NOTES ON SPECIAL PROJECTS

The satisfactory completion of this unit provides an alternative to the regular face-to-face classroom unit of study for candidates enrolled in a graduate coursework award. Candidates may choose to enroll in a maximum of two such units to be counted towards their coursework award, but should not enroll in both units in the same semester. This paper provides information as to the nature and purpose of these units and guidelines to proceed.

Assumptions

These units of work will be undertaken independently. A candidate wishing to undertake one or two such units of study should generally:

1. be aiming at producing an original, high quality piece of writing;
2. have already completed some study relevant to the proposed topic;
3. be willing to accept the responsibility of working largely independent of staff supervision; and
4. not have submitted this work for other units of study completed in the degree program, or even in another institution.

This project/paper will consist of work equivalent to one unit of graduate study. This would be supported by 3-4 discussions with a candidate’s supervisor and eventuate in a paper of approximately 6,000 words.

Why choose this unit?

There are a number of reasons why a candidate may consider enrolling in this unit. First, it provides the opportunity to continue with a particular professional/personal interest which develops from, but goes beyond, the scope of coursework offered by the School, in the form of a Capstone task. Second, this paper/project may be used as a bridge between a completed unit and the development of a thesis proposal. Third, the completion of projects may be appropriate for Special Consideration candidates.

The nature of a Special Project

Special Projects may be presented in many forms and structures; however, common to all should be a high quality of writing, characterised by clarity, coherence and logical argument. Candidates are encouraged to consider forms of Projects such as reviews, reports and critiques of research, accounts of the development of resources, protocols, instruments or
accounts and analyses of action and research in educational contexts. As with all essays, such work should be demonstrably informed by relevant theory and research. Furthermore, Special Projects may include forms other than written prose; use may be made of graphs, tables, pictorial representations, audio, video and computer generated material in order to support written reports.

A Special Project should **not** take the form of an empirical study involving quantitative or qualitative data collection and analysis and requiring human ethics approval.

**Proposal**

Each student needs to submit a proposal for the Special Project. The proposal, normally of 1 page in length, is to be seen as a flexible plan of action for the candidate. It should indicate the major purposes and directions of the proposed Special Project. However, it should also provide flexibility to accommodate changes in emphasis that may occur as the Project develops. Candidates should ensure that their proposal addresses the following:

1. Title of the proposed Special Project
2. Candidate’s name
3. Name of proposed supervisor (where applicable)
4. The nature and purposes of the proposed Project
5. An indication of the relationship between the proposed Project and the problems, concepts and issues raised in previously completed coursework
6. Two references indicating the student's familiarity with the related literature at this stage

**Assignment of Special Project Supervisor**

After consultation, the Designated Course Convenor will formally assign a supervisor for your Special Project, who is normally the academic staff member who has worked with you until this point.

**Special Consideration and Leave of Absence**

Students should refer to the Sydney School of Education and Social Work policy (website links through [www.edfac.usyd.edu.au](http://www.edfac.usyd.edu.au)) for information on:
- Special consideration for reasons of serious ill health or serious misadventure
- Leave of absence

**Assessment**

Submit your Special Project through Turnitin by the set due date.

Generally, a Special Project will be assessed by a candidate’s supervisor. In some circumstances, the Special Project Coordinator may request another staff member. The specific criteria for assessment may vary depending on the nature of the project. The Marking Criteria and the Grade Descriptors below are provided as guidelines, but specific criteria should be discussed with the supervisor before submission of the report for marking.

**Sample Marking Criteria**

1. Clear Introduction to the Field
2. Adequacy of the Literature Review
3. Analysis of Key Themes
4. Discussion of Policy/Practice Implications
5. Presentation

Sample Grade Descriptors

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<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| 85-100 | High Distinction | Indicates work of exceptional quality with respect to all specified objectives. Demonstrates:  
- High level of critical analysis and/or interpretation  
May also demonstrate:  
- Evidence of wide, systematic and creative information retrieval  
- Potential to produce original ideas, based on specialized knowledge, which challenge and extend terms of debate |
| 75-84 | Distinction      | Indicates work of superior quality with respect to all specified objectives. Demonstrates:  
- Ability to adapt and apply ideas to new situations, and to evaluate them  
- Academic writing of a high standard (style, argumentation, referencing – as appropriate)  
May also demonstrate:  
- Understanding of a broad area of knowledge as an integrated whole, and the ability to recognize significance of an argument to a theoretical debate or abstract context  
- Ability to articulate integrated analyses of ideas and theories  
- Evidence of wide reading |
| 65-74 | Credit           | Indicates work of predominantly good quality with respect to all specified objectives. Demonstrates:  
- A sound understanding of fundamental concepts, theories and/or issues  
- Ability to apply fundamental concepts going beyond simple replication of content knowledge  
- Satisfactory analysis and argumentation, rather than a predominantly descriptive approach  
- Ability to use academic language competently  
May also demonstrate:  
Interpretive and/or research skills which are used autonomously |
| 50-64 | Pass             | Indicates a satisfactory achievement of specified objectives. Demonstrates:  
- A basic grasp of factual content, theories and/or issues  
- Basic knowledge of fundamental concepts, and/or performance of basic skills  
- Ability to use academic language adequately |
| 0-49  | Fail             | Indicates an unsatisfactory achievement of specified objectives. Demonstrates little or no evidence of satisfactory understanding of the relevant content; and may contain either serious errors or major gaps in what is considered essential information. |
For further information and advice regarding Special Projects, candidates are advised to contact the appropriate Designated Course Convenor from your designated course, or the Special Projects Coordinator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESIGNATION</th>
<th>COORDINATOR</th>
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References

Among the many books written to assist students in essay writing are:


Another useful resource is the Learning Assistance Centre, which offers a variety of on-campus services to help students improve their academic writing and study skills. See the website: http://www.edsw.usyd.edu.au/courses/eaa_skills/