

PhD in Education Program

Program Guidelines

**College of Education and Human Development
George Mason University**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Program Description

The PhD in Education is a program of advanced professional study that facilitates development of scholarship and leadership in a selected field of education. This program of doctoral study emphasizes theory and research as well as breadth and depth of study. It seeks to develop knowledge and skills useful in educational contexts as well as the ability to analyze and address educational problems.

The program emphasizes the development of expertise in a broad professional specialization in addition to a narrow area of research focus. Students must demonstrate the following major competencies to be awarded a PhD in Education degree:

1. Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing to a variety of professional stakeholders;
2. Knowledge of significant theory, developments, and practices in one's professional specialization and a supporting area of study (i.e., secondary specialization);
3. Ability to understand, utilize and interpret basic principles and methodologies of educational research design and data analysis;
4. Ability to organize efforts to solve problems, advance knowledge, test theories, and adapt information to meet professional goals;
5. Understanding of ethical practice in research.

Individual student programs of study will enable students to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes which constitute and support these competencies. Mastery of these competencies is demonstrated by successful completion of coursework, a comprehensive portfolio assessment, a dissertation, and an oral dissertation defense.

PhD in Education Office

The PhD in Education Program office is located in West Building, Suite 2200 and, unless otherwise posted, is open from 8:30 am - 5:00 pm on weekdays, year-round except for university holidays and closures. The telephone number is (703) 993-2011.

PhD in Education Committee

The PhD in Education Committee is chaired by the Director of the PhD in Education Program and comprises faculty representing professional specialization areas within the PhD in Education Program. Faculty representatives are elected by their specialization area colleagues to the committee for a two-year term. The Senior Associate Dean of the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) and the Associate Dean of Student and Academic Affairs serve as Ex Officio members of the committee. The PhD in Education Committee establishes procedures and policies for academics within the PhD in Education Program, recommends admission and termination of students, approves new doctoral courses, and participates in periodic evaluation of the program.

PhD in Education Program Evaluation

The PhD in Education Program undergoes continuous formative evaluation. Students are encouraged to communicate ideas for program improvements to members of the PhD in Education Committee and to the PhD in Education Director as they see fit. In addition, periodic formal and informal evaluations of the program are conducted by the PhD in Education Committee in conjunction with university and CEHD assessment activities. Feedback from all evaluations serves as the basis for changing various aspects of the program.

University Support Services

There are numerous support services available to students in the PhD in Education Program through George Mason University (Mason). For information on some of the student support resources on campus, see the “Student Support Resources on Campus” webpage: <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>.

PhD in Education Program Resources

Information for students in the PhD in Education Program can be found on the PhD website (<https://education.gmu.edu/phd-in-education/>) as well as the PhD student Blackboard site. Additionally, information is emailed to the PhD in Education student listserv every Friday afternoon. Students are responsible for using these resources to locate current information related to the program.

II. PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The PhD in Education program operates in full accordance with Mason policies and practices (see Mason's University Catalog at <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10>). This document incorporates a synopsis of key applicable policies as well as additional requirements and protocols of the PhD in Education degree at Mason.

Academic Integrity

Students in the PhD in Education Program are expected to demonstrate academic integrity by complying with Mason's Honor Code and policies related to misconduct in research and scholarship.

Honor Code

Students sign a statement upon application to the program agreeing to uphold the Mason Honor Code. The following excerpt from the University Catalog provides a brief description of Mason's Honor Code.

*To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: **Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.***

A full reference to the Honor Code and the associated systems is accessible via: <https://oai.gmu.edu/>. Please note there is a separate process for individuals accused of research misconduct.

Misconduct in Research and Scholarship

As stated in Mason Policy 4007, "Allegations of academic misconduct against graduate students are governed solely by the university honor code, except for:

1. research activities as defined above regardless of sponsorship; and
2. master's theses and doctoral dissertations, both of which are governed by this policy.

The PhD in Education Program adheres to Mason's policies related to misconduct in research and scholarship, which applies to graduate students engaged in research activities as well as University faculty. Mason defines research misconduct as including fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism.

University Policy 4007 requires that all research misconduct allegations must be referred to the Mason Research Integrity Officer (RIO). Contact information can be found at <https://oria.gmu.edu/topics/research-misconduct/>. Policy 4007 specifies the guidelines that are followed to investigate alleged violations, including maintaining confidentiality.

Questions related to research misconduct that fall under this category should be directed to the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance (<https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/research-misconduct/>).

Committees

Each PhD in Education student is advised throughout their enrollment in the program by a committee of at least three faculty members. The first committee, the *Program Advisory Committee*, advises the student through the completion of all pre-dissertation coursework and the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment. A second committee, the *Doctoral Dissertation Committee*, advises the student in the preparation, submission and defense of the PhD in Education dissertation.

Initial Advisor

At the time of admission, students in the PhD in Education Program are provided with an initial point of contact from their specialization to serve as a *temporary* advisor. After no more than two semesters of coursework, students select a chair for their Program Advisory Committee to guide them through development of a program of study and the portfolio process. Students are encouraged to meet with several faculty members before making this decision to ensure the best match to their scholarly interests. The chair will advise and support the student in the selection of the other two committee members.

Program Advisory Committee

The Program Advisory Committee consists of a minimum of three Mason faculty members selected by the student. This committee is chaired by a graduate faculty member with the PhD in Education Program who is affiliated with the student's primary specialization. It is recommended that the chair be awarded graduate faculty status. The student should notify the PhD Office when a chair has been selected and the faculty member has agreed to serve on the committee. The chair will advise and support the student in the selection of the other two committee members. One member must be a graduate faculty member representing the student's secondary emphasis. The third member can be any Mason faculty member.

Consideration of a change in committee membership should include discussion with the committee chair, or the Director of the PhD in Education Program if the change is in regard to the chair of the committee. To initiate a change to their Program Advisory Committee, the student must request the change in writing with a clear rationale and submit this request to the PhD in Education Program Director. A student requesting a change in committee membership must have first ascertained the new member's willingness to serve prior to submitting the written request with indication of change. Membership of the Program Advisory Committee, once established and approved, may not be altered without prior approval of the PhD in Education Program Director. If a faculty member on the Program Advisory Committee leaves the University, the student may select a replacement without approval from the PhD Director, although the student needs to inform the PhD Office of the replacement.

The major functions of this committee include assessing the student's goals, interests and academic needs; facilitating student planning of their program of study; approving the student's

program of study; monitoring the student's progress through the program; and evaluating the student's three portfolio reviews. **Students may take courses for no more than two semesters without having an approved Program Advisory Committee and an approved Program of Study.** If a student's Program Advisory Committee Chair has retired or resigned from Mason prior to conclusion of the coursework and portfolio process, that individual can no longer serve as a Chair or Co-chair, and an alternate faculty member must be selected to fulfill this key role. The former faculty member may continue to serve as an external member of the committee.

Doctoral Dissertation Committee

See requirements for doctoral dissertation committees under "Dissertation Committee" in Section III: Dissertation Guidelines.

Courses Required in the PhD in Education Program

The following courses are required of all PhD in Education students:

General Culture (3 credits)

- EDUC 800 Ways of Knowing
OR
- EFHP 860 Critical Perspectives in Exercise, Fitness, and Health Promotion
[*Kinesiology Concentration Students Only*]

Research Methods (15 credits)

- EDRS 810 Problems and Methods in Education Research
- EDRS 811 Quantitative Methods of Educational Research
- EDRS 812 Qualitative Methods of Educational Research
- EDRS 8XX TWO Advanced Methods courses: 818, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 830, 831

Specialization (36 Credits—combined primary and secondary specialization areas)

- Primary specialization coursework (18-24 credits)
- Secondary specialization coursework (12-18 credits)
- In some instances, students may be required to take undergraduate courses or graduate courses as prerequisites for courses included on their programs of study or to complete other coursework as preparation in areas where they are judged by their advisors to be deficient; such required courses at any level are not counted as part of a student's PhD in Education program of study.

Dissertation Credits (12 hours)

- EDUC 998 Dissertation Proposal Seminar (3-6 credits)
- EDUC 999 Dissertation Research (6-9 credits, *minimum*)

A description of this coursework and related policies follows.

Foundational Knowledge (6 credits)

All PhD in Education students must enroll in EDUC 800: Ways of Knowing (or EFHP 860: Critical Perspectives in Exercise, Fitness, and Health Promotion for Kinesiology Concentration students). Students enroll in EDUC 800 (or EFHP 860) as an entering class, developing and reinforcing a group identity and commitment to doctoral study. Students must earn a B or better in EDUC 800 and EDRS 810. *See also "Grade Requirements."*

Ways of Knowing (EDUC 800)

This three-credit course is required of all PhD in Education students. The purpose of this course is to explore how different disciplines establish knowledge in order to develop an understanding of the nature of knowledge and how it is made. This course seeks to broaden one's perspective in a way that enables an appreciation of how one's perceptions of reality is conditioned and reflected by the ways that knowledge is made. It is also intended to equip students with additional perspectives through which to view their professional worlds.

- This course must be taken in a student's 1st semester in the program.

Critical Perspectives in Exercise, Fitness, and Health Promotion (EFHP 860)

This three-credit course is required of all PhD in Education students within the Kinesiology Concentration. The purpose of this course is to critically examine current topics in Exercise, Fitness and Health Promotion, and Applied Kinesiology. The course seeks to examine scholarship in the Academy including development and presentation formats.

- This course must be taken in a student's 1st semester in the program.

Problems and Methods in Educational Research (EDRS 810)

All PhD in Education students must satisfactorily complete EDRS 810: Problems and Methods in Education Research to complete the PhD in Education Program.

- This course must be taken in a student's 1st or 2nd semester in the program.
- This course is a prerequisite to EDRS 811 (3 credits) and EDRS 812 (3 credits).

Before enrolling in EDRS 810, students must have completed EDRS 590 or a comparable introductory graduate level course in educational research. Most students will have had such a course as part of their Master's degree program of study.

Students may use a similar research course taken elsewhere within five years of admission to the program in lieu of this course with the prior approval of her/his Program Advisory Committee and the PhD in Education Program Director.

Research Methods (9 credits)

Quantitative Methods (EDRS 811) and Qualitative Methods (EDRS 812)

All PhD in Education students must satisfactorily complete EDRS 811: Quantitative Research Methods and 812 Qualitative Research Methods.

Advanced Methods (2 courses)

All PhD in Education students must complete two advanced methods courses. One of these advanced research methods courses must be in the methodological area of their anticipated dissertation research. For example, students anticipating using quantitative methods would take

EDRS 821: Advanced Applications of Quantitative Research. The advanced research methods course is the *only course that may be taken after the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment and concurrently with EDUC 998*.

Specialization Courses

As part of the specialization coursework within a student's program of study, students may opt to include individualized coursework, including independent studies and internships that help them to achieve desired competencies in the program. It is the student's responsibility to meet submission deadlines set by the PhD in Education Office.

Required Course Level

All (100%) of the CEHD courses within the 36-credit specialization part of the program must be at the 800 level, with the following exception:

- up to 9 credit hours of 700 level CEHD coursework may be applied to the **secondary** specialization instead of, but not in addition to, a reduction of required credits from an earned master's degree that meets eligibility requirements.

This guideline does not preclude 800-level courses outside of CEHD in a student's program of study. This guideline also does not preclude application of doctoral level classes taken in a University unit outside of CEHD regardless of the course level.

Independent Studies

Independent study courses are integral elements of a student's PhD in Education program. Only independent study courses approved in advance by a student's doctoral advisor and the PhD in Education Program Director may be counted toward fulfillment of a student's program of study requirements. A maximum of 6 credits of Independent Study may be applied to a student's program of study unless the PhD in Education Program Director has approved additional courses.

Independent studies are doctoral-level courses designed collaboratively by the student and a faculty member possessing the appropriate expertise. Such sections should not duplicate existing university course offerings. An independent study course may be primarily a "reading" or a "research" course. *Independent study guidelines, procedures and forms are located on the PhD in Education Website: <https://education.gmu.edu/phd-in-education/>*. Students should use these guidelines as a template when drafting their proposal.

In undertaking an independent study, students must prepare a proposal for the independent study in consultation with the potential independent study instructor. Students should expect to revise or modify the proposal or develop alternative proposals based on instructor feedback, resubmitting the final revisions to the PhD in Education Director for final approval.

Students must submit one complete copy of the proposal, with required documentation, signatures and completed cover sheets, to the PhD in Education Director (and are advised to retain a copy for their records). The proposal and the completed individualized section form should be submitted to the PhD Office no later than two weeks before the start of the first day of classes. Once approved, students are expected to register for the course in a timely and proper fashion.

Internships

Internships are experiential learning opportunities in which a student engages in supervised work experiences at an approved site relevant to a student's program of study. *Internship guidelines, procedures and form are located on the PhD in Education Website:* <https://education.gmu.edu/phd-in-education/>.

All students have the option to add at least three credits of EDUC 998: Doctoral Internship to their Program of Study. This internship must be in a setting other than the student's regular work setting. A three-credit internship requires at least 100 hours of on-site, supervised experience. Additional internships are taken as EDUC 890: Doctoral Internship.

CEHD PhD in Education students who enroll in an internship that involves teaching an undergraduate or graduate course in CEHD are not eligible to be also classified as the instructor of record or paid for teaching the course. It is further recommended that if a doctoral student plans to independently teach in CEHD as part of her/his professional experience then the student must first complete a supervised teaching internship in accordance with the aforementioned policy.

Proposals for internships must be approved by a student's Program Advisory Committee Chair and the PhD in Education Director no later than one week before the start of the first day of classes. Students may enroll in internships only after they have completed one year of part-time study or one semester of full-time study in the PhD in Education program.

Students may work cooperatively with other PhD in Education students in an internship, if both/all students agree to the arrangement; however, no PhD in Education student may evaluate another PhD in Education student. Students have the same responsibilities in establishing internships as they do in securing pre-approval of independent studies.

To have an internship applied to a student's program of study, it must be approved by the student's Program Advisory Committee Chair and the PhD in Education Director. Initial arrangements for the internship must be made by the student through his/her chair in consultation with the site supervisor.

Individualized Course Sections

When the University does not offer a course in a specific subject required of a student's approved program of study, a student may arrange to complete an individualized section of the course with a faculty member at the university. The content of individualized course sections should be comparable with regularly offered sections of the same course. The university is not obligated to offer such courses.

Dissertation Credits (12 credits)

A minimum of 6 credits of EDUC 999, with a total of 12 credits of combined EDUC 998 and EDUC 999 credits are required. Students need to comply with college and university policies regarding registration for EDUC 998 and EDUC 999 credits.

Dissertation Proposal Seminar (EDUC 998)

The purpose of the EDUC 998 is to assist students in preparing their dissertation proposals. Developing the completed dissertation proposal, however, is the responsibility of the student and the Doctoral Dissertation Committee. In this seminar, students generate:

1. A clearly defined problem statement or task;
2. A review of the research literature; and
3. A description of the methods that will be employed to address the research question.

In the first semester after successfully defending their comprehensive portfolio, all students must register for the 3-credit course EDUC 998: Dissertation Proposal Seminar. Most students will defend their dissertation proposals while enrolled in this 3-credit course and then will proceed to dissertation credits (EDUC 999). However, students who do not successfully defend their dissertation proposals during the course, must continue to enroll in EDUC 998 for at least one credit hour each semester (fall/spring) until they have done so. Students must also register for EDUC 998 credits during the summer if they are scheduled to defend their dissertation proposal in the summer term.

Students can apply up to 6 credits of EDUC 998 to the 12-hour dissertation credit requirement. Any credits of EDUC 998 beyond 6 credits will not be applied to the degree.

Students will receive an IP (In Progress) grade in EDUC 998 each semester until they have successfully defended their dissertation proposal. Students receive an S grade (Satisfactory) in the course at the conclusion of the semester in which their proposal has been presented and approved by their Doctoral Dissertation Committee.

Dissertation Research (EDUC 999)

Once the dissertation proposal is defended successfully and approved by the student's Doctoral Dissertation Committee, students must register for a minimum of 3 credits each semester until they have completed 12 credits of combined EDUC 998 (not more than 6 credits) and EDUC 999. When the minimum is met, students must register for at least one credit of EDUC 999 each semester until the dissertation has been successfully defended, approved and submitted to the library.

Students must be enrolled in EDUC 999 in the semester that they are scheduled to defend their dissertation proposal. Students must also be enrolled in EDUC 999 the semester in which they receive their degrees.

Students will receive an IP (In Progress) grade in EDUC 999 each semester until they have successfully defended their dissertation. Students receive an S grade (Satisfactory) in the course at the conclusion of the semester in which their dissertation has been presented and approved by their Doctoral Dissertation Committee.

See requirements for doctoral dissertation in Section III: Dissertation Guidelines.

Credits

See University Catalog (AP.6.10) for minimum credits required in a doctoral program and additional Mason policies related to doctoral credits:

<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10>.

Reduction of Required Credits

Students who have earned a master's degree in a discipline other than the student's identified primary specialization may request using the master's degree in lieu of nine hours of the **CEHD secondary specialization** area requirement. This reduction of credit can be accomplished with the reduction of credit form (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/>). Credits used in reduction of credits are not subject to time limits, must have been applied to a previously earned post-baccalaureate degree, and must have received a minimum grade of B. Approval of reduction of credit must be granted by a student's Program Advisory Committee and reflected in the student's program of study.

Transfer of Credits

Upon development of the Program of Study, as student may request that up to 12 semester hours of coursework beyond a Master's degree be used to meet PhD in Education degree requirements. Such coursework must be clearly related to the student's Program of Study and be approved by the student's Program Advisory Committee. In addition, credits must comply with University policy for transfer of credits (see University Catalog AP.6.5.3:

<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10>). Credits applied to a student's program are subtracted from student program requirements and not shown on Mason doctoral program transcripts.

Once the student has enrolled in the PhD in Education Program, students may take up to 12 credits of doctoral-level coursework at other universities as part of their PhD in Education program of study provided these courses are approved by the Program Advisory Committee and there is not an equivalent course offered at Mason. Students must receive approval from the Director of the PhD in Education Program and the CEHD Office of Academic and Student Affairs prior to taking a course elsewhere once enrolled in the PhD in Education program. To obtain these permissions, students must submit to the PhD Office the completed form, *Graduate Permission to Study at Another Regionally Accredited U.S. Institution*, which is available on the Registrar's website: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/>. In some limited cases, with approval of the Director of the PhD in Education Program, more than 12 credits may be transferred.

Enrollment

Full-time doctoral study allows an opportunity for intense and in-depth immersion in intellectual study in a collegial atmosphere with development of consequent skills and insights. PhD in Education students are strongly encouraged to enroll for at least one academic year of full-time study.

Continuous Enrollment

Students are expected to comply with University policies for continuous enrollment, including:

- When students fail to enroll for two consecutive semesters (summers are not included) they are declared inactive. Students reenrolled after an absence of two or more consecutive semesters may be required to add courses to or otherwise modify their program of study. If this extends beyond the Mason time limits, this extension must receive the approval of the Associate Dean or Associate Provost. *For reenrollment requirements, see “Reenrollment.”*
- Failure to enroll during any single semester, no matter how many single semesters are missed, does not extend the time limits for completing degree requirements.
- Mason requires continuous registration each semester from the point that a student commences work on their dissertation through graduation. In other words, students must be in continuous enrollment in EDUC 998 (Dissertation Proposal Seminar) or EDUC 999 (Dissertation Research) with the requisite number of credits each semester after successfully completing the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment until graduation. *For additional requirements, see “Dissertation Credits” under Core Courses Required in the PhD in Education Program.*
- Students must be enrolled in the semester they graduate.

Reenrollment

Students who fail to enroll in two consecutive semesters (excluding summers) become officially inactive and must submit a re-enrollment request to Mason via the PhD in Education Director. Re-enrollment is neither automatic nor guaranteed.

Program Time Limits

Time limits in the PhD in Education program are consistent with University Policy. Students have six years to successfully complete all coursework and defend their Comprehensive Portfolio (third portfolio review) in order to advance to candidacy. Students have a total of 9 years to complete all required components of the program (coursework, a Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment, a dissertation, and an oral dissertation defense).

See the University Catalog (AP.6.10.1) for additional requirements for international students: <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10>.

Time Limit Extension Requests

Doctoral students who need more than six years to complete their coursework and Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment due to compelling circumstances out of their control can apply for a doctoral extension of advancement to candidacy. Students who need more than nine years to complete their program and graduation requirements due to compelling circumstances out of their control can apply for a doctoral extension of graduation deadline. Information about this form and supporting documentation can be found on the Registrar website: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/timelimit/>.

Graduate Student Parental Leave of Absence

The PhD in Education Program complies with the University policy on graduate student parental leave of absence. See University Catalog (AP.6.4.5): <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10>.

Withdrawal from Courses

Students may withdraw from courses in which they are currently enrolled aligned with Mason policies and timelines. Approved withdrawal requests do not initiate tuition forgiveness or a tuition refund. Students who wish to request a withdrawal from one or more courses, should contact the CEHD Student and Academic Affairs office at cehdacad@gmu.edu for more information.

Withdrawal from Program

Students may withdraw from the PhD in Education program in alignment with university withdrawal procedures. Notification of withdrawal should be made by the student completing requisite academic actions. The *Voluntary Resignation from Graduate Academic Program* form is available on the Registrar's Office website (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/VRGAC.pdf>) and submitting to the PhD in Education Director.

Students who withdraw from the program may indicate their intention to also withdraw from all courses. All university exit procedures should be completed as required. Approved withdrawal requests associated with a voluntary resignation do not initiate tuition forgiveness or a tuition refund.

Readmission to Graduate Study at Mason

Former graduate students who have been terminated, dismissed or have resigned from a Mason graduate program are not permitted to take any additional coursework at Mason unless a new graduate program application has been submitted and the applicant has been admitted to graduate study. See University Catalog (AP.6.6.3) for additional Mason policies: <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10>.

If the student is readmitted, the following University policies will be applied to acceptance of coursework, including the following:

1. If the student applies and is readmitted to the same graduate program at Mason from which the student was terminated, dismissed, or resigned, any grades of F or unsatisfactory grades accumulated within six years prior to readmission shall count toward reaching the termination threshold.
2. Any previously earned credit applied to the new graduate program must have been earned within six years prior to enrollment in the new graduate program.
3. Time limits for the degree begin with the date of admission to the new program.

In addition, existing PhD Program requirements would apply, including:

1. The student must form a Program Advisory Committee (that can contain the same or new members from first enrollment) and meet portfolio guidelines and deadlines. It is at the discretion of the committee whether the student can re-present portfolio content from student's first program enrollment.
2. The student must follow program requirements for dissertation credits, including continuous enrollment, completion of the 3-credit course EDUC 998, and 12 total dissertation credits (can include up to 6 credit hours of EDUC 998 and a minimum of 6 credit hours of EDUC 999). The student is entitled to select their dissertation chair (which can be the same or different from first enrollment) and to work with that chair to

form a Doctoral Dissertation Committee (that can be the same or different from the first enrollment). It is at the discretion of the committee whether the student can re-submit dissertation content from the student's first program enrollment.

Grade Requirement

PhD in Education program students are required to:

1. maintain a minimum of 3.00 GPA.
2. earn a B or better in EDUC 800 and EDRS 810. Those students who receive a B- or C in either of these courses must repeat the course and earn a final grade of at least a B. Those who fail to earn a B or better on a second attempt, will be terminated from the program as will those who receives a grade of F in either of these courses.
3. be terminated upon accumulating six credits of unsatisfactory grades (C or F) in degree coursework.

Grading Policies

Grades of A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C, or F are given in all courses, except as follows:

1. A grade of IP (In Progress), rather than a grade of IN, (Incomplete) is given in any dissertation course (EDUC 998, EDUC 999) or internship (EDUC 890, EDUC 994) where, for legitimate reasons, the student has not completed the assigned work by the conclusion of the course. IP grades are assigned only for extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the student. IP grades may not be given in other courses. IP grades must be replaced by final letter grades in all courses before students complete their Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment or can be recommended for graduation.
2. IN (Incomplete) grades are allowed in any course, except dissertation and internship courses, that a student does not complete within the required time limits. These courses must be completed and all letter grades submitted within nine weeks of the start of the semester immediately following the semester in which the IN grade was given (not counting the summer semester). If students do not complete their work by this time, the IN grade is automatically changed to an F (failing) grade. Students should attend to the Mason Registrar's calendar regarding deadlines.
3. A grade of S (Satisfactory/Pass) or NC (Unsatisfactory/Fail) may be given only in EDUC 998 or EDUC 999. All other courses, including internship, must be assigned a letter grade.

Academic Termination

A PhD in Education Program follows University policy for termination (See University Catalog AP.6.6.2 at <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10>). A student will be terminated if he:

- Fails to make satisfactory progress toward degree as determined by the academic unit and/or Associate Provost for Graduate Education.
- Accumulates grades of F in two graduate courses or 9 credits of unsatisfactory grades (C or F) in graduate courses.

Graduation Requirements

In order to satisfactorily complete the PhD in Education Program and receive the PhD in Education, a student must meet all requirements of CEHD, including:

1. Satisfactorily complete all courses listed on the student's approved program of doctoral study.
2. Have at least a 3.0 GPA in all coursework included in the program of study.
3. Satisfactorily complete a Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment.
4. Satisfactorily complete an accepted dissertation and the oral defense of this dissertation.

The process of graduation is initiated by certification by a candidate's Doctoral Dissertation Committee Chair of the student's completion of the dissertation. If all student coursework and other requirements have been completed, the PhD in Education Director confirms to the college that the student is ready to receive a PhD in Education degree. The Registrar's Office reviews and affirms that all requirements have been met.

Applications for graduation and completed, approved dissertations must be filed by candidates with CEHD by the set deadline. See the University Catalog (AP.6.10.9 and AP.6.10.10) for requirements for dissertation submission and fees: <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#text> and the Registrar's Office for graduation deadlines: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/graduation/timelines/>. See also "Enrollment."

Grievance Procedures

PhD in Education students who wish to appeal decisions on the application of doctoral policies and procedures, grades, or other matters affecting their academic progress, should follow the steps listed below:

1. The student should discuss the matter with the instructor, advisor, or other faculty member involved in an effort to reach a mutually agreeable solution.
2. If a satisfactory solution is not reached, the student should follow Grievance Procedures for CEHD (<https://cehd.gmu.edu/saa/student-success-center/submit-an-appeal>).

Program of Study

Each student prepares an individual program of study upon completing two semesters in the PhD in Education Program. This program of study constitutes a contract to complete specified instructional experiences.

Preparation

Students prepare their tentative program of study during their first year in the program, in consultation with their Program Advisory Committee. Students meet with their advisors informally during this year to discuss and prepare their proposed programs. The program of study form can be found on the PhD in Education website: <https://education.gmu.edu/phd-in-education/>.

Completed program proposals signed by the student's advisor (one copy) must be submitted for approval to the PhD in Education Program Director when 18 credits have been completed no later than the end of the student's third semester (whichever comes sooner).

Rationale Section

The program rationale section of the Program of Study form is very important. It is an argument for the proposed program. It normally consists of a claim (goal statement and assertion that the courses specified will help one accomplish that goal); explanation; evidence and reasons supporting the claim; and evidence and reasons negating any alternative claims. In terms of a student's program, a rationale must explicitly justify the professional education courses by telling why they are being taken and how they will help achieve the student's goal(s).

There should be a demonstrated congruence between a rationale and the courses listed on a program. Additionally, the rationale must communicate the student's goal and how and why the proposed program will enable the student to achieve that goal. This requires clarity and detail as well as some length. A few lines or some general statements are insufficient for this purpose. The goal and rationale must be clearly stated, must be coherent, and must demonstrate movement toward the student's chosen career path and goals.

Approval

Faculty members are invited to serve as a member of a student's Program Advisory Committee by the doctoral student. The Program Advisory Committee assists the student in preparing a program of study. The PhD in Education Program Director reviews all proposed student programs of study. Once a program has been reviewed and approved by the Program Director, it serves as a contract between the student and the university. Although the university is not obligated to offer the courses included in the program, a reasonable effort is made to do so or to offer substitute courses or arrange for appropriate independent studies.

Modification

By prior mutual agreement of a student and the Program Advisory Committee, additions, deletions and modifications may be requested to an existing program of study. To initiate this process, the student must submit a written request, with supporting rationale and appropriate documentation (if any is needed), to the advisor who, after consulting with other members of the committee, endorses or rejects the request. Written endorsed requests are forwarded by the advisor to the PhD in Education Program Director who must act to approve the change before it can become final. No changes may be made in a student's program without prior written approval of the PhD in Education Program Director. All student programs are audited for the degree to which there is agreement with the University transcript. Inconsistencies may cause delays in graduation.

Course Registration

Students register for courses each semester in accordance with Mason procedures. Only courses included in the student's approved program of study count toward degree requirements. Students may register for and take any Mason courses they desire to take insofar as these courses are open to them; however, these courses may not count toward the degree unless represented in the student's program of study.

Registration for independent studies (EDUC 897) and internships (EDUC 994 and 890) require completion of a written proposal and individualized section forms available from the PhD in Education Office or the PhD website (<https://education.gmu.edu/phd-in-education/>).

Completion

A program of study is deemed complete when the Office of the University Registrar has affirmed that a final grade has been recorded for all courses listed in the program of study.

Specializations

Most students will identify a primary and secondary specialization; however, Kinesiology has a concentration option where no secondary specialization is available within the typical number of credit hours for the PhD.

Primary Specialization

Students will choose a primary specialization in a field of professional education. Such fields include, but are not limited to:

- Early Childhood Education
- Education Leadership
- Education Policy
- Educational Psychology
- Kinesiology (concentration)
- Higher Education
- International Education
- Learning Technologies Design Research
- Literacy(ies), Culture, and Reading
- Mathematics Education Leadership
- Multilingual/Multicultural Education
- Research Methodology
- Science Education Research
- Special Education
- Teaching and Teacher Education

Interdisciplinary Primary Specialization

An “interdisciplinary specialization” can be individually designed including coursework selected from across CEHD program areas and other Mason units. Such primary specialization should align with a coherent rationale for the choice of specific coursework which meets the student's professional goals. The requirements for the specialization must have the approval of the student’s Program Advisory Committee.

Secondary Specialization

All students in the PhD in Education Program, except those with a Kinesiology concentration, are required to have a secondary specialization in addition to a primary professional specialization. The purpose of the PhD secondary specialization requirement is to ensure that each student has adequate exposure to the concepts and research methods of a specialty or a

coherent interdisciplinary field of study which is relevant to the field of specialization in Education.

The secondary emphasis area of study provides an opportunity for advanced, intensive, and purposeful study in a particular specialty or a coherent interdisciplinary field of study. Accordingly, the requirements for the secondary specialization area require a rigorous inquiry and involvement in scholarly activities. Through this area of study, students may explore and become familiar with the analytical concepts and assumptions that distinguish a particular specialty from other areas of study. The student may also develop proficiency in the methods by which specialists develop and test knowledge.

For options to reduce credit hours in the secondary specialization see "Reduction of Required Credits" under Credits.

Secondary Specialization in CEHD

Secondary specializations may be selected from any of the academic specializations within the CEHD, or in a different program area than the student's professional specialization. The course requirements for these secondary specializations are established and monitored by the specialization affiliated faculty member serving on the student's Program Advisory Committee. Generally, the course requirements for discipline-based secondary concentrations include work both within the CEHD and other Mason schools, departments, and institutes. A faculty member in the designated program area must serve on the student's Program Advisory Committee as a representative to the secondary concentration area.

Secondary Specialization in a Non-CEHD College, School, Department, or Institute

Students may select a secondary specialization from any Mason college, school, department or institute offering graduate programs in a specific area of study. The requirements for the secondary specialization are set and monitored by faculty in the administering department. A faculty member in the designated department serves on the student's Program Advisory Committee as a representative to the secondary specialization area.

Interdisciplinary Secondary Specialization

A secondary specialization can be individually designed including coursework selected from across CEHD program areas and other Mason units. Such secondary specialization should align with a coherent rationale for the choice of specific coursework which meets the student's professional goals. The requirements for the secondary specialization must have the approval of the student's Program Advisory Committee.

III. PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES

Purpose

The Ph.D. Portfolio is a required program document that provides concrete evidence of a Ph.D. in Education student's learning and knowledge development throughout the pre-dissertation phase of a student's doctoral work. The purpose of the Ph.D. in Education Portfolio is two-fold. First, it is designed for the doctoral student to document academic and professional growth and development in an organized, coherent, and selective record in order to facilitate evaluation by the student's Program Advisory Committee. The portfolio represents the scope and depth of a student's goals, plans, and accomplishments in coursework, independent study, research experiences, internships, and other advanced learning activities. It also provides both a vehicle for self-reflection and a comprehensive account of a doctoral student's experiences and ongoing progress toward his or her academic and professional goals. Second, the portfolio serves as an anchor point for the student's Program Advisory Committee as they assist the student to reach each of the three important portfolio meetings that are required. The review and evaluation process includes three presentations by the student to the Program Advisory Committee over the course of the program. The final portfolio review serves as the assessment required for advancement to candidacy.

Expectations of the Student

In the Portfolio process, each student will:

- Define academic and professional goals, revisiting them at each of the three meetings with the Program Advisory Committee;
- Formulate specific plans to achieve those goals through coursework, research experiences, and field-based activities;
- Demonstrate growth in understanding knowledge in the specialization and how knowledge is advanced through inquiry;
- Synthesize and reflect upon the process and results of learning activities;
- Modify goals and plans as needed based on academic and reflective self-evaluation as well as feedback from the student's Program Advisory Committee;
- Demonstrate readiness to proceed to the dissertation phase of the doctoral program.

As students progress through the program, they will periodically meet with their Program Advisory Committee Chairperson, as well as the other members of their Program Advisory Committee to review and assess their goals, plans, understandings, and accomplishments, and to discuss possible modifications and additional work needed to facilitate continued progress in the doctoral program. It is required that the students make three separate presentations of their Portfolios to their Program Advisory Committee: the first after completion of approximately 15 credits, the second after approximately 30 credits, and the third at the completion of the doctoral coursework and prior to advancing to candidacy. Students are not allowed to conduct two portfolio reviews on the same date or within the same semester. They are expected to adhere to the schedule. When students complete the coursework phase of the program, a final meeting is held with the Program Advisory Committee. This meeting is the context for conducting the third portfolio review, the **Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment**, a formal evaluation of a student's

readiness to proceed to the dissertation phase of the Ph.D. in Education program. This is analogous to the traditional doctoral comprehensive exam.

Expectations of the Program Advisory Committee

The student will identify a Program Advisory Committee made up of a chair and two members representing the specialization and the secondary emphasis. The chair of the committee should be chosen first and should be from your primary specialization. The chair will assist and advise students' choice for the other members of the committee. The other members of your committee should be from your secondary specialization and should have expertise that is complementary to the chair's expertise. The committee may also

- Facilitate course selection to help students reach professional and academic goals
- Provide feedback on progress toward degree and goals
- Provide guidance on academic activities beyond your courses
- Provide feedback on academic writing

Committee membership can be changed during pre-dissertation, however, students should demonstrate professional courtesy and inform all people involved in a timely manner when this occurs. Consult the chair or PhD Director if you feel that changes need to be made to your committee.

Portfolio Process

In the Ph.D. in Education Program, a portfolio is a selective and organized electronic record of coursework advancement, documented accomplishments, and growth as a scholar as you proceed through the Ph.D. in Education program. It provides your Program Advisory Committee with the information it needs to assess your growth and development, and to suggest changes that more closely tie your goals to your program.

It is required that all students create electronic portfolios. In addition to providing a demonstration of technological competence, electronic portfolios can be more easily referenced with links to coursework documents, and are available readily to committee members. Students creating electronic portfolios are not required to include personal information such as addresses, phone numbers or social security numbers, but can present any such information, if needed, in the portfolio meetings. Students often use tools such as Google Sites, WordPress or <http://onmason.com/> to create their portfolio. Students may protect their portfolio with a password for privacy as long as the password is shared with the Program Advisory Committee. Web-based portfolios are not required. As an alternative, students may elect to create electronic portfolios on CDs. In this case, each member of the committee should be provided one copy of the CD two weeks prior to the portfolio meeting.

Scheduling a Portfolio Presentation. Prior to presenting each of the three portfolios, the student should meet with the Program Advisory Committee chairperson to ensure that the materials are addressing the expectations for each portfolio and to review drafts of the materials. Once your chair has agreed, contact all members of the committee to locate dates for the presentation. The entire Committee must have a minimum of two weeks to read and

review the portfolio. It is important that the student is aware of and responsive to each of the Program Advisory Committee Member's suggested comments and edits.

Once a date and time have been identified, please contact Ms. Joan Stahle (jstahle@gmu.edu) in the Ph.D. Office to secure a location.

Standards and recommended scoring rubrics for each portfolio review are included at the end of this document (pp. 8-20). Portfolio Assessment Review forms can also be found here: <http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/phd/forms/>

Portfolio I

Present at about 18 credits

Purpose: The purpose of Portfolio 1 is to provide evidence of a developing research interest and to show how this has evolved through coursework.

Students must present their first Portfolio when they have successfully completed 18 credits of coursework, or before the end of their third semester of study. It is required that you gain the approval of your Program Advisory Committee chairperson in advance of submitting your portfolio to your committee, and that you give the entire Committee two weeks to read and review your portfolio.

There are three main goals for your first Portfolio review meeting:

1. To present your current understanding about your research area of interest
2. To inform your committee about your professional goals (CV and Goals Statement)
3. To gather recommendations to complete your Program of Study

At this first portfolio meeting you are expected to have set up the electronic portfolio and include links to the following 5 sections:

- ***Section 1: Current Vita***
- ***Section 2: Statement of Professional Goals***
- ***Section 3: Knowledge Discussion Essay***
- ***Section 4: Proposed Program of Study***
- ***Section 5: Academic Archive***

Section 1: Current Vita

A Curriculum Vitae (CV) represents who you are as an academic and will change over time as you accumulate research, teaching and service activities during your PhD studies and beyond. In order to gain an understanding of how CVs change over time and for different purposes, it is suggested that you examine the CVs of professionals, academics, or other educational researchers at different ranks in your field to understand how CVs progress. To create your academic CV, consult with your committee and committee chair because different fields have different requirements. For example, you may find that your professional resume is not the same as your academic CV required for this portfolio process. Remember that CVs contain three main areas (order depends on the audience):

research, teaching, and service. See this Mason website for general tips on creating an academic CV

- <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/for-graduate-students/developing-your-cv>

Section 2: Statement of Professional Goals

In this section, you will present a short paper detailing your academic, research, and professional goals. One of the purposes of this section is to help your committee understand what you want to accomplish with your Ph.D. in the future. Different professional paths require different preparation during the program. For example, the skills for pursuing an academic position at a research university are different from the skills needed to run a consulting business, serve as an analyst at a research and evaluation firm, or work in a school district.

In order to communicate your professional goals clearly, you should first reread the original goals statement you prepared for admission into the program, and then address how you are now viewing your role, and how your work in the Ph.D. program will help you reach your professional goals. Highlight evidence of changes from the original goal statement to your current thinking and indicate relevant work accomplished. Include in this section:

- A. A copy of your original Goals Statement from your admissions file.
- B. A 3-5 page written description detailing your academic goals (specialization and supporting areas of study), research goals (problems, topics, theories, concepts, approaches, interests), and professional goals.
- C. An optional pictorial representation of how your interests, experiences, and plans fit together into a coherent conceptual framework. This creative diagram should concisely portray the intellectual substance of your developing identity as a scholar-practitioner.

Section 3: Field of Interest Discussion Essay

The purpose of this section is for you to communicate to your committee your current understanding of your area(s) of research interest, making connections among coursework you have taken. In 3-5 pages, analyze what you have learned about your area of research interest to this point in your academic career and to situate this knowledge into the courses you have taken. You will want to address the major connections and themes you are seeing in your specialization. Please hyperlink relevant evaluated pieces of evidence from your **Academic Archive**.

Hints for the process of writing your Field of Interest Discussion Essay:

- Start by writing about your area(s) of interest, what is already known, and cite the researchers you have been reading, much like a short literature review;
- Once you feel you have captured the essence of the relevant research area, think about which major papers you have written in courses fit in this overview;
- Hyperlink the relevant papers in your Academic Archive;
- Consider which major papers you have written that do not link to this paper. Write about how you have moved from those topics on to this current topic

From the information you provide in this essay and your presentation during the portfolio meeting, you should expect your committee to make recommendations for other articles, journals, and authors for you to read as you make progress to Portfolio II.

Section 4: Proposed Program of Study

Complete the Program of Study document found on the Ph.D. website.

Be prepared to answer the question “How does your proposed program of study help you accomplish your goals?” at the portfolio meeting. Your committee will make recommendations to be sure that your Program of Study will include the necessary courses to give you the skills you need to complete your dissertation and other professional goals. You and your committee may agree to program changes at this meeting. All members of the Committee and you should sign the Program of Study, thereby accepting it as your approved program. Once signatures are secured, please submit this document to the Ph.D. in Education Office for your permanent files. From this point forward, you will include the Program of Study in all three of your portfolios, and adjust it as necessary as you proceed (and file each change with the Ph.D. in Education office).

If you are seeking to use credits previously earned elsewhere or at Mason, e.g. non-degree courses, please provide a rationale. Information on applying these credits can be found in the Program Guidelines on the Ph.D. website.

Section 5: Academic Archive

The Academic Archive is a repository of all of the major course products from each course you have taken to date. Please include in the Archive the major course assignment you were given and your evaluated paper with the professor’s comments.

Transcripts. In each portfolio, please include copies of your transcripts at the time of application to the Ph.D. program. To facilitate your degree audit, update your Mason transcripts (unofficial is acceptable) for each portfolio presentation. These should be included in your Academic Archive, along with a statement explaining why you received any grades of C or lower, or an Incomplete.

Evaluation of Portfolio I

At your portfolio meeting, sign and have your committee sign the **Portfolio Assessment and Feedback I form** (PAF I), and submit it to the Ph.D. in Education Office. The PAF I is in the Appendix of this document. Please bring one copy of the rubric and scoring sheet (PAFI) to the Portfolio Meeting for the committee. Should you not pass this portfolio assessment, you can conduct this review once more within three months of the date of the first Portfolio I presentation. Students who are unable to provide acceptable evidence of readiness to continue in the program at that second presentation will not be permitted to continue in the doctoral program.

Insert your copy of the PAF I in your portfolio. Use the feedback you receive from your Program Advisory Committee from Portfolio Review I in preparing for Portfolio Review II by including the form in the Academic Archive section for the Portfolio II review.

Portfolio II

Present at about 30 credits

Purpose: The purpose of Portfolio II is to provide evidence of a student's ability to summarize the foundational and contemporary literature related to area(s) of interest, situate their area of study within their field, synthesize and analyze major contributors to area(s) of interest, and to elaborate and/or reflect on professional and academic selves since Portfolio I.

Students must complete Portfolio Review II after they have accumulated 36 credit hours of coursework. After this review, submit the signed Portfolio Assessment Form (PAF) II to the Ph.D. in Education Office. Include a copy of the PAF II in the portfolio. Use the feedback received from your Program Advisory Committee from Portfolio Review II in preparing for the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment.

Section 1: Updated vita

Section 2: Professional Update and Reflection Essay

Questions to inform this essay of approximately 1000 words follow:

- How have you addressed the feedback discussed and received in Portfolio I?
- How have your academic, research, and professional goals evolved since portfolio I?
- Since Portfolio I, how have your courses influenced your thinking and current area(s) of interest? Since Portfolio I, in what ways have you engaged in your professional community? In what ways do your areas of interest and professional community influence each other?

Section 3: Foundational and Contemporary Literature Essay

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate the student's breadth of understanding in the area(s) of interest. Questions to inform this approximately 1000-1500 word essay could include:

- What key issue(s) form your developing research interest(s)?
- Who are the major thinkers in your developing area(s) of research interest? What foundational and contemporary literature forms your understanding of your developing research interest(s)? In what ways are they complementary? In what ways do they disagree?
- Who has most influenced your thinking and how is that their work integrated into your thinking?
- Situate your area of interest in your field. The scope of this essay should be discussed with your chair as it will be different in various specializations.

Section 4: Depth of Knowledge Essay

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate a more in-depth investigation within the broader parameters defined in the previous essay and for a more specific area of study. The essay should include references to relevant literature. Questions to inform this approximately 1000-1500 word essay may include:

- How might your developing work contribute to improved practice or the profession? Consider ethical, methodological, and theoretical contributions.
- What gaps occur in the foundational and contemporary literature? Consider gaps such

- as theoretical or methodological. Why do these gaps occur?
- How might you address these gaps in your developing area(s) of interest?
 - What is it about these issues that influence your thinking? Why are you compelled to address these issues?

Section 5: Program of Study

Update your Program of Study (document found on the Ph.D. website) based on requirements or changes since Portfolio 1.

Section 6: Academic Archive

In addition to the major evaluated assignment from each course you have taken in the program (with your professor's feedback to you), please also include in this portfolio a link to your most recent transcript.

Evaluation of Portfolio II

Please see the rubric and scoring sheet (PAF2) for Portfolio II in the Appendix of this document. Please bring one copy of the rubric and scoring sheet (PAF2) to the Portfolio Meeting for the committee. Should you not pass this portfolio assessment, you can conduct this review once more within three months of the date of the first Portfolio II presentation. Students who are unable to provide acceptable evidence of readiness to continue in the program at that second presentation will not be permitted to continue in the doctoral program.

Portfolio III

Comprehensive Portfolio

Present after about 45 credits and prior to proposal

Purpose: The purpose of Portfolio III is to provide comprehensive evidence of in-depth knowledge in the field prior to advancement to candidacy. The student should demonstrate broad knowledge of an area and be able to narrow to a specific area of inquiry. The goal is to assess whether the student is prepared to advance to candidacy and enroll in the dissertation proposal course.

The Comprehensive Portfolio III is presented when all coursework is completed, with the one exception being an advanced research methods course (if requirement has not yet been met). The Comprehensive Portfolio must be presented within the timeline for coursework completion prior to advancement to candidacy. Students should work with the Program Advisory Committee members to prepare these documents. All committee members should receive the full portfolio a minimum of two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting. At the meeting, students must provide all updated forms (e.g., Program of Study, Portfolio Assessment Review Sheet) for signature by committee members. Students should submit all signed documents to the Ph.D. in Education Office at the end of the portfolio III meeting.

Section 1: Updated vita

Section 2: Analytic Personal and Professional Essay

In an essay of approximately 1000 words, please address the following questions:

- Since Portfolio Evaluation II, in what ways have you continued to be engaged in your professional community?
- How have you addressed the gaps or deficiencies noted in the Portfolio II Evaluation?
- What are your scholarly achievements and how have you advanced your knowledge and experience beyond coursework?
- How have your courses influenced your thinking and work?
- Provide evidence of these changes through your coursework products and assignments (provide hyperlinks within text to your evaluated course products). If other scholarly products are available, they should also be hyperlinked.

Section 3: Knowledge Evidence Paper

Building and expanding upon your essays from portfolio II, the Knowledge Evidence Paper is a substantive document (approximately 30 pages in length) that serves as an in-depth investigation and identifies an area (or areas) of inquiry. It should synthesize major lines of research and demonstrate a strong understanding of relationships between and among the major paradigms in your area of study. This paper should be scholarly in nature (e.g., following APA 6th style, appropriate use of citations, representative of an academic style of writing in publication). The paper should provide the background for a proposal for a dissertation.

As you work toward preparing your documents for portfolio III, you should meet regularly with your advisory committee chair and committee members to discuss the issues and areas of emphasis that are specific to your field.

The following may help to guide your discussion:

- Discuss how your breadth and depth of knowledge narrows to a specific area of inquiry
- Consider how your area of proposed study is situated in the broader literature
- Address the history of the research in this area.
- Ensure that the major theorists and principal researchers are adequately represented.
- Articulate the significance of your proposed research to your field
- Provide an empirically based justification for your proposed research
- Situate how your proposed study will be carried out with a brief overview of proposed methods and procedures that would address key or central questions guiding your study

This comprehensive Knowledge Evidence Paper should be evaluated, in addition to other evidence, to determine that the student possesses comprehensive knowledge of the selected field, can demonstrate the capacity for scholarly writing, and is prepared to undertake original research as a doctoral candidate. At the successful completion of the Comprehensive Portfolio III assessment, the student is advanced to candidacy and may enroll in EDUC 998, Doctoral Dissertation Proposal.

Please note that the Knowledge Evidence Paper does not bind the student to that particular topic for the dissertation; nor should the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment be regarded as a Proposal Defense.

Section 4: Program of Study Final Review

At this time, your program of study and your academic transcript should be identical. It is incumbent upon you to be sure you have satisfied all University and program requirements in order to proceed to the dissertation phase of the program. Should you have failed to take a required course, or still have Incomplete(s) for a grade, or have outstanding bills with the University, you will not be allowed to proceed to EDUC 998: Dissertation Proposal.

Section 5: Academic Archive

In addition to the major evaluated assignment from each course you have taken in the program (with your professor's feedback to you), please also include in this portfolio a link to your most recent transcript.

Evaluation of Comprehensive Portfolio

If any weaknesses or gaps in evidence of readiness for dissertation work are noted in the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment, use feedback from this meeting to address each area of concern. In order to give you guidance, the Portfolio Assessment and Feedback (PAF3) form **must** specify any and all actions that your committee requires you to complete before you are judged to have fully passed the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment.

Note: You will be given no more than three months to complete these requirements from the date of the first Portfolio III presentation, at which time your Program Advisory Committee will reconvene for another review. Students who are unable to provide acceptable evidence of dissertation readiness at that second presentation will not be permitted to continue in the doctoral program.

Portfolio Process Overview and Timeline

Throughout the scheduling of portfolio reviews and your construction of documents for the portfolio communication with your committee members is essential to the portfolio process. In particular, it is important to give committee members and the chair sufficient time to read and review materials.

Portfolio 1 (at approximately 18 credits)

- Identify committee chair and committee members - 2 months prior to portfolio meeting
- Draft essays for review by committee chair
- Schedule meeting with portfolio committee upon approval - 1 month prior to expected meeting date
- 2 weeks prior to meeting - submit final materials to committee, prepare presentation
- At the meeting - have committee sign program of study and review form

Portfolio 2 (at approximately 30 credits)

- Draft essays for review by committee chair
- Schedule meeting with portfolio committee - 1 month prior to expected meeting date
- 2 weeks prior to meeting - submit final materials to committee, prepare presentation
- At the meeting - have committee sign program of study and review form

Portfolio 3 (45 credits - must be completed prior to enrollment in Dissertation Proposal)

- Draft paper for review by committee chair
- Schedule meeting with portfolio committee - 1 month prior to expected meeting date
- 2 weeks prior to meeting - submit final materials to committee, prepare presentation
- At the meeting - have committee sign program of study and review form

NOTE: Students are not allowed to conduct two portfolio reviews on the same date or within the same semester.

Portfolio Rubrics & Forms

Rubrics and forms can be found on the PhD in Education website:

<https://education.gmu.edu/phd-in-education/>

IV. DISSERTATION GUIDELINES

Purpose

All students must satisfactorily complete a doctoral dissertation. The dissertation is the capstone to the PhD in Education and culmination of doctoral study. There are two dissertation options within the PhD in Education Program: the traditional dissertation and the manuscript dissertation.

Dissertation Committee

Members of the candidate's Doctoral Dissertation Committee may comprise members of the disbanded Program Advisory Committee or the candidate may select one or more new members. A doctoral candidate's Doctoral Dissertation Committee consists of at least three members with graduate faculty status, including a full-time GMU faculty member relevant to the student's field of study who serves as the Chair of the candidate's Doctoral Dissertation Committee.

The Chair of the Doctoral Dissertation Committee must be core faculty for the student's degree program (i.e., faculty affiliated with any of the PhD Program specializations). The Doctoral Dissertation Committee Chair advises and supports the candidate in preparing, completing and defending the dissertation. In some cases, a co-chair may be appropriate and may include: faculty from another GMU academic unit, faculty who are external to the university, or non-tenure track faculty. A co-chair must be awarded graduate faculty status at Mason.

One committee member should be a full-time faculty member at GMU and have expertise in the research methods the candidate will employ in their dissertation. Additional committee members may be from CEHD faculty, the GMU faculty outside of CEHD, or non-GMU faculty with an appropriate terminal degree. Committee members must meet University dissertation committee requirements for graduate faculty status (see University Catalog AP.6.10.5: <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#text>). Additionally, committee members who are not full-time GMU faculty must be approved by both the Doctoral Dissertation Committee Chair and the PhD in Education Program Director.

Candidates must select members of their Doctoral Dissertation Committee once they have passed the comprehensive assessment (third portfolio) and while preparing their dissertation proposals (in EDUC 998), but before presenting a dissertation proposal to the faculty. When committee members have agreed to serve on the committee, the candidate must complete the online Dissertation Committee Form posted on the PhD in Education Website.

Consideration of a change in committee membership should include discussion with the Doctoral Dissertation Committee Chair and the PhD in Education Director, as appropriate. To initiate a committee member change, the student must request the change, in writing, clearly specifying the rationale, and submit this request to the PhD in Education Program Director. A student requesting a change in committee membership must have first ascertained the new member's willingness to serve prior to submitting the written request and indicate this on the request. Membership of the Doctoral Dissertation Committee, once established and approved, may not be altered without prior approval of the PhD in Education Program Director.

If a candidate's Doctoral Dissertation Chair retires or resigns from GMU prior to conclusion of the dissertation process, and they agree to continue to advise the student, that individual can serve as Co-chair along with a GMU faculty member as long as they have been granted legacy graduate faculty status. If the Chair or another faculty member on the candidate's Doctoral Dissertation Committee leaves the University, the candidate may select a replacement without approval from the PhD Director, although the candidate needs to inform the PhD Office of their replacement.

It is the responsibility of the candidate's Doctoral Dissertation Committee, under the leadership of its Chair, to assist and supervise the candidate in the preparation of the doctoral dissertation and to assure that the dissertation meets all standards for doctoral work, including being written in the style of the latest edition of the American Psychological Association. (For Kinesiology concentration students, the latest edition of the *AMA Manual of Style* is allowed). The major responsibility for this work, however, rests with the candidate, who is expected to demonstrate the ability to conduct independent research through dissertation study.

Members of this committee act in accord with PhD in Education procedures to accept, modify or reject a candidate's dissertation proposal(s), evaluate the candidate's oral presentation of the completed dissertation, accept or reject the candidate's completed dissertation, and certify the candidate's completion of all dissertation requirements necessary to qualify for graduation.

Option 1: Traditional Dissertation Process

The purpose is for the PhD in Education candidate to clearly demonstrate ability to apply disciplinary foundations and methods in a chosen area of specialization. It must integrate knowledge of various disciplines with relevant educational practice and theory. The dissertation must also make a significant contribution to existing knowledge or practice in education.

To be acceptable, a PhD in Education dissertation must:

1. Address a clearly identified major societal or educational need or issue as derived from the literature in the field, analysis of research, projection of trends, and other accepted sources;
2. Have implications for education beyond local school audiences, clients, or settings;
3. Be scholarly -- it should be grounded in critically evaluated research and theory, and presented in a form consistent with the highest standards of organization and writing or other appropriate form of communication;
4. Clearly relate to a facet of education (as broadly defined);
5. Be theoretically and conceptually grounded and utilize appropriate analytical techniques;
6. Furnish tangible evidence that the student is able to produce new knowledge or a new product for use in educational practice in a school, industrial, or governmental setting;
7. Be consistent with ethical guidelines for professional practice (e.g., follow IRB guidelines for research with human subjects when applicable).

A PhD in Education dissertation must be original, new work and not replicated research or work completed prior to entering the PhD in Education Program or undertaken while in the program. It must also meet the standards of doctoral level scholarship and research. If a dissertation expands

on prior research, it must go significantly beyond that work and do so in a manner appropriate to doctoral level research. It is the responsibility of a candidate's Doctoral Dissertation Committee to ensure that a dissertation does not duplicate previous work by the student or others.

Dissertation Proposal and Proposal Defense

After defending the Cumulative Portfolio and advancing to candidacy, the candidate will write a formal proposal for their proposed dissertation that includes:

- Chapter 1: An introduction that clearly establishes the educational problem, a conceptual framework (if applicable), the research questions to be addressed, and definitions of key terms
- Chapter 2: A thorough review of the existing research literature (or literatures) in the areas related to the proposed dissertation study.
- Chapter 3: A detailed description of the proposed research methods and data analysis plan for the dissertation study. **Note:** For multiple-paper dissertations, this must include the proposed research methods for each paper (see also, Multiple-paper dissertations).

To begin work on a PhD in Education doctoral dissertation, a candidate is required to (a) form a Doctoral Dissertation Committee that meets University criteria for service, (b) orally defend the dissertation proposal to the committee in an open meeting, (c) submit formal approval by all committee members to the PhD in Education Office, and (d) receive approval of the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), if the dissertation involves human subjects. Student work on a dissertation that is not conform to all of these requirements cannot be counted toward completion of dissertation requirements.

Dissertation Content

The traditional dissertation is written in 5 chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Review of the literature
- Chapter 3: Methods
- Chapter 4: Results
- Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusions

Option 2: Manuscript Dissertation Process

The manuscript dissertation is one response to considering how the dissertation of can better support students' seeking research careers after graduation and in encouraging greater dissemination of research findings in education (Duke & Beck, 1999; Nehls & Watson, 2016). The manuscript-style dissertation is one type of dissertation format consisting of multiple papers in published or publishable form (Nehls & Watson, 2016). The student engages in research during doctoral study while writing in a format consistent with the expectations of their work after graduation. As a learning process, this results in both publishable artifacts of the research and an experience consistent with their career goals.

The manuscript dissertation includes **at least three publishable papers** and **at least one chapter** to describe the organizational framework that connects the papers as a program of research. **A concluding chapter** should discuss implications, limitations and further research

related to the completed studies. However, as with any dissertation, the manuscript dissertation is considered original research completed by the student with the guidance of the Doctoral Dissertation Committee. For the purposes of the multiple-manuscript dissertation, one meta-analysis or systematic synthesis of the literature related to the dissertation can be considered "original research."

The same expectations for high quality, ethical research apply to the manuscript format as to any dissertation. The manuscript-style dissertation process described here has two goals guiding the process.

Goals

1. To support students' professional goals in research-intensive careers post-graduate school
2. To enhance and encourage wider dissemination of research by students and faculty

Key Features

1. Develop a program of research with committee guidance
2. Promote publishing and dissemination by the student
3. Support sharing of findings and research more rapidly

Guidelines for Manuscript Dissertation

Deadlines and overarching procedures should be consistent with program, college and university guidelines, catalog, and deadlines. However, there are specific guidelines for the manuscript dissertation to support both the student and the dissertation committee. As a result, there are **additional requirements** for planning and executing a manuscript-style dissertation.

Dissertation Committee

The PhD in Education includes two committees for doctoral students: (a) the program advisory committee and (b) the dissertation committee. Since, the manuscript dissertation may require more planning during the coursework stages of the dissertation (e.g., in the preparation of syntheses papers or conducting pilot studies), students are strongly encouraged to maintain some common membership in the committees from Portfolio 2 to Portfolio 3 and then to the dissertation committee. Committee members may be added or removed **consistent with university and program policies** (University Catalog AP.6.10.5; PhD in Education Guidelines), but the student will require consistent planning and support throughout the process.

Dissertation Planning and Proposal Meetings

All students in the PhD in Education program are required to have a proposal defense meeting of the student and the committee to approve the dissertation proposal. However, given the requirements of the manuscript-style dissertation, **an added planning meeting** is suggested to discuss and outline what papers may be included in the dissertation (e.g., if papers that have already been written may be included) and the overall structure of the project. Upon completion of the planning meeting, the student should submit the dissertation committee form and a summary of the planning meeting discussion to the PhD Director.

The second proposal meeting should include an oral defense of the full, written proposal **including literature review, research methods, timeline, and proposed papers for inclusion.**

The proposal should also address authorship of papers. The student should be the **lead author or sole author** on the research papers but there may be collaborators including members of the dissertation committee or other students. In the case of a collaborative project that may be included in the dissertation, the student's role in the research must be clearly outlined and described.

The three central papers should be of a **quality consistent with publication in peer-reviewed journals** in the discipline or related disciplines. The committee might approve additional papers beyond the three central papers at their discretion.

Dissertation Content

The dissertation itself should include the “cover” chapters that **introduce and summarize** the multiple papers within the dissertation. These chapters should describe the program of research the manuscripts support.

The dissertation also includes the manuscripts themselves. In the event that copyright related to a published paper would prevent a full paper from inclusion in the dissertation, then a summary of the paper is acceptable including a reference to the published manuscript. Students should attend to the copyright policies of intended journals as they are preparing manuscripts. The student and the dissertation committee should also include appropriate use of the university's embargo policy for dissertations where appropriate.

The current CEHD template for dissertations can be used for APA formatting as usual.

References

Duke, N. K., & Beck, S. W. (1999). Education should consider alternative formats for the dissertation. *Educational Researcher*, 28(3), 31–36. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1177255>

Nehls, K., & Watson, D. (2016). Alternative dissertation formats: Preparing scholars for the academy and beyond. In V. A. Storey & K. A. Hesbol (Eds.), *Contemporary approaches to dissertation development and research methods* (pp. 43–52). Hershey, PA: IGI global.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

All PhD in Education doctoral dissertations that are proposed to have human subjects must receive clearance from the Mason Institutional Review Board (IRB) (following Mason policies and procedures). Such review and approval must be obtained in writing and in advance of beginning work on the dissertation. Final faculty approval of a dissertation requiring review board clearance is contingent on receipt of this approval.

Information for securing IRB approval may be obtained at <http://oria.gmu.edu/>. It is the responsibility of the student, with the support of their Doctoral Dissertation Chair, to apply for and receive approval from the IRB prior to beginning data collection. Any dissertation focusing on the study or involvement of human subjects undertaken without prior written approval will not be deemed to meet Mason or PhD in Education requirements and will not be authorized or

sanctioned by the PhD in Education Director. In addition, the student is subject to penalties from the IRB Office.

Doctoral Defense

Upon completion of the dissertation research, the candidate will write a formal draft of their finished product. The body of the paper, excluding frontmatter and end matter required by the library, includes:

Traditional Dissertation	Manuscript Dissertation
Abstract	Abstract
Chapter 1 An introduction that clearly establishes the educational problem, a conceptual framework (if applicable), the research questions to be addressed, and definitions of key terms.	Chapter 1 An introduction that clearly establishes the educational problem, a conceptual framework (if applicable), a rationale for each of the 3 manuscripts (including research questions), and definitions of key terms.
Chapter 2 A thorough review of the existing research literature (or literatures) in the areas related to the proposed dissertation study.	Chapter 2 Manuscript 1 that includes introduction, literature review, methods, results, and discussion/conclusions.
Chapter 3 A detailed description of the proposed research methods and data analysis plan for the dissertation study.	Chapter 3 Manuscript 2 that includes introduction, literature review, methods, results, and discussion/conclusions.
Chapter 4 A presentation of the data analysis and findings for each research question.	Chapter 4 Manuscript 3 that includes introduction, literature review, methods, results, and discussion/conclusions.
Chapter 5 A thoughtful discussion of how the study findings contribute to the existing research base, limitations, and educational implications.	Chapter 5 A thoughtful discussion of how the collective findings from the 3 manuscripts contribute to the existing research base, limitations, and educational implications.
References	References
Appendices	Appendices

After the candidate has submitted the final draft of their dissertation to all committee members, they should notify the PhD in Education Office so that the date of the scheduled oral doctoral defense can be publicized. In the oral examination, the student will present findings from the

dissertation and the Doctoral Dissertation Committee will discuss and critically evaluate the draft. Following this examination, the student's dissertation committee determines whether the dissertation under examination is acceptable as submitted or needs further revision or work and the student is so notified.

Once all committee revisions have been satisfied, the student must submit the completed dissertation to the PhD Director for review. Once PhD Director approval has been given, the student may submit the dissertation to the library.

University Dissertation Submission

For degree conferral in a particular semester, all required documents materials must be submitted to University Dissertation and Thesis Services according to the semester deadlines (For specific materials, deadlines and more information, please refer to the websites of the University Dissertation & Thesis Services: <https://library.gmu.edu/udts> and the University Registrar: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/graduation/timelines/>). *See also "Graduation Requirements" in Section I: Program Guidelines in the PhD in Education Handbook.*