

**Florida Atlantic University**  
**Department of Educational Leadership & Research Methodology**  
**DOCTORAL DEGREE POLICY: APPLICATION TO COMPLETION SEQUENCE**

**Admission**

1. Student applies and is notified if accepted into the doctoral program (<http://www.leadership.fau.edu>). Enrollment is competitive and selective. Meeting minimum standards does not guarantee admission.

**Program Advisor and Courses**

2. Once admitted, each student is assigned a program advisor and notified by letter. The department sends a copy of the letter to the advisor. The assignment of program advisor does not necessarily mean the advisor will become the dissertation committee chair.

It is the responsibility of the student to contact the assigned advisor and set up an appointment to develop a plan of study (POS) within the first 90 days of admission. The plan of study must meet all doctoral course requirements and minimum hour requirements (80 hours above the masters). Student begins coursework and is advised to be reading deeply in the educational leadership literature and thinking about dissertation topics. Students are responsible for submitting the approved plan of study (Form 5 Graduate College Plan of Study) in consultation with their advisors.

Student completes courses with the guidance of a program advisor. Required courses are listed in the program materials that are available on the departmental website. Students are encouraged to follow a recommended rotation of course offerings and join a cohort, if available. Students are also advised that they must follow the requirements of the University Graduate College, which change from time to time.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure Form 5 (Plan of Study) is filed and approved at all levels at least one semester in advance of sitting for the qualifying examination ("comps").

**Qualifying Exam (Comps)**

3. Student, with approval of the program advisor, signs up to take the qualifying exam (generally after 60% of the doctoral program is completed or most of the required course work). An application form must be completed and signed by the advisor in order to be allowed to sit for comps. This must be submitted two weeks in advance to the department. Exams are offered once in the fall and spring semesters with the dates announced on the departmental website. Students are encouraged to form study groups to prepare for the exam. Students will be notified of their exam results by letter sent to their residence. (See Qualifying Examination: Policy & Procedures. <http://www.coe.fau.edu/academicdepartments/el/comprehensiveExams.aspx>)

**Selection of Dissertation Chair**

4. When the qualifying exams have been successfully completed, the student identifies a dissertation committee chair from the Department of Educational Leadership & Research Methodology who must agree to work with him or her. For some students this will be their program advisor.

### **Selection of Dissertation Committee**

5. The student, in consultation with the dissertation chair, selects the doctoral committee members. Students may not form a committee until a faculty member has agreed to be the chair. The dissertation committee must have a minimum of 3 Graduate Faculty (full time faculty) and often includes more. All faculty must be approved as Graduate Faculty or Associate Graduate Faculty to serve on a dissertation committee. At least two members must be from the Department of Educational Leadership & Research Methodology. Outside members must have a doctoral degree from a regionally accredited university and be approved to serve by the university (generally as Associate Graduate Faculty). Once membership is set, Graduate College and departmental form(s) must be completed and signed. When program advisors or committee members change, the student must complete Form 9.

Please note that the process for asking committee members to serve includes submission of a concept paper. After the dissertation chair approves the concept paper and the potential members, the student uses the concept paper as a means of introduction and to invite people to serve. The student must have a dissertation committee in place in order to be admitted to candidacy (see below). Admission to Candidacy is a prerequisite for enrollment in dissertation credits.

### **Admission to Candidacy & Forming a Dissertation Committee**

6. A student and his or her dissertation committee chair will agree on a topic for the dissertation and then the student writes (and must get approved) a concept paper. Typically, a concept paper is a brief, 15-20 page paper in which a doctoral student seeking candidacy introduces the concept/topic that he or she would like to investigate for the dissertation. A rationale for the proposed topic of study is to be included, followed by a discussion of the study's purpose and research questions. The concept paper must provide a brief description of the literature intended to be used for the study, i.e. guiding questions and themes to be explored. Students should also suggest a tentative methodology and discuss how the proposed study would contribute to the field of educational leadership. A proposed reference list (no specified length), along with a timeline for proceeding to the proposal stage must be included.

Once the dissertation committee chair approves the concept paper, the student presents it to the committee for their feedback and approval (This can be done electronically or student may meet individually with members.). This step allows the committee an opportunity to give a student specific direction on the conceptual framework and literature to be reviewed. If the committee is supportive of the dissertation concept, the committee members and dissertation chair sign the Admission to Candidacy Form and submit it to the Department Chair for signature. The student is responsible for getting the signatures. The form is next sent to the College Dean and on to the Graduate College.

7. Student enrolls in EDA 7912 Advanced Research (Literature Review) to conduct independently a comprehensive review of selected literature with guidance from the dissertation committee chair. (In some cases, the chair will allow a student to register for

this course prior to completion of concept paper.) The student may also enroll in the Advanced Research (Proposal Course) and begin the development of the first three dissertation chapters, with permission of the dissertation chair. See reference below regarding EDF 7482 Advanced Educational Research. Students may not enroll in EDA 7912 or EDF 7482 until successfully completing the qualifying exam and have permission of their dissertation committee chair.

8. When admitted to candidacy, students begin continuous enrollment and work with their dissertation committee chair and committee to complete the dissertation. As a doctoral candidate, a student may register for dissertation credits. (Please note: students may *not* register for dissertation hours until they have been admitted to candidacy and the paperwork is completed.) At this stage, to maintain matriculation in the Department of Educational Leadership & Research Methodology, students must register for a minimum of 3 credits for 3 semesters a year (fall, spring and summer) until graduation. If other course work is complete, student registers for dissertation credits. This schedule will encourage students to complete their dissertation work in a timely fashion. Note, students must be registered in the semester of graduation. If students have successfully defended their dissertation but not in time to graduate in that semester, they may register for only 1 dissertation credit the semester of graduation, with permission of their dissertation committee chair.

#### **Development of Proposal & Proposal Defense**

9. Upon approval of the dissertation committee chair, student enrolls in EDF 7482 Advanced Educational Research to develop a dissertation proposal. Under the guidance of the EDF 7482 professor and dissertation chair, the dissertation proposal is developed. During this time a student may also meet with the committee informally to receive suggestions for improvement.
10. When the proposal is completed (Chapters 1-3) with approval of the dissertation committee chair, the student schedules a committee meeting to present the dissertation proposal. Committee members must receive the proposal, i.e. the final version that will be presented, two weeks prior to the meeting (student ascertains if members want paper and/or electronic copy and where it should be sent). There is a minimum of two weeks for all review periods, including reviews by the dissertation chair.
11. The defense of the proposal should focus on the problem statement, review of literature, and methodology. The proposal includes chapters one, two and three, as well as references and appendices. The expectation is that the committee will make recommendations for changes to strengthen the proposal.
12. After the proposal is approved or not approved by the committee, committee members sign the department's Approval of Dissertation Proposal Form which is then placed in the student's file. The student is required to submit an electronic copy of the proposal that was defended to the department.

Students should consult the “[Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines](#)” for specific instructions on the preparation, formatting and publication of the Dissertation, and how to submit a manuscript to the Graduate College. See

<http://www.fau.edu/graduate/currentstudents/thesisanddissertation/pdf/ManuscriptGuidelines.pdf>

*Archived Theses/Dissertations.* <http://libguides.fau.edu/ETDs> to search for theses and dissertations completed by FAU graduate students.

**Internal Review Board (IRB) Approval** (<http://www.fau.edu/research/researchint/index.php>)

13. Human subject research requires IRB approval. Student must obtain the dissertation chair, department chair and associate dean's approval and process the University IRB form which enables him/her to conduct research. Student must upload the completion certificate for CITI before the IRB form can be processed. Data may not be collected until the IRB approves the application and research protocols that the student is proposing. If denied approval, student works with dissertation committee chair to make corrections/changes and meets with the committee again, if necessary. The IRB process takes time and students must plan accordingly. Please note that the dissertation committee chair is the Principal Investigator, not the student.

**Conducting Research**

14. Upon appropriate approval, student collects and analyzes data. Next, student writes the findings and conclusions, typically Chapters Four and Five of the dissertation, under the supervision of the dissertation committee chair.
15. Depending on the dissertation committee chair and committee members' preferences, student sends chapters to committee members *always with approval of the chair first* for review and comment. Please note: Some committee members would like to read chapters as they are completed and others prefer to read all chapters at once. Student consults with dissertation committee chair to determine the best protocol for working with committee members.

**Defending the Dissertation**

16. A dissertation defense meeting is scheduled when the dissertation committee chair and committee think the dissertation is ready for public review. Please note that there are University timelines to adhere to for submitting a completed dissertation to the Office of Graduate College each semester. It is the student's responsibility to ensure all required completed forms are in place with the Graduate College at least one semester prior to graduation.

Student will submit an electronic copy of the manuscript to the Graduate College for a formatting check a minimum of two weeks prior to the scheduled defense. The dissertation committee chair should be copied on this submission. Consult the "Graduate Thesis and Guidelines" for more information

<http://www.fau.edu/graduate/currentstudents/thesisanddissertation/>

If during the format check by the Graduate College there are inconsistencies with the department, the student should contact the department chair and dissertation committee chair for clarification.

17. Notice of the dissertation defense meeting must be made public two weeks prior to the meeting to encourage faculty and student attendance. Once the student and dissertation committee chair set the time and date (having first confirmed this with the full committee and having reserved the Dissertation Room), they must notify the Department Chair and

the department's Program Assistant. The program assistant will prepare the announcement and send it to the COE Dean. The announcement includes: student name, dissertation chair, committee members, title of dissertation, time and place of the defense (The Dissertation Room on the Boca campus). Student is responsible for providing this information to his or her chair and for insuring accuracy. The dissertation chair will send it to the department chair and program assistant. Student should consult with the dissertation committee chair regarding inviting guests to the defense.

18. Student is required to send the committee members the completed dissertation (the final version that will be defended) two weeks prior to the dissertation defense meeting.
19. At the defense, student makes a 15-20 minute presentation of the dissertation with emphasis on methodology, findings and conclusions.
20. Committee may approve the dissertation as: approve with major changes required, approve with minor changes required (changes monitored by dissertation chair), or disapprove. (Dissertations that are disapproved require a second dissertation defense meeting.) If approved, committee members sign the dissertation signature page. (Student is advised to bring 5 signature pages and pen to the defense.)

**Post Dissertation Defense Procedures (steps 21-24 are in revision to align with the Graduate College's new rule about electronic dissertations)**

The following process is to be followed after a successful dissertation defense:

21. Student makes corrections required by the committee and if the dissertation committee chair approves, submits the dissertation to the department chair by the departmental deadline. One copy of the dissertation on draft paper and the original, signed signature pages (5 original documents) on water marked 20 lb. weight/25% cotton bond are submitted for this review process.
22. If the department chair approves the dissertation, he or she signs the signature page and the department transmits the dissertation to the College of Education for the Dean's signature. If the department chair does not approve the dissertation, the dissertation is returned to the dissertation committee chair. Student will work with her or his dissertation chair to address concerns raised by department chair. Once the problem has been addressed, department chair may need to review the dissertation a second time. Student must obtain the department chair signature in order for the dissertation to be sent to the Dean's Office. The dean reviews the dissertation and returns it to the department.
23. The student collects the dissertation and original signature pages from the department after they have been approved by the College of Education Dean. The dissertation must next be delivered to the Dean of the Graduate College. As a courtesy, the department will assist with this process if the student requests assistance in a timely manner (see program assistant).
24. The student picks up the dissertation after it has been signed by the Graduate College Dean and receives instructions about submitting final copies and paying necessary fees. Student makes all corrections and submits final copies and fees at least one week prior to graduation. Please note: These instructions are also available in "Requirements and Guidelines for Graduate Theses and Dissertations," a document available from the

Graduate College.

### **Leave of Absence**

25. A student who would like to request a leave of absence must submit a petition (Form 10 “Request to Waive a University Requirement”). A letter must be attached to the petition that explains the reason for this waiver and specifies what rule is being waived. The petition must be signed by the student’s advisor/dissertation committee chair before moving through the petition process.

### **Program Termination**

26. Dissertation course credits will be graded “S” for satisfactory progress toward degree or “U” for unsatisfactory progress toward degree. If a student receives two unsatisfactory grades in a row, her/his performance will be reviewed by a panel to determine if she/he is permitted to continue in the degree program. The panel will be formed by the department chair and will include the dissertation committee chair.

The University has a 10 year rule that establishes the time limit for doctoral studies. Students who have passed their tenth year in the program will be officially notified that they must (1) stop taking all course work, including dissertation credits, and (2) notify the department if they wish to continue toward the degree under the following conditions (See “Procedure to Proceed”). Students who do not notify the department chair in writing within 60 days of notification will be withdrawn from doctoral studies in the Department of Educational Leadership & Research Methodology. Note the university also has a requirement that no course work may be counted that is older than 10 years at the time of graduation. For instance, students planning to graduate 2021, will not be allowed to use any course work older than 2011.

### **Procedure to Proceed:**

**Option 1: One Year Extension.** If a student has an approved dissertation proposal, he or she may formally petition the full faculty for a one year extension. The petition must include an explanation for the delay and, more importantly, a credible timetable for completion within one year. Alternatively, if the student has a proposal that is near ready for presentation to the dissertation committee, i.e. scheduled for within one month of the deadline, and has the support of the dissertation chair and committee, the student may petition the full faculty for a one year extension. The petition must include an explanation for the delay and, more importantly, a credible timetable for completion within one year. If the extension is granted, the student must enroll in a minimum of 3 dissertation credit hours each semester until graduation (fall, spring, and summer). The department will not entertain a second petition at the end of the one year extension. The appropriate petition form must be filed and approved by the dissertation committee chair, department chair, College committee, College of Education dean and the Graduate College dean.

**Option 2: Leave of Absence & One Year Extension.** If a student does not have an

approved dissertation proposal, the student may request up to a one year leave of absence. During that year he or she must work independently and present a completed proposal (Chapters One, Two & Three) to the dissertation committee. The student must solicit support in advance of the leave of absence from the full committee to agree to meet one time for the proposal defense during the year of non-matriculation. If the dissertation committee is satisfied that the proposal will lead to a successful dissertation, the student must next formally petition the full faculty for a one year extension to complete the dissertation. If the extension is granted, the student must enroll in a minimum of 3 dissertation credit hours each semester until graduation. The department will not entertain a second petition at the end of the one year extension. The appropriate petition forms for a leave of absence and one year extension must be filed and approved by the dissertation committee chair, department chair, College committee, College of Education dean and the Graduate College dean.

The faculty will not consider a petition to extend the University 10 year rule unless the above outlined process has been followed. Petitions will only be considered at full faculty meetings that are scheduled during the fall and spring semesters.

Adopted: January 7, 2000 (Department of Educational Leadership)

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