



University of Connecticut  
Neag School of Education

Department of Curriculum &  
Instruction

Doctoral Handbook

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## MISSION

The mission of the Department of Curriculum & Instruction is to advance the quality and equity of education for all. The Department's Ph.D. program supports the development of scholars who positively impact education through research, teaching, and service. To achieve these ends, we cultivate knowledge of diverse worldviews and perspectives, and the skills, insights, and imagination required of scholars as they assume leadership roles as university faculty, researchers, administrators, and policy makers.

## PRINCIPLES

To achieve this mission, the design of our Ph.D. program is guided by five core principles:

**WE CONDUCT RIGOROUS RESEARCH** – To generate the new knowledge that advances understanding and scholarship, doctoral scholars engage in research throughout their course of study.

**WE COLLABORATE AS SCHOLARS** – To solve increasingly complex challenges in education, doctoral scholars engage in collaborative research within and across departments, schools, campuses, and institutions.

**WE RELATE RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PRACTICE** – To examine and address educational issues at many levels, doctoral scholars investigate questions at the intersections of research, policy, and practice.

**WE ADDRESS INEQUITIES** – To improve the quality of education globally, doctoral scholars study practices that yield advantages for all learners, with particular attention to under-served populations.

**WE THINK COMPREHENSIVELY** – To prepare a broad-minded generation of leaders in educational research, doctoral scholars synthesize across fields and employ comprehensive and productive approaches to understanding education.

## VALUES

The selection and preparation of doctoral scholars in the Department are guided by four values: pursuing ideas, developing expertise, cultivating commitments, and engaging imagination. In particular, we recruit and support doctoral students who are committed to:

### *Pursuing Ideas*

- deeply within a discipline or field
- broadly across disciplines and fields
- openly beyond one's perspectives, languages, and cultures

### *Developing Expertise*

- for designing research, policy, and practice
- for negotiating complexity, uncertainty, and diversity
- for communicating with many audiences

### *Cultivating Commitments*

- to intellectual curiosity
- to professional responsibility
- to addressing issues in the education of under-served learners

### *Engaging Imagination*

- to ask novel and important questions that shape the field
- to generate innovative methods, practices, and solutions
- to envision new possibilities

## ADMISSIONS

Doctoral study in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction is research-oriented. Because the Ph.D. degree is the highest degree conferred by the University of Connecticut, it is granted to a graduate student only when evidence indicates a pattern of *pursuing powerful ideas, developing distinctive expertise, cultivating professional commitments, and engaging an able imagination* (see departmental Values). The degree is never awarded solely for a required period of study or the completion of a prescribed program of course work.

### **Documents**

Prospective doctoral scholars must meet the admission criteria of both the Graduate School and the Department of Curriculum & Instruction. Consideration for admission requires that you submit:

- Graduate School Application
- All Undergraduate Transcripts
- All Graduate Transcripts
- GRE Scores (Verbal & Quantitative)
- Academic Writing Sample
- Vita
- Personal Goal Statement
- 3 Reference Letters
- Evidence of K-12 or Other Relevant Teaching Experience
- TOEFL Scores (for international applicants whose native language is not English)

Taken together, the documents in your application file should provide a compelling argument for why you aspire to doctoral work. Seek excellence in the documents you submit. Provide explanations for your application materials. Help the Admissions Committee understand: *Why do you want the Ph.D.? Why do you want to earn the degree at UConn? What are you curious about?* To the committee, the documents in your application folder must present a persuasively argued appeal for investing in your long-term scholarly goals.

### **Deadlines**

The Department of Curriculum & Instruction admits new doctoral scholars once each year. To be considered for the admissions review, application materials must be sent to the Graduate School and postmarked by January 15. Applicants' credentials are reviewed after January 15 for admission to the subsequent summer or fall semester.

### **Residency**

Given the intensity of the academic preparation necessary to assume top leadership roles as university faculty, researchers, administrators, or policy makers, the department ordinarily admits full-time doctoral scholars. Part-time students are encouraged to discuss full time study with their advisors.

### **Advisor**

Before submitting your application materials, study the faculty biographies on our department's website to learn about the people, research, grants, courses, and traditions that are part of our scholarly community. In particular, you should determine if there is a match between your goals and the scholarship of a Graduate Faculty member in the department.<sup>1</sup> If so, you should contact that faculty member to discuss your goals. Identify in your Personal Goal Statement who you would like your initial faculty advisor to be.

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<sup>1</sup> A Graduate Faculty member is indicated by an \* next to his or her name in the FACULTY section at the back of this Handbook.

## **Requirements**

To be considered for admission to the Graduate School and the Department of Curriculum & Instruction you must meet a number of requirements, which are described below. Because acceptance into the Department's Ph.D. program is highly competitive, meeting or exceeding the application criteria for these requirements does not guarantee admission.

### **Knowledge & Skills**

- **All Undergraduate Transcripts.** A bachelor's degree is required from an approved institution. An undergraduate degree or equivalent evidence of suitable background is required for entering EDCI for doctoral study. The Department of Curriculum & Instruction ordinarily requires applicants for Ph.D. study to have obtained an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0 (on a 4.0 grading scale) during your last 60 undergraduate semester credits. If your undergraduate GPA falls short of this requirement, you must provide compelling alternative evidence of your ability to succeed in doctoral work. Official transcripts of all undergraduate study must be provided.
- **All Graduate Transcripts.** A completed master's degree of at least 24 graduate credits, with a GPA of at least 3.5 (on a 4.0 grading scale), is required. If your graduate GPA falls short of this requirement or your graduate degree is not directly related to doctoral study in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction, you must provide compelling, alternative evidence of your ability to succeed in doctoral work. Official transcripts of all graduate study must be provided.
- **GRE General Test scores.** Ordinarily, students admitted to our program have a combined *Verbal* and *Quantitative* score on the GRE of 311. Official scores for the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test <http://www.gre.org> must be sent by the *Educational Testing Service* directly to the University of Connecticut—Storrs at the time of application (Institution Code 3915). The Department of Curriculum & Instruction's GRE Department Code is 3101. Scores may not be more than five years old.
- **Academic Writing Sample.** You must submit an academic writing sample for the admissions committee to review. Doctoral courses, the dissertation, and research manuscripts are all writing-intensive activities. In recognition of the importance of writing in the Ph.D. program, prospective advisors and members of the Graduate Program Committee evaluate each applicant's writing. Samples of writing submitted for evaluation are not returned. Suitable examples include a master's thesis, an academic paper from a graduate course, a journal article, a grant proposal, or any other writing that can be used to judge an applicant's academic writing ability. Applicants who doubt the quality or informativeness of their writing sample may wish to supplement it by taking the GRE Writing Assessment.
- **Vita.** You must provide a current vita (a detailed resume) that includes information about: Educational History, Professional Experience, Awards and Honors, Grants and Fellowships, Publications, Presentations at Professional Meetings, Professional Service, Professional Organizations, and Teaching Certificates.
- **TOEFL Test Scores.** If you are an international applicant whose native language is not English, you must furnish recent (not older than two years) results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (<http://www.toefl.org/>). Consideration of an application does not proceed until it satisfies the TOEFL requirement. A score of at least 237 on the Computer-Based TOEFL or 580 on the Paper-Based TOEFL is required. In recent years, the Department of Curriculum & Instruction has only admitted international applicants whose scores are considerably higher.

### **Dispositions & Goals**

- **Personal Goal Statement.** The admissions committee will read your statement with great care. Your statement should include detailed reasons for pursuing doctoral study. The statement should discuss:
  - (a) **Your Background**—How your experiences (education, work, volunteer, or personal) have prepared you for the rigors of doctoral study.

- (b) **Your Goals for Doctoral Study**—Your career goals, intended faculty advisor, and initial research interests.

The information in your Personal Goal Statement is used to determine how well your goals align with the Department's Mission, Principles, and Values and to determine if the faculty member you indicated is available to serve as your advisor. If your statement fails to persuade the indicated or another faculty member to serve as your graduate advisor, you will not be admitted. Therefore, it is essential that your Personal Goal Statement be detailed, well-written, and composed with cognizance of the specific areas of graduate specialization available in the department.

If you have been encouraged by a specific professor to apply as a prospective doctoral advisee of him or her, you should mention that faculty member in the statement. Your statement should be double-spaced, 12-point font, and between 500-1,000 words; each page should include your name, page number, and the specialization for which you are applying (e.g., Bilingual Education, Elementary Education, English Education, Foreign Language Education, Literacy Education, Math Education, Science Education, Social Studies Education).

## **Experiences & References**

- **Evidence of K-12 or Other Relevant Teaching Experience.** A minimum of three years K-12 teaching experience in elementary, secondary, bilingual education or TESOL is required. In exceptional circumstances, we will accept, in place of this, evidence of teaching or other school-based experiences relevant to the student's purposes in earning a Ph.D.
- **Three letters of recommendation.** Letters of recommendation should be sent directly to the Graduate School from three persons qualified to evaluate your potential for doctoral study. Recommendations should be written by people who have supervised you in either an academic, employment, or community service capacity and who can comment on your intellectual ability, creativity, initiative, sensitivity to others, leadership potential, and promise for academic research. At least one of the letters should be from a university professor familiar with your academic knowledge and skill. *Inform your recommenders that their letters should focus on your preparedness for the academic rigors of a research-oriented doctoral program.* Recommendations should not be written by friends or family members. Recommendation letters should directly address your candidacy for admission to the Department of Curriculum & Instruction in the Neag School of Education. (See attached recommendation form.)

## **Interview**

- If the faculty determines that your application merits possible admission to the Department of Curriculum & Instruction, an interview will be arranged by a Departmental representative. The potential advisor and two Graduate Faculty from the Department will ordinarily conduct the interview. Ordinarily, the interview will be located at the Storrs campus, although, in some cases, a telephone or webcam interview will be arranged.

## **Steps**

Decisions about applications for admission involve the following steps.

1. **Verification of completed application.** You must make sure that your application is complete and that all of the supporting materials required by the Department and the Graduate School have arrived. Keep copies of all materials submitted. Active consideration of an application does not begin until all of the required materials are available. Once all application materials are verified, your file is sent to the Department of Curriculum & Instruction.
2. **Initial routing and review to an EDCI Graduate Admissions Area.** Your application materials are then routed to one of the Department's three Graduate Admissions Area Committees (Elementary Education, Secondary Education, or Bilingual/Bicultural Education). Each Committee conducts an initial review of your application and supporting materials. If you are an international student, your application materials will first be routed to the University's International Office for transcript and document review; then your file will be reviewed by one of the three Graduate Admissions Area Committees listed above.

3. Review by EDCI Program Area faculty. Your folder is then reviewed by prospective advisors in the Program Area of Study that best fits your goals and experiences (e.g., Bilingual/Bicultural Education, Curriculum Development, Elementary Education, and in most secondary education content areas). The Program Area faculty members make a recommendation back to the respective Graduate Admissions Committee about your application. If the Program Area recommends that you be admitted, it will also identify a faculty member who would be willing to serve as a major graduate advisor and whose expertise matches your intended area of emphasis. If no faculty member is persuaded by the application materials to serve as major graduate advisor, admission will not be granted. Recommendation for admission by a Program Area, together with willingness of a faculty member to serve as major graduate advisor, is a necessary precondition for admission.

4. Interview with EDCI faculty. If the Graduate Admissions Committee and Program Area faculty determine that your application materials merit possible admission to the Department of Curriculum & Instruction, an interview will be arranged by a Departmental representative. The potential advisor and two Graduate Faculty from the Department will conduct the interview. Ordinarily, the interview will be located at the Storrs campus, although in some cases a telephone or webcam interview will be arranged.

5. Review by the EDCI Graduate Admissions Committee. The Graduate Program Committee reviews each application after it has been routed and reviewed through steps 1-4 above, and for whom a prospective Program Area and major graduate advisor have been identified. In some cases, the prospective advisor of the applicant may be invited to meet with the Committee. The committee's review culminates in a recommendation either to admit or to deny admission.

6. Action by the Department Chair and Associate Dean. The recommendation made for your application is then acted upon by the Department Chair and Associate Dean who approve or abrogate the EDCI Graduate Admissions' Committee's recommendation. The resulting recommendation from the Department is relayed to the Graduate School.

7. Concurrence by the Graduate School. As the culminating step in the admission process, the Graduate School must concur with the recommendation from the Department and Associate Dean. It is rare for the Graduate School to deny admission to an applicant recommended by the Department, but admission is not final until the Graduate School has acted.

## ***Decisions***

The admission review process can result in two possible decisions, which are described below.

1. **Full admit.** Every student who has been accepted for doctoral study is mailed a letter from the Graduate School informing him or her of this action. The letter names your area of study within the department and the faculty member who has agreed to serve as your major graduate advisor.

2. **No admit.** Every student who has not been accepted for doctoral study is mailed a letter from the Graduate School informing him or her of this action.

Reapplication for admission and consideration by the Committee may be made in the year following the initial application but not until additional evidence is available to the Committees (e.g., additional testing, further graduate work, or additional recommendations from faculty).

## ***Advisor***

Your major advisor is recommended by the Program Area faculty and Department Head.

## ***Advisory Committee***

The Advisory Committee must be formed in compliance with Graduate School guidelines: the Advisory Committee is to have at least three members, including a chair from EDCI and at least one associate advisor from the department.

Students work with their major advisors to finalize the Advisory Committee.

## PLAN OF STUDY

The Plan of Study outlines the coursework, professional experiences, and research efforts that a doctoral student will undertake. Because the Ph.D. in EDCI is a research-oriented degree, it is granted to a graduate student only when evidence indicates a pattern of *pursuing powerful ideas, developing distinctive expertise, cultivating professional commitments, and engaging an able imagination* (see Departmental Values). The degree is never awarded solely for a required period of study or the completion of a prescribed program of course work. Although minimum credit requirements are established to ensure a common ground for graduate students to develop emerging expertise, the Plan of Study is a means for cultivating these values and patterns of scholarly engagement, not a mechanism for tallying credits.

### **General Features**

The Plan of Study is developed between the Advisory Committee and doctoral student. As required by the Graduate School, the Plan:

- Must be submitted when the student has completed no more than 18 credits of coursework.
- Must be submitted to the Graduate Records Office for approval by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Faculty Council.
- Must be submitted before the student takes the General Examination.
- Must include 20 to 24 credits of coursework beyond the Master's degree, exclusive of any related or supporting area offered in lieu of a non-credit language requirement.
- Must include at least six credits of advanced work in a related or supporting area, or, students must demonstrate that they have competent reading knowledge of a least one foreign language appropriate to the general area of study.
- Must include at least 15 credits of Dissertation Research. Full time students register for GRAD 6960; part time students register for GRAD 6950.
- May include credits from other institutions, as well as non-matriculated credits, so long as they are post-Master's degree credits. Transfer of credit toward the Ph.D. degree requires the approval of both the Advisory Committee and the Graduate School.
- May include credits acquired while pursuing a Sixth Year Certificate, with approval of the Advisory Committee.

### **Specific Requirements**

Specifically, the Plan of Study in EDCI is designed to cultivate beginning expertise in five areas central to scholarly work in the related areas of Teacher Education: *Disciplinary Knowledge, Curriculum & Instruction, Professional Skill, Research Methods, and Research Performance*. Each area is outlined below and summarized in Table 1. While *minimum* credit levels are set for each area, the development of emerging expertise in these areas will likely necessitate additional courses or other experiences. A suggested list of possible courses from which to choose for each area is provided.

**Disciplinary Knowledge.** To acculturate new doctoral colleagues into a specific disciplinary area (e.g., mathematics, reading/literacy, science, or social studies education), a *minimum* of six credits must be taken through a 6094 doctoral seminar (or equivalent doctoral seminars) designed to provide in-depth exploration and discussion of current topics, issues, and research in a disciplinary area.

**Curriculum & Instruction.** To acculturate doctoral colleagues into the academy as scholars, a *minimum* of six credits must be taken through a departmental Proseminar across two semesters that focuses on the history, models, theory, and issues in Teacher Education. These six credits are typically taken during the first year of doctoral study.

**Professional Skill.** To acculturate new colleagues into the fundamentals of emerging scholarly work, a *minimum* of six credits must be taken toward initial mastery of professional skills for grant writing, writing for research and professional publication, and teaching courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

**Research Methods.** To acculturate doctoral colleagues to the use of tools and procedures for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data, a *minimum* of 12 credits in research methodology must be taken. The distribution of coursework is established by the Advisory Committee with the doctoral student's professional goals in mind but is ordinarily a combination of quantitative and qualitative courses to ensure breadth of knowledge for evaluating and conducting rigorous research.

**Research Performance.** To acculturate new colleagues into the practice of academic research, a minimum 15 credits of GRAD 6950 or GRAD 6960, Doctoral Dissertation, is required while completing the dissertation research study.

**Table 1 – Teacher Education Areas of Expertise**

<b>Disciplinary Knowledge</b> (6 credit minimum)	<i>Acculturation into a specific disciplinary area.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDCI 6094 – Doctoral Seminars</li> </ul>	
<b>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</b> (6 credit minimum)	<i>Acculturation into the academy as a scholar.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Education: Proseminar in History, Theory, Models, &amp; Issues</li> </ul>	
<b>Professional Skill</b> (6 credit minimum)	<i>Acculturation into the necessary fundamentals of emerging scholarly work.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDCI 6010 – Writing for Research and Professional Publication</li> <li>• EPSY 6103 – Grant Writing</li> </ul>	
<b>Research Methods</b> (12 credit minimum)	<i>Acculturation into the use of tools and procedures for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDCI 6000 – Qualitative Methods in Research I</li> <li>• EDLR 6052 – Qualitative Methods of Educational Research II</li> <li>• EDCI 5760 – Qualitative Research in Bilingual Education &amp; ESL Settings</li> <li>• EDCI 6860 – Research in Multicultural Education</li> <li>• EDCI 5824 – Educational Ethnography</li> <li>• EDCI 6005 – Advanced Methods of Qualitative Research</li> <li>• EPSY 5605 – Quantitative Methods in Research I</li> <li>• EPSY 5607 – Quantitative Methods in Research II</li> <li>• EPSY 5602 – Educational Tests &amp; Measurements</li> <li>• EPSY 5621 – Construct of Evaluation Instruments</li> <li>• EPSY 5613 – Multivariate Analysis in Education</li> <li>• EPSY 5603 – Methods of Inquiry</li> <li>• EPSY 6621 – Program Evaluation</li> <li>• EPSY 6626 – Sampling Designs &amp; Survey Research Methods in Education</li> <li>• EPSY 6636 – Measurement Theory &amp; Application</li> <li>• EPSY 6637 – Item Response Theory</li> <li>• EPSY 6635 – Measurement in Cognitive Psychology</li> <li>• EPSY 6611 – Logistic and Hierarchical Linear Models</li> <li>• EPSY 6601 – Methods &amp; Techniques of Educational Research</li> <li>• EDLR 6051 – Research Methods in Educational Leadership</li> </ul>	
<b>Research Performance</b> (15 credit minimum)	<i>Acculturation into the practice of academic research.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GRAD 6950 – Doctoral Dissertation</li> </ul>	

**Table 2 - Sample Plan of Study (Full-Time Study)**

<b>YEAR 1</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Methods</li> <li>• Curriculum &amp; Instruction</li> <li>• Disciplinary Knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Methods</li> <li>• Curriculum &amp; Instruction</li> <li>• Disciplinary Knowledge</li> </ul>

<b>YEAR 2</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Methods</li> <li>• Professional Skill</li> <li>• Elective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Methods</li> <li>• Professional Skill</li> <li>• Elective</li> </ul>

<b>YEAR 3</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elective</li> <li>• Elective</li> <li>• Elective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elective</li> <li>• Elective</li> <li>• Elective</li> </ul>

<b>YEAR 4</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Performance</li> <li>• Research Performance</li> <li>• Research Performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Performance</li> <li>• Research Performance</li> <li>• Research Performance</li> </ul>

**Table 3 - Sample Plan of Study (Part-Time Study)**

<b>YEAR 1</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
• Curriculum & Instruction	• Curriculum & Instruction

<b>YEAR 2</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
• Research Methods	• Research Methods

<b>YEAR 3</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
• Research Methods	• Research Methods

<b>YEAR 4</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
• Professional Skill	• Disciplinary Knowledge

<b>YEAR 5</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
• Disciplinary Knowledge	• Professional Skill

<b>YEAR 6</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
• Elective	• Elective

<b>YEAR 7</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
• Research Performance	• Research Performance
• Research Performance	• Research Performance
• Research Performance	• Research Performance

# FIRST YEAR REVIEW

## **Purpose**

A First Year Review will be conducted for all doctoral students in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction. The Review serves two purposes:

- Scaffolding—to support and facilitate the student’s ongoing work.
- Monitoring—to evaluate the student’s progress to date and recommend either continuation in the Ph.D. program or a move to an alternative program (e.g., 6<sup>th</sup> year program).

To achieve these purposes, the First Year Review should articulate: (a) broad questions, goals, and directions, (b) specific steps taken to accomplish these broad questions, goals and directions, and (c) provisional plans for further accomplishments in the year ahead.

## **Timing**

The student is expected to prepare a First Year Review when 16-24 credit hours of coursework have been completed; the First Year Review *must* take place no later than the completion of 24 semester hours of coursework. Twelve of the 16-24 credits must be specific courses outlined in the student’s draft Plan of Study. The submission of the Review is the responsibility of the student and should be arranged by the student with the members of his/her Advisory Committee in advance.

## **Evaluation**

The student’s major advisor oversees the evaluation of the First Year Review, with input from other faculty within and beyond the Department of Curriculum & Instruction. First Year Review components will be evaluated by the student’s entire Advisory Committee, who may (a) approve the student for continued work in the doctoral program, (b) offer provisional approval, make recommendations to the student for the remediation of identified areas of weakness, and set benchmarks for continuation, and/or (c) agree that the student should not continue in the program of study (following University policies for discontinuation/dismissal in the Academic Dismissal section of the Graduate School Catalog).

## **Components**

During the First Year Review the Advisory Committee will review the student’s academic record and three artifacts. The first artifact involves the selection of two papers authored- or co-authored by the student (from course assignments, research projects, conference presentations, etc.; the papers do not need to be published), accompanied by a written brief that concisely reflects on and explains how the two papers represent his/her thinking and communication skills as an emerging new scholar.

The second component entails writing a reflective, succinct statement that maps a possible research agenda imagined by the student. The statement could include key research questions that interest the student, literature that is relevant for understanding these questions, methodological expertise necessary to answer those questions, and the implications that could follow from research on these questions.

The third component includes a final version of the student’s Plan of Study for approval by the Advisory Committee.

# COMPREHENSIVE/GENERAL EXAMINATION

## ***Purpose***

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to (a) build your professional capacity, (b) evaluate your preparedness to conduct dissertation research, and (c) assess the breadth and depth of important content knowledge in your field of study. The examination assesses capacity, preparedness, and content knowledge in manner that is:

- relevant
- authentic
- formative

As such, you will produce artifacts for the examination that are germane to becoming a researcher. These artifacts will demonstrate that you have:

- an ability to reason across disparate stances and research
- an insightful and respectful understanding of the debates and tensions within your field and a clear ability to articulate your stance within them
- an ability to express your ideas in the academic formats expected for wider dissemination
- an ability to evaluate and critique research that taps a range of research traditions
- a deep regard for the potential and limitations of research and its relationship to theory and practice

## ***Timing***

The examination is a written and oral assessment that must be passed before the presentation of a dissertation proposal. The student's Plan of Study must also be approved by the Advisory Committee before the comprehensive exam may be scheduled. The examination is typically taken at or near the completion of their Plan of Study courses. The student must have a GPA of 3.0 and be registered for credits during the semester in which the examination is taken. All timeframes outlined in the UConn Graduate Catalog must be followed.

## ***Evaluation***

The comprehensive examination (written and oral components) is under the jurisdiction of the student's Advisory Committee. All members of the Advisory Committee must participate in the examination, noting that an examination committee includes at least five faculty members. The major advisor invites the additional faculty to complete the needed five member examination committee.

The examining committee is responsible for administering and overseeing the comprehensive examination process and is responsible for evaluating all components. The examining committee participants will be required to evaluate all portfolio components and submit written feedback to the major advisor by the completion of the oral. Students must pass both the written and oral components of the exam per criteria outlined in the Graduate School Catalog.

## ***Options***

There are two components for the examination: a written portfolio and oral defense.

**1. Written Portfolio Component.** The written portfolio will consist of a minimum of four elements:

**A. Publishable Manuscript.** The student must complete a publishable manuscript. For multiple author manuscripts, the student must be the first author. In such cases, the manuscript must be accompanied by a brief explanation of the student's role in the manuscript.

**B. Critical Synthesis.** The student must write a critical synthesis of the research literature in their area of study. The synthesis should be single authored and demonstrate the student's knowledge of the research

literature, his/her ability to synthesize and critique that research literature, and skill at communicating these abilities in writing.

**C. Two or More Additional Products.** The student, in collaboration with the Advisory Committee, must design at least two additional scholarly products that demonstrate expertise and competence to conduct dissertation research. These products must provide evidence that the student can (a) construct a clear, evidence-based argument for a scholarly position, (b) demonstrate depth and breadth of knowledge when analyzing and synthesizing a body of literature, and (c) compose scholarly prose that is genre appropriate and clearly written for the intended audience. Products could include, but are not limited to:

- Full Academic Vitae
- Pilot Study
- Annotated Syllabus and Philosophy of Education
- Publishable Manuscript
- Grant Proposal
- Fellowship Proposal
- Paper Presented at a Research Conference
- Written Responses to Sit-Down Exam Questions

## **2. Oral Defense Component**

The comprehensive examination includes an oral examination that typically focuses on the student's portfolio products. The date for the oral examination will be set by the student and his/her Advisory Committee. At a minimum, the one-hour examination will be attended by the Advisory Committee and two outside readers. All faculty and graduate students in EDCI will be notified of the oral examination and invited to attend the open portion of the defense.

# DISSERTATION

Dissertation research is the vehicle through which students learn to independently conduct, complete, and communicate research. The doctoral dissertation should reveal the student's ability to discover, analyze, interpret, synthesize, and disseminate information through the process of:

- (1) generating a research question of interest and import to the student's chosen field;
- (2) placing the research question in the context of research literature relating to the project with a particular emphasis on prior scholarship on which the dissertation is built;
- (3) describing and executing appropriate methodology;
- (4) presenting results in a logical manner; and
- (5) fully and coherently discussing the meaning of the results.

The dissertation should be:

- (1) **Original** (i.e., it builds on or extends what is currently known).
- (2) **Substantial and Researchable** (i.e., it addresses a significant problem that:
  - (a) poses a puzzle to the field at a theoretical, methodological, or policy level;
  - (b) requires an analytical discussion, beyond simple cataloging or describing; and
  - (c) employs a reasonable research methodology).
- (3) **Manageable** (i.e., the scope of the project is appropriate given limited time and resources).

## ***Dissertation Proposal***

Upon successful completion of the General Examination, the doctoral candidate prepares a dissertation proposal that delineates the critical problem(s) s/he wishes to examine, a supportive literature review, and the methodology for studying the problem(s). A flowchart outlining the proposal process is available in Appendix A. The policy of the Department of Curriculum & Instruction (EDCI) for the review of dissertation proposals is as follows.

## ***Dissertation Advisory Committee***

The student's Dissertation Advisory Committee is chaired by the Major Advisor who must meet the following characteristics:

- be a current member of the EDCI faculty (at the time the Committee is formed),
- be in the tenure stream,<sup>2</sup>
- hold graduate faculty status,
- have completed IRB training, and
- work in the candidate's field of study or concentration.

The remaining 2-4 members of the Advisory Committee must ordinarily be tenure-stream graduate faculty, and the majority of the whole committee must have appointments within the University of Connecticut system. In exceptional circumstances, such as the departure of a faculty member, it is acceptable to have a Major Advisor who is not a member of the EDCI faculty—pending approval of the Department Head. Other extenuating circumstances require that a special request be made to the Department Head for approval. If a faculty member retires while serving on an Advisory Committee, or a retired faculty member is being considered for service on an Advisory

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<sup>2</sup> To be decided by a departmental process ... Graduate School Catalog.

Committee, such memberships are permissible granted that they comply with the requirements spelled out in the Graduate School Catalog.

## ***Submitting the Proposal***

The student shall submit a written draft of the proposal to his/her Advisory Committee for feedback and preliminary approval. The date of the submission shall be flexible (taking into account the 6 month deadline set by the Graduate School for the defense of the dissertation)<sup>3</sup> and determined by the Major Advisor and the student. The Advisory Committee shall make final decisions related to format and length of proposal. In the absence of agreed upon format, guidelines regarding length and format are suggested in Appendix B. Note: Each time a revised document is submitted for feedback and approval to members of the Advisory Committee, the student should allow a minimum of 2 weeks and a maximum of 4 weeks for feedback during the academic year.

## ***Readers***

Upon preliminary approval of the written draft by the student's Advisory Committee, the Major Advisor (acting on behalf of the Head of the Department) shall select, in conjunction with the Committee, two readers from outside the Advisory Committee to review the proposal. The readers may be selected from outside the student's field of study. In addition, it is acceptable that at least one reader from outside the University of Connecticut be selected. All readers must hold a doctoral degree. When conducting the review of the proposal, the readers shall use the Dissertation Proposal Review Form (see Appendix C) to guide their comments. Written comments, including a decision to approve or revise and resubmit, must be provided by each reader prior to an oral presentation to the Advisory Committee. After preliminary approval of the document has been granted by the Advisory Committee, the student should prepare three (3) copies of the proposal with the Dissertation Proposal Review Form as the cover sheet (student completes top portion of the form only). The sets are then submitted to the Major Advisor who completes the Reader information. One set is filed with the EDCI office and the remaining sets are sent to the readers. Readers shall return the completed form to the Major Advisor while also providing a copy to the EDCI office. The readers should complete their reviews within a period of two weeks or within a period agreed upon by the Major Advisor. At this time, the student may tentatively schedule an oral defense date, anticipating a 2-3 week timeframe for completion of the reader review. [Note: At the same time the readers are completing their review, the student should ensure each member of the Advisory Committee has an updated copy (i.e., all requested revisions have been completed) in order to allow sufficient time for review prior to the oral presentation.]

## ***Oral Presentation and Defense of the Proposal***

Once feedback from the two outside readers has been received, the student shall orally present and defend the proposal to the Advisory Committee and readers. This event is to be announced to the Neag faculty and graduate student community; an electronic version of the proposal is to be made available via posting to the web or in response to an email request. This meeting shall be convened and conducted by the Major Advisor. The oral presentation and defense may be open to other faculty and graduate students. At the discretion of the Advisor and student, the defense can be:

- open to all in the University community for the proposal presentation and Committee discussion, then closed for the Committee decision;
- open to all only for the proposal presentation, then closed for the Committee discussion and decision; or
- closed to all for the proposal presentation, Committee discussion, and decision.

Note that if either reader had recommended the proposal be revised and resubmitted, the student may proceed to the oral presentation of the proposal, but the proposal must be revised and resubmitted to the readers following the presentation. It is the responsibility of the Major Advisor to ensure that the comments and suggestions of the readers are incorporated into a final version of the proposal.

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<sup>3</sup> The dissertation proposal must be on file with the Graduate School a minimum of 6 months prior to the defense, as set forth in the Graduate School Catalog.

## ***Final Approval and Submission of the Proposal***

Final approval of the proposal requires unanimous approval by the Advisory Committee. After receiving final approval of the proposal by the Committee, the student must then submit a completed IRB-1 protocol (or IRB-5 exemption form) along with a copy of the dissertation proposal to the Institutional Review Board. IRB Board approval is required for the final approval of the proposal by the Department Head, Dean of the school, and the Graduate School.

A cover sheet (Dissertation Proposal for the PhD Degree) bearing the approval signature of each Advisory Committee member shall be attached to the final proposal (three original sets). These sets, along with the PhD Dissertation Proposal Review Cover Sheet indicating approval from each reviewer, shall be submitted to the Department Head. The Department Head's signature on the cover sheet confirms the approval by the committee and review by the outside readers.

The three sets of the cover sheet and proposal will then be forwarded to the Dean's Office and then to the Graduate School.

Upon approval of the dissertation proposal by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Faculty Council (with prior approval of the plan of study and successful completion of the comprehensive/general exam), the student becomes a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

If the proposal is initially rejected, the student shall be allowed a maximum of two more submissions of revised versions of the proposal to receive approval.

## ***Dissertation Format***

The format for a dissertation shall be determined by the Dissertation Advisory Committee. No set format is prescribed. The dissertation format must, however, meet one overriding criteria: it must be consistent with the scholarly tradition that informs the research by articulating the questions being asked, the type of data collected, the data collection procedures used, the data analysis employed, and the scholarly audience to whom the findings will be communicated. Furthermore, the format must make visible the doctoral student's ability to independently conduct, complete, and communicate a complex research project that makes an original contribution to the field of education, schools, and society.

Operational examples of dissertation formats are outlined in the following pages. They are intended to be suggestive rather than prescriptive, and illustrative rather than exhaustive.

**Traditional Format.** The traditional format for the dissertation is typically a lengthy, five-chapter document that includes an introduction to the research study, review of the literature, methods and procedures, results, and discussions and implications. It is a unified piece of work with the theme of a particular research project running through it. Dissertations in this form are written for a very limited audience, the candidate's committee. Once completed, the document becomes public, available for anyone to read from the University's library shelves and through online digital databases.

**Journal-Ready Format** (multiple genres). The journal-ready format consists of a series of individual manuscripts based upon the research study that are appropriate for submission to peer-reviewed journals. The organization of the dissertation typically is: introduction (brief overview of the underlying issue[s] that tie the manuscripts together); manuscript 1, a critical, integrative review of empirical literature on a current topic; manuscript 2, a research report including the abstract, introduction/statement of problem, methods, results, and discussion sections; manuscript 3, an application paper written for practitioners and emphasizing the application of the research findings; and appendices. The appendix may contain further evidence, as the committee deems necessary, of a student's detailed literature search or project design. The final chapter for this format has a summary/review-type style; however, it is written from a more global perspective. That is, it answers the question, "How do these works collectively fit into the big picture?" This chapter has a speculative quality to it and entertains the directions for future research on the topic by the author or by other investigators.

**Journal-Ready Format** (single genre). The journal-ready format (single genre) consists of a series of individual manuscripts based upon the research study that are appropriate for submission to peer-reviewed journals. The

organization of the dissertation is: introduction (brief overview of the underlying issue[s] that tie the manuscripts together); manuscript 1, a empirical study on a current topic; manuscript 2, a empirical study on the same current topic; manuscript 3, a empirical study on the same current topic; and appendices. The appendix may contain further evidence, as the committee deems necessary, of a student's detailed literature search or project design. The final chapter for this format has a summary/review-type style; however, it is written from a more global perspective. That is, it answers the question, "How do these works collectively fit into the big picture?" This chapter has a speculative quality to it and entertains the directions for future research on the topic by the author or by other investigators.

**Journal-Published Format.** The journal-published format consists of a series of individual articles that have already been accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals. The format for the articles is informed by the professional or disciplinary guidelines of the periodical. The candidate writes a brief introductory overview of the underlying issue(s) that tie the journal articles together. The final chapter for this format has a summary/review-type style; however, it is written from a more global perspective. That is, it answers the question, "How do these works collectively fit into the big picture?" This chapter most likely will have a speculative quality to it and may entertain the directions for future research on the topic by the author or by other investigators.

**Narrative Format.** The narrative format consists of a novel-like manuscript that tells the story of a project or inquiry. The document typically includes a critical introduction (or appendix) that explains the intellectual background, questions, issues, and context that motivate the study, as well as a description of the interpretive mode used for analysis, critique, and representation.

## ***Dissertation Defense***

The dissertation defense or final examination is oral and is under the jurisdiction of the Advisory Committee. The dissertation document submitted for the defense must meet all standards prescribed by the Advisory Committee and the Graduate School. Specifications for its preparation are available online at <http://www.grad.uconn.edu/policies.html> or at the Graduate Records Office. It is important to plan sufficient time for all members of your Advisory Committee to make suggestions for revision.

The oral defense of the dissertation must be announced publically by means of the university events on-line calendar at least two weeks prior to the date of the defense. At this time, electronic tentative approval of the dissertation and an electronic working copy of the entire dissertation must be filed with the Graduate School.

A successful defense must occur at least two weeks prior to the University's announced date for graduation (conferral of the degree).

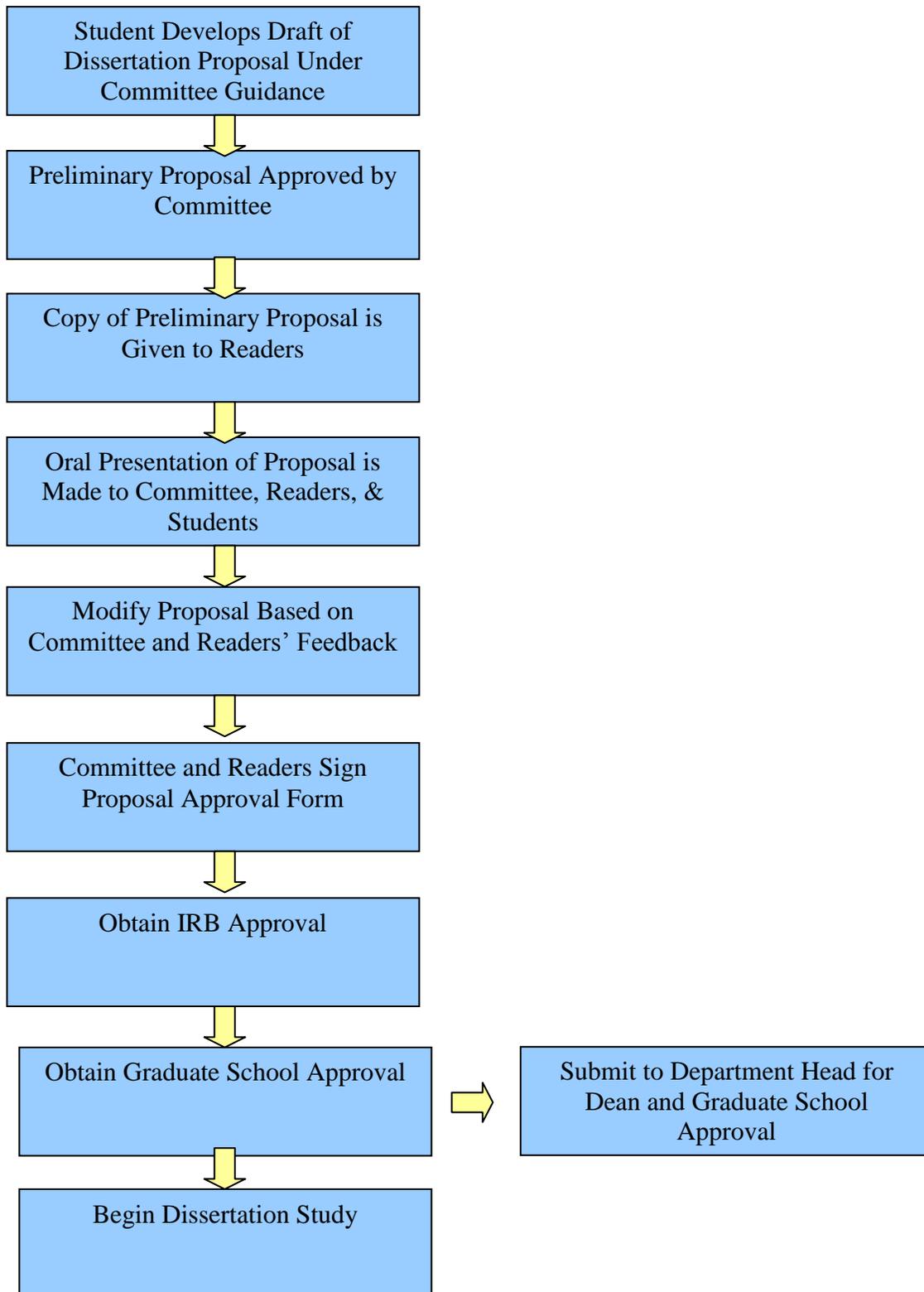
The dissertation defense is an open presentation and discussion of the study undertaken. All faculty and graduate students are eligible to attend. Ordinarily, the defense begins with the student's presentation of 15-20 minutes, followed by questions that deal with the focus of the dissertation.

All members of the Advisory Committee must be present at the dissertation defense. No fewer than five members of the faculty, including members of the student's Advisory Committee, must participate in the dissertation defense, unless approval from the Dean of the Graduate School has been previously secured. Decisions regarding the outcome of the defense rest solely with the Advisory Committee, taking into account the opinions of other participating faculty members and experts. The vote of the Advisory Committee must be unanimous. Following the defense, the Major Advisor communicates the decision to the student and verifies that the official report has been completed and signed for submission to the Graduate School.

Any exceptions to the above are subject to policy as outlined in the Graduate School Catalog.

The Graduate School requires the electronic submission of the dissertation through Digital Commons. The final copy must meet all specifications outlined on the Graduate School Website. The Dissertation Submission Checklist must be submitted to the Graduate School once it has been signed by a Homer Babbidge Library designated staff member together with an approval page bearing original signatures of all members of the Advisory Committee. Once a dissertation is bound, it becomes the property of the Homer Babbidge Library.

## APPENDIX A - FLOWCHART OF DISSERTATION PROPOSAL PROCESS



## **APPENDIX B - DEFAULT FORMAT OF THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL**

The Advisory Committee shall make the final decisions related to format and length of proposal. In the absence of agreed upon format, the following guidelines are suggested:

### **Format**

1. Title Page
2. Abstract
3. Introduction
4. Statement of the Problem
5. Background of the Study
6. Research Questions and/or Hypotheses
7. Methods and Procedures
8. Limitations
9. References (Limited to those cited in the proposal)
10. Appendices (if necessary)

### **Page Considerations**

1. The Title Page is not numbered.
2. The Abstract is not numbered.
3. The Introduction starts on a separate page, and is numbered page 1.
4. Ordinarily, dissertation proposals do not exceed 70 pages. This does not include the Title Page, Abstract, References, or Appendices. The format of the proposal shall comply with: 1) APA guidelines, such as double spacing, 12 point font, and 1-inch margins, and 2) University of Connecticut guidelines for dissertations.
5. Students should consider the use of Appendices to present such items as instruments, consent forms, tables, figures, and lengthy descriptions that do not need to be in the body of the proposal. If any of these documents are lengthy, they may be abridged.

## APPENDIX C - DISSERTATION PROPOSAL REVIEW FORM

**Instructions to the candidate:** Complete the top portion of this form and attach to the proposal. Submit 3 sets (review form and proposal) to the Major Advisor.

**Date:**

**Name of Candidate:**  
**Major Advisor:**  
**Title of Dissertation:**

**Instructions to the Major Advisor:** Complete the Reader information. File one set with the EDCI office and forward the remaining sets to the readers.

**Reader 1:**

**Address:**  
**Phone:**  
**Email:**

**Reader 2:**

**Address:**  
**Phone:**  
**Email:**

**Date review is due to the EDCI Office:**

**Instructions to Reader:** Please comment on each of the following criteria along with your recommendation on the proposal. Attach narrative explanation using a separate sheet of paper. Please return the form to the Department of Curriculum & Instruction Office, 249 Glenbrook Road, Unit 2033, Storrs, CT 06269-2033 by the date listed above.

	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
1. Contribution of proposed project to knowledge within the field.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Demonstration of knowledge of the content area and awareness of relevant research by others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Appropriateness of the methodology to answer the research questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Demonstration of adequate understanding of proposed methodology.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Clarity and organization of writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Attached Narrative Provides Explanations for Each Criteria

**Overall Recommendation:**  Approve as presented       Revise and resubmit

**Signature of Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_