

Education, PhD

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Degree Requirements

Doctoral Candidacy

To earn a PhD at Washington University, a student must complete all courses required by their department; maintain satisfactory academic progress; pass certain examinations; fulfill residence and Mentored Experience Requirements; write, defend, and submit a dissertation; and apply to graduate via Workday Student. For the details of doctoral degree general requirements in Arts & Sciences, including an explanation of Satisfactory Academic Progress, students should review the Doctoral Degree Academic Information page of the Arts & Sciences *Bulletin*.

Program Requirements

- **Total Units Required:** 24-30
- **Degree Length:** 6 years
 - Students are expected to have completed all PhD requirements, except for the dissertation, no later than the end of the fourth year of full-time graduate study
 - By the third year, students should be completing their courses and submitting a qualifying portfolio of written work
 - By the fourth year, students should have a dissertation proposal approved before they continue with the bulk of their research and writing for the dissertation
 - Typically, the dissertation is completed and defended by the end of the fifth or sixth year of study.
- **Note:** Students must be enrolled in 9 graduate credits each semester to retain full-time status. As students complete their coursework, if enrolled in fewer than 9 graduate credits, they must enroll in a specific Arts & Sciences graduate course that will show 0 units but does count as full-time status. Students should connect with their department to ensure proper enrollment prior to Add/Drop.
- **Grade Requirement:** Students must achieve a grade of C or better for courses to count toward the degree. Students are expected to maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in courses that count toward their requirements. Thus, among courses of equal weight, each grade of C must be balanced by at least one A.

Required Courses

- **General Education Courses** (9 credits)
 - Students are required to take 6 credits (3 credits per semester) of EDUC 6960 Doctoral Seminar. This seminar is offered every fall semester, and it is required of all doctoral students in their first two years.
 - EDUC 5450 History of Education in the United States (3 credits) is required in the first or second year of study. Alternate graduate courses in the history of education may be substituted, as approved by the Doctoral Studies Committee.
- **Methodology Courses** (12-15 credits):
 - EDUC 5600 Foundations of Educational Research (3 credits): Students who enter the program with little to no methodological training relevant to the field of Education are required to take this course, which is an introduction to the various methodologies used in the field of Education. Students who enter the program with prior introductory level methodological training relevant to the field of Education can petition to waive this course requirement with approval of the student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.
 - Students concentrating in quantitative methodology are required to take a minimum of one core qualitative and three core quantitative courses (12 total credits at minimum).
 - Students concentrating in qualitative methodology are required to take a minimum of one core quantitative and three core qualitative courses (12 total credits at minimum).
- **Area of Focus Courses** (3-6 credits): In addition to the general education requirements and the appropriate methodology requirements, students select one of two areas of focus for study: Educational Policy Studies or Educational Psychology and complete related coursework. Coursework will be based on the needs of the student and determined by consultation between the student and the advisor.

Qualifying Examinations

Progress toward the PhD is contingent upon the student passing examinations that are variously called *preliminary*, *qualifying*, *general*, *comprehensive*, or *major field exams*. The qualifying process varies according to the program. In some programs, it consists of a series of incremental, sequential, and cumulative exams over a considerable time. In others, the exams are held during a relatively short period of time. Exams may be replaced by one or more papers. The program, which determines the structure and schedule of the required examinations, is responsible for notifying the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, of the student's outcome, whether successful or unsuccessful.

Mentored Experience Requirements

Doctoral students at Washington University must complete a department-defined Mentored Experience. The Mentored Experience Requirement is a doctoral degree requirement that is notated on the student's transcript when complete. Each department has an established Mentored Experience Implementation Plan in which the number of units that a student must earn through Mentored Teaching Experience(s) and/or Mentored Professional Experience(s) is defined. The Mentored Experience Implementation Plans outline how doctoral students within the discipline will be mentored to achieve competencies in teaching at basic and advanced levels. Some departments may elect to include Mentored Professional Experiences as an avenue for completing some units of the Mentored Experience Requirement. Doctoral students will enroll in ASGS 8005, 8010, or 8015 Mentored Teaching Experience - Assistant in Instruction; ASGS 8020 Mentored Teaching Experience - Mentored Independent Teaching; or ASGS 8120 Mentored Professional Experience to signify their progression toward completing the overall Mentored Experience Requirement for the degree.

The Doctoral Dissertation

A Research Advisory Committee (RAC) must be created no later than the end of the student's third year; departments may set shorter timelines (e.g., by the end of the student's second year) for this requirement. As evidence of the mastery of a specific field of knowledge and of the capacity for original scholarly work, each candidate must complete a dissertation that is approved by their RAC.

A Title, Scope & Procedure Form for the dissertation must be signed by the committee members and by the program chair. It must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, at least six months before the degree is expected to be conferred or before the beginning of the fifth year of full-time enrollment, whichever is earlier.

A Doctoral Dissertation Guide and a Dissertation Template that give instructions regarding the format of the dissertation are available on the website of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Both should be read carefully at every stage of dissertation preparation.

The Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, requires each student to make the full text of the dissertation available to the committee members for their review at least one week before the defense. Most degree programs require two or more weeks for the review period; students should check with their faculty.

The Dissertation Defense

Approval of the written dissertation by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) is strongly recommended before the student can orally defend the dissertation. The Doctoral Dissertation Committee that examines the student during the defense consists of at least five members. Normally, the members of the RAC also serve on the Doctoral Dissertation Committee. The dissertation committee is then additionally augmented to ensure that the following criteria are met:

1. Three of the five members (or a similar proportion of a larger committee) must be full-time Washington University in St. Louis faculty members or, for programs involving Washington University in St. Louis-affiliated partners, full-time members of a Washington University in St. Louis-affiliated partner institution. All members must be authorized to supervise PhD students and have appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study. One of these three members must be the PhD student's primary thesis advisor, and one may be a member of the emeritus faculty.
2. All other committee members must be active in research/scholarship and have appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study whether at Washington University in St. Louis, at another university, in government, or in industry.
3. At least one of the five members must bring expertise outside of the student's field of study to the committee, as judged by the relevant department/program and approved by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

The approval processes outlined in the RAC section of the Doctoral Council bylaws also apply to the doctoral dissertation committee, including approval of each dissertation committee by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

The student is responsible for making the full text of the dissertation accessible to their committee members for their review in advance of the defense according to program rules. Washington University in St. Louis community members and guests of the student who are interested in the subject of the dissertation are normally welcome to attend all or part of the defense but may ask questions only at the discretion of the committee chair. Although there is some variation among degree programs, the defense ordinarily focuses on the dissertation itself and its relation to the student's field of expertise.

Attendance by a minimum of four members of the Doctoral Dissertation Committee, including the committee chair and an outside member, is required for the defense to take place. This provision is designed to permit the student's defense to proceed in case of a situation that unexpectedly prevents one of the five members from attending. Students should not plan in advance to only have four members in attendance. If four members cannot attend, the defense must be rescheduled. The absence of all outside members or of the committee chair also requires rescheduling the defense.

Students, with the support of their Doctoral Dissertation Committee chair, may opt to hold their dissertation defense in person or by utilizing a virtual or hybrid format.

Submission of the Dissertation

After the defense, the student must submit an electronic copy of the dissertation online to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. The submission website requires students to choose among publishing and copyrighting services offered by ProQuest's ETD Administrator. Students are asked to submit the Survey of Earned Doctorates separately. The degree program is responsible for delivering the final approval form, signed by the committee members at the defense and then by the program chair or director, to the Office of Graduate Studies,

Arts & Sciences. Students who defend their dissertations successfully have not yet completed their PhD requirements; they finish earning their degree only when their electronic dissertation submission has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

Optional MA in Education Along the Way (with Thesis)

The MA in Education program provides an optional along-the-way master's program for students enrolled in the Department of Education's PhD program. The program requirements consist of coursework and the completion of a master's thesis. The coursework has substantial overlap with the requirements for the doctoral degree to avoid adding time to degree. The MA in Education is optional for PhD students but strongly recommended for those students with no master's degree or a master's degree in a field outside of education. This program also offers an alternative degree path for students who decide to leave or are asked to leave the PhD program before completing it. Doctoral students in the Department of Education will be able to opt into the master's degree along the way program at any point up until they complete or exit the doctoral program. However, students are encouraged to complete the requirements before the end of their second year in the PhD program.

Program Requirements

The program requirements include coursework and a master's thesis:

- **Coursework:** The required coursework for the master's degree will be based on the requirements for the doctoral degree. Students are required to complete the following courses:
 - EDUC 6960 Doctoral Seminar (6 credits total; 3 per semester for two semesters)
 - EDUC 5450 History of Education in the United States (3 credits)
 - Four methodology courses (12 credits total; 3 credits per course): Students concentrating in quantitative methodology are required to take a minimum of one qualitative and three quantitative courses whereas students concentrating in qualitative methodology are required to take a minimum of one quantitative and three qualitative courses.
 - Two elective courses (6 credits total; 3 credits per course): Students can choose two other courses within the Department of Education, including courses in supervised research.
 - EDUC 5800 Master's Project (3 credits): This course will be taken during the semester in which the student conducts and/or defends their master's thesis.
- **Master's Thesis:** The thesis will consist of a research project in the student's area of focus. Before starting the project, the student will form a master's degree committee, consisting of at least three members with an appointment in the Department of Education. The membership of the master's degree committee must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. Once the committee is approved, the student will submit a proposal for the research project to the committee. After the committee approves the project, the student will conduct the project and then write it up. Finally, the student will submit the written thesis document

to the committee and then engage in a public defense of their thesis. Upon successful defense of the thesis and approval by the committee, the thesis will be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and the MA in Education (with thesis) will be awarded.