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. It should be more comprehensive than a course paper, but less of an undertaking than a full MA thesis. Final versions of projects should fall *between 6,000 and 12,000 words* or *between 20 and 40 pages* (typed, double-spaced), excluding references and appendices.

This document describes the various phases of MA Field Project development.

Prerequisites

MA students should have passed MTL 402 *Measurement and Evaluation* and MTL 403 *Introduction to Research* prior to writing the Field Project Proposal.

Writing the proposal and the final report

Field Project Reports should follow appropriate style conventions as outlined in the most current edition of the *APA academic style guide* and should contain the following sections:

1. **Title Page**

2. **Abstract**: 300 words maximum

3. **Table of Contents**

4. **Introduction or Background**: introduce your topic, tell us the impetus behind the project (this should support the purpose of your study)

5. **Review of Related Literature**: a summary of relevant/related empirical studies from peer reviewed journals in music education.

   - outline *briefly* the purpose, methodology, and conclusions from each study
   - divide the studies into sub-categories if/where appropriate
   - provide some brief overall conclusions about the findings of these studies
   - outline what your own study can potentially add to this area of research (i.e., explain the void your study fills)

6. **Purpose**: tell us the specific purpose/aims of your study

7. **Method and Procedures**:

    • outline each of the steps you will take to complete your study with reference to current research methodology texts and/or other studies to support your choices
    • any project that is undertaking official 'research' as defined by the Research Subjects Review Board (RSRB) AND involving human subjects needs RSRB review and approval (see more information about this below); if your project falls into this category, RSRB approval steps should be included in this section

(*Note: up to this point, the document is considered the proposal.)

8. **Results**: outline your findings

9. **Interpretations:** discuss your findings in relation to the past research you outlined in your review of literature section. What has your study added that is new to this area of research?

10. **Implications for Music Teaching and Learning**: outline several ways your findings can help to enrich/inform current teaching and learning practice

11. **Reference list**: list all referenced sources in proper APA style

12. **Appendices and other documentation** (if applicable): depending on your topic, it may be appropriate to include copies of survey instruments, transcriptions of interviews, curriculum or standards documents, etc.

(* Please note: if your study is undertaking official 'research' as defined by RSRB AND itinvolves human subjects, you will require RSRB review and approval PRIOR to beginning your research and must include appropriate RSRB documentation in your proposal and final project [*See separate document entitled 'RSRB regulations' and U of R RSRB website for more information]).

Developing a topic/Project Types

Each of the courses in which you enroll as an MA student includes valuable information and ideas that can influence the direction of your Field Project. A synthesis of information from coursework along with relevant issues from your own teaching practice typically leads to the development of a topic.

Project Types

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, curriculum analyses/investigations of various sorts, and a case study of music and adolescent identity formation.

Many of these worthy projects did not require RSRB approval. Some examples of kinds of projects that typically fall into this category are:

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

Curriculum analysis: a definition/description of the curriculum to be studied, followed by a thorough analysis of that curriculum and suggestions for quality improvement or adaptation. For example, you 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 could be conducting a content analysis of a music textbook series and making suggestions for quality improvements in terms of revising the order of presentation and/or supplementing the content. This type of project would include a theoretical argument about the purposes for quality improvement or adaptation, and multiple sources of evidence from the curriculum under study. You could also compare/contrast two similar curricula and make theoretical arguments about what works in each case, how they could each be improved/adapted/combined, etc.

Case study: compiling and interpreting data on a unique or representative case of music teaching or music learning. For example, you 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.

(*Note: A selection of model Field Projects are posted as PDFs on Blackboard under "Continuous: MA Field Project.")

Projects involving **official RSRB research AND human subjects** must provide protections for participants and therefore require RSRB approval.

- Research, as defined by RSRB in their investigator guidance document is: "a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge."

  - ➢ A "systematic investigation" generally means that there is a study plan/protocol that is followed.

  - ➢ Contributing to "generalizable knowledge" means that there is or will be a report, publication, poster, communication, etc. (*apart* from your final field project presentation requirement, which is considered a final course requirement for MTL 473 and thus is not contributing to "generalizable knowledge") that provides the results and conclusions of the research to other people/clinicians/researchers.

  - ➢ The definition of a human subject is a living individual about whom an investigator (whether a professional or student) conducting research obtains: Data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or identifiable private information.

- For instance, if you wish to investigate a "new" kind of teaching and learning technique by "testing it" in terms of its efficacy on a number of students, this is the kind of thing that would require RSRB approval.

- If you think you may want to present your project in a public setting such as a conference, or publish it in some form in the future (which would be considered contributing to generalizable knowledge), AND you are working with human subjects, then you would be wise to seek RSRB approval prior to beginning your research in order to allow yourself this option at a later date.

For more information and further guidelines about RSRB approval, please consult the separate "RSRB requirements" document posted in Blackboard in MA Field Project, under Continuous and please consult the RSRB website for U of R which can be found at http://www.rochester.edu/rsrb/

Protocol/Steps to take

1. **Getting started:**

   - Complete MUE 402 and MUE 403.
   - Identify a topic of interest.
   - Inform the chair of the music education department of your chosen topic when you are ready to begin writing your proposal. The chair will bring this information to the Music Education department at a regularly scheduled meeting time, where an advisor will be assigned; a second reader will also be assigned at this time or shortly afterward. (*Note: if you would like to work with a particular faculty member, you may speak with him or her directly. He or she will then confirm with the chair that this is acceptable.)
   - Once the chair lets you know who your advisor is, contact him or her to set up a meeting (either in person or via email/telephone for those who may be further away from Rochester). This person will serve as the principal advisor during the refinement of the topic, development of proposal, and completion of the field project. At this initial meeting, the process for developing the proposal and Field Project will be clarified, and a timeline to completion will be established.

2. **Writing the proposal:**

   - Register for 1 credit of MUE 473 Field Project during the semester (including summer) in which the Field Project Proposal is developed and approved.
   - Stay in regular contact with your advisor. Regular updates about how you are progressing are expected (an email once per month is suggested as a minimum). Please make the advisor aware if the timeline to completion must be renegotiated.
   - You will need to have the *proposal* portion of your document completed and approved by both your advisor and your department reader *before* you can begin any of your actual research. The proposal portion of your document should include: the **Title Page**, **Abstract, Table of Contents**, **Introduction and Background**, **Review of Related Literature**, **Purpose**, **Method and Procedures**, **Reference list** and any initially required **Appendices**.

3. **Doing the research and writing up the results:**

    - Once your proposal has been approved and you have been given the 'go ahead' from your advisor, you should complete the steps of your research project as outlined in the Method and Procedures section of your proposal.
    - After your research has been completed, you should write up the **Results**, **Interpretation**, and **Implications for Music Teaching and Learning** sections of your paper, as well as add any final elements to other sections (e.g., additional sources consulted to the reference list).
    - Polish/revise the final document fully as per your advisor and second reader's comments.

4. **Presentation and submission of the final written document:**

    - The advisor and the second reader together determine when the Field Project is ready for presentation (there may be several stages of editing required for each reader).
    - Be sure that you are registered for 1 credit of MUE 473 Field Project during the semester (including summer) in which the Field Project is presented.
    - When the final document is completed and approved, you will present the project as the final requirement for MUE 473 in a local forum in a similar manner to a major course paper/seminar presentation (e.g., an undergraduate methods course, a school district music department meeting, or a gathering of music education graduate students). The field project advisor and the Music Education Department Secretary can assist the student with making arrangements for the presentation. The field project advisor and reader should be present for the presentation. During the presentation, the student will report on and/or demonstrate the content of the field project, allowing time for questions.
    - Within **7 days** of the presentation, a bound copy of the final Field Project document must be submitted to *each* of your 2 readers and 1 electronic copy (pdf) should be submitted to the Music Education Department Secretary.
    - The Field Project advisor will notify the registrar's office (copy to the students' departmental file) that the Field Project has been completed.