

## Department of Exercise Science and Sport Management

### Graduate Faculty

#### Capstone Experience

The culmination of the MS in Applied Exercise and Health Science program is a 6-credit hour Capstone Experience. In consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator, students will select one of the following three options. During the semester prior to the beginning of the Capstone Experience, eligible graduate candidates must submit the appropriate graduate Capstone Experience proposal form (see below). The form serves as a proposal, offering a brief description of the project and setting expectations and timelines for completing work. The student must receive approvals from all appropriate supervisors (Graduate Program Coordinator and Department Chair included) before the end of the semester prior to the beginning of the Capstone Experience. Care should be taken to set intermediate deadlines in order to monitor student progress during the semester.

- 1) EHS 7800 Administrative Field Experience (up to 9 credit hours, repeatable) - The Administrative Field Experience is an experience that is established with the approval of the department chair and is verified through Career Planning and Development as a legitimate site including who the on-site supervisor will be. The goal is to allow the student to integrate their academic preparation through problem solving or program implementation in a worksite setting. Although it is advisable to not intern at a student's place of employment, in certain situations a valid case might be made to warrant an exception. In this case, the field experience must be above and beyond the student's normal work responsibilities and approval is at the discretion of the department chair. Since time is required to identify and secure a field experience site, the Graduate Program Coordinator will encourage the student to begin meeting with the WCHHS Career and Internship Advisor during the preceding semester to secure an appropriate site.
- 2) EHS 7850 Master's Project in AEHS (plus an approved elective) - The Master's Project is a capstone experience that leads to the development of an exercise science and/or sport management product. This product can be in many forms such as a publishable journal article, teaching aid, instructional videotape, program or facility development, web site, on-line course materials, lab manual, curriculum development, etc. The student will work with the Graduate Program Coordinator during the semester preceding the Project to help identify a member of the Graduate Faculty (if needed) to direct the Master's Project. This faculty member must have the expertise and interest to direct the Project since it is a significant time commitment. It is important to understand that the Graduate Faculty member has the discretion whether or not to direct the Project. Also, final approval is required by the Department Chair since directing a Project has ramifications on faculty teaching workload. Once the Project Director has been approved, the student will meet with the faculty member to complete the Master's Project Approval Form (see below)

which identifies the title, products, and dates for completion of work. This signed document will be required before a student will be allowed to register for the course.

To avoid student confusion regarding the distinction between a Master's Project and a Master's Thesis, it is imperative that all Graduate Faculty pay careful attention to the usage of certain terminology or phrases when directing a Master's Project or when mentoring Graduate students. This is particularly problematic when a Master's Project is data based. First, a Master's Project can never be converted into a Thesis. If a student makes this request, the student must either withdraw from the Master's Project or complete the Master's Project. Then, the student can enroll in Thesis the next semester (the Thesis will require two semesters and the topic must be different from the Master's Project if a grade was awarded for the Project). Secondly, a Master's Project should be completed in one semester; therefore, make sure the depth and breadth of the work is consistent with a one-semester Project. And, never tell a student that "this Project should have been a Thesis." This statement undermines our credibility as Graduate faculty and our ability to distinguish the difference between a Project and a Thesis (They must never appear to be the same). Thirdly, students will stress over the ramifications of doing a Master's Project and whether it will restrict them from being admitted to doctoral school. It is important to not become obsessed with the semantics of Project verses Thesis, but we must encourage all of our students to publish their work. Lastly, please do not confuse the presentation of the Master's Project at the end of the semester with the Master's Thesis "defense." It simply is a presentation of the Master's Project and certainly there is no problem having some time devoted to questions. If you are directing a Master's Project and a Thesis, please do not schedule the Thesis defense during the same session you would have a student present a Master's Project. It would be better to plan for a separate day.

- 3) EHS 7900 Master's Thesis (repeat once) - The Master's Thesis is a capstone experience that leads to the development and writing of a thesis under the supervision of a Graduate Faculty member and the oversight of a Thesis Committee composed of at least two additional Graduate Faculty members. The Master's Thesis (EHS 7900) is repeated once; therefore, it will require two consecutive semesters to complete or more if work is unsatisfactory at any point.

During the first semester, students will develop the research prospectus which will include the proposed title, background about the topic, review of the literature, and a description of the scientific methods that will be utilized for the research. In addition, students are required to complete the KSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the use of human subjects if applicable. The prospectus should be presented to the Thesis Committee no later than two weeks prior to the end of the semester. Committee members should take this opportunity to express any concerns regarding the Thesis. Raising substantial concerns that should have been evident at the proposal stage after the prospectus has been approved should be avoided. Any dissention regarding the prospectus will be resolved by a simple majority vote of the Committee. If the Thesis Committee rejects the prospectus, the student may schedule one revised prospectus defense before the end of the semester. If the Thesis Committee does not approve the

revised prospectus, then the student must choose Project or Administrative Field Experience as his/her Capstone Experience. The prospectus must be approved by the Thesis Committee prior to the initiation of data collection.

During the second semester of Thesis, students will complete the data collection, analysis, write up, and defend of the thesis. It is imperative for the Thesis Committee Chair and the Thesis Committee members to understand that the scope of a Thesis must ample enough to require two semesters for completion. If a student is capable of completing a Thesis in a single semester, this is not appropriate for the awarding of Thesis credit. During the first course, a grade of “U” (Unsatisfactory) or “IP” (In Progress) should be awarded. The student is expected to complete the Thesis during the second semester; therefore, a grade of Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory should be awarded. If a student does not finish the Thesis during the second semester, another “IP” (In Progress) grade would be awarded and the student must register for the course a third time the next semester. Thesis hours beyond the required six hours do not count toward completion of the degree. Faculty members should be sensitive to the fact that a third semester of Thesis hours represents an additional financial burden to students; therefore, care should be taken to ensure that the thesis is completed within two semesters. In addition, the Department Chair must approve the extension of the Thesis into a third semester. Awarding a grade of “I” (Incomplete) should only be done in consultation with the Department Chair.

The writing of a Thesis is a major task; therefore, the decision to pursue a Thesis will be made in consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator. Unlike the Administrative Field Experience and the Master’s Project, the Master’s Thesis requires the Graduate student to have the commitment and maturity to spend the necessary time focusing on this research project that is primarily independent work. The Thesis begins with the student selecting a member of the Graduate Faculty to serve as the Thesis Committee Chair. This faculty member must have the expertise and interest to direct the Thesis since it is a significant time commitment. It is important to understand that the Graduate Faculty member has the discretion whether or not to serve as the Thesis Committee Chair. Also, final approval is required by the Department Chair since serving as the Thesis Committee Chair has ramifications on faculty teaching workload across two semesters. Once a Thesis Chair has been approved, the student selects the Thesis Committee members in consultation with the Thesis Committee Chair. As with the Chair role, serving on the Thesis Committee is a major time investment; therefore, Graduate Faculty members have the discretion whether or not to serve and their appointment must be approved by the Thesis Committee Chair and the Department Chair. The Master’s Thesis Committee Approval Form (see below) must be completed before the student will be allowed to register for the Master’s Thesis. For clarification, the ultimate responsibility for the successful completion of a Thesis resides with the Graduate student. The supervision of the Graduate student’s work is the responsibility of the Thesis Committee Chair and the Chair is free to involve any other Graduate Faculty in the Thesis as deemed appropriate. The role of the Thesis Committee members is to provide oversight to the Thesis process which will include approval of the Thesis prospectus and the final Thesis document. Any member of the Thesis Committee including the Chair has

the right to recuse himself/herself from the Committee at any point during the process. This decision must be done in consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator and the Department Chair. If the Committee has at least three members, no replacement will be added. If the Committee falls below three members, the Department Chair, in consultation with the Thesis Committee Chair, will appoint the appropriate number of replacements.

The Thesis must include a standard title page and a signature page that conforms to the Department's guidelines. Templates are available on the Department website. The Department has adopted two different formats for the final Thesis product: 1) traditional five chapter book format, or 2) journal article format. Although there are two different formats available, the Thesis process remains the same and the selection of the appropriate format is at the discretion of the Thesis Committee Chair. The Thesis Committee Chair must provide the specific details regarding the Thesis format to the student and the Thesis Committee members. Regardless of format, all students who complete the research Thesis should be strongly encouraged to submit their work for peer-reviewed publication (and conference presentation). The following are some basic guidelines for the two formats.

Traditional Five Chapter Book – It is the responsibility of the Thesis Committee Chair to develop a detailed guide for the Thesis format and to work closely with the student to ensure adherence to the format. The Traditional Five Chapter Book format will consist of the following chapters: 1) Introduction (e.g., introduction, purpose, research question, hypothesis, limitations, delimitations, significance of the study, definition of terms, etc.), 2) Review of the Literature (i.e., comprehensive summary of the relevant published research), 3) Methodology (e.g., research design, subjects, methodology, instrumentation, data analyses, etc), 4) Results (i.e., tables/figures and findings from the study), and 5) Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations (i.e., explanation of the results in comparison to current research, summary statement of findings, and recommendations for future research). The Thesis must also include a reference list, a title page (see below) and a signature page (see below). The Thesis prospectus will include the first three chapters with the final Thesis containing all five.

Journal Article – It is the responsibility of the Thesis Committee Chair to develop a detailed guide for the Thesis format and to work closely with the student to ensure adherence to the format. The Journal Article format may vary somewhat depending on the Committee Chair, but some basic tenets will be followed. First, all students must develop a prospectus for Thesis Committee approval. The prospectus must contain the proposed title, background about the topic, review of the literature, and a description of the scientific methods that will be utilized for the research. Secondly, the final product will be one (or more) journal articles which will include an abstract, introduction, methodology, results (including figures/tables), discussion, and reference list. The format and style will be consistent with the intended journal where the paper will be submitted for publication.

## **Defense**

Once the Chair of the Thesis Committee feels the Thesis is finished, a copy will be provided to each of the Thesis Committee members for review along with a date to complete the review. The Thesis Committee must be given a minimum of 7 days (calendar) to review and respond to the document. The Thesis Committee Chair should be sensitive to the Thesis Committee members' time and make every effort to provide this copy as early as possible before the end of the semester along with ample time for review. Likewise, all Thesis Committee members must understand that their commitment to serve on the Committee may necessitate a lot of reading and review at the end of the semester when everyone is the busiest. If a member of the Committee feels there is one or more major issues that must be addressed before approving the Thesis, this Committee member is responsible for articulating his/her concerns in writing to the Thesis Committee Chair before the end of the review period. If there is a disagreement between the Committee Chair and Committee Member regarding these issues, the Committee Chair will call a meeting of the Thesis Committee to discuss the issues and determine the final outcome. If a vote is required to settle differing viewpoints, simple majority will rule. *In short, any significant issues regarding the acceptability of the written Thesis document must be resolved before the Thesis defense.*

The Thesis Chair will preside over the Thesis defense. The defense should be scheduled after the review period and after all major issues have been resolved, but as early as possible before the end of the semester. It is the responsibility of the Thesis Chair to set the date/time, confirm a location, and to announce the defense to the faculty and students. Following the presentation of the Thesis, there will be a question/answer period. Committee members are encouraged to ask some questions related to the Thesis which integrates content from the student's AEHS Core and Concentration Core courses. Once the question/answer period is finished, the Thesis Chair will clear the room for the final meeting of the Thesis Committee. During this meeting, Committee members must submit in writing (can be notations on the Thesis copy) any additional recommended editorial changes to the Thesis. Any dissention will be resolved by a simple majority vote of the Committee. Once again, any significant issues must be resolved before the Thesis defense is held; therefore, most editorial changes at this time should be fairly minor. The Graduate student will be invited back into the room for a celebratory time and the signing of the Approval Page by the Thesis Committee members. The Master's Thesis is a capstone for our AEHS Graduate Program, and the final defense should conclude as a positive experience for our Graduates. All Committee members will sign the Approval Page with an understanding that the Thesis Committee Chair is responsible for ensuring all final edits to the document. The Department Chair withholds his/her signature until all the Committee's recommended changes have been made. Once the final edits are completed, the thesis is submitted to the Department Chair for approval. Once signed by the Department Chair, the Thesis Committee Chair will submit the grade for the course. Also, the Thesis Committee Chair is responsible for verifying that the student completes the final bound copy and delivers it to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

**Final Written Document**

At least one final bound copy of the Thesis must be prepared for the Department. The Thesis must be printed on high quality (acidfree, 20%-100% cotton, 16lb. or 20lb.) and letter-size (8 ½" x 11") plain white paper. The final copy must be bound (available at most print shops) with a protective front and back cover. This final copy must be given to the Graduate Program Coordinator for storage with other Graduate Theses.

**Publication**

It is the responsibility of all Graduate faculty to encourage students to publish (and present at a professional conference) their work. All Master's Theses and most Master's Projects should be publishable. In some instances, the project from the Administrative Field Experience may be publishable. Therefore, it is in the best interest of all to encourage our students to seek publication of their Capstone Experience product. Authorship on a publication can become a very sensitive issue. For example, should all members of a Thesis Committee be listed as an author on the publication? – probably not. Here is a recommended guideline to follow when determining authorship credit. Authorship should be limited to individuals who made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. Authors should be involved in one or more aspects of data collection, analysis, interpretation, and drafting/revising the intellectual content of the manuscript. And, the author should give final approval of the published version of the manuscript.

Since publication is a desirable outcome for all Master's Theses, it is imperative that we ensure that our students' topics are timely, solve problems, and/or explain knowledge. The research process should be systematic and based on a thorough review of the literature which results in facts and reaches conclusions in the end. Certainly it is important for students to have an interest and passion for the topic, but this must be an original research topic and not a simple duplication of previous work. Our research should be hypothesis driven, and we must utilize the most sophisticated methods and instrumentation available to us. Lastly, we must strive to reinforce what we teach in Research Techniques in AEHS through the selection of appropriate subject sampling, research designs, statistical techniques, and our efforts to achieve the highest level of reliability/validity possible in our methodology.

*(type the Thesis title)*

*(type your full name)*

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the  
Department of Health, Physical Education, and Sport Science,  
Kennesaw State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree

Master's of Science  
Applied Exercise and Health Science

*(type the date to include Month Year)*

**APPROVAL PAGE FOR GRADUATE THESIS**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Master of Science in Applied Exercise and Health Science, in the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Sport Science at Kennesaw State University.

(type full name of candidate)  
Candidate

(type name of concentration)  
Concentration

TITLE: *(type the thesis title)*

APPROVED: Dr. (type name of Committee Chair) \_\_\_\_\_  
Thesis Committee Chair Signature

Dr. (type name of Committee Member) \_\_\_\_\_  
Thesis Committee Member Signature

Dr. (type name of Committee Member) \_\_\_\_\_  
Thesis Committee Member Signature

Dr. (type name of Department Chair) \_\_\_\_\_  
Department Chair Signature

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_