

**EDCI 590 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH  
REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES  
Revised August 2007**

**Course Description**

**EDCI 590 Individual Research** (3 semester hours)

Prerequisite: 27 hours of M.Ed. coursework or approval of program advisor; open to Track II students only.

This is an experience in self-directed learning and research in practice, primary goals of the program. Track II M.Ed. candidates will conduct original research on a topic of study in education that is beyond the scope of regular course offerings. Working individually with a faculty advisor, students will review the pertinent literature, conduct qualitative or quantitative research, and write a report of their research following conventions of the discipline. Although research is the primary goal, the final project may include a supplemental component, such as a curriculum restructuring plan, a proposal for public policy change, or a professional development workshop. A formal research proposal must be submitted for approval by the M.Ed. faculty in a semester preceding enrollment in the course. Final project reports will be archived in the campus library.

<b>Proposal Schedule</b>	
<i>Proposal Deadlines</i>	<i>For EDCI 590 in:</i>
June 15	Fall Semester
October 15	Spring Semester
March 15	Summer Semester
(Students enrolled in EDCI 580 may have different deadlines)	

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## **Goals and Purpose of the Course**

As a self-directed learning and research experience, the Individual Research project is integral to the achievement of Master's level scholarship and leadership in the educating professions. The project provides the degree candidate with the experience necessary to develop and utilize scholarly skills associated with attainment of a Master's Degree. These skills consist of the ability to independently

- apply knowledge about the field to practical issues
- plan and carry out in-depth, objective investigation of issues, policies and/or problems, including the ability to locate, evaluate and synthesize relevant resource materials
- reflect on the implications of the research and offer practical solutions
- inform others in the field about the outcomes of the research

Beyond this, however, the skills required for individual research and the successful accomplishment of the project itself are of particular importance in developing leadership in education. Among these skills, which a master educator employs both in and out of the classroom, are:

- self-directed study
- critical thinking
- reflection
- problem solving
- clear and compelling explanation of complex ideas

Teachers who demonstrate these skills and who have also developed expertise on a topic of importance to educational practice not only stand as leaders in their schools and communities, but also heighten the stature of their profession as a whole.

## **Prerequisites**

Track II students should have 27 credits in the M.Ed. Program in order to register for EDCI 590, Individual Research. With this background, students will have had the opportunity to explore various research topics in different courses and to prepare research reports under the direction of different faculty members in preparation for EDCI 590. Although the Individual Research project is intended as a capstone experience, students should begin preparing the project proposal at least two semesters before registering for the course, and may submit their proposal before having 27 credits in the program, as long as they have 27 credits, or approval of their program advisor, at the time of registering for EDCI 590.

Another prerequisite, for all students conducting research involving human subjects, is training on human subjects research. The training consists of an online tutorial that must be completed before beginning the research, although the optimal time to complete the training is before submitting the project proposal. Detailed information is provided in the section below on Institutional Review and Informed Consent.

## **Overview of the Individual Research Project**

The Individual Research project consists of two phases, the proposal submitted a semester prior to conducting the research, and a report of the research project itself:

**Proposal:** The proposal is a detailed essay submitted to a faculty review committee the semester prior to beginning your EDCI 590 Individual Research project. The proposal essay describes your rationale for conducting the proposed research, a description of how you plan to carry out the research investigation, and an overview of the contents of the final project report. In addition to the essay, the proposal also

contains a proposed schedule for completing the project and an annotated bibliography of resources to be used in the research.

**Research Project:** EDCI 590 Individual Research is a one-semester, three-credit course involving significant planning, research, and reflection. The primary requirements for the course project are that it involve original research into a topic of importance in education and that it include a written report of the research conducted. Within these parameters, projects can vary greatly in terms of purpose and contents. Regardless of its topic or purpose, the project must be a rigorous academic exercise showing intellectual depth and should stand alone as a coherent whole, with clear relationships between the purpose, the method of research, and the recommendations or supplemental materials developed.

The Individual Research project should not be confused with a master’s thesis, which often takes up to a year to complete and is generally awarded six credits. The planning and thinking through of the Individual Research project—from topic development through final publication—may occur over two or three semesters, but the actual execution of the original research and the writing of the final report should be tailored for one semester, requiring approximately the time a student would give an individual classroom course (10-15 hours per week over 15 weeks). In a sense, each student is completing a three-credit graduate level course that he or she—not an instructor—has designed.

**Deadlines**

<u>For Projects to be completed in</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Summer</u>
Enlist project advisor and develop topic	previous spring	previous summer	previous fall
Draft proposal to advisor for review	May 15	Sept. 15	Feb. 15
Deadline for proposal submission*	June 15	Oct. 15	March 15
Registration before first day of class	August	January	May
Completed project due on last day of class	December	April/May	July

\* If a proposal submission deadline falls on a weekend or school holiday, proposals are due the day classes resume. The faculty review committee may refuse to accept proposals submitted after these deadlines, so it is crucial that students allow ample time for drafting and revising proposals before submission.

**Steps to Take**

The overall process of development, proposal, and execution of the Individual Research project consists of the following basic steps. Each step is described in detail in the following pages.

1. Develop a research topic.
2. Enlist a faculty member as project advisor.
3. Complete human subjects research training module as needed.
4. Write a formal proposal.
5. Submit proposal (both hard copy and digital) by required deadline for review by faculty committee; revise proposal if required by review committee.

6. Submit human subjects research review form as needed.
7. Conduct research and write report of project.
8. Submit bound and digital copies to be graded by advisor and archived in library.

### **Topic Development and Project Advising**

At least two semesters before anticipated enrollment in EDCI 590, students should settle on a research topic and arrange with a faculty member to serve as project advisor. Students needing help defining a topic or choosing a project advisor should consult with their program advisor or with the M.Ed. program director during this period. As soon as you have an idea for a research project, you should meet with a faculty member with expertise in that area. The purpose of this meeting is (a) to obtain feedback on the feasibility of the research project, and (b) to enlist the faculty member as project advisor. If the project idea is not deemed feasible or if the faculty member does not agree to serve as project advisor, it is the responsibility of the student to select a different topic and/or advisor.

**Topic Development:** Research topics generally arise from concepts and issues studied in the M.Ed. program. Many Individual Research projects are, in fact, extended investigations of research assignments in a previous course. Students are strongly encouraged to develop the topic and begin the research for their Individual Research projects in this manner through earlier course assignments. You not only have the advantage of a head start on your proposal, but also the benefit of early feedback from a faculty member who may ultimately serve as your project advisor.

One of the criteria for the Individual Research project is that it make an original contribution to the field of education. This means that it is neither a rehash of available research nor simply filling in a gap in the researcher's own background knowledge. A worthwhile topic for Individual Research involves examination of a matter of concern to educators in general, such as investigation of a controversial issue, deeper understanding of a process, or a solution to a problem in the field of education. An excellent resource for examples of appropriate topics is the collection of EDCI 590 project reports by previous M.Ed. students that is available in the college library.

**Role of the Project Advisor:** It is essential that you work closely with your advisor during topic development and while drafting your proposal. During this phase, the project advisor will provide guidance on obtaining training for human subjects research, as appropriate, and on informing school officials about research conducted in schools (see the section below on Institutional Review and Informed Consent). Before the proposal can be considered by the faculty review committee, it must be read and signed on the cover sheet by the student's project advisor. The advisor's signature does not indicate approval of the proposed project, but does indicate that the faculty member has agreed to serve as advisor on the project. However, students should consult with their project advisor while drafting the proposal and before obtaining the advisor's signature.

In addition to working with students in drafting a proposal, the project advisor also provides advice during the research project itself. However, the project advisor is not a private tutor or editor and is not responsible for instructing the student on research methodology, writing style, or content. In short, since the Individual Research project is a self-directed learning experience, the project advisor acts as a consultant rather than a collaborator.

The completed project is graded by the project advisor only. The criteria for grading are based on the objectives set out in the project proposal and on the criteria for evaluation established by the program. In addition, project advisors may establish intermediate deadlines, formatting criteria and other requirements for the projects they advise.

Students will submit the proposal and final project in both digital and hard copy formats. The advisor will maintain copies in both formats, which may (with the student's permission) be used as models for assisting other EDCI 590 students with their projects.

### **Proposal Contents and Preparation**

Developing your project proposal is a time consuming process. It not only involves research of the literature in the field, but also drafting and revising a polished, formal essay that will convince the faculty of your ability to complete a scholarly research project that contributes to the field. Students must plan time for revising the proposal before the submission deadline. The services provided by the CGPS Writing Center can be very helpful at this stage. (For more information, see Detailed Criteria for Evaluation of Proposals and Projects.) In terms of the amount of time and work involved, you might consider the proposal equivalent to a term paper in a graduate course. In fact, many students find that a term paper assignment in one of their courses serves as the basis for their Individual Research proposal.

**Introduction to Research:** One course that will help prepare Track II students for writing the proposal is EDCI 580, Introduction to Research. Generally offered each semester, it is an elective for the M.Ed., and provides students not only with a solid background for understanding educational research, but also with a guided opportunity to improve writing skills and draft a project proposal. The course also includes official training on requirements to be followed in conducting research involving human subjects, including steps involved in the institutional review process and obtaining informed consent. The Introduction to Research elective is strongly recommended for Track II students. Many students find it helpful to take this course early in their graduate program, and the latest it should be taken is the semester before submitting the research proposal.

**Purpose of Proposal:** The primary purpose of the project proposal is to convince the faculty that the proposed research makes an original contribution to the field and that it will be conducted and reported in an objective manner appropriate for graduate level work. It is also an argument that the student has adequately planned for and thought out what needs to be done to complete the project successfully by the end of the project semester. **Without this proof of planning, the faculty cannot grant permission for the student to proceed.** This means that you must carefully write and edit your proposal essay and explain your proposed project in concrete detail. The review committee looks for evidence that the student is capable of carrying out the proposed project at the level expected of a M.Ed. candidate.

Another important purpose of the project proposal is to set out additional criteria upon which the final project will be evaluated. In essence, the proposal is a "contract" that commits the program to awarding credit for work that meets the goals established in the project proposal. This means that once your proposal has been approved by the faculty, you are guaranteed a passing grade in EDCI 590 as long as you do the work you have proposed to do. For this reason, students should not feel discouraged or frustrated if required to make revisions to their proposal.

**Contents of Proposal:** The proposal should be typed, double spaced, with pages numbered. The proposal essay (Opening Abstract through Contents section) should be at least 3 pages and no more than 10

pages in length. In order to be considered for review, the proposal must contain the following sections, and failure to include any of this information in the proposal may be enough to delay or deny approval of the project.

- **Official Cover Sheet:** Type out the cover sheet according to the format of the “Sample Cover Sheet” provided in this packet, including list of contents and signatures of both student and project advisor.
- **Opening Abstract:** The first paragraph of the proposal presents a summary of the key points of the proposal essay; be sure to edit the opening abstract after completing the proposal essay.
- **Rationale:** Explains the purpose of the research in detail; includes background on why the topic is of interest to the student and important to the field of education; includes concrete support for the ideas expressed, including citations to scholarly literature.
- **Methodology:** Explains the specific research questions to be answered and how they will be investigated; discusses main themes or subtopics to be covered through library research (literature review); describes in detail the procedures for data collection and the issues to be focused on in analyzing the data; includes informed consent procedures.
- **Contents of Proposed Project:** A working outline of the final research report and the supplemental component of the project, if any; provides a brief overview of what each section of the final project report is expected to contain, and describes the proposed contents of any supplemental material such as a unit plan or inservice presentation (see Project Research and Writing of Report).
- **Project Schedule:** A list of dates and project goals to be accomplished by those targets; the schedule should begin with dates after approval of proposal and end with submission of final bound copies of the project on or before the last day of classes in the project semester; the schedule should include at least two (2) drafts of the project report submitted to advisor before submission of final bound copies.
- **Annotated Bibliography:** A preliminary but substantial list of resources to be used, with a brief note for each one describing its relevance to the project; it should be done in APA style and appended to the end of the proposal; it should contain a minimum of 15 scholarly resources, including peer reviewed journal articles, directly related to the topic of the research project.

### **Proposal Review Process and Basic Criteria**

Submit the proposal in both hard copy and digital formats to your advisor. The proposals are reviewed for approval by a committee which is composed of at least three members of the M.Ed. faculty, including the student’s project advisor. The chair of the committee schedules a meeting soon after the proposal deadline to consider all submitted proposals. The committee then reviews the proposals and evaluates them in the following categories:

- **Approved:** This means that the proposed project has a great deal of merit and the proposal meets virtually all the expectations of the faculty. Students will receive approval to register for EDCI 590.
- **Approved with conditions:** This means that the proposed project has a great deal of merit, but that some aspects of the proposed project need to be clarified. Students must meet with their project advisor to review the committee’s conditions for approval of the proposal and to ensure that the conditions will be met in completion of the final project. After that meeting and upon the recommendation of the project advisor, students will receive approval to register for EDCI 590.

- Denied pending receipt of revised proposal: This means that, while the proposed project has some merit, the proposal lacks sufficient clarity, detail, or evidence that the student has planned the research project carefully. Students will be given a short deadline to submit a revised proposal for review and evaluation by the committee. The revised proposal will be evaluated in the following categories: Approved, Approved with Conditions (see above), or Denied (see below).
- Denied: This means that the proposed project lacks merit to be considered for Master's level research. Students must submit a different proposal in a subsequent semester.

Students will receive a written report and explanation of the committee's decision prior to the end of the semester in which the proposal is submitted and in time to register for EDCI 590 in the appropriate semester. Once the proposal has been approved, the student will receive a letter from the director of the M.Ed. Program about the procedures for registration for EDCI 590, Individual Research, in the semester proposed.

**Criteria for Approval of Proposals:** Among the evidence that faculty look for in evaluating proposals are the following:

- Clear, focused, coherent writing; appropriate use of terminology; standard English usage
- Persuasive, objective rationale for importance of research to the field of education
- Concrete support for claims made; rationale should contain references to scholarly research; concrete examples and detailed descriptions are needed, especially in the rationale and research methodology sections of proposal
- Evidence of sufficient background knowledge about the topic and research methodology to conduct thorough, objective research
- Competence in using APA style

Remember that your ability to explain your proposed project clearly and your care and thoughtfulness throughout the proposal provide evidence of your ability to conduct a thorough, worthwhile project. (For additional information see Detailed Criteria for Evaluation of Proposals and Projects.)

### **Informed Consent and Institutional Review**

All research involving human subjects must adhere to legal guidelines of research ethics and procedures. Federal and state laws require that subjects be informed of the purpose and manner of the research before they participate, that they be given the option not to participate, and that they be guaranteed privacy or anonymity as appropriate for the research. However, when conducting research involving children under the age of consent, higher standards must be observed. In order to ensure that research conducted at UMW conforms to these legal requirements, all students, faculty and staff conducting research involving human subjects that is publicly archived or publishable must submit information about their research to the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning the research. On the other hand, if the research involves no human subjects, no records pertaining to human subjects, and no work samples produced by human subjects, then it does not have to be reviewed by the IRB. There are, however, additional legal requirements governing research conducted in public schools or involving school records. This section provides a brief summary of these institutional review requirements. **More information is available online at** [www.umw.edu/cas/acaffairs/institutional\\_review\\_board/default.php](http://www.umw.edu/cas/acaffairs/institutional_review_board/default.php)

**Summary of Steps to Take:** Below is a brief summary of the steps to take to ensure compliance with IRB requirements at each stage of your project. Because it is a summary, you must review the official IRB information on the website given above and consult with your project advisor while working on your proposal to make sure that you follow the policy guidelines in detail.

**1. Preparing the Proposal:** If your project involves human subjects, you will be required to complete an *online tutorial* about the federal laws regarding human subject research and the policies for review of such research. There is a link for “IRB Training” on the website given above. Students are required to complete the module for student researchers. After completing the tutorial you will receive documentation of successful completion. Keep a copy of the document for your records and supply a copy for your project advisor. In addition, be sure to explain in the Methodology section of your proposal the steps you will take to inform your subjects and protect their rights during your research (see below).

**2. Submitting the IRB Application:** After your proposal is approved, meet with your project advisor to determine which level of review your proposed project will require. Depending on the type of research you plan to do, you will submit one of the following forms, available from your advisor:

- **Application for Exempt Status:** Submit this form if any of the following apply:
  - 1) Your research involves the use of educational tests or the study of previously existing data that is anonymous;
  - 2) You are doing classroom-based research (action research) involving normal educational practices; or
  - 3) Your subjects are adults and the research poses no more than minimal risk to them
- **Application for Expedited Review:** Submit this form if you are doing research that involves surveys, interviews, recordings or observation of children under age 18

Be sure to include a substantive description of your research methodology on your IRB application, or attach a copy of your proposal. The IRB representative may ask you for clarification on your research methodology before granting approval. IRB application forms should be submitted to the M.Ed. Program’s representative on the IRB.

**3. IRB Approval:** Your application for Exempt Status or for Expedited Review will be returned to you within a week to 10 days from the date submitted, and, *if approved*, you may begin your research as described on the form. If you submitted an Application for Exempt Status that is *not approved*, you may be asked to submit the more detailed Application for Expedited Review. It is unlikely that any Application for Expedited Review will not be approved, because the project proposal will already have been reviewed by your project advisor and a committee of the M.Ed. faculty.

**4. Conducting the Research:** There are specific procedures to take and forms to use for giving research subjects informed consent. A *Consent Form* is signed by all adult research subjects which informs them of what their participation in the research entails and what the purpose of the research is, and they must be given an opportunity to opt out at any time. If appropriate, they should also be informed of how their anonymity will be protected. When the subjects are children, their parents sign the Consent Form, and the children themselves must assent to being participants on an *Assent Form*. There are sample forms available from your project advisor that must be completed by all participants in any research involving human subjects. These forms prove that you have obtained informed consent from your subjects to participate in your study.

In addition, if you are conducting research in public schools, there are laws that protect the privacy of students involved in any research activities conducted in the schools. While these matters are outside the purview of the IRB, it is important that you follow all the procedures required by the school where your research is being conducted. All research involving students in schools must adhere to *The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*, which gives parents rights over the content of their children's school records, and to *The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)*, which gives parents rights over research conducted with their children. The procedures for adherence to these federal laws are different in different school divisions. Therefore, you must consult with an appropriate school official to know exactly what is involved in meeting the requirements of these laws. It is the responsibility of the researcher and the officials of the school division to ensure that these laws are adhered to. Your project advisor can assist you in making sure that you meet the appropriate requirements.

**5. Writing your Research Report:** The report of your research that will be archived in the CGPS Library should describe the steps you took to meet the requirements of the laws and policies outlined above. It is appropriate in the Methodology section of your research report to describe the protocols used for obtaining informed consent, as well as the steps taken to meet FERPA and PPRA guidelines. It is common to include a blank copy of the consent and assent forms in an appendix. In addition, it is also wise to discuss any other issues relating to research ethics in your Methodology section.

### **Project Research and Writing of Report**

All projects for EDCI 590, Individual Research, must include original research by the student on a topic of importance in education. Original research means not just a rehash or summary of information already available to the profession, but new information that will benefit other educators. The research must be objective, presenting varying points of view and detailed supporting evidence.

Furthermore, this research must be conducted after approval of the project proposal. Although the proposal itself requires a good deal of background knowledge and familiarity with the scholarly literature on the topic, the credit awarded for EDCI 590 will be based on research conducted after approval of the proposal. If you have already conducted some research on your topic (e.g., for a previous class), this should be explained in the proposal. It is a violation of the Honor Code to submit a proposal for research that you have already conducted.

**Research Methodology and Analysis:** Your research methodology consists of the procedure(s) used to gather and analyze the information needed to conduct your research investigation. All projects will include a review of the scholarly literature on the topic as part of the research. Some projects, called meta-analyses, may consist entirely of a detailed synthesis of such literature, bringing together information from different areas of educational scholarship in a coherent and original manner. Most projects, however, also include field research methods (e.g., action research, qualitative interviews, case study, etc.), with the literature review providing the scholarly context in which the field research is conducted.

If you plan to conduct field research, it is important to read up on appropriate research methods before submitting your proposal and include the references consulted in your annotated bibliography. Data collected from field research must be objectively and thoroughly analyzed, which involves drawing connections between different types of data and explaining the implications of the data. If the field research involves human subjects, submission of appropriate forms for institutional review are also required (see the section on Informed Consent and Institutional Review).

**Contents of Research Report:** All Individual Research projects will consist of a written report of the research, along with optional supplemental components (see below). The written report should be typed, double spaced with pages numbered, and contain the following:

- Official Title Page: Type the title page as shown in the attached sample (see page 30); also serves as cover page for bound copies
- Table of Contents: Lists the main section headings of the research report and supplemental component, if any
- Introduction: Explains the purpose and rationale for project, provides essential background information, and gives an overview of the project report
- Literature Review: Synthesizes the scholarly literature on the research topic, organized according to clearly defined themes or subtopics related to the research goals
- Methodology: Step-by-step explanation of how research was conducted
- Analysis of Results: Objective explanation of what was learned from the research, including gaps or problems with the research
- Conclusions and/or Recommendations: Explanation of how the results of the research impact the field of education
- References: List of all research references cited in the body of the report; follows APA style
- Appendices: Contain material such as procedural documents and forms used to collect data (e.g., blank assessment tools, consent forms, etc.), long tables, and other detailed material that supports the contents of the research report

Research reports may be organized using these conventional headings or may be organized with more substantive headings; however, regardless of the headings used in the research report, this is the information that the report should contain.

**Optional Supplemental Component:** Many projects for EDCI 590 include a practical application of the research or a method of disseminating the information gathered in the research project. For example, a practical supplement might be a unit plan, instructional booklet, or teacher’s resource guide. A dissemination supplement might be an inservice PowerPoint presentation, an informative web page, or a manuscript for a journal article. The supplemental component should be included with the final bound copies of the research report submitted at the end of the project semester. Attempts should be made to transfer any supplemental components that are in alternative media into print format for archiving.

### **Incomplete or Withdrawal**

Students must complete the research and the written report on the project within the semester during which they are enrolled in EDCI 590, Individual Research. Requests for an “Incomplete” must be approved by the project advisor, the M.Ed. Program Director, and the Director of Adult Degree Programs and Advising Services. Students cannot receive a grade of “Incomplete” simply because of a miscalculation in the time needed to complete the project.

If a student withdraws from EDCI 590, Individual Research, after registering but before completing the project, the student must re-submit a proposal for a subsequent semester in order to take the course and

obtain credit. The re-submitted proposal will be subject to the same review process as the original proposal, and must consist of a full semester's work. Any research, other than literature review, that was completed before withdrawal should be spelled out in the re-submitted proposal, along with the additional research to be completed during the project semester.

### **Binding and Archiving**

Upon completion of the project—that is, submission to and grading by the project advisor—and in order to receive a grade for the course, students must submit two bound copies and a digital copy by the last day of the semester. The digital copy may be used (with the student's permission) as a model for future students while planning and writing their projects. One bound copy is shelved in the library's archives; the other is for the student's project advisor. Students must use the format of the "Sample Title Page" attached (see below) which serves as both the cover sheet and title page of their final project report. The front cover should be made of clear plastic so that the title page shows through as the cover page. The back cover should be made of a sturdy black vinyl or paper board. The binding should be a permanent Velo binding, available at most quick-print stores, such as Kinko's. Students are responsible for having copies appropriately bound for archiving. Additional formatting requirements (e.g., margin width, page layout, type fonts, etc.) and archival preparation of supplemental components such as CDs or videos may be determined in consultation with the project advisor or librarian.

### **Detailed Criteria for Evaluation of Proposals and Projects**

Individual Research projects will be graded by the student's project advisor based on the criteria set out in the project proposal and on the criteria for evaluation listed in this section. As long as these criteria are met, students will receive a passing grade. Nevertheless, it is essential that students keep their project advisor apprised of their progress throughout the project and seek advice whenever needed.

**The criteria set forth in this section should be considered part of the research proposal**, which is a "contract" and commits the program to awarding credit for work that meets these standards as well as the specifics of the individual research proposal. Additional criteria for evaluation of the Individual Research project, including any supplemental components of the project beyond the written report, may be set by the project advisor in consultation with the student.

**CGPS Writing Center:** Students may obtain valuable guidance on writing the proposal and project report at the CGPS Writing Center, located in the campus library. When you make an appointment for consultation in the Writing Center, be sure to give the staff a copy of these guidelines and any handouts provided by your project advisor.

**Scholarly Writing:** Individual Research projects are required to contain a written report of the research, which is expected to meet certain standards of scholarly writing, since it is through writing that the quality of your research project is ultimately evaluated. The following criteria have been developed for evaluation of both the proposal and the final report on the Individual Research project. They are based on the University of Mary Washington Plan for Assessing Writing Competency (2001) and have been adapted for use at the graduate level.

1. The purpose of the research project is clearly defined and explained with sufficient background information; the report makes a contribution to the field.
2. The research is described and explained with enough supporting detail to justify the conclusions.

3. The report exhibits evidence of critical and objective thinking, such as presentation of differing points of view and conflicting evidence; the report goes beyond mere reporting of research that has already been done by others.
4. The writing maintains focus with a clear and purposeful organizational plan; the writing is cohesive; the report stands alone as a coherent whole.
5. Vocabulary, phrasing, sentence and paragraph structure are appropriate for the intended audience (professional educators) and consistent with scholarly writing in the field.
6. The report exhibits standard English spelling, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics following the conventions of scholarly writing in the field and appropriate for a permanently archived document.
7. References are chosen with discernment and cited appropriately, demonstrating academic integrity; clear distinctions are made between the words and ideas of the student and those of others, with appropriate use of quotations and attributions to the ideas of others; bibliographic data is presented comprehensively and consistently following an APA style.

**APA Style:** Students are strongly advised to obtain a copy of the latest edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA Manual)* for reference in writing and formatting their proposal and project report. The *Manual* contains detailed explanations and examples for style, mechanics, and citation of resources, and is an indispensable reference tool. Although the *Manual's* primary purpose is to give style requirements for submission of manuscripts to APA publications, APA style has become the convention for research papers in education and in the social sciences. Specific information on preparing student research papers is contained in Chapter 6 of the *Manual* and any requirements of the advisor take precedence over instructions in the *Manual*.

**Honor Code:** Under the UMW Honor Constitution, all students are required to maintain the highest standards of intellectual honesty. In addition to prohibiting plagiarism, the Honor Constitution also prohibits the presentation of others' ideas as if they were your own. It is therefore crucial to explicitly distinguish between your original ideas and those of others, giving appropriate attributions and citations. Submission of your final project for grading implies your adherence to the Honor Constitution, whether or not it contains the words of the honor pledge. Therefore, any violations of the Honor Constitution may result in a failing grade and/or sanctions by the Honor Council. On the other hand, it is not a violation of the Honor Constitution to have your written work proofread by another person or to seek suggestions for revision. In fact, it is highly recommended that you do so.

## Sample Cover Sheet for Proposal

### EDCI 590 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I plan to complete my project in \_\_\_\_\_ (semester) \_\_\_\_\_ (year)

I will have completed 27 graduate credits toward the M.Ed. by \_\_\_\_\_

Endorsement of Project Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**This proposal contains the following:**

- 1. Abstract of proposal**
- 2. Rationale for proposed project**
- 3. Research methodology for proposed project**
- 4. Contents of proposed project**
- 5. Schedule for execution and completion of project**
- 6. Annotated Bibliography**

*Sample Cover and Title Page for Report*

**TITLE**

**STUDENT'S NAME**

**EDCI 590 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH**

**DATE SUBMITTED**

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Signature of Project Advisor

**Name of Project Advisor**  
Project Advisor's Title