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# School of Education

Handbook of Procedures for Graduate Study  
Louisiana State University  
School of Education

The School of Education (SoE) offers several graduate degrees. The Doctor of Philosophy degree, commonly called the PhD, is the highest earned degree offered by Louisiana State University. It is conferred only for work of distinction and only in recognition of marked ability and achievement; the degree is not granted merely in recognition of faithful performance of prescribed coursework. In addition, we offer programs leading to a Master of Arts (MA), a Master of Education (MEd), Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) and an Educational Specialist Certificate (EdS).

## Graduate School

All graduate study at LSU is governed by the LSU Graduate School, including all published policies, regulations, deadlines, and requirements. Specific SoE policies are contained within this document.

All graduate students are responsible for progress toward their degrees by following the rules and policies of the LSU SoE and the LSU Graduate School.

## Admission

To apply to graduate programs in the SoE, the applicant must complete the LSU Graduate School application for admission electronically ([GS Application](#)). This application includes submission of:

- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores sent directly from Educational Testing Service (ETS) to the Graduate School
- SoE Graduate Study Application Form, found on the SoE website: [SoE Application](#)
- official transcript(s) sent directly from the Office of the Registrar of each college or university attended to the Graduate School via procedures detailed on the application
- three letters of recommendation that attest to the applicant's potential for successful graduate study written by any combination of colleagues, professors, or supervisors
- a statement of purpose, included on the Graduate School application form, that indicates the applicant's reasons for wanting to commence or continue graduate study in their chosen field
- and for individuals whose native language is not English, command of English as demonstrated by successful completion of the IELTS, TOEFL, or PTE (A score of 550 (paper-based), 213 (computer-based) or 79 (Internet-based) on the TOEFL or a score of 6.5 on the IELTS or a score of 59 on the PTE)

**Unconditional admission.** Successful applicants generally possess an undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 and a GRE score of at least 297. However, each application is considered holistically and weaknesses in one area may be tempered by strengths in another.

**Probationary admission.** Applicants whose credentials do not meet admission criteria may be considered for probationary admission. A student admitted under these conditions will be removed from probation after successfully completing nine semester hours of graduate work (with at least a 3.0 GPA).

**Denial.** Students who fail to meet the entrance criteria are not admitted for graduate study.

**Assignment of Major Professor.** The student is assigned a major professor as part of the admission process. The selection of the major professor is determined by the student's indication of area of interest communicated within the Statement of Purpose (on the LSU Graduate School application) and/or contact with the student. The student may change major professors to another within the SoE with the consent of the individual who will serve as the major professor going forward. The area of specialization of the major professor determines the area of specialization of the student going forward from the time of the change. Written evidence of this change should be filed with the Graduate Administrative Program Specialist (A.P.S.) in a timely fashion.

**Credit for Previous Graduate Work.** The student's major professor may choose to allow course requirements for the degree to be fulfilled through evidence of previous graduate work.

**PhD:** At least one third of the required credits toward the Ph. must be earned through instruction offered by Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. A maximum of 6 credit hours of Master's degree thesis coursework can be counted toward the PhD, and only if the Master's degree was completed prior to enrollment in the doctoral degree program.

**EdS:** At least one third of the required credits toward the EdS must be earned through instruction offered by Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge.

**MA, MEd, and MAT:** Up to 12 hours of graduate credit from a comparable, accredited institution may be transferred and counted toward a Master's program at LSU in the SoE with the consent of the major professor. These credits must not have counted toward an earned Master's degree.

**Non-matriculating Graduate Study.** Students may enroll in courses numbered 6000 and above (graduate courses) for a total of up to six semester hours. These courses may be transferred to a graduate program in the SoE with the consent of the major professor. An unlimited number of courses numbered 5999 and below may be taken as a non-matriculating student.

## Committee Membership Guidelines

Each graduate student must put together a committee to conduct advising and assessments of the student's work. Over the course of the first semester or two of study, the student will become acquainted with faculty in the SoE. In consultation with the major professor(s), the student must select at least two additional faculty members to serve on the committee.

### Master's and Specialist Committees

A committee chosen by the student with the advice and consent of the major professor should include, at minimum, three members from the SoE.

### Doctoral Committees

A doctoral committee chosen by the student with the advice and consent of the major professor should include, at minimum, three members: the major professor and two additional professors. At least two members of the committee must be from the SoE. According to Graduate School rules, at least two members

of this committee should be **full members** of the Graduate Faculty; these may be any members of the committee except for the Dean's Representative. The remainder may be associate members of the Graduate Faculty. A list of graduate faculty and their ranks may be found here: [Grad Faculty](#).

**Changing Committee Membership.** Changes to the committee composition often reflect the need for relevant faculty expertise as the student's dissertation topic comes into focus. As the student progresses through the program, another faculty member in the area of specialization may be asked by the student to serve as major professor. If that faculty member agrees, the student must notify the Administrative Program Specialist and the SoE will record the change. Other changes to the committee membership should be initiated by the student with advice and consent of the major professor(s).

### Program of Study

Before beginning study, the student contacts and/or meets with the major professor(s) to determine a course schedule for the first and second semesters of study. By the end of the first 15 hours of PhD program study, a **School of Education Program of Study** must be designed by the student and major professor, approved by the committee members, and put in the student's SoE file. This is an internal document, and is not submitted to the Graduate School. This Program of Study formally identifies the student's committee and the coursework designated as necessary for completing the doctoral degree. Minor coursework (see below) is included on the SoE Program of Study. Changes to the Program of Study may be made with the consent of the committee. To make changes, the student may fill out another Program of Study, gain consent of the committee, and submit to the APS in the same fashion in which the original Program of Study was submitted.

The program of study may be filed using the form included at the end of this document: the Program Planning Worksheet for Ph. students, EdS students, or Master's students.

**Doctoral Minors.** The student may choose to focus some portion of study in a minor content area. This is concentrated study in another content area that is housed in another department at LSU. If the student chooses to have a minor area, one of the committee members must be from the minor department. The minor requirements are determined by the minor department; see that department's documents for specific rules and guidelines.

**Scheduling.** All documents that must be submitted to the Graduate School must be submitted through the SoE APS at least two calendar weeks prior to the Graduate School's published deadlines.

### Examination Procedures: Master's Examination and PhD Written General Examination

**Master's Exams.** All Master's students who opt to write a comprehensive examination (instead of a thesis or research project) follow these procedures toward the end of their last semester of coursework.

**PhD Exams.** As PhD students approach the end of designated coursework, they prepare for a general comprehensive examination which includes questions in their area of specialization, research, and minor area, if applicable. Students opting to have a minor area must include a faculty member from the minor department on their committee, and meet the minor requirements of that department. The **Doctoral Degree Audit and Request for General Examination Form ([GS Forms](#)) must be submitted to the Graduate School at**

**least five weeks prior to the scheduled oral examination.** The request must state the time and the place proposed for the oral examination and the names of the faculty members selected to serve as the examining committee, including the previously-appointed Dean's Representative. In addition, this form contains the official degree audit for the student's program of study for the PhD. When the request for the General Examination is submitted, the Graduate School will assign a Dean's Representative to the committee who will then serve as a permanent member of the four-plus member committee.

Exam Formats: The examination is coordinated by the major professor incorporating questions provided by some or all of the committee members. The major professor will contact each member of the graduate committee (except for the Dean of the Graduate School's representative, if applicable) suggesting a structure for the exam including areas of coverage for committee members, and requesting their preference for the format for questions.

Standard formats include take-home questions and sit-down questions or some combination of the two.

- Take-home questions will be given to students with up to one academic semester (spring or fall semester) or 15 weeks (if not during spring or fall semester) to turn in their responses.
- If the examination is sit-down, the student is asked to complete the questions on one or two consecutive days in a location to be determined by the APS. Students whose committee members choose sit-down format questions will specify the conditions of the exam to the student including more general or more specific guidance as to the content of the questions, and whether this part of the exam will be closed-book or notes or open-book or notes.

The questions are distributed to the committee members within two days following the examination.

Detailed exam instructions for sit-down or take-home examinations are included with each question to better enable committee members to evaluate the quality of the candidate's responses.

The SoE provides a set date and time each semester (fall, spring, and summer) for proctoring comprehensive examinations for Master's students; PhD students schedule their general examinations on an individual basis with the committee members.

Committee Deliberation: Committee members will be given the completed exam by the A.P.S. Each committee member is responsible for reading and evaluating the entire exam response and making an independent determination as to whether the candidate's work warrants pass or fail. These votes will be considered by the Committee Chair.

Feedback. Students **may not receive specific feedback** regarding their responses or performance on the written section of an examination from their committee members after the exam has been turned in. Major professors may choose to indicate to the student verbally that one broad section or another of the written examination or a specific topic area might demand attention prior to the oral examination. However, **the written examination is not to be returned to the student in any form for rewriting or revising prior to an official oral evaluation of the examination** and there is to be no written or specific feedback regarding student performance prior to the oral examination for doctoral orals.

## For All Exams

- If all members of the committee vote “pass,” the candidate passes.
- If two or more committee members vote “fail,” the candidate fails; to pass the examination, there may be no more than one “no” vote.
- If only one member votes “fail,” the candidate passes.
- A student failing the exam may choose to take the examination one additional time only.

This evaluation applies to oral examinations as well as written examinations.

## Master’s and EdS Exams

The committee may decide to “pass” the student pending corrections to be submitted to the committee chair and/or additional committee members, “fail,” with a provision that the student may retake the examination or deficient parts of the examination at a specified later date, or “fail,” without the possibility of reexamination at a later date. The reexamination option is available to the committee a maximum of one time.

If the member decides that the student’s work should “pass,” the committee member will communicate with the chair and determine the consensus of the committee. If the committee appears to be in favor of “pass,” members may sign the paperwork with the A.P.S. That is, no meeting is necessary.

If a committee member is unsure of whether the exam warrants a pass or failure, she or he should not sign the Graduate School exam form until after contacting the committee chair who shall initiate a conversation with the whole committee (face-to-face, by phone, or by e-mail) to discuss the quality of the work, and the standards of adequacy.

## Overview of PhD Program Requirements

In order to earn a PhD in Education, all students must:

- Submit their Programs of Study to the SoE at or before completing 15 hours of coursework,
- Complete 90 hours of coursework (including dissertation hours),
- Meet the residency requirement,
- Pass the general examination,
- Complete and pass a dissertation prospectus (proposal) meeting,
- Complete the dissertation (9 to 18 hours of EDCI 9000 or ELRC 9000), and
- Pass their oral dissertation examination (dissertation defense).

## Dissertation and Thesis Procedures: PhD and Master’s Students

Once the General Examination has been successfully completed, students are expected to spend the remaining time in their programs concentrating on the dissertation and in preparing for the Final Examination.

Proposal. With the help of the major professor(s), the student must develop a formal proposal for the dissertation and defend it at the Dissertation Proposal Meeting. **The proposal must be submitted in final**

**form to the student's committee no later than two weeks prior to the Dissertation Proposal Meeting.** The Committee members will carefully examine the proposal for its potential contribution to knowledge in the field of study.

Traditionally, the **proposal** is composed of the first three chapters of the dissertation and includes (1) the Introduction, (2) the Literature Review, and (3) the Method for the dissertation study.

Dissertation Proposal Meeting. This meeting is not an official examination designated by the LSU Graduate School, but is, instead, a SoE mandate. Therefore, the Dean's Representative to the Committee must be invited, but may choose not to attend. All other members of the Committee must attend this meeting.

Approval or disapproval of proposal, and procedures for changes. The approved prospectus constitutes an informal contract between the committee and the student respecting the general focus and methodology of the study. Committee members should not reject on methodological grounds a dissertation whose proposal they previously approved. To protect this informal contract, significant changes to the focus or methodology of the study should be referred back to the committee for approval, either by reconvening the committee, or by having the student, in consultation with the major professor, send proposed changes to committee members for their endorsement. The major professor is encouraged to keep records of such communications for later reference.

As a cautionary note, students who seek to institute substantive changes to the research plan should understand that the project overall is shifting away from what originally was approved by the committee. Rather than have such changes individually endorsed, consideration should be given to reconvening the committee to ensure continuing committee support for the amended project. Note that some committee chairs prefer to regard the prospectus as a more formal contract, with committee members signing the cover sheet, and approving changes in writing.

Elements of a Dissertation. The dissertation proposal should be sufficiently detailed and clear to serve as a blueprint for the study which will follow. **The proposal often contains the following elements, but may vary depending on the nature of the study and the preferences of the student and major professor. Items 12 through 15 are included in the final dissertation at the defense.** The dissertation is written in current American Psychological Association format and typically includes the following:

1. Statement of the problem,
2. Purpose of the study or rationale,
3. Setting,
4. Significance of the study,
5. Research questions,
6. Definition of terms,
7. Review of the literature,
8. Method,
9. Research design,
10. Data collection procedures,
11. Data analysis procedures,

12. Results,
13. References,
14. Appendices, and
15. IRB application, if applicable.

Dissertation Chapters. The dissertation generally is organized into the following chapters:

- Introduction,
- Literature Review,
- Method,
- Results, and
- Discussion

Dissertation research and write-up. Once the proposal and/or changes have been approved, the student will collect and analyze the data for the study, as needed, and write the dissertation working closely with the major professor. Members of the student's committee may act as consultants in the research and writing process. **The major professor assumes responsibility for seeing that the dissertation draft is of sufficient quality and at least approaching final form before it is circulated to the committee and the oral defense scheduled.** Students whose work appears, to the major professor or committee members, as unlikely to pass the Final Examination should be strongly encouraged to delay the oral defense until revisions are completed and the dissertation is more likely to pass. The student is solely responsible for circulating the dissertation to the committee.

Prior to the Oral Defense. When the student has finished the dissertation and it has been approved by the major professor, the student must orally defend it in a Final Examination.

Application for Doctoral Degree ([GS Forms](#)). The student submits the application to the Graduate APS for signatures. It is necessary that there be at least one week between the date of submission and the final date for application specified on the **Academic Calendar**. This application is completed after consultation with the major professor.

Request for Doctoral Examination ([GS Forms](#)). The student submits this request to the Graduate APS for signatures at least **four weeks** prior to the desired date of the Final Examination. The APS will submit it to the Graduate School through the SoE Director or Director of Graduate Studies at least **three weeks** prior to the proposed final examination date for submission of approved dissertations and committee examination reports.

Distribution of Dissertation Copies to Committee. The Examining Committee must have **paper copies** of the dissertation at least two weeks prior to the Final Examination. If the committee members prefers electronic copies of the dissertation, they must make that request, **in writing** (e-mail is acceptable), to the student, copying the major professor(s).

Oral defense. Major redesign of the research will not be considered at the time of the final oral defense; small to medium revisions are acceptable and expected. If the major professor(s) determine, prior to the

Oral Examination, that the quality of the final dissertation draft is insufficient to merit Oral Examination, the Committee should meet either electronically or in person to determine what the next step in the dissertation process should be.

The oral defense is a public meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, the major professor will excuse visitors and the student and ask whether the Committee has any objections to proceeding with the defense. If the Committee does not have objections, the student may make a presentation, and the Committee will ask the student questions pertaining to the literature review, rationale, method, results, and discussion of the dissertation. The student must be prepared to defend orally what has been stated in writing. Following questioning by the committee the major professor may permit a few questions from the audience. When it is time for the Committee to deliberate regarding passage of the examination, the student and any visitors will be asked to leave the room.

Electronic participation in the defense. A single committee member can participate in a Master's Exam, a Doctoral Degree Audit and Request for General Examination, or a Doctoral Final Exam remotely through VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) programs such as Skype upon receiving permission from the Graduate School. The program chosen must permit real-time, two-way exchange of visual information (e.g., presentation slides) and dialogue among the committee members and the student. Remote participation is for rare circumstances in which physical presence would be unfeasible. The individual participating remotely cannot be the Dean's Representative. Also, this individual cannot be the Committee Chair or student, except under extraordinary circumstances approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

The responsibility for arranging, testing, and assuring operative connection and time-zone arrangements rests upon the student and the committee chair. The form requesting such participation must be completed and submitted to the Graduate School along with the request for examination at least three weeks prior to the date of the examination and by the current semester deadline for graduation, if applicable.

The form at this link is required to request remote participation: [Remote Participation Form](#).

Evaluation. Following the oral examination, in confidential consultation among the Doctoral Committee members, the Committee votes on the successful completion of the examination. The Committee may vote "pass," "pass with revisions," or "fail." Abstentions are not permitted under Graduate School regulations. The success of revisions may be determined by the major professor(s) alone or with additional Committee input, depending on the consensus of the Committee. More than one negative vote constitutes failure. At the discretion of the Committee, students who fail may be given one reexamination.

## Logistics

Continuous registration requirement. Doctoral candidates must maintain continuous registration for a minimum of three semester hours of credit each regular semester (excluding summers) from the completion of the General Examination to the end of the semester in which an approved dissertation is submitted to the Graduate School. The Dean of the Graduate School may exempt a student from the continuous registration requirement upon departmental certification that the student is in absentia from the university and is not

drawing directly upon university resources. Exemptions are intended to accommodate students whose dissertation research requires extended periods of absence for field work in distant archives and laboratories. Exemptions are not intended for students who have accepted positions as employees in business, industry, or education.

**Deadlines.** The student is responsible to adhere to all Graduate School, University, and SoE rules and deadlines for submission of documents.

**Graduate Assistantships.** Full-time PhD students may apply in March for an assistantship for the following academic year (starting with the fall semester). Full-time is defined as a minimum of nine hours, six of which must be for graduate credit.

## Personnel

Administrative Program Specialist (APS): Ms. Lois Stewart, [lstewart@lsu.edu](mailto:lstewart@lsu.edu), (225) 578-6810

Director of Graduate Studies (DGS): Kristin Gansle, [kgansle@lsu.edu](mailto:kgansle@lsu.edu), (225) 578-6867

**Publication(s).** It is recommended that a manuscript be prepared and ready to submit to a professional journal either before or shortly following the Final Examination.

## Recommendations

Students are encouraged to present at local, regional, national, and international conferences. Funding is available at:

- Graduate School: [Graduate Funding](#).
- Please check with your major professor, the A.P.S., and Director of the SoE to see if there is funding currently available for your desired presentation.

Funding is also available from the Graduate School for various activities. Please see this website for more information: [Graduate Funding](#).

## Student expectations.

- Consult with major professor on timeline for completing the Program of Study.
- Schedule rooms for written and oral (general/final) examinations.
- Contact committee members about dates for examinations and procedural changes.
- Confirm that paperwork has been submitted by APS, advised by Graduate School calendar.
- Consult with the Graduate School Editor regarding submission of final version of dissertation. All Graduate School guidelines requirements are at this website: [Dissertations](#). The Graduate School Guidelines will have the most up-to-date information for preparation and electronic submission of the dissertation.

**Time limit.** Doctoral degree programs must be completed within seven years from the time a student is classified as a doctoral student. **There is no circumstance under which that “clock” may be stopped.** A student may apply for a one-year extension of the seven-year time limit with the approval of all members of

the Doctoral Committee, including the Dean's Representative. Students who decide to apply for the extension should contact the Graduate APS.

Master's degree programs must be completed within five years from the time the student matriculates.

#### Directory

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