Doctorate in Educational Leadership

Handbook of Procedures
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Table of Contents

Overview of the Program
Program Goal
Student Learning Outcomes
Program Structure
  Description of Educational Administration Specialization
  Description of Curriculum and Instruction Specialization
  Description of Higher Education Specialization
Program Delivery Format
Admissions
  Admissions Requirements
  Application Deadlines
  Deferring Admission
  Orientation
Degree Requirements
  Program Core
  Program Specializations
  Exit Requirements
Course Sequence and Suggested Timeline
Internship and Directed Independent Study (DIS)
Advising Structure
Post-Coursework Milestones
  Forming the Dissertation Advisory Committee
  Reconstituting the DAC
  Milestone 1: Oral Comprehensive Examination
  Milestone 2: Dissertation Proposal Defense
  Milestone 3: Dissertation Defense
  Routing of Required Forms
Academic Regulations and Procedures
  Registration Procedures
  Add/Drop and Withdrawal
  Registration During the Dissertation
  Transfer Credit
  Non-Degree Credit
  Annual Review and Academic Progression
  Grading and Appeals
  Honor Code and Honor Pledge
  Academic Grievance Procedure
  Time to Degree Limits
  Leave of Absence
  Graduation Procedures
  UNC Online
Overview of the Program

Faculty members in the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) established the Doctorate of Educational Leadership (Ed.D.) program in 2007 with a mission to “prepare graduates to be informed, proactive, reflective agents of change to improve public schools and other educational organizations for the benefit of all students, particularly in southeastern North Carolina.” Since its inception, the program has successfully graduated over 100 scholar-practitioners.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a reference for students and faculty members about a range of program procedures and to guide decision-making and advising. Students in the program will receive a copy of the handbook when they enter the program. The handbook is updated on a regular basis as new procedures are introduced and existing procedures are modified by faculty vote. If questions arise that are not answered in the handbook, students and faculty members should communicate with the Ed.D. program coordinators.

Program Goal

The primary goal of the Ed.D. program is to prepare scholar-practitioners who investigate and integrate research-based practices and policies that make a positive impact on their educational environments.

[Updated by Vote on 3/16/16]

Student Learning Outcomes

Graduates of the Educational Leadership doctoral program will be able to:

1. Integrate social justice principles into practice;

2. Engage in research, evaluation and data-driven decision making to contribute to education practice, policy, and theory;

3. Lead systemic organizational change to facilitate educational reform;

4. Demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in order to be successful in rapidly changing, complex environments (e.g., technology, problem solving);

5. Critically examine and imagine ways to change how our work as educational leaders is situated in economic, political and cultural systems; and
6. Develop a raised consciousness of global educational policies and practices.

[Updated by Vote on 3/16/16]

Program Structure

The Ed.D. program is structured as a single academic program with three specializations. All students in the program take a set of core courses in leadership, social justice, and research methods, after which they take courses in their specialization. Students must declare a single specialization when they apply to the program; however, they can take elective courses in any of the three specializations in consultation with their advisor. Students may petition to switch specializations within their first year. The process for this is outlined in the Academic Regulations and Procedures section. The three specializations are as follows:

Description of Educational Administration Specialization

The specialization in Education Administration (Ed Admin) focuses on the preparation of scholar-practitioners in the field of education administration. The program provides in-depth study of the organization, administration, staffing, funding, and executive level leadership experience at public/private PreK-12 levels of education and other organizations.

Description of Curriculum and Instruction Specialization

The specialization in Curriculum and Instruction (C & I) focuses on the preparation of curriculum and instruction specialists. The specialization provides in-depth study of areas related to curriculum and instruction, such as planning and design, innovation and change, accountability and assessment, policy and law, diversity and special education, and supervision and resource management.

Description of Higher Education Specialization

The specialization in Higher Education (Higher Ed) focuses on the preparation of scholar-practitioners in the field of higher education and student affairs administration. The specialization provides in-depth study of the organization, administration, staffing, funding, and student experience at postsecondary education institutions.

Program Delivery Format

The program delivery format is hybrid, with a combination of synchronous face-to-face instruction and asynchronous online instruction. This typically means that students meet for
synchronous face-to-face class sessions bi-weekly during the evening. Throughout the semester, students are responsible for completing readings, engaging in discussions with peers, and other activities related to course content. Consistent with our commitment to applied and experiential learning, program faculty strive for a high level of social presence during asynchronous online weeks. The program also features a distance education option for students who reside outside of the Wilmington area. These students attend the synchronous face-to-face class sessions using Zoom, a platform that allows them to be part of the classroom experience virtually.

Admissions

The Ed.D. program accepts students from a variety of backgrounds and actively seeks to craft a diverse cohort each year. This includes diversity of experiences and skills, which gives students the opportunity to learn inside and out of the classroom and to build professional relationships that can last their entire career. Students are admitted to begin coursework in the fall term. Students are not admitted to begin coursework in the summer or spring terms prior to their anticipated enrollment.

Students will be admitted to the Ed.D. Program in Educational Leadership based upon a recommendation from the Ed.D. Admissions Committee within each specialization. Students must select one of three specializations at the time of application: 1) Educational Administration; 2) Curriculum and Instruction; or 3) Higher Education. Admission decisions will be based on several factors, including, but not limited to, fulfillment of eligibility requirements, documented promise as a scholar-practitioner, and available resources.

Admissions Requirements

[Source: Graduate School Website]

Students will be admitted to the Ed.D. Program in Educational Leadership by a recommendation of the Ed.D. Admissions Committee based upon eligibility requirements and available resources. Admissions decisions are based on several factors. Under most circumstances, students admitted to the program will have met the following requirements:

1. A Master’s degree in school administration, supervision, curriculum, instruction, higher education, or related field from a regionally accredited university (official transcripts from undergraduate and graduate school are required)
2. An overall graduate grade point average of at least 3.0 out of 4.0 in undergraduate and graduate coursework
3. A score of at least 79 on the internet-based (TOEFL) version of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or a score of 6.5 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) for applicants whose native language is not English or that did not earn their baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited US institution. TOEFL scores are good for two years from the date the test is administered.
4. A minimum of three years of documented leadership experience
5. Completion (within the last five years) of a graduate-level introductory research class (such as EDL 523) or successful completion of a research competency module provided by the EL department. This must be completed prior to the first semester of study.
Applicants are required to submit:

1. An application for graduate admission.
2. Official transcripts of all college work (undergraduate and graduate).
3. Three written recommendations by individuals in professionally relevant fields addressing the applicant’s potential to succeed in a doctoral program. Recommendations from individuals who have supervised the applicant will be given greater weight.
4. Official score on the TOEFL or IELTS (if applicable/see number 3 above). TOEFL scores are good for two years from the date the test is administered.
5. Essay identifying a current issue in education and describing potential ways in which the issue can or should be addressed by leaders in the field. Where possible, applicants should discuss how their professional and educational background and research interests align with this issue and its resolution.
7. Interviews with Watson College of Education faculty to be conducted in the spring for selected candidates.
8. Application and supplemental documents must be submitted by the published deadline.

Application Deadlines

[Source: Graduate School Website]

Priority Consideration January 15
Final Space Available Deadline May 15

Deferring Admission

[Source: Graduate School Website]

The process to request a deferral is outlined below:

1. Complete the deferral form (PDF) and have it considered by the Program Coordinator prior to the first day of classes for the semester originally accepted. Keep in mind that only accepted students may be considered for a deferral. Deferments may only be considered for up to one academic year and not all programs consider deferrals.
2. Specific instructions will be sent from the Graduate School once an approved deferment has been received.
3. Financial awards or scholarships do not carry over to the following year. Students must re-apply to be considered for financial awards, scholarships, and financial aid.

Orientation

All admitted students are required to attend a one-day orientation for Ed.D. program on the UNCW campus prior to the start of their first semester of coursework. This orientation typically happens in August 1-2 weeks prior to the first day of classes. Specialization coordinators will communicate orientation information to all admitted students.

Degree Requirements
The program of study for the Doctorate in Educational Leadership includes core courses and specialization-specific courses. A total of 60 credit hours are required for graduation. Students must fulfill the requirements for a specific specialization of study and work closely with an advisor to plan their program of study.

**Program Core**

The primary purpose of the program core is to provide all students with a foundation in leadership and organizational theory and practice. Other courses in the core prepare students as researchers. All courses in the core are required for graduation and are offered in a specific sequence.

**Program Core Courses (9 hours, required)**

- EDL 601 - Leadership Theory Credits: 3
- EDL 605 - Social Foundations of Education Credits: 3
- EDL 609 - Leading Change in Educational Organizations Credits: 3

**Research Core (12 hours, required)**

- EDL 641 - Applied Research (3)
- EDL 642 - Program Evaluation (3) or other Advanced Methods Course
- EDL 643 - Quantitative Research (3)
- EDL 644 - Qualitative Research (3)

**Program Specializations**

Students choose one of three program specializations at the time of admission: Leadership in Educational Administration, Leadership in Curriculum and Instruction, or Leadership in Higher Education. Courses in each specialization build upon the foundation of leadership, organizational development, and research. Courses are offered on a rotating basis and a final program of study will be determined in consultation with an advisor. Courses in the program typically begin with the EDL prefix.

**Educational Administration Specialization**

Students will take a set of courses that focus on areas related to executive level leadership, such as policy, law, regulation, technology, curriculum, assessment, decision making, global achievement, and resource management.

All students are required to take Educational Administration specialization core courses (15 credits) and one internship course (3 credits). Students will select from internship courses that
focus on: international perspectives (requires study abroad), business organizations, or education and government organizations. Specific details will be determined in consultation with a faculty advisor. Students will also select appropriate electives (15 credits) to meet the program requirement of 60 credits.

Specialization Core Courses (18 hours, required)

- EDL 624 Accountability (3)
- EDL 626 Executive Leadership (3)
- EDL 628 Developing Effective Communications and Collaborative Skills for Leaders (3)
- EDL 604: Politics, Policy, Governmental Regulation and Law (3)
- EDL 607: Generating, Managing, and Aligning Resources (3)
- EDL 661 Education and Government Internship (3)
  or
- EDL 664 International Internship (3)

Elective Courses (15 credits)

- Selected in Collaboration with your Advisor

Curriculum and Instruction Specialization

Students will take a set of courses that focus on areas related to curriculum and instruction, such as planning and design, innovation and change, accountability and assessment, policy and law, diversity and special education, and supervision and resource management. All students are required to take Curriculum and Instruction specialization core courses (15 credits) and one internship course (3 credits). Students are required to participate in an international internship course (requires study abroad) and will select from two other internship courses that focus on: business organizations or education and government organizations. Specific details will be determined in consultation with a faculty advisor. Students will also select appropriate electives (15 credits) to meet the program requirement of 60 credits.

Specialization Core Courses (18 hours) (Required)

- EDL 665 Curriculum Theory (3)
- EDL 621 Curriculum Leadership (3)
- EDL 625 Curriculum for Equity (3)
- EDL 646 Global Perspectives and Comparative Education (3)
- EDL 648 Curriculum Controversies and Political Contexts (3)
- EDL 662 Curriculum and Instruction Internship (3)
  or
- EDL 664 International Internship (3)
Doctorate in Educational Leadership
Handbook of Procedures

Elective Courses (15 credits)

- Selected in Collaboration with your Advisor

Higher Education Specialization

Students will take a set of courses that focus on areas related to higher education, such as student learning theory, innovation in higher education, accountability and assessment, policy and law, and resource management. All students are required to take Higher Education specialization core courses (15 credits) and one internship course (3 credits). Students will select from internship courses that focus on: international perspectives (requires study abroad), business organizations, or education and government organizations. Specific details will be determined in consultation with a faculty advisor. Students will also select appropriate electives (15 credits) to meet the program requirement of 60 credits.

Specialization Core Courses (18 hours) (Required)

- EDL 630 Proseminar in Postsecondary Education I (3)
- EDL 631 Law & Policy in Higher Education (3)
- EDL 632 Higher Education Finance (3)
- EDL 633 Today’s College Student (3)
- EDL 635 The Academic Profession (3)
- EDL 661 Internship I Education/Government Internship (3)

or

- EDL 664 International Internship (3)

Elective Courses (15 credits)

- Selected in Collaboration with your Advisor

Exit Requirements

All Ed.D. students must:

1. Complete and pass an oral comprehensive examination.
2. Propose and defend a dissertation topic.
3. Take and pass 6 credits of required dissertation credits:
   - EDL 603 Doctoral Seminar (1)
   - EDL 699 Dissertation (5)

4. Complete, successfully defend and submit a dissertation to the Graduate School.
The program is structured with the assumption that students take 2 courses per term, including summer. This amounts to 6 courses per year. Following this schedule, students typically complete coursework in 3 years. Following completion of coursework, students must complete three milestones (the oral comprehensive examination, dissertation proposal defense, and dissertation defense). Completion of these milestones typically takes an additional 1-1.5 years. Below is the sequence of core courses as of Fall 2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall Year 1</th>
<th>Spring Year 1</th>
<th>Fall Year 2</th>
<th>Spring Year 2</th>
<th>Fall Year 3</th>
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<td>Specialization Core</td>
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<td>EDL 641</td>
<td>EDL 605</td>
<td>EDL 643</td>
<td>EDL 644</td>
<td>EDL 609</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Internship and Directed Independent Study (DIS)

Internships give students in-depth experience in settings that are not possible within the university classroom. The opportunity to intern in an international, business, or government setting will enrich the doctoral experience. All internships are carefully planned and completed under the guidance of a university faculty member.

Students in the Ed.D. program must complete an internship as indicated in the Educational Administration, Curriculum & Instruction, and Higher Education program of study. Additional internships may be taken as electives. Internship courses are typically offered during the summer, but it is possible for students to complete internship hours during the fall and spring terms with permission of the specialization coordinator and course instructor.

**EDL 661 Education/Government Internship (3 credits)**

This course is a focused internship for candidates who are placed in an educational or government setting to intensively study innovation, leadership styles and data-driven decision-making.

**EDL 664 International Internship (3 credits)**

This course is designed to provide first-hand international experiences in observing and analyzing diverse cultures and philosophies and how they impact educational decisions in international educational settings. Contact your program coordinator for a listing of approved travel destinations to fulfill this requirement.

**EDL 691 Directed Independent Study (1-3 credits)**
Students may elect to work directly with a faculty member on a project or research of mutual interest in an independent study. Faculty must complete paperwork prior to students enrolling in EDL 691. The form is available on the UNCW registrar’s website. Contact faculty directly to arrange for independent studies. Students can only count 3 credits of directed independent study in their program of study.

Advising Structure

Throughout coursework, the specialization coordinators serve as advisors for students in their specialization. This means that specialization coordinators will assist students with course selection, registration, and planning their program of study. Specialization coordinators should serve as the first point of contact if students have any questions or concerns about the program. Specialization coordinators are also responsible for evaluating students’ academic performance annually. Once students begin working on the post-coursework milestones and officially begin working with their Dissertation Advisory Committee Chair, the DAC Chair becomes their first point of contact for any questions or concerns. The specialization coordinators are still available to answer questions and assist students with registration.

Post-Coursework Milestones

Students in all specializations of the Ed.D. program must complete three post-coursework milestones in order to graduate: 1) oral comprehensive examination, 2) dissertation proposal defense, and 3) dissertation defense. During their final term of coursework, students should make an appointment to discuss post-coursework milestones with their specialization coordinator.

Forming the Dissertation Advisory Committee

All three post-coursework milestones require participation of a committee of 3-4 eligible members called the Dissertation Advisory Committee (DAC). Unless it is reconstituted, the committee will consist of the same members through all 3 milestones. The committee includes a chair and at least two other members. All DAC members must have graduate faculty status and all DACs must have at least one member from the EL department.

The first step of the post-coursework process is to meet with the specialization coordinator to discuss the process. With guidance from the Specialization Coordinator, students will communicate with an eligible faculty member and request that this person chair the DAC. Students should plan to discuss with their potential chair their tentative dissertation topic and timeline. It is required that the student’s doctoral advisory committee be chaired by a faculty member in the Educational Leadership department, with graduate faculty status, preferably in the student’s research area or methodology. If a student’s research area or anticipated methodology aligns with a faculty member outside of the EL department, students are able to request an exception, with written approval from the coordinator of their specialization and the
department chair. Students will email or write a letter outlining the request and providing reasons for this request. The specialization coordinator and chair will consult in the decision. All decisions should occur within two weeks of the student request in writing.

If a student’s doctoral advisory committee is chaired by a faculty member outside of the EL department, at least one of the other committee members must be an EL faculty member. Faculty external to the department will be provided an opportunity for training that will include the handbook and guidelines paramount for consistently and continuity college-wide.

### Tips for Selecting a DAC Chair

When selecting a DAC Chair, students should consider the following factors:
- Faculty member’s research expertise and interests
- Faculty member’s methodological strengths and preferences
- Faculty member’s availability during anticipated timeline
- Experiences in a faculty member’s courses

When selecting DAC committee members, students should work in consultation with their DAC Chair, who will assist them with this process. Additional factors to consider:
- Including a committee member because of their research expertise and interests
- Including a committee member to help with methodological questions
- Including a committee member for additional support and mentoring
- Availability of committee member during anticipated timeline

A [Dissertation Advisory Committee Form](#) must be submitted and signed by the specialization coordinator and the EL department chair, approving committee membership, prior to any work with DAC, such as the oral comprehensive examination or enrolling in EDL 699. The form should be signed by the specialization coordinator first, who will ensure the student has met all requirements to begin post-coursework milestones. The form then goes to the department chair to sign and give to the departmental administrative associate.

### The Role of the DAC Chair and Committee Members

The DAC Chair is responsible for helping students to navigate all three of the post-coursework milestones. They serve as advisors and primary points of contact for their advisees, though they often need to work with specialization coordinators for registration and questions related to procedures. Although it is difficult to capture all of the tasks associated with serving as a DAC chair, important responsibilities include:
- Instruct, assess, guide, and mentor the student toward a successful completion of their comps, dissertation proposal, and dissertation defense
- Developing a professional relationship with the student
Doctorate in Educational Leadership
Handbook of Procedures

- Explaining the post-milestone processes, including helping students to understand what the Oral Comprehensive Examination, Dissertation Proposal Defense, and Dissertation Defense entail.
- Coordinating with other DAC members to construct questions for the Oral Comprehensive Examination and assisting with scheduling and finding a location for the post-coursework milestones.
- Helping students to understand the structure and expectations of the dissertation proposal and dissertation.
- Helping students with the research design of their dissertation.
- Suggesting useful resources and helping students to make contact with data collection sites, if appropriate.
- Reading chapter drafts and providing students with constructive feedback.
- Meeting (in-person, phone, or virtually) to discuss their project and answer questions.
- Determining when a student is ready to schedule their dissertation proposal defense and dissertation defense.

DAC committee members play an important role in supporting students, reading their work and providing feedback, and ultimately determining in consultation with the DAC chair if a student passes a milestone and graduates.

Discussion and Guide for DAC Chairs

Each chair approaches their work with their student differently. We appreciate a diversity of working styles, and trust that you and your student will explore what works best.

- Identify your working style: Do you gravitate toward structure, setting firm meetings and deadlines, or are you responsive preferring to make decisions during each progressive meeting? Discuss how each of you work and come to an agreeable manner on how best to support their success.
- Set expectations: We all remember that doing a dissertation is a new and difficult process. Framing the process and setting clear expectations for each step of their work, will help the student success. For each task, create a shared agreement on the goals and what the produced work looks like.
- A dissertation vs. a research paper: Many students, despite their training during their doctoral program, still revert back to reporting out on research rather than synthesizing and creating their own analysis of the literature. To support students in making this shift, we have created a portal of resources to which you can point your student. In addition to using these resources, we encourage you to create your own method of working toward doctoral level products.
- Obstacles: Meeting obstacles during the process is inevitable. Students will at times become frustrated, confused, and lost. Clearly explain that a dissertation is constantly in a revision process, and their first draft will be only one of many, many more.
● Personality conflicts: Dissertations are stressful. Students can become easily discouraged. When this happens, it is human nature to want to blame someone else. The chair is the easiest target. Be sure to have a conversation with your student about what is to come and review the Watson College procedure for working through difficult chair relations.
● Timeline/Plan: Although timelines and plans will certainly adjust, we have found that setting weekly, monthly, and quarterly goals with students is helpful. We recommend creating a shared calendar, organizing a Canvas space, or developing an organized structure to share versions of their work. Talk to your mentor about some strategies that they have used.

Reconstituting the DAC
From time to time, either the faculty or students may need to restructure the DAC due to a variety of factors often out of the control of either party. For this reason, there are specific guidelines for these encounters.

STUDENTS:
Students have the ability to replace committee members in the event that a faculty member
● leaves the department,
● takes on an administrative position,
● takes a leave of absence, or
● experiences other circumstances that severely limit the faculty member’s ability to actively participate in the advising process.

Students may also replace committee members in the event of
● a change in the direction of the research that requires a different knowledge depth,
● conflicts in scheduling between both parties, and
● general conflicts.

It should be noted that students cannot replace a faculty member on their committee because students do not agree with a faculty member’s feedback or expectations. Any conflicts involving students and committee members, or conflicts between committee members, should be brought to the attention of the specialization coordinator and department chair in the hopes of avoiding the restructuring of the student’s DAC or committee. However, there are times when changes must be made.

Students should:

1. Seek to resolve any matters with the DAC chair or committee member for all of the above bulleted conditions. If a resolution is not available, then the student proceeds with the specialization coordinator’s approval.
2. Inform the faculty member that there is going to be a change in composition of the committee.
3. Notify the specialization coordinator and Department Chair of this change.
4. Complete the Dissertation Advisory Committee Form.
5. Obtain all the signatures on the form.

FACULTY:

Faculty, from time to time, may need to step down as DAC chair or committee member. Faculty also have the ability to ask to be replaced as DAC chair or a committee member in the event that a faculty member
- leaves the department,
- takes on an administrative position,
- takes a leave of absence, or
- experiences other circumstances that severely limit the faculty member’s ability to actively participate in the advising process.

Faculty may also asked to be replaced as DAC chair or committee member in the event of
- a change in the direction of the research that requires a different knowledge depth,
- conflicts in scheduling between both parties, and
- general conflicts.

Any conflicts involving students and committee members, or conflicts between committee members, should be brought to the attention of the specialization coordinator and department chair in the hopes of avoiding the restructuring of the student’s committee. However, there are times when changes must be made when in the best interest of the student’s success. It should be viewed as a single process that can be initiated by either the student or faculty.

Faculty should:
1. Seek to resolve any matters with the DAC chair or committee member for all of the above bulleted conditions.
2. Inform the student that there is going to be a change in composition of the committee.
3. Notify the specialization coordinator and Department Chair of this change.
4. Complete the Dissertation Advisory Committee Form.
5. Obtain all the signatures on the form.

Milestone 1: Oral Comprehensive Examination

The oral comprehensive examination is a requirement of all specializations of the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. The comprehensive exam is a 2-3-hour oral assessment in which students respond to questions formulated by their Dissertation Advisory Committee (DAC).
Questions typically ask students to draw upon professional experiences and knowledge gained through coursework, as well as literature reviewed in preparation for the exam.

Questions often relate to students’ tentative dissertation topic. Students should consult with their specialization coordinator in order to form the DAC. Students are permitted to complete the comprehensive exam:

- In their final year of coursework
- Resolution of any incomplete (or “I”) grades from prior coursework
- Receiving approval from their DAC chair and specialization coordinator
- Completion and submission of the DAC form

DAC members, led by the chair, should meet or communicate via email to determine questions for the exam. The DAC chair will send the questions to the student two weeks prior to the examination date. There is to be no discussion or collaboration, at any time, about the written questions, nor the answers to the questions, with other students, work colleagues, or others. The questions that are written for the oral comprehensive exam are considered confidential.

During the exam, the student answers all of the questions provided to them. They are able to answer the questions in any order. Students are permitted to bring and consult a one-page, double-sided sheet of notes during the examination. After answering the questions and any probing or clarifying questions, the student will leave the room and the DAC will deliberate on the quality of responses.

The following documents assist in a successful facilitation of this milestone.

- Course Checklist
- Steps to Comprehensive Exam
- Committee Form
- Comprehensive Examination Rubric
- Comprehensive Examination Form

Failed Exam

If a student fails to pass the comprehensive examination on the first attempt, the student is permitted to try again. Depending on the reasons for not passing, the DAC may decide that the candidate must

(a) retake the entire comprehensive examination with the same, modified, or new questions; or
(b) retake part of the comprehensive examination with the same, modified, or new questions.

The DAC will determine the amount of time needed before the candidate retakes the exam. If a student fails the comprehensive examination twice, they are dismissed from the program.
The DAC chair should record the results of the examination, and the chair and committee members should sign the Comprehensive Examination Form. The chair and committee members should also complete the Comprehensive Examination Rubric. The DAC should give the form, rubrics, exam questions, and the students’ sheet of notes to the specialization coordinator to record the result on the student’s degree audit. The specialization coordinator then turns in all documents to the departmental administrative associate.

**Milestone 2: Dissertation Proposal Defense**

The dissertation proposal defense is a meeting between students and their DAC to discuss the dissertation proposal. Dissertation proposals consist of complete or abridged versions of chapters 1-3 of the dissertation.

The following steps are required for the dissertation proposal defense:

1. Students receive approval from their DAC chair.
2. The DAC Chair works with the student to schedule the proposal defense.
3. Students distribute their proposal to DAC members at least 10 business days prior to the defense date for the committee to thoughtfully read the document.
4. If a committee member has serious reservations about the proposal, they should communicate with the chair prior to date of the proposal meeting.

Dissertation Proposal Meeting Structure: During the proposal meeting, students typically provide a 20-25-minute presentation based upon their proposed dissertation, with significant attention to the proposed research design. The remainder of the meeting is dedicated to providing constructive feedback and comments to help shape students’ dissertations.

1. The DAC Chair outlines the process of what will happen.
2. The student presents proposed dissertation (Typically 20-25-minutes). The presentation should focus on the student’s proposed dissertation, with significant attention to the proposed research design.
3. The remainder of the meeting is dedicated to providing constructive feedback and comments to help shape students’ dissertations. (Usually an hour)
4. Following the presentation and discussion, the DAC Chair will ask student to leave the room, during which time the DAC will determine if the student’s proposal has committee approval.
5. Upon approval, the student can next move forward to IRB review and data collection.

The DAC Chair submits the following form to the specialization coordinator to record the result on the student’s degree audit and will enter a petition in DegreeWorks if the student successfully passed the defense. The specialization coordinator then turns in all documents to the departmental administrative associate.
Milestone 3: Dissertation Defense

The dissertation defense mirrors the structure of the proposal defense. Steps for the dissertation defense include:

1. Students receive approval from their DAC chair to schedule the dissertation defense.
2. Students distribute their dissertation to DAC members at least 15 business days prior to the defense date for the committee to thoughtfully read the document.
3. If a committee member has serious reservations about the dissertation, they should communicate with the chair a minimum of five days prior to the date of the defense.

Dissertation Defense Structure:

1. Students typically provide a 20-25-minute presentation based upon their dissertation, with significant attention to the analysis and results.
2. The remainder of the meeting is dedicated to addressing questions and providing feedback.
3. Following the presentation and discussion, the student will be asked to leave the room, during which time the DAC will determine if the student’s dissertation satisfies all requirements and meets criteria of quality.
   a. Upon completion of the dissertation defense, if the student receives a “pass” or “pass with changes” decision from the DAC the student makes editorial changes requested.
   b. If significant changes are needed, the defense decision is “fail” and the defense must be rescheduled. DAC members must sign the Dissertation Defense Form, and the doctoral candidate must turn in this document to the departmental administrative associate.
4. If the DAC determines a “pass with revisions.” she/he provides the timeline for revisions.
5. After the candidate submits the revisions, the DAC must agree on the editorial changes.

When the DAC chair agrees that the editorial changes are sufficient, the doctoral candidate submits the final dissertation to the Educational Leadership administrative associate and the UNCW Graduate School (see UNCW Graduate School submission requirements).

Routing of Required Forms

All forms for the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership require e-signatures. When the DAC Chair completes a form, she/he is expected to initiate the electronic distribution process. These forms include the Comprehensive Exam Form, the Dissertation Proposal Defense Form, and the Dissertation Defense Form).
In-person Meeting
If the milestone takes place in person, all members of the committee should sign the form at the end of the meeting. The DAC Chair then is required to deliver a copy to the specialization coordinator. The specialization coordinator provides the final signature on this form and gives it to the department’s administrative associate to file.

Virtual Meeting
If the milestone is virtual, the DAC Chair should set the procedures of who signs first, and continue to forward the document until all committee signatures are complete. Following this, the DAC chair should electronically forward the form to the specialization coordinator. The specialization coordinator provides the final signature on this form and gives it to the department’s administrative associate to file.

Academic Regulations and Procedures

Registration Procedures
Students are responsible for registering each semester. Specialization coordinators will communicate with students via email or in-person during advising sessions the courses for which they should register. For additional guidance, students should consult the Course Sequence and Suggested Timeline section of this handbook.

Please take note of the following regulations during registration:

- Students are permitted to take up to 6 credit hours at the 500-level (with approval of the specialization coordinator).
- Students are permitted to take up to 3 credit hours of Directed Independent Study (EDL 691).

Course registration happens through Seanet. For more information on registration, visit the Graduate School web page on registration (https://uncw.edu/gradschool/registration/steps.html).

Add/Drop and Withdrawal

[Source: Graduate School]

Courses may be added or dropped only during the official drop/add period, which is noted in the current University Calendar, linked from http://www.uncw.edu/catalogue/.
This refund policy only applies to complete withdrawals from UNCW. Students who simply withdraw from an individual class after the drop/add period receive NO refund or reduction of fees whatsoever. A student is allowed to withdraw from the University or from individual courses through the first week of the semester without having a grade entered on the academic record. From the second week through the twelfth week of the semester, any student who withdraws will receive a grade of W. A grade of W will not affect the student’s grade point average.

Beginning with the thirteenth week of the semester, a grade of WF will be assigned for each course withdrawal. The instructor will assign the grade of F at the end of the semester for any student that has not gone through the withdrawal process. Should extenuating circumstances warrant, the grade of WF or F assigned for course withdrawal may be changed to a W. This determination will be made by the Graduate School. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate the appeal. The decision of the dean is final and must be rendered prior to the end of the semester in which the withdrawal occurred. The grade of WF and F will affect the student’s grade point average.

If the term of an individual course does not conform to the standard 15 week semester, the withdrawal period is calculated based upon the course term’s equivalence (i.e., a student is allowed to withdraw from the course through the first 1/15 of the course term without having a grade entered; between 2/15 and 12/15 of the course term, a student who withdraws will receive a W; beginning 13/15, a grade of WF will be assigned for a withdrawal).

A student who plans to withdraw from a course or all courses for the term, but plans to return to the University, should complete the “Graduate School Course(s)/Term Withdrawal” form before or on the last day for withdrawal as indicated in the University Calendar of Events. If the student does not plan to register in the following term, then a leave of absence form must be completed (refer to the leave of absence guidelines below). This form is located at http://www.uncw.edu/gradschool/currentstudents/withdrawal.html and, upon completion, should be sent directly to the Graduate School.

A student who plans to withdraw from all courses and the University, and does not plan to return to the University, should complete the “Graduate School Complete Withdrawal” form. This form is located at http://www.uncw.edu/gradschool/currentstudents/withdrawal.html and, upon completion, should be sent directly to the Graduate School.

Students who choose to completely withdraw from the University, but later decide to return, must reapply to the Graduate School and pay all applicable fees.

Faculty who wish to register an accusation of academic dishonesty or misconduct against a graduate student should immediately notify the Graduate School in writing. Graduate students may not withdraw from any course for which such an allegation of academic dishonesty or misconduct has been filed with the Graduate School. Should the student subsequently be found
innocent of these charges and if the withdrawal date has passed, the student may petition the dean of the Graduate School for withdrawal from the course.

**Registration During the Dissertation**

While students are working on their dissertations, they are registered for courses and their DAC chair is the instructor of record. Students must be enrolled during the semester in which they intend to graduate. DAC chairs have the responsibility of communicating with their students and requesting that the department’s administrative assistant create sections/seats. Students must take 3 credits of EDL 603 and 3 credits of 699, which are designated as courses for dissertation research.

Many students do not complete their dissertations in two semesters. Should that be the case, students will enroll in “continuous enrollment,” EDL 700. Double check the student’s degree audit to ensure that all course work is complete and that they have in fact successfully complete two semesters of EDL 699 before advising the student to register for continuous enrollment.

Once you are certain that students are eligible, students use this link to register.


Note: EDL 700 does not currently show up on the student’s Degree Audit. Please either keep track, or ask the student to keep track of the number of 700s so that their advisor can document this in their file.

**Transfer Credit**

[Source: Graduate Catalogue]

A maximum of twelve semester hours of graduate credit may be transferred from another regionally accredited institution in partial fulfillment of the total hours required for any graduate degree. These credits cannot have been used in fulfillment of a previous degree. When special circumstances warrant, students may petition the Graduate School for transfer of more than twelve semester hours, not to exceed one-third of the total hours required for any program. Each such petition must be accompanied by a statement of endorsement from the appropriate dean. Under no circumstances will more than two-thirds of the hours required for a graduate degree or post-baccalaureate certificate be accepted. At least one-third of the hours required for each program must be earned at UNCW.

Grades earned on transferred work must be equivalent to B or better. Transferred credit will be accepted by the Graduate School only upon recommendation of the program coordinator for the program. Graduate School must have an official transcript showing the satisfactory completion of courses offered for transfer credit. All transfer credit is evaluated individually by the Graduate School and must be submitted through the Request for Transfer Credit Form (http://www.uncw.edu/gradschool/currentstudents/transfercredit.html). International transfer
credit must be evaluated through World Education Service (WES.org). Please contact the Graduate School for questions regarding transfer credit.

**Non-Degree Credit**

Graduate courses taken at UNCW as a graduate or undergraduate non-degree student, before formal admission to Graduate School, will meet course requirements for a graduate degree only if approved by the departmental coordinator and the dean of the Graduate School. A maximum of 10 hours may be applied toward the degree. This does not apply to approved combined baccalaureate/master's degree programs.

**Annual Review and Academic Progression**

All doctoral students in the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership will be evaluated annually on their academic performance and progress towards completion. The annual review will require that students complete an Ed.D. Annual Review Form, which incorporates information about completion of degree requirements, significant accomplishments, and any academic challenges. This form will be turned into the appropriate specialization coordinator (i.e., higher education, curriculum and instruction, or educational administration). The coordinator will review the form, along with each student’s degree audit. The coordinator will assess each student’s progress as ‘satisfactory’ or ‘unsatisfactory’. In the event of unsatisfactory progress, the coordinator will meet with the student to create an Academic Development Plan for the following year. If a student’s progress is assessed as unsatisfactory in more than one year, the coordinator can initiate steps to remove the student from the Ed.D. program, in consultation with the department chair and the associate dean of the Watson College of Education.

**Grading and Appeals**

[Source: Graduate Catalogue]

Students are subject to the same grade requirements as other graduate programs at UNCW. Three grades of C, one grade of F, or one grade of U (e.g. thesis/dissertation) results in dismissal from the graduate program. There is no “D” grade in the Graduate School. Further, if a student falls below a 3.0 GPA at any time, he or she goes on academic probation and has either three subsequent courses or nine hours to bring the GPA up to at least a 3.0. In addition, a student must have at least a 3.0 GPA in order to begin any program specific comprehensive examination and/or thesis work.

Any student considering an appeal on a final course grade should understand that each faculty member has the academic freedom and responsibility to determine grades according to any method chosen by the faculty member that is professionally acceptable, communicated to everyone in the class, and applied to all students equally. However, discriminatory, arbitrary, or capricious academic evaluation by a faculty member is a violation of a student’s rights and is the
only valid ground for a final course grade appeal. Any intent to appeal must be made in writing to the Graduate School within 30 days of the issuance of the grade in dispute. Students will not be allowed to enroll in courses while appealing a grade that would result in dismissal from the graduate program; however, the Dean of the Graduate School may allow continued enrollment in unusual circumstances. Grades not appealed by that time become permanent.

These procedures are not to be used in cases involving student academic dishonesty or in cases where a student disputes the final course grade for reasons other than alleged discriminatory, arbitrary, or capricious academic evaluation by a faculty member.

Any student who contests a final course grade under this procedure shall first attempt to resolve the matter with the instructor involved. Failing to reach a satisfactory resolution, the student may appeal the grade in accordance with the steps outlined below.

1. The student shall present the appeal in writing to the chair of the department within which the contested grade was awarded. The written statement shall limit itself to a factual description of evidence pertaining to the valid ground for the appeal and documentation of all attempts to reach resolution. By conferring with the student and the instructor, the chair will seek resolution by mutual agreement. The chair will provide a written statement of the results of this effort to the faculty member and student.

2. Failing to resolve the issue in Step 1, the student shall present the written appeal and all documentation of attempts to reach resolution to the dean of the college or school, in which the protested grade was awarded. The dean, by conferring with the student and the instructor, will seek resolution by mutual agreement. The dean will provide a written statement of the results of this effort to the chair, faculty member, and student.

3. If Step 2 fails to produce a resolution, the student shall provide a written appeal request to the dean of the graduate school. The written statement shall limit itself to a factual description of evidence pertaining to the valid ground for the appeal, documentation of all attempts to reach resolution, and the student’s desired outcome. This initiates the last stage of the grade appeal process.

4. Upon receipt of the written appeal request, the dean of the graduate school will convene and chair the meetings of the Grade Appeals Committee, which consists of faculty members appointed by the dean of the graduate school. The committee will make recommendations to the dean following the hearing proceedings.

5. If the dean affirms the instructor’s decision, he/she will notify the faculty member, student, chair, and appropriate college or school dean or director in writing. The decision made by the dean is a final university decision and may not be appealed further.

6. If the dean affirms the student’s appeal, he/she shall prescribe the method by which the student will be reevaluated and communicate that to the faculty member, student, chair, and appropriate college or school dean or director in writing. If the reevaluation results in a grade change, the established Course
Grade Change procedure will be followed. The grade resulting from the reevaluation is a final university decision and may not be appealed further.

**Honor Code and Honor Pledge**

[Source: Graduate Catalogue]

The University of North Carolina is a community of high academic standards where academic integrity is valued. UNCW students are committed to honesty and truthfulness in academic inquiry and in the pursuit of knowledge. Any member of the university community who has reasonable grounds to believe that an infraction of the Student Academic Honor Code has occurred has an obligation to report the alleged violation. This obligation is a core value of the Honor Code and must be fulfilled by each and every member of the university.

Academic dishonesty takes many forms, from blatant acts of cheating, bribery, or similar misdeeds to the more subtle forms of plagiarism, all of which are totally unacceptable in an institution of higher learning. Reporting and adjudication procedures have been developed to enforce the policy of academic integrity, to ensure justice, and to protect individual rights. Complete details may be found in the current Code of Student Life (http://www.uncw.edu/cosl) and the Faculty Handbook (http://www.uncw.edu/facsen/documents/Faculty_Handbook.pdf).

All students enrolled at UNCW are subject to the UNCW Student Academic Honor Code (hereafter referred to as the Honor Code), which is intended to help every member of the UNCW community appreciate the high value placed on academic integrity and the means that will be employed to ensure its preservation. Students are expected to perpetuate a campus culture where each student does his or her own work while relying on appropriate resources for assistance. In such a climate students enjoy a special trust that they are members of a unique community where one’s thoughts and words are attributed correctly and with proper ownership, and where there is little need for systems to sanction those who cheat. As such, all UNCW students shall commit to the principles and spirit of the Honor Code by adhering to the following pledge:

“As a student at The University of North Carolina Wilmington, I am committed to honesty and truthfulness in academic inquiry and in the pursuit of knowledge. I pledge to uphold and promote the UNCW Student Academic Honor Code.”

A graduate student assigned a course grade of “F” as a result of an Honor Code offense will be deemed ineligible to continue in the UNCW Graduate School. The full UNCW Student Academic Honor Code may be viewed at uncw.edu/cosl.

**Academic Grievance Procedure**

[Source: Graduate Catalogue]

Graduate students who have academic or procedural concerns, other than grades, should attempt to resolve those concerns at the lowest academic level as soon as possible (and no more than 90 days) after the event giving rise to the complaint. The first level for redress is with
the appropriate faculty member. Within 30 days of failing to reach a satisfactory resolution with the faculty member, the student may appeal to the department chairman. Failing resolution at the department level, the student may, within 10 business days, appeal jointly to the dean for the student’s academic area and to the dean of the Graduate School. The deans (or their designees) will conduct interviews with all parties to arrive at a resolution of the issue. The mutually agreed upon decision of the deans will be final and not subject to further appeal. Complaints that fall within the categories of sexual harassment, improper personal relationships, personal discrimination, unlawful workplace harassment, or workplace violence should be filed in accordance with Appendix J of the UNCW Code of Student Life.

**Time to Degree Limits**

[Source: Graduate Catalogue]

A graduate student has five calendar years (masters) or six calendar years (doctoral) to complete his or her degree program. The period begins with the student’s first term of work after formal admission to a degree–granting program. Work completed as a non–degree student does not initiate the five–year period for completing a degree program.

When extenuating circumstances warrant, an extension of the time limit for completing a graduate program may be granted to a student upon his or her petition to the Graduate School. Such petitions must include an explanation and the endorsement of the student’s advisory committee, program coordinator, and EDL department chair.

Below are the time to degree limits for each concentration:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>End of Fall Semester</th>
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<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>2025</td>
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**Leave of Absence**

[Source: Graduate Catalogue]

Students who will not use university resources should apply to the Graduate School for a leave of absence. Students choosing this option must complete a leave of absence form. If a graduate student requests, and is granted a leave of absence, the student must return in the term
specified on the Leave of Absence form. If a student fails to continue in the agreed upon term, then he/she must reapply for admission.

**Graduation Procedures**

[Source: Graduate Catalogue]

Students must complete all degree requirements to be eligible to walk in a graduation ceremony. Graduate students who have completed all degree requirements for July graduation, may walk in the December ceremony and their names will be listed in the December commencement program; graduate students who have completed all degree requirements for December graduation, may walk in the December ceremony and their names will be listed in the December commencement program; graduate students who have completed all degree requirements for May graduation, may walk during the May ceremony and their names will be listed in the May commencement program. A graduate student may walk only in the graduation ceremony in the term in which they graduate.

Students who have completed all requirements for a degree or certificate must apply to graduate before the graduation application closes. If an application is not entered by the application close date, the student will need to apply to the next open graduation term.

Students who are scheduled to graduate must complete all requirements for the degree or certificate by the end of the semester. The end of the semester date can be found on the University Calendar which is listed in the Graduate Catalogue for each academic year. If requirements are not met by that date, the student will be moved to the next graduation date and term.

Students are also required to submit an electronic copy of their final dissertation to the Educational Leadership administrative associate for maintaining a database internally.

**UNC Online**

[Source: Graduate Catalogue]

UNC Online is a web portal that facilitates inter-institutional registration for online classes between all 17 campuses of the UNC System. If you are an active student at UNCW, you have the opportunity to register for an online class offered by another UNC campus. Students are not required to pay tuition at the other campus, since UNCW tuition applies to these courses as well. Courses are taught online or through videoconference technology. For an overview of this inter-institutional registration program and to view lists of available online classes and to begin the registration process, visit the [inter-institutional registration portal](#).

**Graduation Checklist**

- Apply for graduation
Submit your draft Dissertation
Submit your final copy
Cover Sheet Signatures
Thesis Format Approval:
https://www.uncw.edu/gradschool/thesis/forms/formatapproval.pdf