

# Ph.D. in Education Handbook

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*Approved by the School of Education Curriculum Committee and  
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# **PhD in Education Handbook**

## **School of Education (SOE)**

### **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

#### **Program Description**

The Ph.D. in Education degree prepares educational researchers who are trained to interrogate, investigate and meet challenges facing diverse students, leaders and policymakers working from birth to grade 16 environments. This degree is designed to foster collaboration among faculty and students from diverse disciplines, thus providing the opportunity to develop relevant research agendas. Graduates with the Ph.D. in Education degree will be prepared for leadership positions in research and teaching at major universities and institutes, as well as other careers inside and outside of formal education environments.

#### **Advising**

##### **Who Can Be an Academic Advisor and/or a Chair?**

The Graduate School requires students to have a faculty research advisor and a committee chair. Often, one faculty member fills both roles. If the roles are separate, the advisor oversees the research progress and serves as the primary mentor and the chair oversees committee meetings and the associated documentation. Regardless of whether they are filled by one or two faculty members, the roles should be filled by *Regular* members of the Graduate Faculty from the student's major academic program.

The [Graduate School Handbook](#) provides additional information regarding these designations.

All tenure-track faculty in the SOE automatically have Regular Graduate Faculty designation whereas other faculty (i.e., clinical faculty) can be submitted for-graduate faculty designation via the Graduate School (for more information on which faculty have this designation, see [here](#)).

All Graduate Faculty nominations should be submitted electronically through this [link](#). Students will need to ensure they work with their program area Program Support Specialist (PSS) to have the form completed and the committee member's CV uploaded.

## **Expectations of Advisors/Chairs, Advisees, and the Advisor/Chair-Advisee Relationship**

**Academic Chair:** At the point of admission, the student is assigned an initial Academic Advisor/ Chair who typically, but not always, is a faculty member in the student's concentration ([see here](#)). The Chair/Advisor-Advisee relationship is often idiosyncratic to those individuals. However, typical responsibilities of Academic Chairs/Advisors include:

- Orient students to the SOE PhD procedures as outlined in this manual and the Graduate School Handbook and provide an initial orientation to the academic program and research specialization early in the student's first semester
- Establish regular meetings with the advisee
- Monitor students' progress through the program and all [program milestones](#)
- Serve as Chair of the Program of Studies (POS), Comprehensive Exam, and Dissertation committees (the latter may be shared with the Research Advisor, if appropriate)
- Be physically present for all milestone examinations
- Provide bulk of the support in dissertation reviewing and editing as well as support with any needed IRB processes (OR a Research/Dissertation advisor may be appointed)
- Provide academic, scholarship, and career support, guidance, and opportunities
- Remind students to submit their [Doctoral Student Online Annual Report - training link](#) (due January 31 annually)
- Coordinate and provide annual feedback via the [Doctoral Student Online Annual Report process - DSOAR portal link7](#)

### **Changing Academic Advisors/Chairs**

Students may decide to continue working with their initial Academic Advisor/Chair for the entirety of their degree program. In some cases, students decide to change their academic chair for any number of reasons (e.g., change in research interests, desire for a different advising relationship, retirement or relocation of the academic advisor). Students who wish to change academic chairs at any point in their degree program must first speak to their current chair about their desire for a change. Then the student must speak to the proposed new advisor/chair. Once all three individuals have agreed on a change the student should complete an **Advisor/Chair Change Form via DocuSign with their Program Support Specialist** as a means of communicating the change. The Director of Graduate Studies would review this change, and if approved, then sign the form to be placed in the student's academic file in the Office of Student Affairs. Students who are uncomfortable speaking with their current advisor/Chair about a change are encouraged to speak to their [Research Specialization/PhD strand Coordinator](#) and/or the [Director of Graduate Studies](#), to determine how to broach the subject with their current advisor.

## Ph.D. Program Milestones

Please note the following: 1) milestones overview; 2) milestones flow chart; and 3) specific milestone guidelines.

### **Ph.D. Milestones Overview:**

Detailed information about the doctoral milestone process and how to submit forms can be found by visiting the School of Education Info for Current Students Doctoral Milestones [website](#).

1. Prior to or during the fall semester of a student's second year, a [Program of Study \(POS\)](#) is approved by a committee of three faculty formed for this purpose. Students typically complete their coursework by the end of their third year in the PhD program. Doctoral core courses should be completed within the first two years to include: EDUC 710; 825; 830; 867; 876; and one advanced research method course. After the POS meeting, the student submits the completed [Program of Study form](#) to the Office of Student Affairs via [soestudentaffairs@unc.edu](mailto:soestudentaffairs@unc.edu) and distributes copies to the advisor/chair and committee members
2. [Comprehensive exam](#) based on student area(s) of expertise. The comprehensive examination consists of *four* main parts:
  - Pre-comprehensive exam meeting
  - Committee final approval of student specialization area(s) and reading list
  - Written comprehensive exam
  - Oral comprehensive exam defenseMore information about the comprehensive exam process can be found [here](#).
3. **Dissertation** representing a student's contribution to scholarship in the field of education. Under UNC Graduate School policy, the dissertation process consists of the following three steps:
  - Dissertation proposal defense
  - Written dissertation research defense
  - Oral dissertation defense

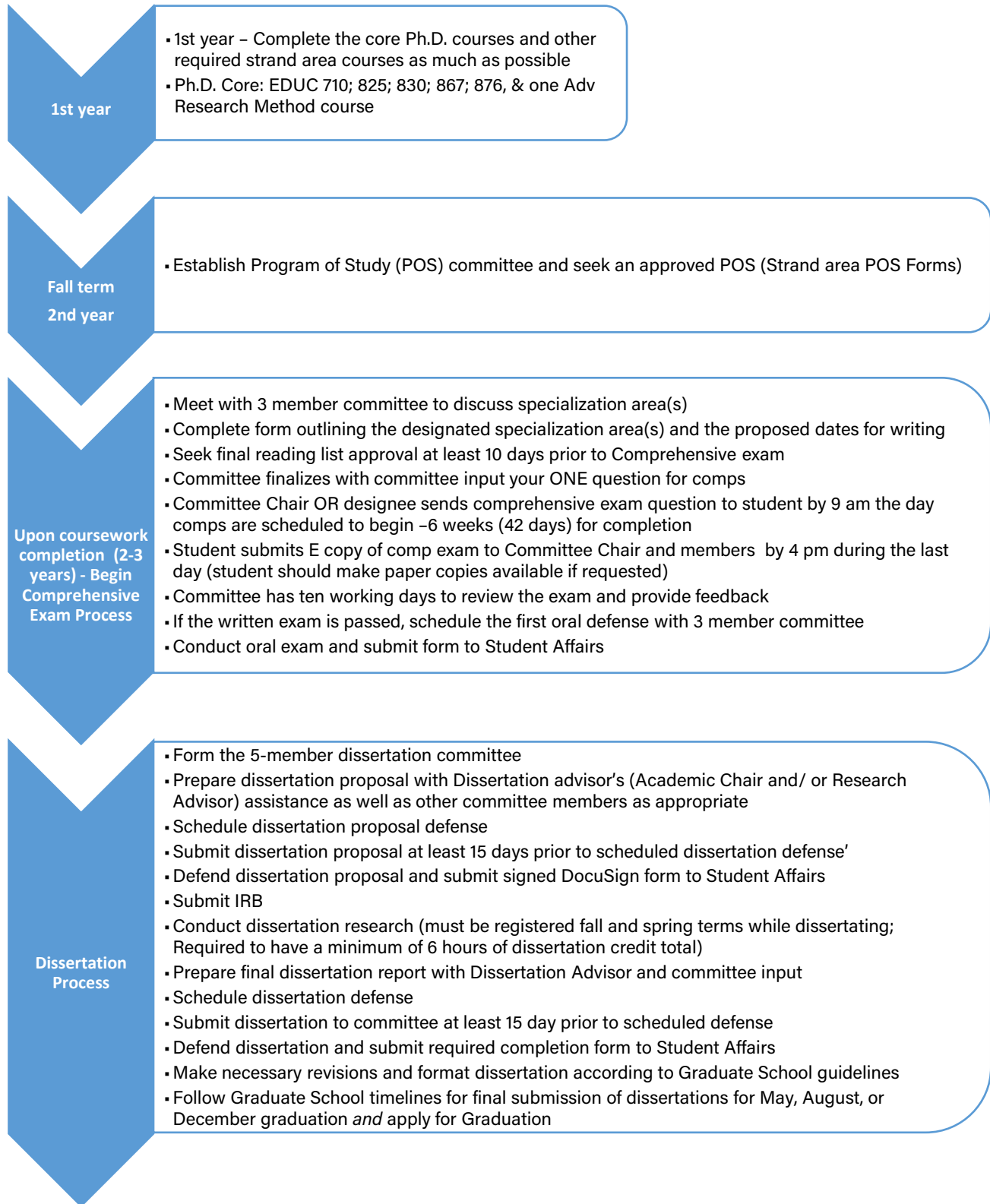
*Note: each milestone must be passed before proceeding to the next milestone.*

### **Note about Milestone Timing and Faculty Availability**

Students are responsible for scheduling all doctoral committee and reserving rooms or providing links for those meetings (e.g., Program of Study, comprehensive exam, and dissertation committee meetings). In the interest of balancing student needs for faculty time for meetings and faculty need to complete responsibilities for the semester, faculty will be available for student milestone meetings (i.e., Program of Study meetings, oral defenses, proposal meetings) through the second reading day of the final examination period of fall and spring semesters. All milestone documents requiring faculty review and approval, including written comprehensive examinations, dissertation proposals, and dissertations, must be submitted to all committee members at least 15 business days prior to the scheduled defense. Committee members must communicate their evaluation of written materials to the Academic Chair within 10 business days of receipt.

Most faculty are on nine-month contracts and, as such, are not obligated to meet with students or provide guidance during the summer months. Some faculty are willing to do so. However, if a student wishes to engage faculty during the summer months, the student must arrange such ongoing advising and help in advance of the end of the spring semester. According to Graduate School policy, if a student convenes faculty for a milestone meeting during the summer months, then that student must be enrolled during the summer session when such a meeting occurs.

## Program Milestone Flow Chart



***Note: Each milestone must be passed before proceeding to the next milestone***

The student's Academic Chair/Advisor assists them through the milestones of the doctoral degree. The specific guidelines for milestones are as follows:

## Milestone Guidelines

### **Coursework and Program of Study**

Program of Study Committee Composition. A student selects, in consultation with the advisor/chair, a Program of Study Committee prior to or during the fall semester of the student's second year of study. The committee is comprised of a minimum of three members, with the majority (i.e., at least two) having Regular Graduate Faculty status in the School of Education. One member of the committee may be from outside the School of Education and/or from an institution other than UNC CH. However, that individual must have earned a doctoral degree, must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies and receive a [Graduate Faculty appointment](#) from the Graduate School. All Fixed Term or other Graduate Faculty nominations should be submitted electronically through this [link](#). Students will need to ensure they work with their program area Program Support Specialist to have the form completed via the following link: <https://go.unc.edu/SOEGraduateFacultyCV> and the committee member's CV uploaded. Nominated faculty must have their fixed-term graduate status approved prior to serving on a committee.

*For more information about graduate faculty status designation, please see click [here](#).*

- The Program of Study should include all PhD in Education required core 3 credit hour courses which include the following:
- EDUC 710: Statistical Analysis of Educational Data (or prerequisite) (fall)
- EDUC 825: Development and Learning (fall)
- EDUC 830: Field Techniques (fall or spring)
- EDUC 867: Issues in Ed Policy and Research (fall)
- EDUC 876: Histories of Schooling: Culture, Curriculum, and Change (spring)
- 1 advanced research methods course, any type (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, mixed) (fall, spring)

In addition, students should complete all research or strand specialization required courses [CCTE](#), [PLS](#), [LSPS](#), [ADSSE](#), and any additional elective courses the student and committee deem necessary for the student's academic and career success. The student and the committee should develop and refine the student's area(s) of specialization(s),



which outline the student's primary area(s) of scholarship and serve as a basis for the comprehensive exam.

The committee approves the student's Program of Study prior to or during the fall semester of the student's second year of study at the latest. After the meeting, the student submits the completed [Program of Study form](#) to the [Office of Student Affairs](#) via [soestudentaffairs@unc.edu](mailto:soestudentaffairs@unc.edu) and distributes copies to the advisor/chair and committee members. If changes to the Program of Study need to be made for any reason, the student should distribute the proposed changes and a rationale to the Program of Study committee, who should consider the proposal and then communicate a decision in writing or, if extensive changes are warranted, reconvene to consider and approve proposed changes. If for some reason a member, or members, of a student's Program of Study Committee are unable to continue to serve on the committee (e.g., a faculty member leaves the SOE), the new member(s) must review and approve the Program of Study or reconvene the entire committee to discuss any concerns.

**Program of Study credit hours.** In many cases, 54-69 hours of coursework are required, not counting dissertation credits. The student and the Program of Study Committee determine the coursework that is in addition to any required classes for all students in the research specialization. A student must sign up for a minimum of six hours of [dissertation credits \(i.e., EDUC 994\)](#) over two semesters to complete the dissertation. *Students are not to sign up for dissertation credits until preparation for written comprehensive exams has begun. Students should be registered for dissertation credits during the semester they plan to take their comprehensive exam.* A student must be registered for a minimum of three credit hours during the semester in which the dissertation proposal is approved and three credit hours in the semester in which the dissertation is defended. Normally students would register for dissertation credit hours (e.g., EDUC 994) in their academic advisor/chair's section.

Waivers and requests for transfer courses must comply with guidelines noted under the later section in this Handbook, "Transfer Credit, Residence Requirements, Registration Requirements, and Length of Time to Complete." Transfer credit is approved by the advisor, Program of Study Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies.

### [Transfer Credit](#)

In addition to the Graduate School policies that govern transfer credit, the School of Education has approved some additional requirements for the transfer of graduate courses. In the School of Education, the student's Program of Study Committee reviews

the courses and recommends transfer credit for any courses deemed appropriate. Transferred graduate-level courses must be relevant to the PhD degree, with course content and level of instruction leading to student competencies at least equivalent to those of currently enrolled students. If a student requests a transfer of credit for PhD Core Courses (EDUC 710; 825; 830; 867 and 876), the requested transfer course should be approved by the core course primary instructor. Information needed will include the course syllabus and transcript noting the student's satisfactory completion of the course. In the School of Education, **courses may transfer only if taken within five years prior to enrollment**. The Graduate School has the final responsibility for approving the transfer.

Students seeking transfer credit may be asked to provide the following to their academic program:

- published course description
- course reading list
- course requirements, including assignments and grading criteria
- information on the types of tools and methods that were used to engage students in learning
- official transcripts noting earned credit for the course are required. A, B or better is required for any course being considered for transfer.

After provision of the requested documents, students should then submit the [Transfer Credit Recommendation Form](#) to the Office of Student Affairs via [soestudentaffairs@unc.edu](mailto:soestudentaffairs@unc.edu) for processing. For additional guidelines, please refer to the [Graduate School Handbook](#).

**Electing a minor (optional).** With the approval of the major (Education) and minor program faculty, a student may elect to declare a formal minor in any university program that offers a graduate degree. With the approval of the major and minor programs, a student may elect to declare a formal minor in any program that offers a graduate degree. The student should submit an approved [Minor Declaration Form](#) to The Graduate School.

## Comprehensive Exam

The doctoral Comprehensive Exam Committee is governed by the same policies as the Program of Study Committee. During doctoral training, through coursework and professional experiences, students develop specific area(s) of specialization within the PhD concentration (ADSSE, CCTE, LSPS, PLS). The purpose of the comprehensive

examination process is to assess the student's knowledge of the area(s) of specialization and familiarity with the published research in the field, and to determine whether the student possesses those critical and analytic skills needed for dissertation research. The written exam and first oral are generally undertaken following the completion of coursework. In some cases, a student may elect to take courses during or after comprehensive exams but in no case should these courses be counted toward a student's approved program of study or specialization area(s).

The following procedures take place to assess doctoral students' expertise relative to his or her area(s) of specialization.

**Pre-comprehensive exam meeting.** During the Pre-comprehensive exam meeting, the student and the committee will discuss appropriate foci for the exam, based upon the student's Program of Study and related research/teaching experiences and area(s) of specialization.

- The meeting in which negotiation of area(s) of specialization must occur— except in rare instances—is held during the semester prior to which students wish to write their examination response. During this meeting, students present their area(s) of specialization and preliminary reading list. Committee members may suggest a revised reading list. The reading list is intended to serve as a guide for students' review and analysis of the specialization area(s).
- The majority of faculty members on the committee must agree that the specialization area(s) are legitimate specialization(s) for the student to make given the student's POS and related research and teaching experiences.
- An electronic form completed via DocuSign is used for students to make explicit their specialization area(s) to be assessed, and for committee members to sign their agreement. The form is archived in the student's electronic file located in the Office of Student Affairs.
- At the Pre-Comps meeting, students will identify a start and end date to writing that spans a 6-week period (42 days). This start/end date will be noted on the form noted above and communicated to Comprehensive Exam committee members by the Chair via email.
- Following this meeting, students are told the areas and general topics for their questions and their final reading list is approved at least one week prior to the start of the exam. The purpose of the final reading list is to identify key texts in the specialization area(s) identified by the student and committee. A text's inclusion on the list is an indication that a student should be familiar the text but need not cite each item in the written examination nor is the student limited to citing only texts on the list in the examination.

**Examination question and response.** One question will be written by the committee relevant to the student's area(s) of specialization.

- The response should be written as a paper intended to be published or presented professionally. Students are strongly encouraged to submit this work for review as a conference presentation or publication.
- The specific question will be written by all committee members.
- Students will receive the exact question by 9:00 a.m. on the day that writing is scheduled to begin from the committee Chair or designee.
- The text of a student's responses to the question (not including reference lists) may not exceed a total of 30-35 pages excluding references, typed in 12-point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, single-sided, with 1" margins. Students must follow APA format (7<sup>th</sup> edition) in their responses.
- Students must indicate their adherence to the UNC-CH Honor Code through their signature on the comprehensive examination form.

**The writing period.** Students will write their responses to their assigned question over a six week (i.e., 42 days) period. To provide the Comprehensive Exam Committee members sufficient time to evaluate student responses, and to allow students to learn the results of their written examination during the semester in which writing takes place, the following guidelines should be followed:

- At least 10 business days prior to writing, the student must generate a reading list to be circulated to all Comprehensive Exam Committee members: electronically and as hard copy. Faculty have one week to make changes to the reading list. Changes must be communicated to the Chair of the Comprehensive Exam Committee. The Chair communicates changes to the student at least five days prior to the beginning of writing. This reading list should be comprehensive and include all sources the student expects to use in his/her written exam.
- The Chair or Chair's designee gives the student the specific question to be addressed via email, by 9:00 AM on the day on which writing is to begin.
- During the writing period, a student may consult written materials relevant to the topic(s). They may not consult live sources to inform the response. Student responses must be drafted independently.
- The student will turn in an electronic copy no later than 4:00 PM on the final day of writing to all members of the Comprehensive Exam Committee. The student will receive the results of the Comprehensive Exam Committee's evaluation from the Chair in writing no later than 15 business days following their submission of their comprehensive exam. Committee members have 10 business days to submit

their comments to the Chair. The Chair should compile comments from the Committee members' review of the exam into one document to be shared with the student. Suggestions for further elaboration of concepts or recommendations should be shared so the student can prepare for the oral examination.

- The oral defense of the written responses (i.e., the first doctoral oral) may take place during the semester the written examination is completed.
- The student may elect to write their responses over the summer or over winter break, if the committee members agree to the timeline and the Chair agrees to be available to obtain and supply the question to the student during this time. If a student writes over the winter break or during the summer, registration is not required. It is important for students to know that written responses completed outside the beginning and end dates of classes during the fall and spring semesters will not be distributed to the faculty until the first day of classes in the following semester. Faculty have 10 business days from this date to evaluate the responses and return their evaluations to the Chair. If the exam is written during breaks between academic-year semesters, students receive notification of the results of their examination within 15 business days from the first day of classes.

**Exam grades.** Three options are available to the examining committee regarding the outcome of written examination: Pass, Fail, or Revise and Resubmit which is a temporary committee decision as determined by majority vote among committee members. The [revise and resubmit form](#) is also located via DocuSign. The Program Support Specialist can assist students with completing this form.

**Pass.** In the event that a majority of committee members determine that the student has passed the written exam, the student may proceed to the first oral—the defense of the written examination.

**Fail.** By majority vote, a committee may assign a grade of fail to the written examination. A doctoral candidate who fails a doctoral written exam may not take the exam a second time until at least three months after the first attempt. A student who fails an exam for the second time becomes ineligible for further graduate work. Upon request to and approved by the Director of Graduate Studies, the Graduate School may grant a student a third and final opportunity to take the examination. In addition, no student may continue in a program or take an examination a third time without approval by the Administrative Board of the Graduate School. The approval of a third attempt is not guaranteed. See the [Academic Eligibility section of the Graduate School Handbook](#) for more information.

**Revise and resubmit.** The committee may decide by majority vote that a student should revise and resubmit. In this case, no final outcome or determination is made by the committee prior to the revisions being completed and evaluated. This vote signifies that the committee has determined that if specified revisions are completed successfully by the student, within the prescribed time period, a pass may be conferred, but again, this is not a guaranteed outcome. To fulfill the requirements under these conditions, the revisions must be completed by the student within six weeks (42 days) from the date of written communication about the committee's decision. The committee chair will complete a form via DocuSign, available from the Office of Student Affairs, that states that a Request for Revisions has been assigned, the date by which revisions must be completed, and a description of the revisions to be completed. The form must be signed and dated by the Chair, on behalf of the committee, and by the student. A copy of this agreement must be placed in the student's file. Students are required only to revise the aspects of the written exams that were deemed unsatisfactory; they are not to rewrite entire questions. By the date specified, the student must turn in a written copy of the revisions to the Chair (or Chair's designee); the Chair will distribute the revisions to the committee members for review. Committee members must return to the Chair a vote of pass or fail for the exam, based on the revisions, within 10 business days on the University nine-month academic calendar. The Chair will compile comments from all Committee members and submit them to the student within 15 Business days. Committees are not obligated to read revisions over summer or winter breaks. If the committee determines, by majority vote, that the student passes the written exams with the revisions, the student will be granted an official Pass, and may proceed to scheduling an oral examination. If the committee determines, by majority vote, that the revisions do not render the written examination a passable product, the student will be issued a Fail. Once an official Fail has been recorded, the student must follow the guidelines stated above.

## First Oral Exam: Comprehensive Exam

**Purpose.** The first oral exam serves as a rigorous defense of the written exam with elaboration of topics. Students should engage in scholarly discourse with their committee members during the oral exam similar to question-and-answer sessions for national conference presentations. Although not required, students may present a brief presentation (15-18 minutes) of their specialization area(s) including a critique of current research and recommendations for further research and practice as appropriate. Students should receive written feedback on their written comprehensive exam and can ask clarifying questions of their committee about this feedback. A student's advisor and/or chair should then provide information on the format of the comprehensive oral exam.

Apart from describing the general format of the oral exam and answering clarifying questions about feedback, comprehensive exam committee members should not help the student prepare for the oral exam. The oral exam should not be used to “fix” a weak written exam. Required revisions should have been requested and approved prior to the scheduling of the first oral. Performance on the oral exam should determine the candidate’s fitness to continue work toward the doctorate but should not focus on the next milestone.

**Scheduling, preparation, and oral exam conduct.** Students should contact their advisor to discuss the structure of the oral exam and the scheduling process, before contacting their committee to identify a specific day and time. The dissertation proposal shall not be considered at the time of the oral exam. The student may seek assistance from his or her Comprehensive Exam Committee Chair to prepare for the exam.

**Exam review.** A majority vote is needed to determine satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance. Immediately after the exam has been given, results should be documented on the Doctoral Exam Report Form, which is completed via DocuSign and sent to the Office of Student Affairs. The Program Support Specialist can assist with completing this process.

**Exam failure.** A doctoral candidate who fails the first oral exam may not take it a second time until at least three months after the first attempt. A student who fails the exam for the second time becomes ineligible for further graduate work. Upon request from the student to the Director of Graduate Studies, the Graduate School may grant a student a third and final opportunity to take the exam. No student may continue in a program or take an examination a third time without approval by the Administrative Board of the Graduate School. Approval is not guaranteed.

## Dissertation

Students may, upon conferral with and approval of their Academic Chair/ Advisor undertake either a traditional 5-chapter dissertation or a 3-article dissertation format (*explained below*).

### **Committee composition and roles**

In accordance with Graduate School requirements, the Doctoral Dissertation Committee consists of five members, a majority of whom must have Regular Graduate Faculty designation from the SOE. Members of the Comprehensive Exam Committee do not

necessarily have to continue to be members of the Doctoral Dissertation Committee. Committee members who do not have a graduate faculty designation will need approval by the Graduate School prior to a member serving in the role. Details on the composition of the doctoral committee, please refer to the [Graduate School Handbook](#). For information on the approval of committee members needing graduate faculty status approval, please [click here](#). All Fixed Term Graduate Faculty nominations should be submitted electronically through this [link](#). Students will need to ensure they work with their PSS to have the form completed and CV uploaded.

### **Dissertation Procedures**

Dissertations in the Ph.D. program in Education are traditionally based on the standard 5-chapter academic dissertation model. This model typically consists of the following chapters: (1) Introduction (overview of study and rationale based on current research literature); (2) Literature Review (current relevant research relative to dissertation topic); (3) Method (detailed methodology for the proposed research); (4) Findings (detailed description of study's results); (5) Discussion and Conclusion (typically including a discussion of the study's results relevant to current research, practice, and/or policy, theoretical or practical implications, research limitations, and future directions).

Three (3) article dissertations typically consist of an introduction introducing the dissertation's overarching themes, three articles formatted for publication in an academic journal (each including introduction, literature review, data and methods, findings, and discussion and conclusion sections), and a conclusion explaining the connections among the three chapters/articles and articulating the work's coherent claims. Standards for the 3 article dissertation formats will be determined by the Academic Chair/Research Advisor and communicated clearly with both the student and their committee but must adhere to the following:

A) The student must be lead author on all articles, with co-authors as appropriate. B) The dissertation's three papers should connect with one another and the connections among chapters should be articulated in the dissertation's introduction and conclusion chapters; C) The three papers can be at any phase of publication; D) Dissertation content and process feedback from their committee is independent from what students receive from journals (journal feedback does not override committee feedback).



**Written dissertation proposal.** Typically, the dissertation proposal includes the following components (although the order of sections may vary):

- Statement of purpose;
- Background of research problem;
- Overview of relevant research;
- Justification and significance of proposed study;
- The thesis to be explored or research questions;
- Research procedures and methodology

A proposal for a 5-chapter dissertation consists of the dissertation's first three chapters (introduction, literature review, data and methods) as well as a list of references. A proposal for a 3-paper dissertation should cover each of the above topics for each of the three component papers.

Other elements such as suggested chapters may be determined by the Academic Chair/ Research advisor and student. Finally, the entire document should be formatted according to APA Publication Manual guidelines, including a complete reference list.

**Scheduling and oral exam structure.** The student presents the dissertation proposal to the doctoral committee at the second oral exam. According to Graduate School policy, a student should not proceed to the oral defense of the dissertation proposal without broad agreement from the committee that the manuscript is in passable condition. The oral exam will be held only after all members of the committee have had at least 15 business days to review a draft of the doctoral dissertation proposal. The Academic Chair/Research Advisor is responsible for determining that the draft is ready to be submitted to the committee. In no case should a student submit their dissertation draft to the committee without prior approval from the Academic Chair/Research Advisor.

Students should coordinate with their Program Support Specialist (PSS) to schedule a room in the School of Education or should provide their committee with a link for oral defenses.

Completion of the dissertation proposal and performance on the second oral exam should determine the candidate's fitness to continue work toward the doctorate degree.

## **IRB Approval**

Once the research dissertation proposal is approved by the committee, students and their faculty advisors need to apply to the Institutional Research Board (IRB) for any research involving human subjects. The Institutional Research Board defines research as a project involving a systematic investigation, including evaluation, which is designed to develop or contribute generalizable knowledge <https://research.unc.edu/human-research-ethics/>. As students begin their dissertation projects, it is important to discuss IRB approval with their faculty advisor. No data collection or, (in the case of secondary data analysis) data analysis can proceed until the student presents the advisor with a written approval for the project from the IRB. Ultimately, the faculty advisor is responsible for IRB approval and is listed on the IRB application. Violations of IRB procedures can have serious consequences for the student, the faculty advisor, the SOE, and UNC.

Policies and procedures for the final dissertation examination mirror those for the dissertation proposal. A public announcement of the student's dissertation defense will be disseminated to the SOE community. *The student will be responsible for sharing the dissertation title, brief description, date, time, and location of defense via this [form](#) at least 10 days prior to the defense so the information can be disseminated to the SOE community.* The dissertation defense presentation but NOT the examination by the Committee will be open to the SOE community to spotlight the student's scholarly work.

## **Exam review**

During the second oral exam (i.e., proposal defense meeting), the student presents a summary of the written dissertation and addresses questions raised by the committee. The committee may accept, request modifications, or reject the proposal. A majority vote is needed to determine pass or fail performance on the oral exam.

When the committee determines that all requirements have been met, the completed [Doctoral Exam Report Form](#) is submitted to the Office of Student Affairs. On this form, the relevant sections are Part III (i.e., final oral examination of the final dissertation) and Part IV (i.e., report of the final written dissertation).

**Exam failure.** A doctoral candidate who fails the second oral exam may not take it a second time until at least three months after the first attempt. A student who fails an exam for the second time becomes ineligible for further graduate work. Upon request from the student to the Director of Graduate Studies, the Graduate School may grant a student a third and final opportunity to take the exam. No student may continue in a program or take an examination a third time without approval by the Administrative Board of the Graduate School. Approval is not guaranteed.

**Dissertation submission.**

Dissertations must be submitted to The Graduate School according to the schedule in the [University Registrar's Calendar](#) in final form designed to meet the standards defined in [The Graduate School's Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#). Documents submitted electronically will not require front page signatures. It is strongly suggested that every document be submitted well before the deadline to ensure ample time for format revisions. Students who submit their document close to or on the deadline, should expect a delay in the response from the Graduate School. Nonetheless, after receiving a response in regard to submissions, required revisions should be submitted immediately. If returned revisions do not arrive immediately, the student will not meet degree requirements for that term and the document will be rejected.

**Registration for Degree Award.**

A student will need to apply to graduate through the Office of the Registrar and Graduate School. That form can be accessed through the [ConnectCarolina Portal](#), Please [click Here](#) for important Graduation due dates.

Students must be registered for a minimum of three credit hours of dissertation (994) during the semester in which the dissertation prospectus/proposal is approved (if the dissertation topic was not approved at the time of the second doctoral examination), *and* the semester in which the dissertation is defended. Once students successfully defend their dissertation, no further enrollments are necessary or permissible, and graduation should not be delayed.

Although a student must be registered in the semester in which he/she defends, the student need not be registered in the semester in which the degree is to be awarded, provided that no use of University faculty time or facilities is required, and as long as the student was registered appropriately in prior terms, unless other conditions (employment, immigration, etc.) require registration (see [Graduate School Handbook](#)).

## UNC Chapel Hill Residence Requirement

A minimum residence credit of four full semesters is required, either by full-time registration, or by part-time registration over several semesters. For information on how to obtain N.C. residency status, please [click here](#).

## School of Education Registration Requirements

**Full-time registration.** The School of Education requires full time enrollment in the PhD in Education for all terms necessary to complete the degree. A full-time student is one who is matriculated and meets these conditions: a) registers for 9 or more graduate credit hours in a fall or spring semester; or b) registers for a minimum of 3 hours of dissertation (994) in a fall or spring semester. A student may register for additional courses as needed, but if registering for less than 9 hours, this must include a minimum of 3 hours of 994 to be considered full-time; or c) registers for fewer than 9 graduate credit hours in a fall or spring semester, exclusive of 994, and has been granted a “waiver of hours” for that semester.

**Required registration.** Students are required to be registered whenever University resources (including faculty time) are being consumed to appropriately reflect work being done. In addition, the following specific registration requirements apply.

Each student holding a service (assistantship) or non-service (fellowship) appointment must be registered full-time in order to hold that position during the fall and spring semesters. Students must be on-campus unless the award requires their presence at another campus or research center.

A student must be registered during the semester(s) in which any examination is taken. This includes written and/or oral exams and defense of proposal or dissertation. Students must be registered for a minimum of three credit hours of dissertation (994) during the semester(s) in which the dissertation proposal and final dissertation is defended.

Registration for the prior semester will cover events that occur during a break between semesters. This registration covers a student from the first day of class in a semester until the day before classes begin for the next semester. For example, if a student is registered for a minimum of three credit hours of 994 in the fall semester and intends to defend in the same term, s/he must defend between the first day of fall classes and the day before the first day of spring classes.

Similarly, summer registration would cover a defense occurring anytime between the first day of summer session I classes until the day before the first day of fall classes. If the defense takes place during a summer, students must be registered for a minimum of three credit hours of 994 during either the first or second summer session to be covered for the entire summer term.

Once the student has completed all courses, including a minimum of six credit hours of dissertation (994), s/he must continue to register for 994 each academic semester (fall/spring) until the degree is completed to use University resources (including faculty time).

**Credit/course load.** Students should register for no more than 16 credit hours in any semester. A student enrolled in the summer may not register for, and will not receive graduate credit for, more than eight hours a session. Overload requests are considered on an exceptional basis and should be initiated by the student's academic program and forwarded to the Graduate School for approval.

A student who holds a service appointment within the University or is employed either on- or off-campus is advised to register on the following basis: a) a student engaged in teaching three to six credit hours or in performing other part-time duties for 10 to 20 hours weekly is advised to register for no more than nine hours of course credit; b) a student engaged in teaching more than six credit hours or in performing other part-time duties for more than 20 hours weekly is advised to register for no more than six hours of course credit; c) an upper-level student engaged in fulltime employment is advised to register for no more than three hours of course credit (EDUC 994); and during a summer session, a student who holds a service appointment should register for no more than three hours of course credit. (Note that if a student is registered for less than nine credit hours of classes or three credit hours of dissertation (994), then that student is not considered full-time which has implications for tuition, assistantships, and financial aid).

Students must be registered for a minimum of three credit hours of dissertation (994) during the semester in which the dissertation proposal is approved and the semester in which the dissertation is defended.

**Length of Time for Program Completion.** Please refer to the [Graduate School Handbook](#) for information on Length of Time to Complete the program, Leaves of Absence, Maternal/Parental Leave, Grades, Reinstatement, and Appeals. The Graduate School states that students have **eight years** to complete their programs. If an extension is needed, an appeal must be approved by the student's Ph.D. strand area, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate School.

## UNC policies

**Student Grievance Policy.** UNC has a university-wide student grievance policy. The procedures laid out in the policy shall be used when a UNC-CH student has a grievance against a UNC employee, including faculty, EPA non-faculty, staff and student employees (when acting in the role of an employee), that involves a UNC policy or law. A full description, including procedures to follow, can be found on the [Dean of Student's website](#).

**Honor System.** All School of Education graduate students are subject to the [UNC Honor Code](#). Suspected violations of the code will be submitted to the Office of Student Conduct.

### **Student Appeals**

School of Education students have the right to appeal academic decisions. Usually, the appeal goes first to the unit responsible for the decision, for example, grades to faculty members who assigned the student's grades. Other appeals may include academic program requirements, school requirements to the Graduate School such as admissions; request to drop course or dismissal from the program. Any student wanting to make an appeal should submit a formal statement appeal along with supporting documents to the School of Education Assistant Dean for Student Affairs. Detailed information about the school's student appeals policy can be found [here](#).

## Resources:

### Study Disruptions

- [Eligibility and Reinstatement](#)
- [Appealing an Administrative Decision](#)

### Classes & Advising

- [Academic Calendars](#)
- [Registering for Classes](#)
- [Schedule of Classes and Course Descriptions](#)
- [The Writing Center](#)
- [The Learning Center](#)

### Tuition & Fees

- [Tuition and Fees](#)
- [University Cashier](#)
- [Office of Scholarships & Student Aid](#)
- [Graduate Financial Aid](#)
- [School Of Education Funding Portal](#)

### Graduation

- [Graduation How-To](#)
- [Commencement](#)
- [Diplomas](#)

### Careers in Education

- [Licensure](#)
- [Transcripts & Certifications](#)
- [Job Resources](#)

### Campus Life

- [Student Organizations](#)
- [Carolina Housing](#)
- [Carolina Dining Services](#)
- [Campus Recreation](#)
- [Carolina Union](#)
- [Campus Y](#)
- [Carolina Athletics](#)
- [Student Government](#)
- [Campus Health](#)
- [Carolina Student Legal Services](#)
- [Carolina Center for Public Service](#)
- [The Woman's Center / Center for Gender Equality](#)

## Dissertation Checklist and Timeline

Student's Name:	
<b>Dissertation Process</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Choose Dissertation Advisor (Academic Chair and/or Research Advisor)	
Choose Dissertation Committee with advisor approval on the ATC Form	
Form dissertation process support groups with other students (e.g., Dissertation Boot Camp via the Graduate School) Also become familiar with the Graduate School dissertation guidelines <a href="https://gradschool.unc.edu/academics/thesis-diss/guide/">https://gradschool.unc.edu/academics/thesis-diss/guide/</a> Formatting your dissertation using these guidelines from the start will save you time.	
Identify defense deadlines. Develop timelines for following steps working backwards from these deadline dates.	
Dissertation Proposal Draft to Advisor	
Revision 1	
Revision 2 (if needed)	
Revision 3 (if needed)	
Final approval from advisor and from committee members	
Submit human subjects form to Institutional Review Board (IRB) if needed	
Search for dissertation funding, e.g., Summer Dissertation Award	
Remaining course work, e.g., independent studies for dissertation parts (if any)	
Schedule Proposal Defense (check with advisor's schedule first)	
Dissertation Proposal Defense (announcement)	
Submit Dissertation Proposal Form w/Abstract & Timeline to <a href="#">Office of Student Affairs</a> via <a href="mailto:soestudentaffairs@unc.edu">soestudentaffairs@unc.edu</a>	
Revise Dissertation Proposal (if needed)	
Collect Data	
Dissertation Chapters Drafted	
Prepare and submit conference proposals (optional)	
Prepare and submit manuscripts to journals (optional)	
Revise Chapter XX (as needed, number of days to be determined with advisor)	
Revise Chapter XX (as needed, number of days to be determined with advisor)	
Revise Chapter XX (as needed, number of days to be determined with advisor)	



Revise Chapter XX (as needed, number of days to be determined with advisor)	
Revise Chapter XX (as needed, number of days to be determined with advisor)	
Revisions to advisor (number of days to be determined with advisor)	
Prepare, practice, and give conference talks (optional)	
Dissertation Approved by Advisor	
Dissertation Submitted to Committee and Wait for Comments	
Dissertation Chapters Revised for Committee Members	
Advisor and Committee Members Agreement to Schedule Defense	
Dissertation Defense Scheduled (check with advisor's and members' schedule first)	
Dissertation Defense (announcement)	
Dissertation Defense	
Revisions to Dissertation 1 (# of days to be determined by advisor)	
Revisions to Dissertation 2 (if needed, # of days to be determined with advisor)	
Revisions to Dissertation 3 (if needed, # of days to be determined with advisor)	
Final Approval by Advisor and Committee Members	
Final Paperwork to UNC Graduate School	
Send Form to Dean's Office by XXX to Walk in May Graduation	
<b>Total days:</b>	
Check with Advisor's Availability Schedule prior to submitting drafts.	
Major Advisor is not available during: ...	