

## **Format of a Proposal for the Early Childhood Education Ph.D. In-depth Paper**

It is recommended that students who are preparing their in-depth papers first write a *brief* proposal of their plans for their in-depth paper. The following provides: (A) the official statement regarding the In-Depth paper part of the Early Childhood Education Comprehensive Qualifying Exam, which is Part II of the Exam. (Parts I and III are take-home exams that focus on the Ph.D. Foundation and Early Childhood Education Core and the student's Cognate, which are scheduled after a student submits the In-Depth paper); and (B) the suggested format for the in-depth paper proposal.

### **(A) In-depth Knowledge of a Specific Area in Early Childhood Education**

This segment of the exam will be a *qualifying paper*.<sup>1</sup> It will be due on the first business day of the designated month of the exams (currently either October or February) prior to taking Parts I and II of the exam. The paper should demonstrate that a student *has an in-depth knowledge of a particular area of focus*, including the major theories, research methods and findings, educational practices and public policies (e.g., language development of young children and its relation to educational practices; the role of play in educational and care environments; the evaluation of the effectiveness of models of early childhood education; parent participation in early childhood education; fostering early literacy, math, or science in young children; the role of teachers in supporting children's social development). Students will seek input from their exam committee and other relevant faculty and be responsible for generating a reading list.

Based on the *Revised Early Childhood Education Proposal* (1996, p. 61), the student's Qualifying Exam paper is to of publishable quality. It should be related to the student's intended dissertation topic, or emerge from the student's course work, and may be developed from a course paper, e.g., FE 873. The topic should be approved in writing by the chair of the Advisory Committee, and the paper completed as a part of the Qualifying Comprehensive Examinations process.

The paper should address an issue in child development, early learning, curriculum, instruction, policy, or other education-related issue, and may become the basis for a conference presentation or publication. It should provide evidence of research competence for the task of conducting the forthcoming dissertation research project. It should be at least 25 to 35 pages in length, excluding tables and references. It should be prepared in APA format and include a significant review of the relevant literature and point to directions for a curriculum/program, research projects, and policy initiative pertaining the reviewed area of focus. Although the qualifying paper may constitute a foundation for a dissertation research proposal, it is not intended as the same document. Rather, the qualifying paper provides the students with the opportunity for in-depth focus in an area of interest and thus provides for the scholarship activity that is foundational for

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<sup>1</sup> *Based on the Revised Early Childhood Education Proposal* (1996, p. 61), with additions and revisions approved by the Early Childhood Education Faculty (June, 13, 2001) and minor clarifications in October 8, 2009.

the student's future area of expertise and constitutes a demonstration of the student's knowledge, synthesis, analysis, and articulation in that area. Along with input and feedback from the committee, the qualifying paper is intended to provide the student with a solid foundation for subsequent preparation of a specific research proposal for the dissertation.

### **(B) Suggested Proposal Format for the In-Depth Paper**

The following is a recommended format for the proposal for the in-depth paper. The student's proposal should be used to gain input from the student's Advisor and Committee. It thus should provide a focus for discussions, suggested directions and references from the advisor and committee. The student may seek further advisement in direction, content, format, and references from the advisor and committee throughout the preparation of the full in-depth paper, but because this in-depth paper is considered to be part of the exam, the advisor and committee will not do edits of drafts of the paper. The proposal should include the following parts.

#### ***(I) Statement of the Problem or Area of Focus***

The first one or two sentences of your first paragraph should specify the problem or area of focus for the literature review. The rest of the first paragraph of your proposal should be a brief summary of what will you focus on and why is it of importance or interest to the field and to society in general. Provide a number of key topics from the relevant knowledge base that you will examine. Your paper should provide both an overview and in-depth examination of your area of focus. Thus, you should plan to write a paper that is comprehensive, or sometimes referred to as a "state of the art."

#### ***(II) The Relevant Major Theories, Empirical Studies, Policies, and Practices***

In approximately 2 to 3 pages, *briefly* describe the major relevant:

- (1) Theory or theories
- (2) Key empirical studies
- (3) Laws, policies, standards from governing agencies and organizations
- (4) Educational, care, and support practices in schools, early childhood centers, community agencies and so forth

#### ***(III) Key Topics***

Provide a list of key topics or descriptors that you will use to:

(1) Search the knowledge base for the above areas

(2) Serve as possible subtopics of your paper

***(IV) Search and Compilation Strategies***

Provide a list of:

(1) Proposed search strategies, e.g., specified databases, key journals, books, edited volumes and series, and

(2) Proposed description system for compiling and organizing your articles and documents, e.g., EndNotes, RefWorks, Word, and so forth.

***(V) References***

List references:

(1) Cited in the proposal

(2) Identified thus far to be examined for the paper