) or Dr. Advisor at NAME@wagner.edu (phone). Thank you for considering being part of a study related to my research for a master’s degree in Education at Wagner College.

---

*Please sign below to indicate your understanding of the project and your consent to participate. I have provided two copies so that you may keep a duplicate for your records.*

---

Signature of Participant

Date

---

NAME, Investigator

[If your more than be sure to pages total number packet (e.g., “Page 1 of 4: \_\_\_\_”) and have participants initial each page in the blank next to the pagination.]

# WAGNER COLLEGE

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

consent form is one page long, number the indicating the in the consent



## Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research: Parents

Dear Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s):

As part of my master's degree requirements at Wagner College, I am conducting research in your child's school on [XYZ] in order to learn [XYZ]. My hope is that by conducting this study, we will be able to improve our ability to [statement about the benefits of the study]

I am requesting your permission for your child to participate in the research. This document will provide you with information that will help you decide whether or not you wish to provide your permission. If you decide not to give permission, or if you or your child decides at any point to discontinue participation in the study, there will be no penalties for you or your child. [Note if there are any incentives for the child to participate.]

During the course of the project, I will [XYZ—be specific about what you will do]. If you were to grant permission for your child to participate, I would ask your child to [XZY—be specific and include how much time it would involve]. The study will not interfere with your child's access to his or her regular educational program.

All information gathered during the project will remain confidential and will not be associated with your child's name. My analyses will also be cleared of any possible identifying information in order to ensure your child's confidentiality.

The project does not carry any foreseeable risks for your child. However, if for any reason you or your child felt uncomfortable, he or she could be removed from the study at any time with no penalty, and any information gathered from your child during the study would be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning this study please feel free to contact me at NAME@wagner.edu (phone) or Dr. Advisor at NAME@wagner.edu (phone). Thank you for considering being part of a study related to my research for a master's degree in Education at Wagner College.

---

*Please sign below to indicate your understanding of the project and your consent to for your child to participate. I have provided two copies so that you may keep a duplicate for your records.*

---

Signature of Parent

Date

Child's Name

[If your consent form is more than one page long, be sure to number the pages indicating the total number in the consent packet (e.g., "Page 1 of 4: \_\_\_") and have participants initial each page in the blank next to the pagination.]

## Appendix C: Principal Support Letter

### Sample Letter Seeking Principal Approval

Dear Principal [Name],

I am a student with the Wagner College Education Department interested in working with your school and students to conduct a study as part of my Master's degree in [XYZ]. I currently am pursuing approval for this research through both Wagner's and the NYC DOE's human subjects review panels. Pursuant to ethical guidelines for research and DOE policies, I am seeking your permission to approach [teachers, students, parents] in your school to explain the study and invite their participation.

The goal of the study is to better understand XYZ. [Brief description of study and methods, including the time the study is expected to take] The study [would/would not] involve students, would be completely voluntary, and would seek active consent from all participants.

All participants and the school itself would be ensured confidentiality in the study. No names or identifiable information will ever be part of the publication of the findings.

[Special considerations, if any]

I realize that in opening your school to this study, you would be granting me an important professional privilege for which I would be grateful. I assure you that I will work to ensure the study does not interrupt the regular work of the school and provides, though my sharing of findings, some measure of benefit to you. [Optional: Additionally, if there is any way unrelated to the study that I might help the school, for example (list a skill you could share), I would be happy to do so.]

I would be happy to speak with you more about the study at any time. Within ten days, I will follow up with you to confirm your approval of my request to use your school as a site for the study.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me ([name@wagner.edu](mailto:name@wagner.edu), phone) or my advisor, Dr. Name ([email@wagner.edu](mailto:email@wagner.edu), phone).

Sincerely,

Appendix D: Advisor Support Letter

# WAGNER COLLEGE

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## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Date

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter serves as my endorsement for the proposed master's research project for [student name] in the New York City Department of Education school system. [Student name] has been working closely with me to develop the project. [S/he] has demonstrated an understanding of the legal, ethical, and procedural requirements for a project of this measure. The project is well-conceived, well-designed, and likely to promote important learning for [him/her] as an educator pursuing deeper knowledge about how to put theory into practice. Additionally, according to research principles embraced by our College, it is designed in a way that is likely to support positive growth among project participants, potentially benefitting the school site[s] chosen.

I will ensure the project meets the highest standards, particularly with regard to ethical and operational considerations related to the school[s] in which the project takes place.

If there are any questions or concerns, please contact me at [email@wagner.edu](mailto:email@wagner.edu) or [phone].

Thank you for your support of this work and our continued efforts to educate strong teachers and leaders for the NYC DOE schools.

Sincerely,

[name]

[title]

**Appendix E: Title Page**

YOUR TITLE IN ALL CAPS, DOUBLE SPACED,  
CENTERED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PAGE

By  
Your Name

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
[Master of Science in Education/Master of Arts in Education]

Education Department  
Wagner College

Month, Year

## Appendix F: Signature Page

**Wagner College**  
Division of Graduate Studies  
Master's Thesis

Author:                      Your Name  
Title of thesis:            Your Thesis Title  
Degree:                      Your Degree (MSED or MA) and Formal Degree Name (e.g., Teaching Literacy, Early  
   Childhood Education/Special Education)  
Date of Graduation:      Your Graduation Date (at least month/year)

Thesis Review Committee:

Thesis Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_  
   Dr. Name    Date

Reader:                      \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_  
   Dr. Name    Date

Reader:                      \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_  
   (Dr.) Name    Date



## Appendix H: Intent to Defend Form

### Wagner College Intent to Defend Form

Author:                   Your Name

Title of thesis:        Your Thesis Title

Degree:                Your Degree (MSED or MA) and Formal Degree Name (e.g., Teaching Literacy, Early  
                                  Childhood Education/Special Education)

Date of Graduation:   Your Graduation Date (at least month/year)

Thesis Advisor: Name of Advisor

Reader:                Name of First Reader

Reader:                Name of Second Reader

I have comprehended the requirements for defending my Master's Thesis and am confident in my intention to defend my thesis.

I have submitted my [Project Status Report](#) closing out my study.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix I: Digital Release Page**

**Wagner College**  
Graduate Thesis Copyright Release Form

Document Identification

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Department: Department of Education

Author Agreement

I hereby grant to the Board of Trustees of Wagner College and its agents the non-exclusive license to copy, publicly display, archive, lend, and make accessible, my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known.

I understand that Wagner College will make my work available to all patrons of its library, including interlibrary sharing.

I agree to the unrestricted display of the bibliographic information and the abstract of the above title.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of the work.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix J: Submission for Binding

### Wagner College Submission for Binding Form

\* Students will have the option to bind their thesis if they select to do so (not mandatory). Please note copies of thesis will be kept on file digitally.

#### Document Identification

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of desired copies: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Document Approval

I acknowledge that all readers' comments have been appropriately addressed and the document is ready to be printed in a final manner.

Advisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Name Date

#### Submission Fees

Binding Fee ..... \$ 32.00  
Printing Fee @ \$0.10 x \_\_\_\_\_ (# of pages) ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Additional Copies @ \$16.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ (# of copies)..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Cost..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Checks can be made payable to Wagner College)