



Department of Education

MA Project procedure

Revised October 2025

I. Comprehensive Exam

All students at the MA level should pass the Comprehensive Examination (EDUC 395A). The comprehensive exam is an oral defense of the project proposal and is intended to evaluate the graduate students' ability to synthesize knowledge **arising from the discipline, which they have specialized in**, demonstrating that they have attained a level of mastery and are ready to make an original contribution to the field.

- *Components*

The Comprehensive Exam consists of two components:

- a. Comprehensive manuscript
- b. An oral defense.

- *Process*

The student will be eligible to register for the Comprehensive Exam (EDUC 395A) concurrently with or after successful completion of EDUC 321 and after approval from the student's academic advisor.

1. *Project topic*: Students will prepare a topic of interest to be implemented in a project format arising from the discipline which they have specialized in.
2. *Committee*: Students will solicit the service of a committee (2 members for an intended project, one of them will be the project advisor). This committee will be the student's Comprehensive Examination committee as well as the Project Committee.
3. *Submit online petition*: Students have to submit online the abstract of their project (after approval of the project advisor) via the petition system form to the FAS Graduate Committee specifying the names of the committee members (<https://petitions.aub.edu.lb/>). Please note that students have to submit this petition **at least one semester before** they graduate. Therefore, it is recommended to submit the petition once the committee is formed.
4. *EDUC 395A*: The student will contact Mrs. Nahed El-Oud (dep@aub.edu.lb) for On-campus programs, or Mrs. Rayana Saad (rs126@aub.edu.lb) for online programs, to register for the Comprehensive Exam (EDUC 395A). Note that Section 1 is for on-campus programs and section 9 is for online programs, and both sections are registered under the Department's Chair.
5. *Proposal*: The student will work closely with the project advisor to finalize the Project Proposal. Once ready and upon consultation with their project advisors, students will submit their proposal directly to the members of their comprehensive committee, allowing a minimum of 10 days between submitting the proposal and the date for the oral defense.



- *The project's proposal-Comprehensive Exam*

The proposal should be at least 10-15 pages in length (Double spaced 12 Times New Roman, and contain 10-12 references following APA style).

- a. In the case of a **Practical Application**, the proposal should include (1) an abstract (2) a problem-statement (3) statement of significance of the proposed project, (4) objectives of the project and expected outcomes, (5) literature review including the theory in use for the project design and (6) design of project and plan for implementation (including the actions to be taken to facilitate and monitor the implementation of the project, the resources needed, the strategies to achieve the objectives, as well as the indicators to measure them and the timeline expected).
- b. In case of a **Case Study**, this should provide (1) an abstract, (2) a problem statement/rationale, (3) a statement of the significance of the proposed study, (4) research questions, (5) literature review, and (6) methodology (data collection and analysis).
- c. Students can choose also to perform a **Policy Research Study** where they compare the effectiveness of existing policies across different regions, countries, or time periods. This research may help to identify gaps, unintended consequences, and areas for improvement in current policies. This should provide (1) an abstract (2) a problem-statement (3) statement of significance of the proposed project, (4) objectives of the project and expected outcomes, (5) literature review including the theory in use for the study and (6) methodology (number of articles and policies to include, criteria for selection such as date and region or context).

The project advisor will give guidance during the preparation of the proposal and grant approval to the student to set the date for the Comprehensive Examination/Oral defense.

- *Proposal oral defense*

The proposal oral defense will consist of a 20 min. presentation of the intended project/study. Professors will ask questions during the defense and suggest modifications if needed.

- *Evaluation of the proposal*

The student's comprehensive examination committee will evaluate the written and oral components of the proposal. The results will be assembled by the project advisor and then shared with the chair of the department to submit the grade of EDUC 395A. A grade will be reported to the Department's Chair (with a P-Pass, F-Fail, or PR-Progress, as possible grades) and will be given two attempts to pass it.

- *Register for the project (EDUC398) under the Project advisor name*

After successfully defending the project proposal, the student can start working on the project after addressing all the committee comments. Once all the above steps are completed, students can register the EDUC398 (Project) and start working under the project advisor supervision. When students register the project for a second semester, EDUC 398A should be enrolled. In the case of a mini-study, an IRB application should be submitted and approved by the IRB office before the research project can be implemented.



II. MA Project

- *Components*

The Project Report consists of two components:

- a. Project manuscript
- b. An oral defense.

- *The project's manuscript [APA Style]*

The library has developed a guide that outlines the key steps for submission, formatting requirements, required signed forms, etc...

[Home - Thesis Writing Hub - LibGuides at American University of Beirut](#)

Students should use the template for Education students: [Education-Template-Project.dotx](#)

The project advisor will give guidance during the preparation of the project manuscript and grant his/her approval to student to set the date for the project defense. Deadlines for defense are set by the graduate Council at AUB and can be retrieved at

<https://www.aub.edu.lb/graduatecouncil/Pages/thesisdeadlines.aspx>

Students are strongly advised to submit their thesis for format checking at least two weeks prior to their defense to allow sufficient time for any necessary revisions and to ensure compliance with AUB formatting guidelines on lib-thesis@aub.edu.lb.

The project manuscript should be at least 50 pages in length (Double spaced 12 Times New Roman). Moreover, a minimum of 20 references following APA style should be included with appendices, if any. The manuscript should be structured as follows:

Abstract – (1 page)

Chapter I- Introduction (5-10 pages)

- Statement of the Problem (What is the problem, 1-2 pages)
- Rationale of the Study (Why this study/project, 1-2 pages)
- Research Questions for a case study or policy study /purpose for a project (1 page)
- Significance of the study/project for practice and policy (The impact/Implications of this study/project, 2-3 pages)

Chapter II-Literature review (15-20 pages)

- Review of relevant literature about the subject in the world, the region and Lebanon as relevant (10-15 pages)
- Conceptual Background/Theoretical Framework (2-3 pages)
- Chapter Summary (1page)



Chapter III- Methodology (8-15 pages)

- Research /project design (2-3 pages)
- Context of the study/project (1-2 pages)
- Data collection tools, procedures, analysis/or criteria for selection of policies and articles/or project implementation procedures/products to be generated (5-10 pages)

Chapter IV- Findings and Discussion (14-20 pages)

- Analysis of findings of the case study/Analysis of the articles findings for the policy study/ outcomes of the project implementation (7-10 pages)
- Discussion of the findings for case study/outcomes of project/compare and contrast for policy study (7-10 pages)

Chapter V- Conclusions (3-5 pages)

- Summary of findings/outcomes and broad conclusions (1-2 pages)
- Limitations of the study/project (1 page)
- Recommendations and implications (1 page)

References

Appendices

- *The Project defense*

The project oral defense will consist of a 20 min. presentation of the completed project/study. Professors will ask questions during the defense and the student is expected to answer their inquiries. Afterwards, the student is asked to leave the (virtual) room and the committee deliberates and decides on whether the candidate has successfully defended the project.

- *Evaluation of the MA project*

The student's project committee will evaluate the written and oral components of the project based **on the rubric (see below)**. In the case the students are not deemed ready by their project advisor to defend their project after the first semester, they will receive a PR (for in progress) giving the student more time to work on the project.

- *Accomplishment of the MA Project*

Once you defend and pass the project defense, you need to fill out this project form [thesisprojectformmasters.pdf](#) and submit it to Ms. Rola Badreddine (rb17@aub.edu.lb) in the office of the Registrar, as well as contacting the Library to ensure compliance with AUB formatting guidelines on lib-thesis@aub.edu.lb before you submit your project to the AUB Jafet Library.



Queries and Answers

- 1. How many times can students register for EDUC 395A (comprehensive exam-proposal)?**

Only two times. It is a zero-credit course during which the project proposal is prepared

- 2. When can I register the EDUC 395A?**

Concurrently with or after completing EDUC 321.

- 3. Can I register for the comprehensive exam-proposal (EDUC 395A) with the project (EDUC 398)?**

Yes, you can register at the same time. The 395A can be registered along with one course or after finishing all the courses. Discuss with your academic advisor what best suits your conditions.

- 4. Do I have to pay for the semesters I register for the project? Or only once?**

You pay only for the first time you register for EDUC398, the second time (EDUC398A) there is no tuition payment just the fees for library. However, any subsequent registration needs approval of the graduate studies committee and will cost one graduate credit only.

- 5. Do I need to submit a petition on the system with the committee members for approval? Or just register for the course EDUC 398?**

First, you need to register for EDUC 395A (comprehensive exam) and pass it. Registration for this course requires that your project advisor contacts the department chair to open capacity in the course. After passing the comprehensive exam, you register for EDUC 398 and you need to submit the petition called "Project proposal" while including the committee members for formal approval and processing by the FAS Graduate Studies Committee.

- 6. Can I have a member who is a part-timer at AUB on the committee? How can I know?**

Yes, you can have a part-timer as a member. However, this person will be counted as a third extra member and not among the two required for the committee. Ask your project advisor for advice.



7. What should I do after finishing my project?

Once you defend and pass the project defense, you need to fill out [this project form](#) and submit it to Ms. Rola Badreddine in the office of the registrar.

8. How to submit my work to the AUB Library?

Contact the library on lib-thesis@aub.edu.lb to check the format before you submit your project to the AUB Jafet Library. Remember that there is deadline to submit the manuscript to the Library available at <https://www.aub.edu.lb/graduatecouncil/Pages/thesisdeadlines.aspx>

9. Who owns the copyright of my work?

The thesis/project writer is the exclusive copyright holder of his/her unpublished thesis/project. However, the University Libraries have a non-exclusive right to preserve and provide access to the thesis/project for research purposes only, through the Release Form that the author is required to sign as part of the final thesis/project document. As for the procedure, please refer to the Thesis Writers Hub>> Submission process <https://aub.edu.lb/libguides.com/Thesis/Submission>

10. Can I take a Leave of Absence?

Students who are not enrolled for a period of more than 12 months will be considered to have withdrawn from the program unless they apply for a leave of absence. The leave of absence application can be up to one year at a time. The maximum period of approved leave of absence is for two years. Please refer to FAQ regarding Online Petitions and Forms System (Graduate Students) <https://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/Pages/OPFS-FAQ-GR.aspx>

11. How long I can stay as an active student enrolled in the MA program?

Students can stay maximum eight regular semesters (4 years). The minimum is 4 regular semesters (2 years).

12. Can I pursue a Ph.D. after a project?

Yes, you can pursue a Ph.D. after a project. It depends on the program you are applying to. Each Ph.D. program may have specific requirements, so check these carefully.



MA Project Rubric

This rubric constitutes the evaluation criteria for a research study, an implemented project, a written manuscript, or a presented product. It defines the characteristics of an excellent piece of work with regard to quality, novelty, relevance to educational challenges in the region and implications for the practice and contributions to the knowledge-base in the region.

		Poor (0)	Satisfactory (1)	Good (2)	Exceptional (3)
Quality of the study/Project	Significance of the problem studied	The study/project is essentially a repeat of previously published work, with some minor variations adding little to the existing literature.	The study/project addresses research questions/objectives that have been addressed previously in the literature but it has been extended to a novel context or population. However, the relevance of this extension is not well rationalized.	The study/project addresses novel research questions/objectives that have not been addressed before in the literature. However, the questions/purpose do not emerge from a well-documented gap in the research literature or a clear practical need.	The study/project has generated an important finding and/or has very important and timely implications for practice. The study/project addresses a well-documented gap in the literature or clear practical need.
	Depth, breadth and organization of literature review	The literature review does not cover all relevant areas given the research questions and project objectives and lacks a conceptual framing for the study/project	The literature review covers all relevant areas given the research questions and purpose of the project. However, the organization of the review as well as the conceptual framing drawn from the literature do not clearly rationalize/ground the research questions and project objectives.	The literature review covers all relevant areas given the research questions and project objectives. Moreover, the organization clearly rationalizes the research questions and project objectives. Additionally, there is a relevant theoretical or conceptual framework informing the design and implementation of the study/project	The literature review covers all relevant areas given the research questions and project objectives. Moreover, the organization clearly rationalizes the research questions and purpose of the project. In addition, the review critically evaluates the existing literature and offers a coherent conceptual framework on which the study/project design is based
	Methodology rigor	Some errors can be identified in the selection of methods and/or project design and implementation, data collection or analysis techniques	The method of data collection and analysis/project design selected are appropriate given the goals of the study/project. However, the methods have not been implemented with a high degree of accuracy and precision.	All selected methods are appropriate given the goals of the study/project. Data collection, analysis techniques/project design are applied with accuracy and precision. However, the methodological limitations have not been clearly described and acknowledged.	All selected methods are appropriate given the goals of the study/project. Data collection, analysis techniques/ project design are applied with accuracy and precision. Methodological limitations are clearly described and acknowledged. Consequently, the results are highly trustworthy.



	Findings and conclusions	Many conclusions are drawn that are either inconsistent with or not warranted by the actual results of the study/project.	Most of the conclusions drawn are warranted given the results. Although, some speculative conclusions are included that are not identified as such.	All conclusions drawn are warranted given the results. However, there is little discussion of alternative interpretations of the findings and what future work is needed to address open questions.	All conclusions drawn are warranted given the results. Moreover, alternative interpretations of the results are acknowledged and discussed. Directions for future work that would address open questions are discussed.
Quality of the writing		The manuscript is poorly edited, including many errors. Also, many parts of the manuscript are poorly organized and/or are not clear. APA style is not attempted for references and headers. Sources are missing or not complete.	The manuscript is quite clearly written but includes a few editorial errors and some parts are not well organized. APA style is attempted but there are many errors. All sources are referenced with minor errors in format.	The manuscript is well-edited, clear and well organized. However, the style of writing often does not rise to the level of professional quality. APA style is used consistently with only minor errors. All sources are properly referenced.	The manuscript is well-edited, clear and well organized. Moreover, the style of writing reaches a high degree of professionalism and quality. APA style is used consistently and accurately. All sources are properly referenced.
Oral Defense		The candidate presents and defends the study/project weakly.	The candidate presents and defends the study/project at a satisfactory level.	The candidate presents all components of the study/project with clarity and defends it successfully answering most questions in a manner that shows satisfactory understanding of the study/project providing a few details that enriches the written manuscript	The candidate presents and defends the study/project while being creative and adding details that highlight the critical nuances and major components in a manner that adds depth to what was communicated in the written document.
Engagement with the project		The student did not demonstrate independence and enthusiasm when conceptualizing and carrying out the project.	The student required a lot of supervisor support in the conception and implementation of the study initially but increasingly took on ownership of the project.	The student required some support in the conception of the study but demonstrated substantial independence and ownership during the implementation phase.	The central idea of this research study/project originated with the student. The student demonstrated great independence and enthusiasm while carrying out the study/project.