



## **Cognate Guide** for **MA Candidates in Reading/Language Education**

Please read about MA degrees in Education and the Cognate path in the *Masters Degree in Education Handbook*, available on line at [www.sonoma.edu/education/masters/](http://www.sonoma.edu/education/masters/) and in print in the SSU Bookstore. The following information is adapted from this document and extended to apply directly to graduate students in Reading and Language.

### **What is a Cognate?**

The Cognate is an opportunity for deeper study of a focus area. It consists of four courses, one of which is an independent study course, EDUC 572. You will select the remaining three courses in consultation with an advisor to extend and deepen your program concentration in Reading and Language. You will design a project based on the three courses. Students who pursue a Reading/Language Arts Specialist Credential often use courses from this state licensure program as their Cognate courses.

### **What is a Reading/Language Cognate Project?**

Your project demonstrates your integration of the three courses and fosters reflection on your own growth as a literacy educator. It is a significant undertaking that displays understandings, practices, and theoretical perspectives on literacy learning and teaching. It should grow from your professional and personal inquiries and 'need to know'. Projects are open-ended and flexible, designed to arise out of personal goals and situations. You will represent your knowledge of reading, writing and the language arts and the connections to your chosen cognate in ways that best demonstrate the depth of understanding you have reached. All projects require a written reflection that might include theoretical wonderings, lingering questions, a position statement, principles that you intend to guide your practice.

### **What is the Advancement to Candidacy meeting?**

Schedule your Advancement to Candidacy meeting as soon as you decide to pursue the Cognate path to the MA degree. In this meeting you present your Program Portfolio and Cognate project proposal to your three-faculty committee. You will talk about what you know about some aspect of literacy/language theory and how your project might take you deeper into a particular area. You will tell about how your work in the Reading/Language program has furthered your knowledge, raised questions, and pushed you to consider new alternatives. You may point out highlights from program coursework thus far and describe how you think your project would connect the cognate courses with your teaching or other professional work. The GSO1 form is signed at this meeting to signify faculty support for your Cognate project.

### **What is the Reading/Language Cognate Presentation?**

This public session validates your accomplishments. After you have finished the Cognate project, schedule a meeting to present your project work and reflections to your committee and other interested people (colleagues, family, classmates). Submit your project/written reflection to the committee two weeks prior to the Presentation. In the session, your committee will want you to summarize briefly what you did and then to talk about your surprises, new questions, and what you will do with what you learned. Tell about your expanded theoretical understandings and the principles that now guide your practice as a literacy educator. The Cognate Form and the GSO2 form are signed at this session to signify completion of the Cognate requirements.

### **Reading/Language Cognate Procedure**

- Select a Committee – at least one from the Reading/Language faculty
- With the Committee chair, select three courses (9 units).
- With the Committee chair, design a project that integrates the three courses in a way that furthers your knowledge, pursues your need-to-know and deepens your theoretical understanding of Reading and Language Education.
- Schedule your Advancement to Candidacy meeting as soon as you decide to pursue the Cognate path. In this meeting, present your Program portfolio and Cognate proposal (3-5 pages) to your Committee. Record courses and project title on the Reading/Language Cognate Form.
- Apply for graduation before the deadline published in the University calendar.
- Complete the courses and work on your cognate project.
- Schedule your Cognate Presentation. The LSEE department will secure a room and post a notice of your presentation; call 664-3115.
- Two weeks before your Cognate Presentation, submit the project and written reflections to your committee for review. If it still needs work, it will be returned to you with recommendations for revision.
- Invite colleagues, friends, and family to your Cognate Presentation.
- Conduct Cognate Presentation.
- File the signed GSO2 form with Graduate Studies Office and Cognate Form in the LSEE department.
- Celebrate your being a Master!

### **Suggested Content and Format for R/L Cognate Project and Written Reflections**

- Projects are open-ended, flexible, and they reflect personal goals and situations related to literacy learning and teaching.
- Written reflections may include theoretical wonderings about literacy development, lingering questions, a position statement, and principles that you intend to guide your practice.
- You may represent your project in writing (no more than 20 pages, including reflections) or in other ways that demonstrate your depth of understanding of literacy issues.

### **Suggested Format for R/L Cognate Advancement to Candidacy Meeting**

- Introductions (5 minutes)
- Present your Program Portfolio – say how your work in the program has changed your literacy/language theories and practice (15 minutes)
- Tell how your R/L program work led to your project ideas and how your intended project connects cognate courses with each other and with the rest of your program (15 minutes)
- Open discussion of project ideas and possibilities (20 minutes)
- Signatures on Reading/Language Cognate form and GSO1 form. (5 minutes)

### **Suggested Format for Reading/Language Cognate Presentation**

- Introductions (5 minutes)
- Summarize your project briefly (10 minutes)
- Talk about your surprises, new questions, expanded theoretical understandings and the principles that now guide you as a teacher of reading and writing (15 minutes)
- Open conversation among you, the faculty, and others about your work (25 minutes)
- Signatures on Reading/Language Cognate form and GSO2 form.
- Give committee copies of your Cognate work.