

Guidelines for the Master of Arts Field Project in Music Education

The Field Project for the Master of Arts degree in Music Education is a scholarly investigation in the field, as the name implies. Recent projects have included focus group interviews with new music teachers in the Rochester area, a survey of beliefs that undergraduates hold about urban music teaching, and a case study of music and adolescent identity formation. This document describes the various phases of MA Field Project development.

Developing a topic

Each of the courses in which the MA student enrolls includes valuable information and ideas that influence the direction of the Field Project. A synthesis of information from coursework along with relevant issues from the student's own teaching practice typically lead to the development of a topic.

Prerequisites

Normally, an MA student should have passed MUE 402 *Measurement and Evaluation* and MUE 403 *Introduction to Research* prior to writing the Field Project Proposal. If the student's program of study does not include these two courses prior to the third semester, the student should consult with Dr. Conkling.

Advising

One Music Education faculty member will serve as the principal advisor during the refinement of the topic, development of proposal, and completion of the field project. Advisor assignments can be made in either of two ways:

- After the student has informed Dr. Conkling that s/he has identified a topic of interest and would like to begin writing a proposal, Dr. Conkling will bring that information to the Music Education department at a regularly scheduled meeting time. This will result in the assignment of an advisor and a second reader to the project.
- A MA student can initiate a conversation directly with a faculty member about the nature of his/her project and ask that faculty member to serve as advisor for the development of the proposal and the completion of the project. This advisor will bring notice of the project to the Music Education department at a regularly scheduled meeting time, and a second reader will be assigned.

It may also be helpful for the student to find a peer mentor, an MA student who has completed the Field Project, who is willing to communicate and give advice throughout the proposal development process. All MA students should attend the Field Project Presentations of their peers to get ideas about the scope of the project and the process of project completion.

Project Types

Model Field Projects are available at the Sibley Music Library Reserve Desk under Dr. Conkling's name (course number: MUE 473), and they may be accessed electronically. The Field Project is intended to be small in scope, so it should be proposed as one of the following project types. (Please note that only method is described below; data might be qualitative, quantitative or both.)

Small-scale survey or interview: gathering and reporting on the status of local music education practices, policies, or programs using a survey instrument, focus group interviews, or series of interviews. For example, the student may wish to conduct a survey of scheduling practices for music programs in a specific geographic region, or the student may wish to interview beginning music teachers about mentoring programs. The survey instrument or interview guide will be included in the final documentation.

Curriculum analysis: a definition of the curriculum to be studied, followed by a thorough analysis of that curriculum and suggestions for improvement or adaptation. For example, the student may wish to study an "informal" music curriculum by becoming a participant observer in a garage band, and then reporting on how informal music teaching and learning practices could be adapted for schools. Another example is the student who wishes to conduct a content analysis of a music textbook series and make suggestions for revising the order of presentation and/or supplementing the content. This type of project would include a theoretical argument about the purposes for improvement or adaptation, and multiple sources of evidence from the curriculum under study.

Case study: compiling and interpreting data on a unique or representative case of music teaching or music learning. For example, a student may wish to study the ways in which an expert high school choral director chooses repertoire by interviewing the teacher, observing choral rehearsals, and reviewing past performances. Transcripts of interviews fieldnotes, and other data would be included in this type of project.

Writing the proposal

MA students must register for 1 credit of MUE 473 Field Project during the semester (including summer) in which the Field Project Proposal is developed and approved.

The writing process should begin with a meeting that includes the field project advisor, reader, and student. At this meeting, the process for developing the proposal and Field Project will be clarified, and a timeline to completion will be established. For students who are away from Rochester during the proposal process, this meeting may take place via phone or videoconference, as long as all three parties are included.

It is the student's responsibility to stay in touch with the field project advisor, and especially to make the advisor aware if the timeline to completion must be renegotiated.

The advising process is facilitated if the student and advisor are working from a written document. Therefore, all subsequent meetings between the student and the advisor require that a written document be submitted to the advisor prior to the meeting.

Field Project Proposals should contain the following sections: Introduction or Background, Review of Related Literature, Purpose, Method and Procedures, Description of Final Documentation, Bibliography.

Approval of the completed Field Project Proposal by the faculty advisor and reader must be secured before the student can begin conducting the project.

Protection of Human Subjects

Where human subjects are involved in a field project, approval of the study must also be secured from the University of Rochester Research Subjects Review Board (RSRB) prior to conducting the project. All investigators (including students) who have contact with human subjects must complete training in research ethics. The University's Office of Human Subject Protections (OHSP) administers the program providing research ethics certification. For students at the Eastman School of Music, the Ethical Principles in Research Program (EPRP) certifies investigators conducting minimal or less-than-minimal risk research. EPRP training normally takes place during the MUE 403 Introduction to Research course.

The RSRB electronic submission process requires a protocol submission using the template that follows. It will benefit the MA student to write the proposal and the protocol submission simultaneously, with assistance from the advisor.

I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND BACKGROUND

Purpose of the study. State the specific scientific objectives (aims) of the research.
Background. This paragraph should support the purpose of the study. [Note: References may be cited in the Background.]

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION

Number of subjects. State the total number of subjects expected to participate. In the case of multicenter protocols (performance sites in addition to those for which the RSRB has jurisdiction), also include the overall total.

Gender of Subjects. Describe the intended gender distribution of the subjects. If there are any gender based enrollment restrictions, explain the nature of the restriction(s) and provide justification. Equitable inclusion of both men and women in research is important to ensure that both receive an equal share of the benefits of research and that neither bears a disproportionate burden. Therefore, subjects of both genders should be included in the study unless there are appropriate medical and/or scientific reasons. [Note: Women of childbearing potential may not be routinely excluded from participating in research.]

Age of Subjects. State the age range of the subjects. Provide the rationale for selecting this age range. Participation of adult subjects in research should not be age-restricted unless there is scientific and/or medical justification. [Note: The age of majority in New York is 18 and special considerations apply to research with children.]

Racial and Ethnic Origin. Describe the intended racial and ethnic distribution of the subjects. If there are any enrollment restrictions based upon race or ethnic origin, explain the nature of the restrictions and provide justification. [Note: Within the limitations imposed by the population of the study site(s), research should include sufficient enrollment of persons of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds to ensure that the benefits and burdens of research participation are distributed in an equitable manner.]

Inclusion Criteria. List the inclusion criteria. These should be based on scientific rationale and should define who will be eligible for the study.

Exclusion Criteria. List the exclusion criteria. These should be scientifically valid and help further define the subject population.

Vulnerable Subjects. If vulnerable subjects (e.g., those with limited autonomy or those in subordinate positions) are included, justification must be provided. Children, pregnant women, the elderly, students, employees, fetuses, prisoners and persons with decisional incapacity are generally considered vulnerable subjects in need of greater protection.

III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Methods and Procedures. Summarize the research design and all procedures (sequentially) to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Procedures/tests/interventions that are considered experimental and/or procedures performed exclusively for research purposes must be identified and differentiated from that which would occur regardless of the research (i.e., standard of care). Point out any procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous and the precautions to be exercised. Identify routine procedures performed solely for research purposes (e.g., additional tests).

Data Analysis and Data Monitoring Summarize the statistical/analytical methods to be used. For trials that involve interventions that entail potential risk to subjects, a data monitoring committee may be required to protect the safety and/or welfare of subjects. Provide a detailed description of its operation (i.e., membership, function, frequency of review, stopping rules).

Data Storage and Confidentiality. Describe where the research data will be stored during the study and how it will be secured. The investigator must take necessary steps to maintain confidentiality of data. This includes coding data and choosing an appropriate and secure data storage mechanism which will prevent unauthorized access to data. State who will have access to the data. If data with subject identifiers will be released, specify the person(s) or agency to whom the information will be released and the purpose of the release (e.g., routine verification of case report forms).

IV. RISK/BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Risk Category. State the risk that the research presents as one of the following: Minimal, Greater than Minimal. Minimal Risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. A risk is a potential harm associated with the research that a reasonable person would likely consider injurious.

Potential Risk. Describe the potential risks associated with the study. Risks are not only physical, but psychological, sociological, economic and legal as well. This includes any specific toxicity data noted in the investigator's brochure. If possible, estimate the probability that a given harm may occur and state its potential reversibility.

Protection Against Risks. Describe how the study design will prevent and/or minimize any potential risks or discomfort. Potential risks and discomforts must be minimized to the greatest extent possible by using procedures such as appropriate training of personnel, monitoring, withdrawal of the subject upon evidence of difficulty or adverse event; and referral for treatment, counseling or other necessary follow-up. State who will pay for treatment, counseling or follow-up.

Potential Benefits to the Subjects. Describe potential benefit(s), if any, for subjects participating in the research. If there are no anticipated benefits, this should be stated. Note: Payment to subjects is not considered to be a benefit of research (see Payment).

Alternatives to Participation. This section should include a description of alternative courses of action which are available should the subject elect not to participate in the study. If the subjects are students who will receive academic credit for participation, describe the alternatives available to earn equivalent academic credit. Academic alternatives must be approximately equal in time and effort required.

V. SUBJECT IDENTIFICATION, RECRUITMENT AND CONSENT/ASSENT

If recruitment and consent are not applicable such as in certain emergency medicine research or studies of existing data/specimens, you may address only the first item below (study population identification) and explain why recruitment and consent are not applicable.

Method Of Subject Identification And Recruitment. Describe the method(s) that will be employed in the identification and recruitment of prospective subjects. Note: The identification and recruitment of subjects must protect privacy and be free of undue influence. Recruitment of an investigator's own students, employees and patients is considered as potentially coercive and the steps taken to minimize undue influence should be included.

Process of Consent. Describe who will obtain consent and how the process of informed consent will be structured to be conducive to rational and thoughtful decision making by the subject/subject's legally authorized representative without any element of coercion or undue influence. Only individuals who are listed in this section are authorized to obtain consent. If used, 'Auditor/Witness' and translator roles would be described in this section.

Subject Capacity. If all subjects will not have the capacity to give informed consent, describe how capacity will be assessed. Describe the anticipated degree of impairment relative to their ability to consent to participate in research. Research with persons who have diminished capacity is allowed only for minimal risk or direct benefit studies.

Subject/Representative Comprehension. All investigators have a legal and ethical obligation to ensure that prospective subjects/subjects' representatives have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of informed consent to enable them to make an informed and enlightened decision whether or not to participate or allow participation in research. In this section, describe how it will be determined that the subject/subject's authorized representative understood the information presented. This section should clearly document that the investigator has an adequate plan in place to assure an acceptable level of comprehension before consent is obtained. If children and/or decisionally impaired adults will be subjects, this section should also include a specific plan to assess comprehension during assent (the subject's agreement).

Debriefing Procedures. In psychological studies where any information will be purposely withheld from the subject, state the information to be withheld, justify this non-disclosure and describe the post-study debriefing of the subject.

Consent Forms. Consult the RSRB consent form guidelines for specific sections required for consent documents. The first page of the consent form must be printed on letterhead of the department or institution.

Documentation of Consent. The PI is responsible for ensuring that valid consent is obtained and documented for all subjects. If not already addressed in item two above (Process of Consent), specifically describe how consent will be documented and how/where documentation will be stored.

Costs to the Subject. Describe and justify any costs that the subject will incur as a result of participating in the study. This section should clarify who will pay for procedures associated with the study (e.g., agency grant versus departmental funds). Normally, subjects should not have to pay for research procedures without direct benefit. No charge may be made to subjects if the costs are covered by a grant, contract, or other payment method.

Payment for Participation. Describe any reimbursements or payments such as cash payments, coupons and extra class credit that the subjects will receive for participation. List the prerequisite condition(s) that must be fulfilled by subjects to receive these payments. The amount must be justified and not constitute undue inducement of the subject to participate in the research or to continue beyond a point that they would have otherwise withdrawn. Note: The RSRB requires a prorated system for financial payments. This means that payments are accrued as the study progresses and that subjects do not have to complete the entire study to be eligible to receive a payment. This is to protect the subject's right to withdraw without penalty.

VI. REFERENCES

VII. APPENDICES

Other assistance for investigators is available on the RSRB website, including information letter and permission form templates: <http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/rsrb>

Writing the final report

Field Project Proposals will typically contain the following sections: Title Page, Table of Contents, Introduction or Background, Review of Related Literature, Purpose, Method and Procedures, Results, Interpretations, Implications, Suggestions for Further Research and Practice in Music Education, Bibliography, Appendices. Other documentation, such as a survey instrument or transcriptions of interviews may also be necessary.

Normally, the MA student completes an initial draft of the field project report and sends it to the advisor. The advisor, in turn, will make edits and suggestions for revision.

Some MUE faculty advisors prefer to edit electronically. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with Track Changes and Comments in MS Word so that the editorial process can proceed smoothly.

The advisor and the second reader together determine when the Field Project is ready for presentation.

Field Project Presentation

MA students must register for 1 credit of MUE 473 Field Project during the semester (including summer) in which the Field Project is presented.

After the final document is completed and approved, the MA student will present the project in a public forum, such as an undergraduate methods course, a school district music department meeting, or a gathering of music education graduate students. The student will report on and/or demonstrate the content of the field project, allowing time for questions.

The advisor and the Music Education Department Secretary can assist the student with making arrangements for the public presentation.

The field project advisor and reader should be present for the public presentation.

Completion

Three bound copies and 1 electronic copy (pdf) of the final Field Project document should be submitted to the Music Education Department Secretary. One bound copy goes to the advisor, one bound copy goes to the reader, the third bound copy stays in a department file, and the electronic copy goes to the Sibley Reserve desk.

The Field Project advisor will notify the registrar's office (copy to the students' departmental file) that the Field Project has been completed.

Graduation

If the MA student expects to graduate in May, the project presentation and submission of final documents should occur prior to the final week of the spring semester. Projects presentations will not be scheduled during jury week.

If the MA student expects to graduate in October, the project presentation and submission of final documents should occur prior to the final week of the summer term. Projects presentations will not be scheduled during late August and September.

If the MA student expects to graduate in March, the project presentation and submission of final documents should occur prior to the final week of the fall semester. Projects presentations will not be scheduled during fall break or Thanksgiving break.