

**SONOMA
STATE**
UNIVERSITY

EARLY
CHILDHOOD
STUDIES

Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education Graduate Handbook

Early Childhood Studies Mission Statement

*The Department of Early Childhood Studies prepares knowledgeable
and caring professionals who are committed to contributing to
a just society through high-quality education and social services
for all children and families.*

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Welcome to the MAECE Program!

Welcome Prospective and New Students!

Welcome on behalf of the faculty of the Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education (MAECE) Program. We are pleased that you are interested in pursuing your master's degree in Early Childhood Education at Sonoma State University and look forward to getting to know you. The MAECE program is a leadership curriculum in Early Childhood Education and was created in response to the demand for a graduate degree to meet the statewide needs for developing leadership in programs serving the state of California's youngest children and their families. We have a history of collaborative partnerships with policymakers and practitioners in the state and national community.

This handbook is intended to help you understand the MAECE program, how to proceed through it, and where to go if you need help. Our program is aligned with CSU and SSU University policies, [NAEYC standards](#), and requirements for the California Child Development Permit. It is also designed to support teachers with Multiple Subject Credentials in achieving the required early childhood units for teaching in PK classrooms.

While the handbook is intended to provide binding documentation of program policies and requirements, it is possible that state or accreditation policy changes may necessitate changes to the information in this handbook. Please consult with the Early Childhood Studies Graduate Advisor if you have questions about any of the information in this handbook.

It is the responsibility of every student in the MAECE program to be knowledgeable about, and to abide by, the contents of this handbook.

School of Education Mission, Vision, and Core Values

The SSU School of Education offers programs for post-baccalaureate students that lead to teaching credentials and graduate degrees in Education. Each of these programs reflects the philosophy, purpose, and goals of the School of Education Social Justice Framework developed by the School of Education faculty.

Mission

The School of Education provides transformative educational experiences through teaching, research, and key initiatives. We prepare undergraduates, graduate students, and credential candidates to advocate for social justice in their learning and throughout their careers so students, schools, and communities flourish.

Vision

Advancing social justice in schools and communities through excellence in education

Core Values

- We believe that examining and respecting human differences is central to educational inclusivity.
- We believe that collaboration and community partnerships strengthen our work.
- We are committed to equity and access in education for all.
- We promote meaningful learning through theoretically sound and research-based pedagogies.

SSU Graduate Level Learning Goals

The Graduate Level Learning Goals at SSU are derived from and approved by all graduate programs on campus. They incorporate the Strategic Priorities of the campus: student success, academic excellence, leadership cultivation, and transformative impact.

- **Disciplinary Knowledge:** Expand mastery of a field of knowledge, both foundational and specific.
- **Critical Thinking/Analysis:** Demonstrate advanced skills of creative, analytical, and critical thinking.
- **Communication:** Demonstrate advanced oral and written communication skills.
- **Practical Application:** Engage with practical and professional aspects of the field, such as research, projects, or professional experience.
- **Professional Integrity:** Demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills related to cultural and ethical aspects of the field.
- **Integrative Dimension:** Engage with competencies that integrate cultural, technological, ethical, practical, and/or professional aspects of the field.

MAECE Program Mission, Goal, Standards, and Program Learning Outcomes

MAECE Program Mission

The mission of the MAECE program is to prepare knowledgeable and caring leaders in the field of early childhood education who use their knowledge of leadership, child development and learning, curriculum and pedagogy, and families and culture, to advocate on behalf of young

children and their families. They work collaboratively and effectively to create community partnerships focused on creating and implementing high quality, inclusive, and just programs for young children and their families.

MAECE Program Goal

The goal of the MAECE program is to provide candidates with a conceptual framework and the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will enable them to work effectively in their roles as early childhood leaders and administrators focused on advancing social justice, educational equity and access for children, families, and communities. The program is designed to develop master's level knowledge, skills and attitudes relating to seven core Program Standards. Learning outcomes related to the program standards are embedded in each of the required courses and the Capstone Project.

MAECE Program Standards

The Program Standards embedded in the program courses are:

1. Standard I: Child Development and Learning
2. Standard II: Families, Culture, and Inclusivity
3. Standard III: Curriculum and Pedagogy
4. Standard IV: Visionary Leadership for Social Justice
5. Standard V: Program Administration and Supervision
6. Standard VI: Policy and Advocacy
7. Standard VII: Research Paradigms

Program Learning Outcomes

The MAECE Program Learning Outcomes are directly related to the Program Standards and describe what graduates should be able to do after completing the program. These measures highlight the knowledge, skills, and dispositions all students are expected to have upon graduating from a specific program.

PLO 1: *Child Development and Learning*. Graduates use knowledge of development and learning as a foundation by which to effectively meet the needs of children, families, children, programs, and communities. (Bloom's Cognitive "Applying" domain)

PLO 2: *Families, Culture and Inclusivity*. Graduates create partnerships designed to foster high quality, culturally responsive, inclusive, and just programs for young children and their families. (Bloom's Cognitive "Creating" domain)

PLO 3: *Curriculum and Pedagogy*. Graduates evaluate program and practitioner use of developmentally and culturally appropriate practices to ensure that curriculum, pedagogical practices, and program policies reflect current family and community change over time, and positively influence the development and learning of each and every child. (Bloom's Cognitive "Evaluating" domain)

PLO 4: *Visionary Leadership for Social Justice*. Graduates demonstrate through their work and actions their commitment to ethical and professional practices and socially just policies and programs for young children and their families. (Bloom's Affective "Internalizing Values" Domain)

PLO 5: *Program Administration and Supervision*. Graduates identify as critically reflective and caring early childhood program administrators and supervisors who advance social justice and educational equity and access. (Bloom's Affective "Organization" Domain)

PLO 6: *Policy and Advocacy*. Graduates design and implement advocacy strategies and policies for young children, their families and communities. (Bloom's Cognitive "Creating" Domain)

PLO 7: *Research Paradigms*. Graduates use current research to inform and guide practices and projects designed to meet community needs. (Bloom's Cognitive "Applying" domain)

Program Overview

Program Description

The MAECE program prepares leaders for programs serving all children between infancy and eight years of age, including professionals who work with young children in TK classrooms, elementary schools, preschools, and other community-based programs. In alignment with the mission and goal of the MAECE program, the purpose of the program is to provide candidates with a conceptual framework and the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will enable them to be visionary and reflective leaders and agents of change for the field. Graduates will be able to work effectively in their roles as teachers, program leaders, administrators, and advocates focused on advancing social and environmental justice, educational equity, and access for all.

The 36-credit program includes coursework in (a) advanced child development and learning, (b) culturally and developmentally responsive and sustaining curriculum and pedagogy, (c) developing and maintaining collaborative and reciprocal relationships with young children and their families, and (d) leadership focused on socially and environmentally just practice and policy in the field of early childhood education. The culminating activity is a research-based project or product of practical use in their own settings.

Students collaborate with faculty and colleagues to examine and influence current educational practice through research, project development, and advocacy. For entry to the program, it is not necessary to possess a teaching credential or child development permit; students may prepare for leadership and advocacy positions in a variety of settings.

The large majority of our students continue to work full time while pursuing a graduate degree; in addition, we have students from rural and underserved areas with no easy access to high quality affordable online graduate programs. To serve the needs of both, this program is designed to be completed on a part-time basis (6 credits per semester) by attending school for six semesters two nights a week.

Admission Requirements

The general requirements for admission to graduate and post-baccalaureate studies at a California State University campus are in accordance with university regulations as well as the California Code of Regulations. Specifically, a student shall:

- have completed a four-year college course of study and hold an acceptable baccalaureate degree from an institution accredited by a regional accrediting association, or shall have completed equivalent academic preparation as determined by appropriate campus authorities;
- be in good academic standing at the last college or university attended;
- have attained a grade point average of ≥ 2.50 (A=4.00) in the last 60 semester (90 quarter) units attempted; and
- satisfactorily meet the professional, personal, scholastic, and other standards for graduate study, including qualifying examinations, as appropriate campus authorities may prescribe.

In unusual circumstances, exceptions may be made to these criteria.

Applicants who completed undergraduate degree requirements and graduated the preceding term are required to complete an application and submit a nonrefundable application fee. Further, to be considered for admissions, students must have completed and been awarded their undergraduate degree by the end of the the fall term for spring applicants.

Applicants must also meet program-specific requirements. Criteria include:

- B.A. or B.S., preferably in early childhood or related field;
- One official transcript from each college or university attended;
- GPA of ≥ 2.5 cumulative upper division/graduate coursework;
- One 3-unit college-level course in child development theory and milestones (Birth-to-age 8 or through adolescence)
- At least 45 verifiable hours of teaching/volunteering in an early childhood setting
- Two (2) letters of recommendation (not more than a year old), with one recommendation from a former professor or person who can attest to the applicant's ability to successfully complete a Master's program. Both the required application to the program and the [Recommendation Form](#) are located on the SSU MAECE website.
- A completed MAECE Application Form;
- A narrative statement of approximately 1000 words, in which the questions listed in the application are answered;
- Documentation of admission or application to Sonoma State University;

After the application has been received, an in-person or video conference interview may be required before the admission decision is made. Admission to the MAECE program is dependent on admission to Sonoma State University.

Financial Aid

If you need scholarships or other opportunities to fund your education, visit the [Graduate Studies Funding Opportunities](#) webpage.

Orientation to the MAECE Program

All students must complete the online, asynchronous “[Orientation to the MAECE program](#)” course located in our Canvas Learning Management System. This short course provides information about the program and provides a welcoming space in which to get to know the Early Childhood Studies faculty and your cohort colleagues.

Courses Required for Graduation

Table 1. *Required Program Courses*

Catalog Number	Course Title	Units
EDEC 531	Play and its Role in Development and Learning	3
EDEC 532	Social and Emotional Development and Learning	3
EDEC 535	The Visionary Leader in Early Childhood Programs	3
EDEC 536	Policy and Advocacy for Early Childhood Professionals	3
EDEC 537	Administration and Supervision in Early Childhood Education	3
EDEC 538	Development of Children’s Thinking and STEM Learning	3
EDEC 539	Families, Culture, and Inclusivity	3
EDEC 540	Infant and Toddler Development and Learning	3
EDEC 541	Dual Language and Literacy Development and Learning	3
EDEC 542	Advanced Field Experience	3
EDEC 571	Research Paradigms in Early Childhood Education	3
EDEC 572	Capstone Project	3
Total		36

Degree Requirements

The MAECE program at Sonoma State University requires that you complete a total of 36 credits (not including the prerequisite credits for admittance), including a supervised field experience and completion of a culminating capstone project as described later in this Handbook. Although the program is completely online, you will meet synchronously online on Tuesdays from 4:00-7:00 pm and on Wednesdays from 7-9:40 pm.

Advising “Road Map”

Table 2. Advising “Roadmap” for MA ECE Students entering in Odd and Even Years

Courses	Spring ONE Odd Years	Summer ONE Odd Years	Fall ONE Odd Years	Spring TWO Even Years	Summer TWO Even Years	Fall TWO Even Years
	Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3	Semester 4	Semester 5	Semester 6
Students who begin in the spring of odd years	EDEC 571 Research Paradigms	EDEC 538 Children’s Thinking and STEM Experiences	EDEC 540 Infant and Toddler Development	EDEC 539 Families, Culture, and Inclusivity	EDEC 531 Play and its Role in Development and learning	EDEC 536 Policy and Advocacy in ECE
	EDEC 532 Social and Emotional Development	EDEC 541 Dual Language and Early Literacy Learning	EDEC 542 Advanced Field Experience	EDEC 535 The Visionary Leader in Early Childhood Programs (GSO1)	EDEC 537 Administration and Supervision in ECE	EDEC 572 Capstone Project (GSO2)

Courses	Spring ONE Even Years	Summer ONE Even Years	Fall ONE Even Years	Spring TWO Odd Years	Summer TWO Odd Years	Fall TWO Odd Years
	Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3	Semester 4	Semester 5	Semester 6

Students who begin in the spring of even years	EDEC 539 Families, Culture, and Inclusivity	EDEC 531 Play and its Role in Development and learning	EDEC 536 Policy and Advocacy in ECE	EDEC 571 Research Paradigms	EDEC 538 Children's Thinking and STEM Experiences	EDEC 540 Infant and Toddler Development
	EDEC 535 The Visionary Leader in Early Childhood Programs	EDEC 537 Administration and Supervision in ECE	EDEC 542 Advanced Field Experience	EDEC 532 Social and Emotional Development (GSO1)	EDEC 541 Dual Language and Early Literacy Learning	EDEC 572 Capstone Project (GSO2)

Field Experience

In EDEC 542, you will participate in online learning activities and complete 90 hours of fieldwork in an Early Care and Education setting (birth to age 8). Field work includes observation, reflection, designing and implementing an inclusive place-and project based educational activity plans, and collaboration with parents and other EC professionals to ensure that projects are culturally and developmentally responsive as well as socially and environmentally just. In addition to field experiences, students complete professional readings and reflective assignments. Your place of work may be used as your field experience site, but your work site must be approved as a field experience site by your instructor.

The Capstone Project

The Capstone Project is a significant scholarly undertaking through which students connect their program coursework with a socially just solution to a real-world need. Completion of the Capstone project assures the Master's in Early Childhood Education Program and the Graduate Studies Division at Sonoma State University that you have achieved graduate level knowledge and skill in an area of inquiry.

Steps for completion of the Capstone Project include the following:

- Candidates choose a Committee Chair and two other faculty members with experience in their area of interest;
- Under the guidance of the Committee Chair, candidates prepare a *Project Proposal* describing the proposed project;
- Candidates present the completed Project Proposal to the full committee for approval at the *GSO1 Advancement to Candidacy* meeting, typically held at the beginning of the final year.

- During the last semester of the program, candidates enroll in EDEC 572, in which they complete the project and present it at the *GSO2 Final Presentation*.

For more information on the Capstone Project, see the [Capstone Project section](#) of this Handbook.

Course Descriptions

EDEC 531: The Role of Play in Development and Learning (3 Units): Students will examine theories from developmental psychology, education, and anthropology to look at the role of play in human experience, from infancy to adulthood. Topics include play's relationship to learning in all areas of development and academic disciplines, history of play, effects of technology and culture on children's play, gender development and play, play environments, play therapy, and play as a tool for developmentally and culturally sensitive curriculum and assessment.

EDEC 532: Social and Emotional Development (3 Units): Students will learn about children's emotional, social and moral development from birth through age eight; the impact of race, gender, income, and ethnicity on children's social and emotional development; the main contributions of major theorists to moral development theory and research; the design of inclusive and developmentally appropriate educational experiences that promote social and moral development (Social Emotional Learning) for children with diverse backgrounds and characteristics; different procedures to assess children's social and emotional competencies; attachment theory, and how these principles apply to early education and child-care settings; how children develop and view friendship.

EDCS 535: The Visionary Leader in Early Childhood Programs (3 Units): Students will critically examine research, theories, and policies related to administration of programs that serve children and families. Students will develop leadership skills in the areas of teaching adults, administering programs, and advocating effectively for children and families within and outside of early care and education programs.

EDEC 536: Policy and Advocacy for Early Childhood Professionals (3 Units): Students will understand early care and education systems and policies, and the cultural context of leadership. They will identify, analyze, and implement advocacy skills to promote social justice in early childhood settings; collaboration strategies with diverse families and community organizations; conflict resolution strategies; systems and change development; adult and community development; and advocacy and policy formation.

EDEC 537: Administration and Supervision in Early Childhood Programs (3 Units): Students will learn about theory, research, and practice regarding planning and administering early childhood programs in a diverse context. Topics are: program design and evaluation; regulations, accreditation criteria and assessment; creation of quality learning environments; principles of

financing and budgeting; nutrition, health and safety services; collaborations with families and communities.

EDEC 538: Children’s Thinking and STEM Experiences (3 Units): Students will learn the cognitive development of children from birth through middle childhood. They will study major theories and research to gain a deep understanding of the following topics: brain development and the impact of early experiences, educational support for optimal cognitive development, the role of culture and family in cognitive development, applications for math and science learning, and assessment methods and approaches.

EDEC 539: Families, Culture, and Inclusivity (3 Units): This course prepares students to work with children and families from diverse backgrounds. Class participants will study the dynamic interactions of race, culture, gender, socio-economic status, language, and other factors as they relate to the care and education of children from diverse families. Students will explore the diversity of family systems; sociocultural factors affecting the child's development, and the socializing influences of community. The coursework aims to help students become thoughtful and effective professionals by promoting the development of their knowledge, attitudes, and skills around collaborating and communicating with diverse families and communities.

EDEC 540: Infant and Toddler Development (3 Units): In this course students analyze theories that guide and ground their understanding of infant-toddler development, evaluate research methods used to study infant-toddler development, deepen their understanding of infant-toddler development across domains and the unique ways in which infants and toddlers learn and interact with the world around them. Students consider the role of the caregiver (parental and nonparental) in infant/toddler development and evaluate early intervention strategies and approaches that support infants, toddlers and their families.

EDEC 541: Dual Language and Early Literacy Learning (3 Units): This course examines dual language, early literacy and biliteracy development in young children, birth through age eight. Topics include the nature of language, literacy, bilingualism and biliteracy and the development of languages and emergent literacy in the preschool years through the primary grades. The role of culture, language structure, brain development, exceptionalities, and changing communication technologies on dual language and literacy development is emphasized, and developmentally appropriate practices that support dual language and early literacy learning at home, in schools, and in childcare settings are included.

EDEC 542: Advanced Field Experience (3 Units): In this online course, students participate in online learning activities and arrange to do 90 hours of fieldwork in an Early Care and Education setting (birth to age 8). Field experiences include observations, designing and implementing inclusive place-and project based educational activity plans, and collaboration with parents and

other EC professionals to ensure that projects are culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate. In addition to field experiences, students complete professional readings and reflective assignments.

EDEC 571: Research Paradigms in Early Childhood Education (3 Units): This course includes an examination of research in early childhood settings, types of research design, critical evaluation of research studies and measurement techniques, and understanding of relevant statistical concepts. During this course, students identify their area of interest for the project and narrow the specific focus with help from an advisor and/or faculty member who may become a reader or chair for their work.

EDEC 572: Capstone Project (3 Units): Supervised Study for Capstone Project.

Graduate and Post-Baccalaureate Repeat Policy

- A student may not re-enroll in a course for which he or she has received an “I” until that “I” has been converted to a grade other than “I”, such as A-F, IC, or NC.
- Graduate and Post-Baccalaureate students may petition the appropriate academic program to repeat courses in which they have earned a grade of B- or lower, or WU, or IC for grade replacement and may repeat only with the departmental approval and in accordance with departmental policy.
- A course may be repeated only once, and no more than two courses may be repeated within a program of study or while a Post-Baccalaureate student.

Schedule of Course Offerings

Table 3. Schedule of Course Offerings by Semester

Course #	SPRING ODD YEARS	SUMMER ODD YEARS	FALL ODD YEARS	SPRING EVEN YEARS	SUMMER EVEN YEARS	FALL EVEN YEARS
<i>EDEC 532</i>	X					
<i>EDEC 571</i>	X					

<i>EDEC 538</i>		<i>X</i>				
<i>EDEC 541</i>		<i>X</i>				
<i>EDEC 540</i>			<i>X</i>			
<i>EDEC 542</i>			<i>X</i>			
<i>Edec 572</i>			<i>X</i>			<i>X</i>
<i>EDEC 539</i>				<i>X</i>		
<i>EDEC 535</i>				<i>X</i>		
<i>EDEC 531</i>					<i>X</i>	
<i>EDEC 537</i>					<i>X</i>	
<i>EDEC 536</i>						<i>X</i>

EDEC 542						X
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Procedures and Policies

Important University Policies for Graduate Students

Below are a few highlights from the University policies for graduate students. For complete and updated information about all procedures, deadlines, and policies related to the graduate program, please familiarize yourself with the [SSU Graduate Studies website](#).

GPA Expectations

Students must maintain a 3.00 grade point average or better in all coursework while in the approved M.A. program as well as in all coursework taken subsequent to admission in conditionally classified standing. The total number of units required for the program is 36, not including a prerequisite three-unit course in child development (ages birth-to-eight or birth-to-twelve).

Credits per Semester

For this program you will be taking **only six units** of graduate-level coursework each semester for six consecutive semesters (including summers). You will not be able to take additional classes. For information about funding opportunities, please see the [SSU Graduate Studies website](#).

Acceptable Courses and Transferring Credits

Courses used toward completion of one degree (BA or previous MA) may not be applied toward completing another degree. No fewer than one-half of the total units required shall be in graduate (500 level) coursework.

Definition of Credit Hours

In all CSU academic courses, it is required that for each unit of credit, there is one hour of classroom instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class work each week. This means that for a 3-unit class, you complete three hours of class time and at least six hours of homework every week. An online course assigns workload in such a way as to comply with the SSU Credit Hour Policy.

Timelines

Graduate programs must be completed in no more than 7 years, which is computed as 14 semesters, not inclusive of summers. Coursework that is more than seven years old may not be used toward the degree unless it is validated through examination or comparable experience. The department will determine whether sufficient cause exists to warrant the re-validation; if not, the coursework must be retaken or new coursework substituted.

Continuous Enrollment Requirements

All Sonoma State University MA students who have begun their final projects must maintain continuous enrollment at SSU through completion of the degree. This continuous enrollment policy serves to ensure that students will be able to receive the advice and supervision of faculty and that students will be able to use university facilities such as the library and computer labs. For complete information on how to maintain continuous enrollment, please refer to the [SSU Graduate Studies website](#).

Academic Standing/Probation

A graduate, credential, or post-baccalaureate student is subject to academic probation if at any time the student's cumulative grade point average in all post-baccalaureate work attempted at SSU falls below 3.0.

A graduate, credential, or post-baccalaureate student will be removed from academic probation when the student's cumulative grade point average in all post-baccalaureate work attempted at SSU is 3.0 or higher.

Graduate, credential, and post-baccalaureate students who are on academic probation must be advised by a faculty member in their department. Otherwise an advising hold may be placed on the student's record.

Academic Disqualification

A graduate, credential, or post-baccalaureate student may be subject to academic disqualification if, after the student has been on probation for at least one semester, the student's cumulative grade point average in all post-baccalaureate work attempted at SSU falls below 3.0. A student who is academically disqualified is not permitted to register for or take courses at Sonoma State University, except through intersession or open university, from the time of disqualification until such time as the student is reinstated according to the procedures below.

Graduate, credential, or post-baccalaureate students who have been disqualified must reapply to their department and the university for admission.

Disqualified graduate students who are reinstated will be on a probationary basis and must meet any requirements outlined in the reinstatement letter by the University Standards Committee.

Students who have been reinstated after disqualification and then disqualified again may not be considered for reinstatement except under exceptional circumstances.

Refer to the ["Reinstatement Checklist"](#) for more information on how to get reinstated.

For detailed information on academic reinstatement, refer to the Academic Senate policy, [Academic Standing, Probation, Disqualification and Reinstatement](#).

Filing for Graduation

Take note of university deadlines for filing for graduation. Filing for graduation triggers a check of your progress and will ensure that you have completed all requirements for finishing your degree. Graduation application deadlines can be found on the [SSU Graduate Studies website](#).

Leave of Absence

If you expect to take more than one semester (including summer) away from your MA program, please file leave of absence forms for both the University and for the School of Education.

- SSU Leave of Absence form: <http://registrar.sonoma.edu/forms-petitions>
- School of Education Request for Leave Of Absence form: <http://education.sonoma.edu/forms>

Without these forms, if you are not enrolled in classes for more than one semester, you will likely have to reapply to the University and possibly to the specific program within the School of

Education. Check with your advisor in the School of Education to see if you need to reapply to the School of Education.

Attendance Policy

The department policy on attendance is that students who are absent for more than three sessions in any given course will fail the course. For weeks when a class is meeting asynchronously, you must post work by the deadline in order to be considered “in attendance” for that session. In cases of extenuating circumstances, the instructor can choose to waive this policy, as long as the reasons for the absence are verified with appropriate documentation and the instructor and student have together developed a plan to address the missed material. Be sure to contact your professor if you are close to the absence limit.

Advising

There are many people to whom you may turn for help with advising as you progress through the MA program. Be prepared to seek out the help you need. The ECS department faculty members are helpful and will be glad to assist you with your questions; however, you should initiate advising appointments with the MA in ECE Graduate Coordinator until you have chosen a Chair for your Capstone Project. At that time, your Chair and the Graduate Coordinator will work collaboratively with you to ensure a successful experience with your Capstone. At all times, be an advocate for your graduate work and ask for the guidance that will help you succeed.

For most questions about the MA program when you are in your first year, please contact the Graduate Coordinator for the MA In ECE. The Graduate Studies office can also answer general questions you may have. The topics might include:

- What classes do I need to take next?
- What are the deadlines for filing paperwork?
- What is my program plan?
- What classes should I take this semester?
- Who should I ask to be my committee chair?

Capstone Committee Chair as Advisor

The role of a committee chair is discussed in depth later in this handbook. However, it is important to know that the ECE MA PROGRAM ADVISOR is your point of contact for assistance

with the program until you have selected a Capstone Committee Chair (usually selected by the end of your first year in the program). Once you have a Capstone Committee Chair, it is best to funnel all your program questions to that person. Your Capstone Committee Chair will best know you, your interests, and the best way for you to finish your program.

Civility, Tolerance, Ethics, and Academic Integrity

SSU Statement on Civility and Tolerance

Sonoma State University is strongly committed to creating a productive learning and living environment that promotes the rights, safety, dignity, and value of every individual. It is fundamental to our mission to promote a civil, respectful, and inclusive community, and to oppose acts of racism, religious intolerance, sexism, ageism, homophobia, harassment, discrimination against those with disabling conditions, or other forms of intolerance. It is the responsibility of all members of the SSU community to create a productive campus climate characterized by considerate and principled conduct. We expect that all members of the SSU community will:

- Communicate with each other in a civil manner.
- Recognize and be accountable for how their actions and language impact the community.
- Treat community members with consideration, dignity, and respect.
- Create a community in which actions of bigotry, oppression, bullying, and hatred will not be tolerated.
- Confront behavior or report to university staff any incidents of intolerance, hatred, injustice, or incivility

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to be honest in meeting all course requirements. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in academic sanctions, including a lowered or failing grade in a course and the possibility of an additional administrative sanction. In all courses, submitted work must be written specifically for that course; if you wish to delve deeper into an assignment submitted to another course, you must discuss this possibility with the professor.

Students are expected to conduct themselves with honesty and integrity. You should be aware that instances of academic dishonesty (cheating and plagiarism) can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

Cheating includes giving unauthorized help during an examination, obtaining unauthorized information about an exam before it is administered, using inappropriate sources of information during an exam, altering the record of a grade or altering an examination after it has been submitted, and misrepresenting the facts in order to obtain exemptions from course requirements.

Plagiarism includes submitting to satisfy an academic requirement any document that has been copied in whole or in part from another individual's work without identifying that individual, paraphrasing a passage so closely that the reader is misled as to the source, and submitting the same written or oral material in more than one course without obtaining authorization from the instructors involved. If you are in doubt about the nature of plagiarism, you should discuss the matter with your course instructor. [The University's Cheating and Plagiarism policy](https://www.sonoma.edu/policies/cheating-and-plagiarism) is available at <https://www.sonoma.edu/policies/cheating-and-plagiarism>.

If a faculty member suspects academic misconduct, he or she will notify the student, discuss the situation and take action as he or she deems appropriate.

In addition, the program ascribes to the ideals and principles for professionals in the field. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, provides guidance about ethical/professional behavior consistent with the ideals and principles of our professional organization.

In all aspects of their campus experience, students shall demonstrate personality and character traits that satisfy the professional standards required in working with children and families and that are consistent with the [School of Education Core Values](http://education.sonoma.edu/about) located at <http://education.sonoma.edu/about>.

Consequences of Inappropriate/Unethical Conduct and SSU Policy on Student Appeals

Students in the ECE MA program are expected to demonstrate a high degree of professionalism that aligns with the [NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct](#). The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct sets forth core values and a framework of professional responsibilities when working with children, families, colleagues, and the community/society. Please familiarize yourself with this statement and use it to guide your academic conduct. If a student is shown to have engaged in behavior that violates the NAEYC Code of Ethical conduct while in courses, fieldwork, or other academic activities, the following procedures will be followed:

- The student will meet with the Early Childhood Studies Department Chair, and, if appropriate, a relevant faculty member for a discussion of the behavior of concern.

This meeting will provide all parties with an opportunity to present information about the incident(s) in question. In some cases, the student will be asked to refrain from attending classes until the case is settled.

- The ECS Chair, after consultation with faculty, will determine an appropriate course of action to address the behavior. Remedies may include, but are not limited to, completion of program-related assignments, recommendation for appropriate counseling, and termination from the program. The ECS Chair maintains all records supporting the decision.
- Students who disagree with the ECS Chair's decision may meet with the Dean of the School of Education. If the Dean and the student do not come to a satisfactory resolution, the student may appeal the decision through the [SSU Student Grievance Policy](https://www.sonoma.edu/policies/student-grievance-policy) at <https://www.sonoma.edu/policies/student-grievance-policy>.

The Capstone Project

Project Overview and Objectives

EDEC 572 is the course in which you will complete the culminating project for your Master of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education. You will work closely with an ECS faculty member to develop and carry out a thesis or an applied project that will demonstrate the knowledge you have gained in this program while furthering knowledge and practices in the field more generally. An applied project is similar to the action research project(s) you will complete in one or more of your courses, you will identify a problem in your workplace, propose a solution such as a new curriculum to better meet the needs of your students, a new strategy to solve an issue or challenge in the classroom, or a new way to collaborate with families.

During the semester when you are registered for EDEC 572, you will be responsible for staying in close contact over email and Zoom with the Chair of your Capstone Committee (more information about the Capstone Committee can be found below). You should expect to spend about 12 hours per week on your project, either in meetings with your Capstone Committee chair, conducting research, reading, writing, and enacting your project.

Capstone Project Objectives

Your capstone project will demonstrate your ability to:

1. Apply theories of development and early childhood research, along with observed changes in children's development over time, to develop strategies and curricula that meet the needs of individual children, their families, and their communities.
2. Identify and incorporate diverse family and community languages and cultures into early

childhood programs and foster culturally responsive, inclusive, and just programs for young children and their families.

3. Apply appropriate observation, documentation, and assessment strategies to evaluate the curricula, pedagogy, and policies of an early childhood program with regard to its ability to provoke children's curiosity and wonder and to positively influence children's development.
4. Demonstrate the characteristics of a caring visionary leader who is committed to integrating socially just and equitable policies and programs.
5. Critically reflect on your practice as an early childhood leader.
6. Demonstrate knowledge of advocacy theories, local community need, state and local policies, and early care and education systems.
7. Use appropriate research design and methodology to create and carry out an original research project based on observation, knowledge of community, and culturally sustaining practices.

University Requirements for Completing the Capstone Project

While our intention is that you will finish your project in the semester in which you enroll in EDEC 572, sometimes it will take longer. The University allows four semesters in total to complete your capstone project, which means that you have three semesters after taking your final course to complete your MA capstone project. For instance, if you enroll in EDEC 572 in Fall 2024, you must complete your capstone project by the end of Spring 2026. A grade of RP (Report Pending) is provided to students for the semester they are working on their culminating project if they are not able to complete the project by their final semester of coursework. The RP grade will remain until the student submits a successful project.

If you extend your capstone work past the semester in which you enroll in EDEC 572, there is no additional cost for finishing the project in the next semester. However, if you are not finished after this "grace" semester of work, you will sign up for a one-credit continuation course through Extended Education for each following semester up to a maximum of two additional semesters. See "continuous enrollment requirements" for information on how to enroll in courses if you do not finish your project in one semester.

A grade of CR (credit) is assigned by Admissions and Records when the GS02 form has been received and processed by the University Graduate Studies Office and after you have completed the program's Exit Survey. Neither your committee chair, nor the Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education Graduate Coordinator can make this grade change.

Projects taking more than four semesters to complete will require an approval for extension by the Graduate Studies office or may require reapplication to the program and re-enrollment in the units.

Students who do not finish the complete degree (all courses plus a successful capstone project) within 14 semesters, not inclusive of summers, may petition the Graduate Studies Office for a one-semester extension of time with appropriate reasons. These petitions must be filed before the expiration of the four-semester time limit.

Timing of the Capstone Project

The Capstone Project is typically completed in the student's final semester. Students must complete all coursework prior to starting the Capstone Project, except for the final content course, which is also completed in the last semester. Therefore, students with an incomplete or failing grade in a required course may be required to delay enrollment in EDEC 572 until missing coursework has been completed, which could significantly delay graduation by two years or more. If you find yourself in this situation, consult with the ECE MA advisor as early as possible.

The Capstone Project Process

The Capstone Project process consists of three phases:

- **Advancement to Candidacy (GSO1 Meeting)** - in the spring of your second year, you will finalize decisions about your topic, gather your Capstone Committee, write a detailed proposal, and hold the meeting in which your proposal will be approved.
- **Completion of your Capstone Project** - in the fall of your second year, you will enroll in EDEC 572 and work with your Capstone Committee chair to complete your project. Expect to spend about 12 hours per week working on your project during this time and to submit your complete project by the 12th week of the semester.
- **Capstone Project Presentation (GSO2 Meeting)** - by the 15th week of the Fall semester, you will present your Capstone Project to your Capstone Committee.

Detailed information about each of these three phases is provided below.

Working with a Faculty Advisor for the Capstone Project

As discussed earlier in the Handbook, the Graduate Program Advisor/Coordinator is your point of contact for assistance with the program only until you have selected a Capstone Committee Chair. Once you have a committee chair, you will work closely with that person to help you with anything from registration to any other program questions, including, of course, those related to your culminating project.

The Capstone Project Committee

What is the committee and who can serve on your committee?

Your committee consists of three individuals whose purpose is to advise and support your progress on your culminating activity. The committee also evaluates the final product.

Your committee chair must be an [Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Full Professor on the Faculty of the Department of Early Childhood Studies](#). Lecturers cannot serve as a Capstone Committee Chair. You should consider a chair who has interests and/or expertise in areas related to your culminating project, and remember that it is perfectly fine to ask someone with whom you have not taken a course. If you don't know who to ask, consult with the ECE MA Coordinator.

The second member of your committee should also teach at SSU, and this person may be either a tenure-track faculty member or a lecturer. The second faculty member may teach in any SSU department—within or outside the Department of Early Childhood Studies.

The third member may be someone from outside the university, but they must hold at least a master's degree. An outside committee member must submit a curriculum vita or resume to the College of Education, Counseling, and Ethnic Studies in order to serve on a committee. It is your responsibility to relay this information to the potential committee member and to make sure your committee chair receives the vita/resume.

As discussed earlier in the Handbook, the Graduate Program Advisor/Coordinator is your point of contact for assistance with the program only until you have selected a committee chair. Once you have a committee chair, you will work closely with that person to help you with anything from registration to any other program questions, including, of course, those related to your capstone project.

What else should you consider when deciding on committee members?

First, understand that faculty members have multiple responsibilities and usually work more than full time. It may not be possible for a particular professor to accept your invitation to be on a master's committee.

When considering your options for Capstone Committee chair, choose someone who understands your topic, someone you trust, and with whom you are comfortable. Your chair will be an important person to guide you through the culminating project. Your chair will help you set up timelines, assist you in developing your proposal, and serve as your first point of contact when you have questions about completing your MA degree.

Discuss other potential committee members with the chair. It is usually a good idea to get the chair's agreement before asking anyone else to serve on the committee. Third members may be from outside the university and can add a perspective that you might not find among SSU faculty.

When should you form your committee?

You should form your committee when you are in your fourth semester of the MA program. By this time, you will have met many of the Early Childhood Studies faculty; at the same time, you want to ask people to work as members of your committee in time to work with them in planning your culminating activity.

How should you approach prospective committee members?

Once you have identified a potential chair, contact them to see if they are available and interested. In your email, introduce yourself and include a tentative plan for your culminating activity. Include as many details as possible, such as the question that interests you, the potential site for your research, the research and writing you have already done in this area, and any other information that will help the faculty member understand your project.

Contact and decide upon your committee chair first. If the faculty member is available, they will set up an initial meeting with you to discuss your plan in more detail, consider who else should serve on the committee, and make sure you are ready to write your proposal. Once you have finalized the rest of your committee with your chair, you will contact each of them to see if they are available and interested in serving as committee members. It is the candidate's responsibility to contact the committee members initially and throughout the Capstone process.

How often should you meet with committee members?

Graduate students usually work very closely with their committee chair, while the other two committee members are usually less involved. When you are working on your capstone project, you will set up a meeting schedule with your chair. The schedule could include meetings as often as weekly at some points in the process.

Students meet at least twice with their complete committees, at the Advancement to Candidacy Meeting (GSO1) and the Final Presentation Meeting (GSO2), each of which is described in detail below. Some committee chairs also recommend that the committee meet sometime between the beginning and the end of the process. At this meeting, the committee can answer your questions, give you additional direction, and respond to work you have completed thus far.

In addition, students often meet informally with their chair or other committee members for input throughout the process. Many graduate students audio record their meetings with faculty in order to aid their recollection of the rich discussions that characterize these meetings.

Advancement to Candidacy (GSO1) Meeting

Typically the first meeting of the full committee, the Advancement to Candidacy meeting (often referred to as the GSO1 meeting) is an important opportunity to gain insights and approval for your research or project ideas. Students share their written proposal with individual committee members about two weeks before the meeting, and when everyone is together in the same space discussing your project, the conversation can be exciting and inspirational. During this meeting, you will present the highlights of your proposal, hear your committee's suggestions, and either get the go-ahead to conduct the work you plan to do for your culminating project or be asked to make revisions to the proposal. This is a time for you to take the lead, ask important questions, and articulate your interest in the work you plan.

Preparation for your Advancement to Candidacy (GSO1) takes place in your fourth semester in the program (your second spring semester). The following table presents a recommended timeline and list of all of the tasks associated with the GSO1 meeting. If you have questions about the timeline or steps, please consult with the ECE MA Coordinator or your Capstone Committee Chair.

Recommended Deadlines	Advancement to Candidacy (GSO1) Tasks
By the end of Week 1 of the spring semester before your capstone class (your second spring semester in the program)	1. Decide on a preliminary topic and write up an outline of what you want to learn about or investigate, or do, and conduct preliminary research to find out if your project seems feasible. 2. Journal or sketch out the answers to the following questions: a. Why do you want to do this? b. What do you want to learn about? (What is the problem/unaddressed need you want to solve?) c. What are your concerns? What have you observed and want to learn more about? What excites you? d. Why is it important to you that you learn more about how to address this problem? e. What do you want to learn about the topic? f. What are practical solutions that you might like to try or to learn about?

	g. What research do you already know about to inform your project? h. Which local and national professionals can inform your thinking about this problem?
By the end of week 2	1. Identify which tenure-track faculty members seem to have expertise in your area of interest. Choose the one that seems like the best fit and ask if they would be willing to be the Chair of your Capstone Committee. See more information about selecting your committee in the previous section of this handbook. 2. Communicate (meeting or email) with the Chair of your Committee to discuss the topic and scope of your capstone project and who might be your other two committee members.
By the end of Week 4	1. Meet with your Chair to discuss the following; a. A final decision about the topic and scope of your capstone project b. A final decision about who you would like to invite to be your two readers (one must be an additional faculty member, the other can be a community member who has earned an MA degree) c. A timeline for the completion of your project by the end of your final semester. Some factors to consider with your chair include: i. How often you and your chair plan to meet for feedback and consultation while you are working on your project; deadlines for completing the various parts of the project. ii. What other responsibilities do you have? Will you be able to devote sufficient time to completing the capstone project or will you likely need an extra semester? iii. When do you want to graduate? If you must graduate in the fall, you will need to plan a project that can be completed in one semester. iv. Do the available resources meet your project needs? For example, you will need to do your own research with your Chair about whether your project requires

	IRB review. Please note that the IRB committee does not meet over the summer. d. What to write in your proposal e. How you will receive feedback on your work f. Possible dates for the GSO1 meeting
By the end of Week 5	1. Send an email to the remaining two people whom you would like to have on your committee. Your email should include a. Polite request to serve as a reader on your committee b. Brief summary of your project (how you envision it so far) c. Explanation of their responsibilities [minimum responsibilities include read and provide feedback on your proposal, attend advancement to candidacy (GSO1) meeting, read and provide feedback on your final capstone project, and attend the presentation of final project (GSO2)]. Both the GSO1 and GSO2 meetings are a minimum of one hour. 2. When your committee members are finalized, set up a day/time for your GSO1 meeting that works for everyone on your committee. When the day/time is determined, send a calendar invitation with all necessary information.
The sixth through the 11 th weeks of the semester	Write your proposal. Your proposal must include the following parts. 1. Proposal a. The Introduction to your proposed capstone project. Include the following elements in your introduction: i. What you intend to study, to do, or to find out and the purpose of the project. ii. Why this project is important to you. What experiences or observations have led to this project? iii. A compelling example or statistic that supports the need to learn more about this topic iv. Initial research literature that provides context for the importance of your project and allows the reader to understand why this study/project is important. v. A statement about what you envision as the potential significance of this capstone project. Why is it important that you conduct this work? vi. How your project is related to an issue of social justice in early childhood education.

	b. The guiding question or problem statement. This question or problem statement will guide both your data collection and data analysis strategies. c. The theoretical framework. What theory or theories are providing the framework for your project and why? d. Explanation of the sources that have informed your thinking so far. What sources of published, peer-reviewed literature are relevant to your research question/s/project and how are they relevant? (2 pages) e. The methods and procedures (how you intend to go about finding the answer to your question or problem). This can be brief. f. Complete references in APA 7th Edition Style 2. List of capstone committee members 3. Anticipated timeline for completion of the capstone project. Be sure to check the Graduate Studies deadlines and to consult with your capstone chair to ensure that your timeline is realistic and meets all university deadlines. 4. List of questions or areas where you feel you need help. The most important goal of the GSO1 meeting is to ensure that you are prepared to begin working on your capstone project. Voicing your questions and concerns now will enable your committee members to better support you! Some additional information about the proposal: a. A solid proposal will usually require about five pages, double-spaced. b. Be sure to include citations and references (in APA style) to support statistics and other facts and to identify important literature relevant to the topic.
By the end of Week 12	1. Send your proposal to your Chair for feedback. 2. Revise, as necessary.
By the end of Week 13	1. Send the final revised (and chair-approved) version of the proposal to the first and second readers for feedback. Allow at least two weeks for your full committee to read the proposal and provide feedback. 2. CC the Chair on all correspondence regarding feedback from the first and second readers 3. Plan to complete the GSO1 meeting by the 15th week of the semester or two weeks after you have sent the last version of the proposal.

By the end of Week 15	1. Present your proposal to the committee at your advancement to candidacy meeting. 2. When your GSO1 meeting has been successfully completed, sign the GSO1 form. Check the forms page on the SSU Graduate Studies website for the most recent version of the form. 3. Discuss any plans you have to work on your Capstone Project over the summer with your Capstone chair. Be sure that you know whether or not they will be available while they are off contract. 4. Celebrate a Milestone!!
Advancement to Candidacy (GSO1) forms are accepted on a rolling basis and should be submitted promptly upon completing the requirements for Advancement to Candidacy and before enrolling in EDEC 572 Capstone Project. Since faculty members are off contract in the summer, you must plan to complete the GSO1 meeting by the end of the spring semester prior to when you will enroll in EDEC 572. All Graduate students <i>must</i> have an Advancement to Candidacy Form on file with Graduate Studies prior to graduation.	

Description and Timeline for the Capstone Project

The Capstone Project is a significant undertaking in which students use the knowledge they have gained in the program to design a project that uses both library research and their own action research to address an important problem in the field. Examples of capstone activities include educational websites; in-service videos; professional presentations; manuscripts prepared for submission to a professional journal; creation, analysis, assessment, and/or implementation of curriculum; and other applications of ideas explored in the ECE MA program.

The Capstone Project is intended to be a culminating representation of the knowledge you have gained in your MA program. While no one project can capture all of your learning, please regularly review and address the [Capstone Project Objectives](#) as you design and complete your capstone project.

Timeline for the Capstone Project

It takes some organization and planning to finish a capstone project in one semester. The key is to be aware of the graduate studies deadlines and to stay in close contact with your Capstone Committee Chair. The following timeline is most likely to lead to a timely graduation:

Timeline	Main Tasks
By the end of the Spring semester before you enroll in EDEC 572	Work with your Capstone Committee Chair to determine a timeline for your Capstone Project. Enroll in EDEC 572.
By the end of Week 1 of the Fall Semester when you are enrolled in EDEC 572	Schedule your GSO2 Meeting with the three members of your Capstone Committee. Schedule regular meetings with your Capstone Committee Chair. We recommend that you meet with your Capstone Committee Chair at least every other week.
Sep 15 of the semester in which you plan to graduate	Apply to graduate. Double check the culminating project deadline. Graduation information and the GSO2 deadlines can be found on the SSU Graduate Studies website.
Weeks 1-12 of the Fall Semester when you are enrolled in EDEC 572	Complete your Capstone Project (criteria for the capstone project are presented below). Your project must be completed one month before your scheduled GSO2 meeting. Plan to spend at least 12 hours a week working on your Capstone Project.
Weeks 12-15 of the Fall Semester when you are enrolled in EDEC 572	Present your Capstone Project at your GSO2 meeting (more information about the GSO2 meeting is presented in the next section). When your GSO2 meeting has been successfully completed, sign the GSO2 form. Check the forms page on the SSU Graduate Studies website for the most recent version of the form Make any needed revisions to your project.
End of the semester	Celebrate your accomplishments! If you have decided to extend your project into a second semester, establish a clear plan for finishing up with your Capstone Committee Chair.

The Final Presentation (GSO2) Meeting

This meeting is the culminating moment of your MAECE course of study. It takes place in person or via Zoom and you are encouraged to invite family and friends. Please note that the day and timing of your Capstone Presentation will depend on the schedules and availability of your Capstone Committee members, and some faculty members may need to meet during the day or at times that vary from when courses are scheduled. We recommend that you work with your committee to reach agreement on a time/day for the GSO2 meeting very early in the semester in which you plan to graduate.

If your Capstone is a thesis, the final presentation meeting will be open to the public and will be advertised within the College of Education, Counseling, and Ethnic Studies. In some cases, presentations made at Sonoma State University, school sites, school board meetings, or parent education nights can serve as this final presentation. Talk with your committee chair about the option that is best for you.

At this meeting, you present your work, and both defend and discuss your ideas with your committee and everyone else in the room. It is an exhilarating experience to share your ideas and engage in intellectual discussions of your work.

Your capstone project must be completed at least four weeks prior to when your Capstone Project presentation meeting is scheduled. Your Committee Chair will need a week to read your final project, and then you will need at least a week to make any changes suggested by your chair. Then your full committee must have two weeks before the meeting to read and review your final write-up so they can give you feedback on it before the final presentation takes place.

At the final meeting, the committee chair signs the GSO2 (Completion of Requirements) form, and the entire committee signs the capstone project title page and abstract. Check the [forms page of the SSU Graduate Studies Office](#) for the latest version of the GSO2 form well before your meeting so you know who needs to sign it and what it looks like.

You must complete the program Exit Survey before the University Graduate Studies Office will process your GSO2 form. Your feedback provides us with the information we need to keep improving the program and the learning experiences of graduate students in the College of Education, Counseling, and Ethnic Studies.

Criteria for the Capstone Project

Your Capstone Committee Chair is your best source of feedback about your progress on your Capstone Project, and these criteria are not meant to substitute for regular meetings with and

feedback from your chair. In cases where these criteria do not quite fit your particular project, consult with your Committee chair.

Required Elements

The formal report on the capstone project must include the following elements:

- Cover page with thesis title, date of GSO2 meeting, your name as author, and the names of all three Capstone Committee members
- Chapter 1 (3-5 double-spaced pages): An introduction that
 - provides relevant context
 - clearly states the problem that is addressed by the project
 - explains the significance of the problem, including a short explanation of the potential significance for our collective work toward anti-racist and equitable programs for children
- Chapter 2 (minimum 8 double-spaced pages): A literature review that demonstrates your professional knowledge base in the areas addressed. The literature review must
 - Provide a complete framework and rationale for your project (consult with your Capstone Committee Chair to clarify the role of the literature review in your specific project)
 - Draw deeply from peer-reviewed and other reliable, appropriate research
 - Articulate connections between research literature and the culminating activity
- Chapter 3 (minimum 3 double-spaced pages, but some projects might require significantly more): A detailed description of the project. Your description should answer the following questions
 - What were the goals?
 - What did you do? If your project includes original research, this chapter must include a detailed description of your research methods. Regardless of the project, include as much detail as possible to give the reader a clear picture of how you carried out your project.
 - If applicable, your project can be integrated into Chapter 3, or it can be included as an appendix. For example, if your project was to create a handbook, the entire handbook might not be easily integrated into Chapter 3, but you could easily attach it as an appendix.
- Chapter 4 (minimum 3 double-spaced pages): A description of the findings, results, or outcomes of your project.
 - What were the findings, results, or outcomes of your project ?
 - How do you know that these findings, results, or outcomes are a direct result of what you did?

- Anything that is especially important, surprising, or significant about the results
- Chapter 5 (3-5 double-spaced): A detailed reflection that includes:
 - The extent to which the findings, results, or outcomes met your project goals
 - The implications of the work for the local context and the field generally
 - How the project advances social justice in Early Childhood Education
 - Any significant limitations of the project and/or things you might do differently next time
 - Any other significant learnings or accomplishments
- A complete list of references. The entire paper must adhere to APA Style, 7th edition.

Evaluation of the Capstone Project

1. At least two weeks in advance of the GSO2 meeting, the candidate submits the capstone to committee members for their consideration.
2. The culminating activity and written reflection are evaluated by the committee according to the rubric below. Each rubric item must be met for successful completion of the MA degree.
3. If any of the items on the rubric are not met, the chair will meet with the candidate to explain the problems with the capstone and to instruct the candidate to revise as needed. The GS02 form is not signed until another meeting is scheduled.
4. Candidates have three opportunities to complete the project and written reflection satisfactorily. Additional time needed to satisfy project requirements must fall within the [university's requirements for timely degree completion](#).
5. Once the committee has determined that the project and written reflection are satisfactory, the committee will meet with the candidate for another final presentation.

Note: If the culminating activity that the candidate has developed is a formal presentation (i.e. inservice, workshop, scholarly presentation), then the committee may evaluate the activity at the presentation itself—which could, in some cases, also function as the final presentation meeting.

Rubric

Key Strengths <i>(faculty comments)</i>	Criteria	Suggestions or Questions <i>(faculty comments)</i>
	Introduction (3-5 pages) provides relevant context; clearly states the problem that is addressed by the project; and	

	explains the significance of the problem, including potential significance for anti-racist and equitable programs for children.	
	Literature review (min 8 pages) demonstrates professional knowledge base in the areas addressed, draws deeply from peer-reviewed research, and articulates connections between research literature and culminating activity.	
	Description of the project (min 3 pages) includes the goals, detailed explanation of the project, and the results.	
	Description of the findings, outcomes, or results of the project (3-5 pages) including a description of the findings, outcomes, or results; how you know these outcomes are a direct result of what you did; and anything that is especially important, surprising, or significant about the outcomes.	
	Reflection (min 3 pages) includes • The extent to which the findings, outcomes, or results met your project goals • The implications of the work for the local context and the field generally • How the project advances social justice in Early Childhood Education • Any significant limitations of the project and/or things you might do differently next time • Any other significant learnings from the project	
	Critical Thinking The work includes original analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of key ideas. Statements are backed by sound reasoning and evidence from reliable sources. Assumptions are identified and different perspectives are included. Social justice implications are considered. Where relevant, practical and ethical implications have been addressed.	
	Writing Writing demonstrates graduate level proficiency. Wording and phrasing convey ideas clearly, and the work is free of typos and errors in grammar, spelling, syntax, and semantics. Work is organized so that ideas and information are clear. Headings are used to help organize the information. Writing is succinct and focused. Paper format, references, and citations match APA Style (7th edition)	
	Professionalism Ideas and concepts are ethical and consistent with professional standards of conduct (such as the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct).	

	Academic language is used correctly. Writing avoids an informal tone and wording.	
	Academic Integrity Ideas and writing are the author's own. When the ideas of others are used to provide evidence or support, academic citations clearly identify both the quoted or paraphrased content and where it came from. Any use of Artificial Intelligence is discussed with the members of the Capstone Committee members and, if appropriate, is cited.	

Student Services

When You Need Information and/or Support

The [Graduate Studies Website](https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/graduate-studies/prospective-graduate-students) at

<https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/graduate-studies/prospective-graduate-students> has a wealth of information for graduate students. You will find funding opportunities for graduate students, the graduate handbook for ALL SSU graduate students, and many, many more resources. This should be your “go to” website as a graduate student.

Campus Policy on Disability Access for Students: If you are a student with a disability, and think you may need academic accommodations, please contact [Disability Services for Students](http://web.sonoma.edu/dss/) at <http://web.sonoma.edu/dss/> as early as possible in order to avoid a delay in receiving accommodation services. Use of DSS services requires prior authorization by DSS.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): CAPS is a unit of the division of Student Affairs of Sonoma State University. [CAPS](http://caps.sonoma.edu/) offers confidential counseling to students experiencing personal problems that interfere with their academic progress, career, or well-being. The CAPS website at <http://caps.sonoma.edu/> provides information only. If you would like to talk with someone or make an appointment, please call (707) 664-2153

SSU Learning and Academic Resources Center(LARC): The [Learning Center \(LARC\)](http://triosss.sonoma.edu/programs) is a multi-purpose center providing a variety of academic support services for SSU students, including tutorial services and specialized programs. For example, there is a [Multilingual Achievers Program](#) designed to offer further instructional support to students whose first language is something other than English, or students who learned English at the same time as another language. The website is: <http://triosss.sonoma.edu/programs>,. [The Writing Center](#)

[Services Website](http://larc.sonoma.edu/writing-center) at <http://larc.sonoma.edu/writing-center> has more information on how to schedule time with a tutor.

Trio Student Support Services: These programs provide a wide variety of excellent academic and personal services for first generation college students, multilingual learners, low-income students, and students with a disability. Please check the Learning Center for eligibility criteria and specific details at <http://www.sonoma.edu/lss/>.

The Hub Cultural Center: The HUB Cultural Center fosters connection by cultivating meaningful conversation and building community within and between diverse cultures. HUB programs and events focus on inclusivity, equity, and community-building. The HUB provides opportunities for students to expand their worldviews, deepen their awareness of who they are in relation to others and place, and to feel at home in a community that cares about and works toward a vital and just society. [The HUB website](https://hub.sonoma.edu/) has more information at <https://hub.sonoma.edu/>

The Dream Center: This center provides a safe space for members of the undocumented campus community and their allies. Information regarding application for DACA, legal services and financial resources is available. All students are welcome and can access services without disclosing individual documentation status. Their phone number is: 707-664-3541. The website is available at: <https://studentaffairs.sonoma.edu/staff-resource-guide/programs/dream-center>

Appendices

Appendix A: Program Checklist

Beginning your MAECE Program

- ☐ Apply and be admitted to MAECE Program
- ☐ Read MAECE Handbook
- ☐ Familiarize yourself with the Graduate Studies Webpage and Resources
- ☐ Meet with Early Childhood Studies Graduate Program Advisor
- ☐ Complete the Online Welcome Course

Throughout the MAECE Program

- ☐ Meet regularly (at least once per semester) with Graduate Program Advisor until you are working directly with your Chair
- ☐ Update Program Plan if you make changes in your program plan*¹
- ☐ Notify School of Education about any change of address or other contact information
- ☐ Take program courses as per schedule
- ☐ Begin thinking about ideas for culminating activity: the Capstone Project

By the end of the fourth semester (24 credits or 8 classes)

- ☐ Decide on your Capstone Project
- ☐ Choose a Committee Chair and with the chair, choose the rest of your Committee members
- ☐ Schedule an Advancement to Candidacy (GS01) meeting at which you will:
 - Present culminating project proposal
 - Sign the Advancement to Candidacy form

By the end of the fifth semester (30 credits or 10 classes)

- ☐ [File for Graduation, according to university deadlines](#)
- ☐ Begin preparing for your Capstone Project & Presentation for the following semester
- ☐ Ensure that all GSO2 Requirements have been completed

¹ Note that courses are only offered every other year. Plan accordingly.

During the sixth and final semester of the MAECE Program

- ☐ Finish and publicly present your Capstone project
- ☐ Make any required revisions as per Committee Feedback
- ☐ Ensure that the GSO2 has been submitted
- ☐ Complete Online Exit Survey

