

University of Connecticut
Neag School of Education
Department of Curriculum & Instruction

Doctoral Handbook



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EDCI DOCTORAL PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Neag Ph.D. program in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction prepares researchers, teacher educators, advocates, and other educational leaders to advance quality teaching and learning in diverse contexts. In keeping with the [mission, values, and principles of the Neag School of Education](#), we help emerging scholars effect change and respond to complex educational problems that stem from inequity in schools and other learning environments. Our collective professional identities coalesce around anti-racist teaching and learning; equitable education and educator preparation for all; a conception of educators as professionals and lifelong learners; and a broad view of the methodologies that are needed for meaningful research on these topics. We see education as a collective endeavor; our close partnerships with various stakeholders invested in pre K-12 schools, and other education institutions allow for rich field experiences for our Ph.D. candidates.

Our program's small size fosters commitment to close mentoring of candidates and sharing of diverse interests and research specialties across a tightly knit community. Our department also works closely with other departments, programs, and institutes across the university to: integrate a variety of approaches to teaching and learning; center funds of knowledge that have been left out of traditional academic discourses; assist emerging scholars in mastering and synthesizing research relevant to their own purpose; and conducting inter- and cross-disciplinary work. We invite applicants who bring multiple interests in and commitments to the fields of educator development, instruction, and curriculum, and who want to put these together in new and interesting ways by collaborating with faculty whose research goes beyond traditional approaches (e.g., Literacy Studies with Participatory Action Research, Math Education with Discourse Analysis, Teacher Preparation and Education Policy, etc.).

One's education is not limited to coursework, and as noted in the doctoral competencies section, doctoral students are encouraged to engage in a variety of activities to support their on-going development. For example, doctoral students may work collaboratively with faculty members, professional colleagues, and youth to write grant proposals; carry out research projects; develop new courses, instructional methods, and innovative materials; offer professional development; shape district and state education policies; and engage in public and professional service. We see doctoral study as one phase in the arc of our students' professional careers, a time when UConn can both benefit from the rich experiences that doctoral students bring to their studies, and learn from the careers they pursue upon graduation as they tackle significant educational problems as leaders in higher education, non-profit institutions, research firms, or national, state, or local departments of education.

All doctoral students completing the program receive a Ph.D. in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, with a concentration in one of the following areas:

- Bilingual and Multicultural Education
- Elementary Education
- English Education
- Mathematics Education
- Reading Education
- Science Education
- Social Studies/History Education
- World Language Education

In addition, there are several opportunities for deepening one's research and teaching interests at an interdisciplinary level, including the following programs:

- [Graduate Certificate in Human Rights](#)
- [Graduate Certificate in Educating Bilingual Learners](#) — ONLINE
- [Graduate Certificate in Literacy and Deaf Education](#)
- [Literacy Specialist Programs](#)

PH.D. OUTCOMES & COMPETENCIES

Goal/Outcome: EDCI Ph.D. graduates will have demonstrated knowledge and competency to be a successful scholar, teacher, and educational leader within a variety of contexts, such as universities, nonprofit or for-profit research organizations, or K-12 settings.

EDCI Ph.D. Outcomes and Competencies are organized into four broad areas: (1) Knowledge & Content, (2) Research & Scholarship, (3) University Teaching & Professional Development, and (4) Service.

Knowledge & Content Outcomes and Competencies
<p>Foundational Knowledge (3 or more credits)</p> <p>Outcome/Description PhD graduates will be able to identify the theory, content, and professional knowledge base related to the fields of curriculum, instruction, and educator preparation, as well as demonstrate a comprehensive grounding in educational research and scholarship.</p> <p>Activities PhD candidates will successfully complete one or more doctoral seminars in curriculum, instruction, and/or educator preparation.</p>
<p>Social Justice and Equity Knowledge (3 or more credits)</p> <p>Outcome/Description PhD graduates will be able to identify issues of social justice and equity related to the fields of curriculum, instruction, and/or educator preparation, and articulate their implications for educational research and scholarship.</p> <p>Activities PhD candidates will successfully complete one or more courses devoted to developing knowledge and insight about issues of equity and social justice in the fields of curriculum, instruction, and/or educator preparation.</p>
<p>Specialized Disciplinary Knowledge (6 or more credits)</p> <p>Outcome/Description PhD graduates will be able to articulate the theory, content, and history of one or more specialized areas of interest within, or related to, the fields of curriculum, instruction, and educator preparation (e.g., science education, language and literacy, bilingual/multicultural education, mathematics education).</p> <p>Activities PhD candidates will successfully complete two or more graduate courses related to their area of interest.</p>
<p>Professional Knowledge (6 or more credits)</p> <p>Outcome/Description PhD graduates will be able to identify and describe the dispositions, knowledge, and skills required to carry out typical professional activities (e.g., disseminating information, pursuing external funding).</p> <p>Activities PhD candidates will successfully complete two or more graduate courses related to professional knowledge and skills (e.g., grant writing, proposal writing, writing for publication, conference presentation). PhD candidates are encouraged to identify similar experiences beyond their coursework to apply these skills.</p>
<p>Methodological Knowledge (12 or more credits)</p> <p>Outcome/Description PhD graduates will be able to identify and apply theory, content, and procedures of research design, as well as apply one or more specific research methodologies (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods) to their own research.</p> <p>Activities PhD candidates will successfully complete four or more graduate courses related to research design and quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Additional advanced coursework in research methodologies is strongly encouraged.</p>

Research & Scholarship Outcomes & Competencies

Research

Outcome/Description

PhD graduates will conceptualize, design, conduct, analyze, and interpret rigorous research in curriculum, instruction, and educator preparation, with a focus on their area(s) of interest.

Possible Activities

PhD candidates will complete dissertation research through 15 or more credits of GRAD 6950 and also select from at least two of the following activities:

- Individually or collaboratively develop/select data collection instruments and collect data
- Individually or collaboratively develop and use various data analysis strategies
- Participate on a research team
- Take a leadership role in a research study before the dissertation
- Individually or collaboratively develop and write research/grant/IRB proposal(s)

Scholarly Writing

Outcome/Description

PhD graduates will engage in scholarly writing activities for a variety of purposes, audiences, and outlets. PhD graduates will be able to identify the various venues for disseminating/publishing scholarly writing.

Possible Activities

PhD candidates will create four or more written products, including the critical synthesis for comprehensive exams, the Dissertation, a first author journal manuscript, and one or more items from the following list:

- Non-Dissertation Literature review(s)
- Position paper(s)
- Practitioner paper(s)
- Technical report(s)
- Book chapter(s)
- Research paper(s)
- Podcast script
- Blog or Vlog post(s)
- Curriculum/training materials

Peer Review

Outcome/Description

PhD graduates will engage in peer review activities for a variety of purposes.

Possible Activities

PhD candidates will:

Engage in peer review activities with faculty in one or more of the following:

- Serve as a guest reviewer for a journal manuscript
- Review conference proposals
- Review research/grant proposals

Professional Presentations

Outcome/Description

PhD graduates will be able to develop, plan, and deliver professional presentations for dissemination of research, scholarship, translation of research to practice, and policy-related products.

Activities

PhD candidates will:

- Present dissertation proposal and dissertation research

PhD candidates may select experiences from two or more categories of the following:

- Propose and present a poster or talk in a graduate student symposium
- Propose and present a poster or talk at a local/regional conference (independently or with faculty)
- Propose and present a poster or talk at a national/international conference (independently or with faculty)
- Propose, develop, and present a poster, presentation, or professional development for practitioners at a local school or district

University Teaching Outcomes & Competencies

University Teaching

Outcome/Description

PhD graduates will be able to develop, plan, and teach university level courses in curriculum, instruction, and educator preparation, preferably within their area(s) of interest.

Possible Activities

PhD candidates will:

- Plan and teach a minimum of two undergraduate or graduate class meetings in university courses

PhD candidates may also select experiences from one or more of the following:

- Design a course within the teacher education program and/or area(s) of interest (e.g., syllabus, readings, lecture outlines, handouts, evaluation procedures)
- Engage in a minimum of one supervised college teaching (e.g., assist with substantive planning, teaching, grading) with sufficient/mastery performance as deemed by the faculty member of record
- Assume primary responsibility for teaching an undergraduate or graduate course within the teacher education program and/or their area(s) of interest
- Supervise students during a practicum/internship/student teaching
- Mentor/advise students related to experiences such as research design, inquiry projects, honors student theses, etc.
- Enroll in a course(s) focused on teaching in higher education

Service & Professional Development Outcomes & Competencies

Service

Outcome/Description

PhD graduates will have engaged in service to the program/department/university, field of curriculum, instruction, and educator preparation, and the larger professional community.

Possible Activities

PhD candidates may select experiences from two or more categories of the following:

- Engage in local community service (e.g., school, community agency)
- Participate in service at the program, department, school, and/or university level (e.g., search committee, IBM admissions, etc.)
- Participate in a local graduate student organization
- Participate in a regional/national professional organization (e.g., AERA, NERA, discipline-specific organizations)

Professional Development

Outcome/Description

PhD graduates will work with educators to improve practices that will lead to enhanced teaching and learning in a variety of contexts.

Possible Activities

PhD candidates may:

- Develop, plan, and present professional development and/or presentation(s) to educators in area of interest independently or with faculty (e.g., outcomes/objectives, content outline, presentation slides, activities, handouts, references, evaluation procedures)

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 the following:

1. Complete the [online application to the Graduate School](#)
2. Upload the following materials electronically into the online application:
 - Transcripts of all collegiate work completed to date, graduate and undergraduate
 - 3 Reference Letters
 - Personal Goal Statement
 - [Residence Affidavit](#)
 - GRE Scores (Verbal & Quantitative)
 - TOEFL Scores (for international applicants whose native language is not English)
 - Vita
 - Academic Writing Sample
 - Evidence of K-12 or Other Relevant Teaching Experience*

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.

To provide a subsequent grounding in disciplinary expertise and experience, successful completion of a Master's degree is preferred but not required. Prospective students without a Master's degree are expected to have considerable experience in their chosen concentration. Students admitted without a Master's degree will consult with their advisor to identify and complete relevant coursework that deepens their disciplinary knowledge. Applicants are encouraged to reach out to their prospective advisor before applying.

**A minimum of three years of K-12 teaching experience is preferred, but not required for Ph.D. applicants. This is especially true for candidates who plan to pursue a position as a faculty member with a university-based teacher education program after earning a Ph.D. Many of these positions require and/or prefer at least three years of K-12 teaching experience.*

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 December 1. Applicants' credentials are reviewed after December 1 for admission to the subsequent 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. 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.

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.** Copies of any transcripts associated with collegiate graduate work completed as of the date of the application. A completed master's degree of at least 24 graduate credits is preferred by not required. For any graduate course work a GPA of at least 3.5 (on a 4.0 grading scale) is required. If your graduate GPA fell 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, IELTS, PTE, and Duolingo Test Scores.** If you are not a native speaker of English, you may be required to submit evidence of your proficiency in the English language. TOEFL, IELTS, PTE, and Duolingo scores are only valid for two years (from the original test date to submission of UConn application). Specific information regarding the standardized tests to satisfy this requirement can be found on the Graduate School's Admission Requirements website: <https://grad.uconn.edu/admissions/requirements/> In recent years, the Department of Curriculum & Instruction has only admitted international applicants whose scores are considerably higher than the minimums.

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. It is essential that your Personal Goal Statement be detailed, well-written, and reflect an understanding of the Ph.D. program's mission and values as described above.

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 of K-12 teaching experience is preferred, but not required for Ph.D. applicants. This is especially true for candidates who plan to pursue a position as a faculty member with a university-based teacher education program after earning a Ph.D. Many of these positions require and/or prefer at least three years of K-12 teaching experience.
- **Three letters of recommendation.** Letters of recommendation should be sent directly to the Graduate School from three people 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/Multicultural 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/Multicultural 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.

DOCTORAL STUDY

Doctoral study consists of several components. An advisor and advisory committee help to guide students' work in the program, including selecting courses for a plan of study, identifying research and teaching opportunities, preparing for comprehensive examinations, and identifying and pursuing a dissertation topic.

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

As part of the overall Doctoral Competencies and in line with the Program Description, the [Doctor of Philosophy Plan of Study](#) outlines the credit-bearing coursework and independent research efforts that a doctoral student will undertake.

General Features

The [Doctor of Philosophy Plan of Study](#) is developed between the [Advisory Committee](#) and the 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 Registrar's Office, Degree Audit 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.
- 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. Please note that credits requested for transfer cannot have been used toward any previously earned degrees
- May include credits acquired while pursuing a Sixth Year Certificate, with approval of the Advisory Committee. Please note however, that credits used to complete the 6th year certificate at UConn cannot be cross-listed on the PhD plan.
- Must include at least 15 credits of Dissertation Research (GRAD 6950).

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 Curriculum and Instruction, as introduced in the section on PhD Competencies: *Foundational Knowledge, Equity and Social Justice Knowledge, Specialized Knowledge, Professional Knowledge, Methodological Knowledge, 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.

Foundational Knowledge. To introduce doctoral colleagues into the academy as scholars, a *minimum* of three credits must be taken through a departmental one-semester Proseminar that focuses on the history, models, theory, and issues in curriculum and instruction. This proseminar is typically taken during the first or second year of doctoral study.

Equity and Social Justice Knowledge. To engage doctoral colleagues with theories and practices that promote equity and social justice, a *minimum* of three credits must be taken through doctoral courses designed to promote in-depth understanding and application of these theories and practices to educational research.

Specialized Knowledge. To deepen doctoral colleagues' specialized knowledge about a specific disciplinary area (e.g., mathematics, reading/literacy, science, or social studies education), a *minimum* of six credits must be taken through doctoral seminars designed to provide in-depth exploration and discussion of current topics, issues, and research in a disciplinary area.

Professional Knowledge. To introduce doctoral colleagues to tools and resources that support their scholarly work, a *minimum* of six credits must be taken toward initial mastery of the professional knowledge and skills required for successful proposal writing, grant writing, and/or writing for research and professional publication.

Methodological Knowledge. To develop the capacity of doctoral colleagues to use the 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 help new colleagues gain experience and skill with the practice of academic research, a minimum of 15 credits of GRAD 6950 Doctoral Dissertation is required while completing the dissertation research study.

Table 1 – Curriculum and Instruction Areas of Expertise

Foundational Knowledge (3 credit minimum)	<i>Introduction to the academy as a scholar of curriculum and instruction.</i>
EDCI 6094 Curriculum and Instruction: Proseminar in History, Theory, Models, & Issues <i>Note: with approval from their major advisor, students may also elect to take another course that fulfills this requirement.</i>	
Equity and Social Justice Knowledge (3 credit minimum)	<i>Introduction to key principles and theories promoting equity and social justice in the context of educational research.</i>
EDLR 6467: Social Justice Leadership EDCI 5810: Anti-Blackness & Education Research <i>Note: with approval from their major advisor, students may also elect to take another course that fulfills this requirement.</i>	
Specialized Knowledge (6 credit minimum)	<i>In-depth study of an area of interest</i>
Doctoral Seminars in Student's Area of Interest	
Professional Knowledge (6 credit minimum)	<i>Development of the fundamentals of scholarly work.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDCI 6010 – Writing for Research and Professional Publication • EPSY 6103 – Grant Writing • EDCI 6094: Reading and Writing Educational Scholarship • EDLR 6050: Dissertation Proposal/Prospectus Development 1 <i>Note: with approval from their major advisor, students may also elect to take another course that fulfills this requirement.</i>	

Methodological Knowledge (12 credit minimum)	<i>Development of the knowledge and skills for independent inquiry</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDCI 6000 – Qualitative Methods in Research I • EDCI 6005 – Advanced Methods of Qualitative Research • EDCI 6860 – Research in Multicultural Education • EDLR 6052 – Qualitative Methods of Educational Research II • EPSY 5195 - Evaluation Practicum • EPSY 5601 - Principles and Methods of Educational Research • EPSY 5602 – Educational Tests & Measurements • EPSY 5605 – Quantitative Methods in Research I • EPSY 5607 – Quantitative Methods in Research II • EPSY 5610 - Applied Regression Analysis for the Education Sciences • EPSY 5613 – Multivariate Analysis in Education • EPSY 5621 – Construction of Evaluation Instruments • EPSY 5641 - Research Design and Measurement for Data Science • EPSY 5643 - Text Analytics • EPSY 6469 – Single Subject Design • EPSY 6601 – Methods & Techniques of Educational Research • EPSY 6611 – Hierarchical Linear Modeling • EPSY 6615 - Structural Equation Modeling • EPSY 6619 - Advanced Modeling Using Latent Variable Techniques • EPSY 6621 – Program Evaluation • EPSY 6623 – Advanced Program Evaluation • EPSY 6636 – Measurement Theory & Application • EPSY 6637 – Item Response Theory • EPSY 6637 – Advanced Topics in Item Response Theory • EPSY 6651 – Introduction to Methods for Causal Inference using Educational Data • EPSY 6655 – Advanced Causal Inference with Data <p><i>Note: with approval from their major advisor, students may also elect to take methods courses in other schools and departments, including but not limited to Nursing, Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology.</i></p>	

Independent Research (15 credit minimum)	<i>Practicum in Dissertation Research</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GRAD 6950 – Doctoral Dissertation 	

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

YEAR 1	
Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Methods • Foundational Knowledge • Specialized Knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Methods • Professional Knowledge • Equity and Social Justice Knowledge
YEAR 2	
Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Methods • Professional Knowledge • Elective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Methods • Specialized Knowledge • Elective
YEAR 3 and beyond	
Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electives as needed • Independent Research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electives as needed • Independent Research

Part time students would spread the coursework from years 1 and 2 over three years.

ANNUAL REVIEW

An Annual Review will be conducted for all doctoral students in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction, to be completed before the beginning of the subsequent academic year. The Review involves the student, the major advisor, and possibly one or more associate advisors. The Review serves two purposes, both aligned with the doctoral competencies for the department:

- Scaffolding—to support and facilitate the student’s ongoing work; and
- 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., 6th year program).

To achieve these purposes, the Annual 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. The results of the Annual Review will be one of the following: (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).

The Annual Review will consist of a conversation between the student and their major advisor, grounded in the doctoral competencies and facilitated by a form based on those competencies. Advisors and doctoral students may also utilize other documents, such as the students’ vita, to engage in discussions.

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

There are two parts to the comprehensive exams: a written critical synthesis and an oral defense. These two parts of the comprehensive exam will demonstrate that you have developed the knowledge and content outcomes and competencies as outlined in the EDCI doctoral competencies document.

Timing

The comprehensive examination consists of written and oral assessments 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 comprehensive examination is typically completed at or near the time of completion of the student's Plan of Study coursework. 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

Both written and oral components of the comprehensive examination are under the jurisdiction of the student's Advisory Committee (see <https://gradcatalog.uconn.edu/grad-school-info/advisory-system/>). All members of the Advisory Committee must participate in the examination, either in person or virtually, noting that an examination committee includes at least five faculty members. In consultation with the student, the major advisor invites the additional two outside readers to complete the needed five-member examination committee. See the Graduate Catalog for additional information.

The examining committee is responsible for administering and overseeing the comprehensive examination process and is responsible for evaluating all components. The examination committee participants will be required to evaluate both the written and oral components and submit written feedback to the major advisor by the completion of the oral component. Students must pass both the written and oral components of the exam per criteria outlined in the Graduate School Catalog. The Advisory Committee completes the [Report on the General Examination for the Doctoral Degree](#).

Examination

There are two parts of the examination: a written critical synthesis of the literature and an oral defense.

- 1. Critical Synthesis.** The student will engage in a written critical synthesis of the literature in their field of study, using one of the formats noted below. 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.
 - **A stand-alone literature review** that follows in the tradition of recognized research reviews (e.g., narrative, scoping, systematic, etc.).
 - **An integrated written response to one or more research questions posed by the student in consultation with the major advisor.**
 - **A timed, written response to three separate questions posed by different members of the Advisory Committee.** The timed aspect can involve either a single sit-down event of several hours or an agreed-upon span of time with a due date, such as 1-2 weeks.
 - **Alternatives as determined by the Major Advisor and student.**

The major advisor, in consultation with the advisory committee, may require additional artifacts that allow the candidate to demonstrate readiness to proceed with designing and conducting dissertation research; such artifacts--if they are included in the comprehensive exam--should also help the committee to assess skills relevant to conducting research, such as: conceptualizing and justifying research problems worthy of further study; proposing or designing research methods for a possible study; reporting research findings to an audience of scholars or to practitioners.

2. Oral Defense. The comprehensive examination includes an oral defense that focuses on the student's written critical synthesis. The date for the oral defense will be set by the student and his/her Advisory Committee. The one-hour examination will be attended by the Advisory Committee.

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 an appropriate 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 for Doctoral Degree](#) that delineates the critical problem(s) s/he wishes to examine, a supportive literature review, and the methodology for studying the problem(s). 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)
- hold graduate faculty status, and
- have completed IRB training.

The remaining 2-4 members of the Advisory Committee must ordinarily be tenure-stream graduate faculty, and the majority of the committee must have appointments within the University of Connecticut system. If a faculty member retires while serving on an Advisory Committee, or a retired faculty member is being considered for service on an Advisory Committee, such memberships are permissible granted that they comply with the requirements spelled out in the Graduate School Catalog.

In addition to the 3-5 Advisory Committee members, the dissertation committee comprises two additional readers, who may be faculty outside of the Neag School of Education, including at other universities. The outside readers are selected through joint discussion by the Major Advisor and the student. All readers must hold a doctoral degree but do not have to be university faculty (e.g., research associates at non-profit or for-profit research organizations with relevant expertise). Written comments, including a decision to approve or revise and resubmit, must be provided by each dissertation committee member prior to an oral presentation to the dissertation committee.

Submitting the Proposal

The student shall submit a written draft of the proposal to his/her Advisory Committee for feedback and preliminary approval. The Advisory Committee shall make final decisions related to format and length of proposal. 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.

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, although the discussion and decision of the Committee are not.

After preliminary approval of the document has been granted by the Advisory Committee, the student and the Major Advisor should complete the [Dissertation Proposal for Doctoral Degree](#), following the guidance in the graduate catalog and on the [registrar's website](#).

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.

Final Approval and Submission of the Proposal

Final approval of the proposal requires unanimous approval by the Advisory Committee. Final approval should be noted on the [Dissertation Proposal for Doctoral Degree](#) in accordance with the guidelines provided on the website of the [Office of the Registrar](#). 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.

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.

Dissertation Format

The format for a dissertation shall be determined by the student and their Dissertation Advisory Committee. No set format is prescribed although it is crucial that the format is consistent with the scholarly traditions that inform the research. The final product must also demonstrate the author's ability to independently conduct, complete, and communicate a robust and significant research project that makes an original contribution to the field of education, schools, and society.

Although there exists a range of dissertation formats or macrostructures (e.g., Anderson, Saunders, & Alexander, 2021; Duke & Beck, 1999), two formats are most often used in education-related doctorates: a "traditional" macrostructure and a manuscript macrostructure.

- *Traditional Macrostructure.* Until recently, dissertations in most disciplines, including education, have followed what some scholars refer to as an introduction-methods-results-discussion (IMRD) format, comprising approximately 80–400 pages and four to seven chapters. Chapters loosely follow the logic of an introduction (including a statement of the problem), review of the relevant literature, discussion of methods, presentation of the results in one or more chapters, and discussion/conclusion.
- *Manuscript Macrostructure.* The heart of the *manuscript-style macrostructure* are several published or publishable manuscripts, usually in the style of journal articles or book chapters. These papers are either single or co-authored texts. This format also includes separate introductory and concluding dissertation chapters. The introductory chapter introduces the problem(s) that the papers/journal articles address, as well as providing a big picture view of relevant literature; the concluding chapter involves stepping from the set of papers/journal articles to offer a concluding discussion about next steps re: research, policy, and/or practice. This format can vary in length, involving 2-4 interior manuscript-journal articles-chapters. Each internal manuscript paper is a stand-alone piece, and thus includes its relevant methods, literature review, paper-specific discussion, and appendices.

Although these are the predominant formats for education-related dissertations, they are not the only choices. Education scholars bring a range of disciplinary lenses to their work, and each of those disciplines has different scholarly traditions. Students are encouraged to investigate alternative formats with their dissertation director and Dissertation Advisory Committee as they deliberate on what macrostructure will best align with their dissertation research.

Helpful resources to consult:

Anderson, T., Saunders, G., & Alexander, I. (2021). Alternative dissertation formats in education-based doctorates. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 16(1), 1-20.

Duke, N. K., & Beck, S. W. (1999). Research news and comment: Education should consider alternative formats for the dissertation. *Educational Researcher*, 28(3), 31–36.

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 on the website of the [Office of the Registrar](#). 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 publicly 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).

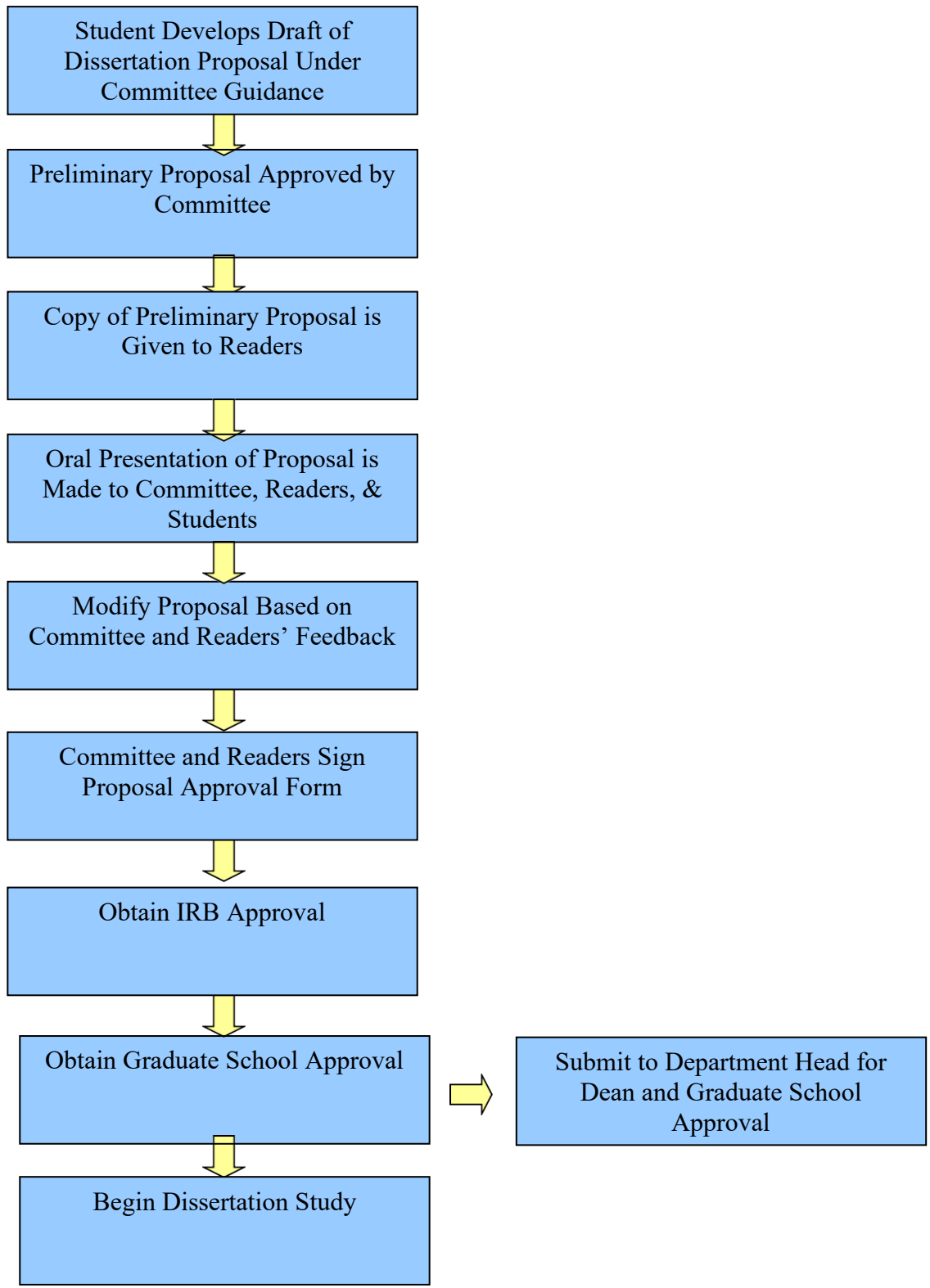
The dissertation defense is an open presentation and discussion of the study undertaken. All faculty and graduate students are eligible to attend. Ordinarily, the defense begins with the student's presentation of 15-20 minutes, followed by questions that deal with the focus of the dissertation.

All members of the dissertation committee must be present at the dissertation defense, either in person or virtually. 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. The two outside readers do not have to participate in the oral defense, nor do they sign the form. 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 as indicated on the [website of the Office of the Registrar](#), along with the dissertation approval page on that website.

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. Dissertation proposals range in length between 15 and 50 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.