



# VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

School of Education

**Department of Educational Leadership**

**Ph.D. in Education Track in Leadership, Policy and  
Justice**

**Procedural Information and Guidelines**

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## Table of Contents

Philosophy.....	3
Admission to the Educational Leadership Doctoral Track.....	3
Doctoral Program Overview.....	4
Development of a Program of Study.....	5
Concentration Courses in Educational Leadership, Policy and Justice.....	6
Qualifying Examination.....	6
Co-Curricular Activities.....	6
Externship.....	7
Comprehensive Examination.....	7
Concept Paper Expectations and Evaluation.....	9
Appendix A: Program Planning Guides.....	10
Appendix B: Plan of Study for Educational Leadership Track.....	11
Appendix C: Comprehensive Examination Literature Review Rubric.....	13
Appendix D: Possible Externship Sites.....	14

This handbook is designed to guide doctoral students through the Leadership, Policy and Justice track in the Ph.D. in Education. Aspects of the doctoral program that are unique to this track are outlined in this document. Educational Leadership reserves the right to change and update information and requirements as appropriate. Students are also expected to be familiar with the SOE Ph.D. in Education Student/Faculty Handbook for general policies <http://www.soe.vcu.edu/files/2015/10/Ph.D-Handbook.pdf>. Many required forms are also available on the Doctoral program Blackboard site. It is the responsibility of all doctoral students to keep abreast of program requirements and changes in the program.

### **Philosophy**

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in the Leadership, Policy and Justice track is designed to cultivate educational scholars and leaders who will advance scholarship, policy and practice related to equity and social justice. Drawing on an interdisciplinary study of leadership and policy, the program promotes an understanding of the many societal and organizational impediments to equal educational opportunity. This concentration is directed not only toward identifying and analyzing those injustices, but also toward imagining, researching, and creating more equitable, inclusive schools and societies through leadership and policy. The dissertation is a rigorous culminating tool for research, advocacy and change within educational organizations and endeavors. Graduates will be prepared to lead for equity in K-12 organizations, higher education, research and policy think tanks or local, state and federal policy-making institutions.

Research interests of current faculty are available on the Educational Leadership website:

<https://soe.vcu.edu/directory/educational-leadership/>

A minimum of 48 credits is required for the doctoral degree for students entering with a master's degree. Students who wish to be employed as faculty in higher education after graduation might consider taking additional credits and time to complete the degree to be competitive for academic positions.

### **Admission to the Leadership, Policy and Justice Track**

The Educational Leadership, Policy and Justice faculty are committed to identifying individuals capable of conducting high quality research to help drive positive change in schools and society. Students applying for admission to the Ph.D. track in Educational Leadership must:

1. Meet School of Education and Graduate School criteria for admission (check your entry year in the Graduate Bulletin).
2. Supply a written statement of professional goals including:
  - a) Rationale for interest in Educational Leadership, Policy and Justice (e.g., help us understand why you are a strong fit for the program),
  - b) Professional/career goals and specialized academic or research interest areas.Discuss how these research interests may align with the work of faculty in the track,
- c) Skills, experiences and/or characteristics that will facilitate the applicant's pursuit of professional goals
3. Participate in a personal interview with Educational Leadership faculty.

Applicants should be prepared to answer questions similar to the following:

- What was the nature of your academic preparation and interests during your baccalaureate/master's program?
  - What factors influenced your decision to pursue educational leadership and/or policy as a career?
  - What factors influenced your decision to pursue a doctoral degree?
  - In what setting would you be most inclined to work following the completion of your degree? What factors, events, or experiences have led to this selection?
  - Tell us about your experiences with research.
  - What do you believe your strengths are when it comes to being a doctoral student? What skills might you need to work on?
  - What else do you wish to have the selection committee know about you?
4. Provide a minimum of three references and letters of recommendation from individuals in a position to evaluate an applicant's graduate study potential. Applicants should consider the inclusion of references who can address their academic ability and research capability.

### **Doctoral Program Overview**

Upon admission to the Educational Leadership, Policy and Justice doctoral track, students will complete a program of study while reflecting on career goals, pursuing research ideas, and eventually selecting a chair and dissertation committee. During this period, students will interact and collaborate with professors across the school through coursework and other professional activities. These interactions are opportunities to learn how faculty members engage in their research in order to prepare students for their own research.

Throughout their graduate student career, students work closely with a faculty advisor. The advisor will aid the student in developing a program of study, choosing co-curriculars, an externship to help him or her prepare for career goals, and ideally work on the faculty member's research program, learning each step of the research process. Students may request a change of advisors, with the consent of the department chair, if they can provide a rationale that it furthers their educational goals. Students are encouraged to gain additional research experience with other faculty members as well. Students may select a faculty member other than their advisor as their dissertation chair.

### **Competencies**

The following is a list of knowledge, skills and dispositions that Ph.D. students should demonstrate:

I. Analytical and Writing Skills

1. Demonstrate general and applied knowledge of the different conceptual approaches to research that are used in educational leadership and policy.
2. Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze, synthesize, and critique the literature in educational leadership and policy. Students should be able to identify weaknesses in methodology as well as gaps in the literature.
3. Write a succinct, coherent, and well-conceived research proposal on a selected topic in the second and third year.
4. Collect and analyze data and report findings.

II. Content Knowledge

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the critical issues and trends in educational leadership and policy through oral and written communication skills in courses as well as through the doctoral comprehensive exam.
2. Begin to develop an area of expertise in the field of educational leadership and policy.

III. Professional Skills

1. Develop doctoral level professional skills including: (1) an understanding of teaching and research skills that are developed through doctoral study; (2) an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of faculty and of students in the doctoral training process.
2. Develop a detailed curriculum vitae documenting areas of expertise, professional skills, and experiences. The doctoral student and the advisor will work together to plan co-curricular activities to build the vitae.

**Development of a Program of Study**

All Ph.D. students need to complete the required Program of Studies Form provided by the School of Education Doctoral Studies office. See also Appendix A for the Educational, Leadership Policy and Justice Program Planning Guide and course sequencing.

One of the most important functions of the student's faculty advisor is the development of a detailed program of study. The purpose of this document is to help plan and guide the student's

doctoral program. Although this program is highly individualized and presupposes appropriate baccalaureate/master's training, there are requirements that must be taken by all Ph.D. students. The preliminary form should be completed during the first semester, and a tentative, final form should be completed after the qualifying exam.

The student, faculty advisor, and track coordinator must approve programs of study. Major changes in program must be approved in the same manner. The student's advisor may approve minor changes (e.g., changes in a co-curricular activity).

## **Concentration Courses in Educational Leadership, Policy and Justice**

- ADMS 701 Educational Policy Research (offered spring semester of odd years)
- ADMS 709 U.S. Educational Policy (offered spring semester of even years)
- ADMS 703 Leadership for Social Justice and Equity in Education (offered fall semester of odd years)
- ADMS 704 Educational Finance Policy and the Equitable Distribution of Resources (offered fall semester of even years)
- ADMS 710 Current Topics in Educational Leadership and Policy (offered spring semester of even years)
- ADMS 707 The Politics of Education (offered fall semester of even years)
- ADMS 708 Equal Educational Opportunity the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Metropolis: Toward a Policy Framework (offered fall semester odd years)

### **Qualifying Examination**

The qualifying examination is the same for all doctoral students in the School of Education. Please see the SOE Ph.D. Handbook for guidance.

### **Co-Curricular Activities**

Co-curricular activities help shape a student's educational and professional trajectories, making him or her as competitive as possible for available jobs after graduation. Co-curricular activities may include participation in research, teaching, and grant preparation. These activities will be monitored by the advisor and track coordinator. Some activities are required of all PhD students in the Educational Leadership, Policy and Justice track, and others are determined with the student's specific career goals in mind.

#### **Required:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ CITI training for social and behavioral research; complete in first semester
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit an individual or group proposal to a conference in year 2 or 3
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend a regional or national research conference (subject to approval of advisor)

**Choose at least 1 from the list below in consultation with your advisor:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Co-teach a course with a department faculty member (especially if interested in academia)

\_\_\_\_\_ Work with a department faculty member on a research project and submit a review of work completed (for no credit or for credit in addition to the 48 hrs. of the program)

\_\_\_\_\_ Co-author an article or participate in grant writing

\_\_\_\_\_ Other, as advisor and track coordinator agree

**Externship**

The student will identify an externship that will build his or her research and/or professional skills and connections by working in a professional environment. For example, students have found placements with the VA Department of Education, with the research departments of public K-12 school divisions, with institutional research offices at VCU or neighboring institutions, and with grant projects at VCU. See Appendix F for additional possible externship sites. The student's advisor will give the student a grade based on the portfolio turned in and the recommendation of the externship supervisor. See Appendix G for the supervisor evaluation and Blackboard for the externship form.

## **Comprehensive Examination**

### **School of Education Ph.D. in Education Program Handbook Description**

From its inception, the Ph.D. in Education Program has been designed to develop interdisciplinary conceptual skills beyond the traditional in-depth extension of the master's program and to emphasize rigorous thinking and the capacity to integrate theory with practice. The comprehensive examination component of the program seeks to ensure that each degree candidate can demonstrate the ability to conceptualize, apply, and communicate information at an advanced doctoral level.

The process of developing, administering and grading the comprehensive examination for a specific track is coordinated by the faculty of the track. The decision concerning when to take the comprehensive examination should be made in consultation with the student's advisor. Consideration should be given to a number of factors, including (a) the degree to which formulating a draft prospectus may assist in writing the examination; (b) the availability and scheduling of final program courses, including EDUS 890 and EDUS 899; and (c) the requirements for continuous registration and for sequencing of the seminar, prospectus review, and actual dissertation research hours. A student who wishes to take the examination must notify his or her advisor and/or track coordinator the semester prior to the semester in which he/she plans to take the examination.

When the comprehensive examination is completed, the result needs to be reported to the Office of Graduate Studies (Comprehensive Exam Report Form available in SOE Ph.D. Handbook).

\*Note: Registration for the examination (when a student informs Office of Graduate Studies that they will take the exam) constitutes an examination attempt by the student. Failure to take the examination will count as a failure of the examination and the student will have only one more opportunity to take the examination. Students must be registered for a university course the semester in which the exam will be taken. If the student has no other program course for which to register, he or she should register for EDUS 641.

### **Educational Leadership, Policy and Justice Comprehensive Exam**

The comprehensive exam will be taken at or near the end of coursework. Doctoral students will conduct an in-depth and nuanced review of the literature on a major issue related to educational leadership and/or policy—and your area of research interest. At this time, students should select their dissertation chair. The paper topic will be determined by the student, their dissertation chair and one other faculty member. The chair and additional faculty member will make up the comprehensive exam committee. The paper should be approximately 15-20 pages in length, in APA style.

The purpose of the paper is to signal to the committee that the student has the skills to collect, evaluate, synthesize and analyze research evidence before continuing to dissertation stage.

Elements of a successful literature review include:

- Compelling framing of problem or issue in the field
- Clarity of organization and argument
- Strong demonstration of knowledge in the field
- Identification of gaps in the literature
- Identification of strengths and weaknesses in existing literature

### **Preparation**

Students meet with their dissertation chair by the first week of the semester in which the exam is to occur to determine the topic and scope of the literature review.

*Literature Review.* Prior to the meeting, students submit 2 – 3 possible topics to their chair for review and discussion. Once the topic is decided, students prepare the abstract for the review for their chair's approval. The advisor and student agree upon a submission deadline, which should be no later than the end of the semester.

### **Administration**

*Literature Review.* Over the course of a semester, students will write a literature review. The review must demonstrate the student's theoretical mastery of the agreed-upon topic. Unlike the dissertation, the literature review comprehensive examination option presents a more elaborate

view of a topic. Although some of the writing of the literature review may be included in the student's dissertation, the literature review is expected to be more extensive in nature. The review should be written with the quality expected of a journal submission. Students are expected to submit the literature review to their chair **no later than December 1<sup>st</sup> for the fall semester, April 1<sup>st</sup> for the spring and August 1<sup>st</sup> for the summer.**

Once the literature review is ready for the committee, the student will provide a copy to all committee members. The student and the committee will meet for an oral hearing 10-15 days after the committee receives the paper. The student will prepare and deliver a presentation (approximately 10-15 minutes) of the paper, followed by a question and answer period. Committee members may ask candidates about other relevant topics in the field of educational leadership and policy during the oral hearing.

### **Grading**

At the end of the oral examination the committee will determine if the student has performed satisfactorily on the oral and written (i.e. literature review) portions of the comprehensive examination. Students can expect written notification of their comprehensive exam performance within four to six weeks of submission. Students have the right to appeal this decision as stated in the SOE Ph.D. Handbook.

### **Concept Paper Expectations and Evaluation**

It is expected that the concept paper will be a roadmap for developing the dissertation proposal. Please see the guidelines in the SOE Ph.D. handbook.

**Appendix A**  
**Educational Leadership, Policy and Justice Program Planning Guide for Students**

**Prerequisites**

\_\_\_\_\_ Research methods in education                      \_\_\_\_\_ Introductory social statistics

**Major Program Courses**

- \_\_\_\_\_ EDUS 702 Foundations of Educational Research and Doctoral Scholarship I
- \_\_\_\_\_ EDUS 703 Foundations of Educational Research and Doctoral Scholarship II
- \_\_\_\_\_ EDUS 608 Statistics for Social Research
- \_\_\_\_\_ EDUS 710 Educational Research Design
- \_\_\_\_\_ ADMS 709 U.S. Educational Policy
- \_\_\_\_\_ ADMS 703 Leadership for Social Justice and Equity in Education
- \_\_\_\_\_ ADMS 704 Educational Finance Policy and the Equitable Distribution of Resources
- \_\_\_\_\_ ADMS 710 Current Topics in Educational Leadership and Policy
- \_\_\_\_\_ ADMS 707 The Politics of Education
- \_\_\_\_\_ ADMS 708 Equal Educational Opportunity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Metropolis
- \_\_\_\_\_ Research elective (ADMS 701 Educational Policy Research)
- \_\_\_\_\_ EDUC/ADMS 700 Externship
- \_\_\_\_\_ EDUS 890 Dissertation Seminar

**Co-Curricular Activities for portfolio**

**Required:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ CITI training for social and behavioral research; complete as early as possible
- \_\_\_\_\_ submit an individual or group proposal to a conference in year 2
- \_\_\_\_\_ submit an individual or group proposal to a conference in year 3
- \_\_\_\_\_ attend a regional or national research-oriented conference

**Choose at least 1 from the list below in consultation with your advisor:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Co-teach a course (esp. if interested in academia)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Apprentice with a faculty member as a research assistant for 2 consecutive semesters, submit a review of work completed (for no credit or for credit in addition to the 48 hrs. of the program)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Co-author an article or participate in grant writing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend 2 workshops or conferences (e.g., VCU, state, regional, or national)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other, as advisor and track coordinator agree.

**Qualifying Exam (after 18 credits)**                      Date \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_

**Comprehensive Exam (after concentration courses)**                      Date \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Plan of Study for Educational Leadership Track

### Odd Year Cohort for Full-Time Study

	Fall Semester	Spring Semester	Summer Semester
Year 1 21 credits	EDUS 608 ADMS 703 ADMS 708	EDUS 702 EDUS 710 ADMS 710	EDUS 703
Year 2 21 credits	ADMS 704 ADMS 707 EDUC/ADMS 700	EDUS 711 ADMS 701 ADMS 709	Prepare for comps
Year 3 18 credits	EDUS 890	EDUC 899	EDUC 899

\*Qualifying Exam in August of year 2

\*Comprehensive Exam in August year 3

### Even Year Cohort for Full-time Study

	Fall Semester	Spring Semester	Summer Semester
Year 1 21 credits	EDUS 608 ADMS 704 ADMS 707	EDUS 702 EDUS 710 ADMS 701	EDUS 703
Year 2 21 credits	ADMS 703 ADMS 708 EDUS 711	ADMS 710 ADMS 709 EDUC/ADMS 700	Prepare for comps
Year 3 18 credits	EDUS 890	EDUC 899	EDUC 899

\*Qualifying Exam in August of year 2

\*Comprehensive Exam in August year 3

Part time Odd year Cohort

	Fall Semester	Spring Semester	Summer Semester
Year 1 15 credits	EDUS 608 ADMS 708	EDUS 702 EDUS 710	EDUS 703
Year 2 12 credits	ADMS 704 ADMS 707	EDUS 711 ADMS 701	
Year 3 12 credits	ADMS 703 EDUC/ADMS 700	ADMS 710 ADMS 709	Prepare for comps
Year 4	EDUS 890	EDUC 899	EDUC 899

\*Qualifying Exam in August of year 2

\*Comprehensive Exam in August year 4

Part time even year cohort

	Fall Semester	Spring Semester	Summer Semester
Year 1 18 credits	EDUS 608 ADMS 704	EDUS 702 EDUS 710	EDUS 703
Year 2 12 credits	ADMS 703 ADMS 708	ADMS 710 EDUS 711	
Year 3 12 credits	ADMS 707 EDUC/ADMS 700	ADMS 701 ADMS 709	Prepare for comps
Year 4	EDUS 890	EDUC 899	EDUC 899

\*Qualifying Exam in August of year 2

\*Comprehensive Exam in August year 4

**Appendix C: Comprehensive Examination**  
**Literature Review Rubric**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Fail</b>	<b>Pass with Revisions</b>	<b>High Pass</b>
Framing of the problem or issue in the field is absent	Framing of the problem or issue in the field is moderately clear and engaging	Compelling framing of problem or issue in the field
Writing is unintelligible and/or poorly organized and detracts from the presentation of ideas.	Writing is understandable, but lacks precision and/or does not flow well around the ideas.	Writing is intelligible, concise, well-organized, and flows nicely around the ideas.
The ideas expressed in the review poorly supported.	The ideas expressed in the review are somewhat supported.	The ideas expressed in the review are thought-provoking, well-defended, and creative.
The review shows minimal understanding of the concepts central to the review.	The review shows adequate conceptual understanding, although limitations in depth and/or breadth are evident.	Student's understanding of concepts central to the review is well-developed, both deep and broad.
References are inadequate	Reference list omits some key references.	Thorough, current set of references.
Your paper includes multiple (i.e., 20 or more) errors of many types in APA 6 <sup>th</sup> Edition style. There are many (i.e., 20 or more) errors in grammar or spelling in your paper.	Some errors of APA 6 <sup>th</sup> edition style formatting are present. There are some grammatical or spelling errors throughout the review.	You accurately use APA 6 <sup>th</sup> edition style throughout your paper. There are very few or no grammatical or spelling errors in your paper.
Review was not submitted on time.	Review was submitted on time.	Review was submitted on time.
Evidence of plagiarism is present.		
Presentation organization inappropriate and disorganized, slides are not visually pleasing, graphics are not used appropriately or effectively, pace was uncomfortable, tone was not conversational and or engaging, eye contact and poise were not evident, technology distracts from presentation	Presentation organization was moderately appropriate and clear, slides are somewhat visually pleasing, graphics mostly used appropriately and effectively, pace mostly was comfortable, tone was somewhat conversational and engaging, eye contact and poise were usually evident, technology mostly enhances presentation	Presentation organization appropriate and clear, slides are visually pleasing, graphics used appropriately and effectively, pace was comfortable, tone was conversational and engaging, eye contact and poise were evident, technology enhances presentation
Comments:		

**Appendix D**  
**Possible Externship Sites**

1. VA State Department of Education
2. Research offices of local school systems (e.g., Chesterfield and Henrico)
3. University Institutional Research Office (e.g., VCU, John Tyler Community College)
4. School of Education at a neighboring institution (e.g., Randolph Macon, University of Mary Washington)
5. Work on a grant or in another department at VCU
6. Several opportunities exist to collaborate with SOE Centers:
  - a. The Literacy Institute/Excellence in Children's Early Language and Literacy/Virginia Literacy Foundation
  - b. Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium
  - c. SOE Center for School-Community Collaboration
  - d. Center for Teacher Leadership
  - e. Child Development Center
  - f. Rehabilitation Research and Training Center
  - g. Partnership for People with Disabilities