

**Florida Atlantic University**  
**Department of Educational Leadership & Research Methodology**  
**Ph.D. Degree Policies and Procedures<sup>1</sup>**  
*From Application to Completion*

**Approved March 20, 2024**

## I. ADMISSION<sup>2</sup>

Admission to the Educational Leadership and Research Methodology Ph.D. program is by program concentration, i.e., School Leaders and Higher Education Leadership. Prospective students should indicate their program concentration area in all application materials. Enrollment is competitive and selective. Meeting minimum admissions standards does not guarantee admission.

The following is admission information is from the University Catalog. Prospective students should also refer to the department website at [www.leadership.fau.edu](http://www.leadership.fau.edu), and additional information is from their program area (i.e., School Leaders or Higher Education Leadership).

### **Admission Requirements for Domestic Students**

Admission to the doctoral program is competitive. Enrollment is limited, and the number of candidates accepted is determined annually. Applicants who meet the following minimum criteria will be placed into a candidate selection pool:

1. Master's degree from an accredited college or university.
2. Achieve a minimum GPA of 3.0 in a master's program from an accredited college or university.
3. Three letters of recommendation.
4. Academic transcripts.
5. Personal objective essay.
6. Resume/CV.

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<sup>1</sup>These policies and procedures are aligned with the University Catalog and Graduate Colleges Policies and Procedures at the time of adoption. When relevant University Policies and Procedures change, this document will be adjusted to ensure compliance.

<sup>2</sup> This is the link to the FAU Catalog with page numbers:

[https://cso.collegesource.com/viewer/CSO\\_catalinkviewer.aspx?iid=26706&pguid={20CBE316-72E9-4978-8493-222CEE2A7E26}](https://cso.collegesource.com/viewer/CSO_catalinkviewer.aspx?iid=26706&pguid={20CBE316-72E9-4978-8493-222CEE2A7E26}). This is the link to the FAU Catalog from the FAU website: <https://www.fau.edu/registrar/university-catalog/catalog/>.

7. Interview with faculty.

### **Admission Requirements for International Students**

Admission to the doctoral program is competitive. Enrollment is limited, and the number of candidates accepted is determined annually. Applicants who meet the following minimum criteria will be placed into a candidate selection pool:

1. Master's degree from a regionally accredited college or university
2. Graduate GPA of 3.0.
3. Three letters of recommendation.
4. Personal objective essay.
5. Resume/CV.
6. Interview with faculty.
7. A course-by-course evaluation of international transcripts is required; FAU will evaluate them, or it must be done by a NACES member.
8. TOEFL score of 500 or IBT of 61; IELTS 6.0; Duolingo 90.

### **Selection Process**

The department's doctoral admissions committee will review completed admission applications. Selected applicants will be interviewed by the Committee. The Committee will then recommend applicants for acceptance and notify them of the decisions.

All required admissions documents must be submitted by March 1 for Fall admittance. The department may open the doctoral program for admittance at other times during the academic year. Prospective students should consult the department for additional information.

The following is additional information about the application and selection process.

- a. Applicants should apply through the Graduate College (<https://www.fau.edu/graduate/apply/>).
- b. Once complete, applications will be reviewed by program area Ph.D. faculty.
- c. Selected applicants will be evaluated by the faculty, and some will be invited for an interview. An interview does not guarantee admission to the program.
- d. The applicant is initially notified by the department administrative via email or letter.
- e. Official notification will be sent by the Graduate Admissions Office.

## **II. DOCTORAL COURSE MATRICULATION AND ADVISING**

### **Advisement**

Once admitted and enrolled, doctoral students will be assigned a faculty advisor who will assist with course guide planning.

- Matriculating doctoral students will be expected to follow the guidance from their program area concentration regarding course sequencing, enrollments, and other

academic expectations. Students should not self-advise.

- The initial faculty program advisor assignment does not necessarily mean that the advisor will eventually become the dissertation committee chair.
- It is the responsibility of admitted students to contact their assigned faculty advisor and set up an appointment to develop an initial Plan of Study (POS). Students should consult their faculty advisor regarding program concentration protocols for developing and submitting a POS since some may offer seminars and guidance to assist with this process.
- The POS must meet all doctoral course and credit hour requirements.
- In consultation with their faculty-assigned advisor, students are responsible for submitting their POS (complete POS directions can be found at Plan of Study: Florida Atlantic University - Graduate College: <http://www.fau.edu/graduate/forms-and-procedures/degree-completion/plan-of-study.php>).
- The POS is expected to be submitted no later than the first year in the program but may vary by program concentration.
- During the development of the POS, the advisor will determine if there is a previously taken course that can be applied to the doctoral degree. Note that “Credits transferred into or applied to an FAU program are considered earned in the first semester of enrollment at FAU.” Retrieved from FAU Catalog - Academic Policies and Regulations: <https://www.fau.edu/registrar/university-catalog/catalog/academics/>
- Required courses are listed on the website and in the University Catalog.
- Students should follow the requirements of the University Catalog and the Graduate College, which are subject to change.

### **Course Matriculation**

Students should follow their POS and course plan. They are encouraged to read relevant scholarly literature and focus on their area of dissertation research interests early and throughout the course matriculation phase.

- The department’s two Ph.D. concentrations either offer courses in a cohort model or have a published course rotation of course offerings.
- Students should follow their advisor and concentration area recommendations on the order of course sequencing.
- The University and Graduate College have published policies about grading and satisfactory progress in graduate courses. Students should also consult the department and program concentration websites for additional information.

When the student has completed almost all coursework, except the dissertation credits, and is ready for the dissertation phase, the Qualifying Examination is in order.

### **III. QUALIFYING EXAM**

The Qualifying Examination is intended to determine if the student is ready for admission to Candidacy and dissertation research. This examination is conducted by each respective program faculty (i.e., School Leaders, Higher Education Leadership). Students should consult their program concentration for specifics about their Qualifying Exam, including the term they should complete their exam.

With the approval of their assigned faculty program advisor, students must register to take the Qualifying Exam. To register, an application form must be completed and signed by the advisor. The form must be submitted at least two weeks in advance of the exam date or by the deadline set by the department. Exams are offered once in the fall and spring semesters, with the dates announced on the departmental website.

Students who pass the Qualifying Exam are eligible for Admission to Candidacy and are officially candidates. Candidates may formally form a dissertation committee.

#### **IV. ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY AND FORMING A DISSERTATION COMMITTEE<sup>3</sup>**

##### **Forming a Dissertation Committee and Selecting a Chair<sup>4</sup>**

1. The student must have a chair selected before being admitted to Candidacy. It is important that the student select a dissertation chair that understands the dissertation research processes and their research goals.
2. The student, in consultation with the dissertation chair, selects the doctoral committee members. The student should not ask faculty to serve on their committee without approval from their dissertation chair. Students should consult their chair on the protocols for recruiting members of their committee. The following are the minimum requirements:
  - The dissertation committee must have a minimum of three (3) Graduate Faculty members, including the dissertation chair.

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<sup>3</sup> This is an excerpt from the University Graduate College Governance Document (April 30, 2021), “Each doctoral candidate shall have a Supervisory Committee comprised of at least three members of the Graduate Faculty. One of the members shall serve as the Chair of the Supervisory Committee and principal advisor to the student. It is strongly recommended that each Supervisory Committee include one member from outside of the department or program. The goal of including an outside member is to broaden the supervision and guidance of the doctoral student, and this could be achieved by an external member or may already be present in an interdisciplinary program. Outside members may be selected from the scholars within other academic programs that have appointments as graduate faculty, or from other institutions where scholarly work is conducted. Graduate Faculty not employed by FAU must be approved for an appointment as Courtesy Affiliate Faculty (as per Policy 2.2.1) and as Graduate Faculty. After consultation with the student and the committee chair, the Supervisory Committee is approved by the director of the respective academic program using the Form 8.” This is a link to the Graduate College Governance Document: <https://www.fau.edu/graduate/documents/grad-policy-education.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this document references to “chair” also include “co-chairs”. Thus, dissertations may be supervised by one or two full-time faculty in the Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology. All dissertations must be chaired or co-chaired by a faculty member in the student’s program concentration.

- All faculty must be approved as Graduate Faculty or Associate Graduate Faculty to serve on a dissertation committee.
- It is recommended that at least two members be from the Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology. The chair and co-chair will count as members.
- The chair or co-chair must be a faculty member in the student's program area concentration (i.e., Higher Education Leadership and School Leaders).
- Other members may be faculty in the department, COE, or other colleges across the university.
- Outside members not from FAU must have a doctoral degree from a regionally accredited university and be approved to serve by the program concentration area faculty, department faculty, and university as required. Exceptions may be granted in rare circumstances for scholars with exemplary expertise in the discipline. Outside committee members must have graduate faculty status per university policy.

The student must be admitted to Candidacy before enrolling in dissertation credits. [Form 8](#) must be completed, signed, and filed before the student can register for dissertation credit.

### **Admission to Candidacy<sup>5</sup>**

Graduate students become candidates for the doctoral degree once they are granted formal admission to Candidacy. Such admission requires the approval of the student's supervisory committee, the Department Chair, the College Dean, and the Dean of the Graduate College. The approval must be based on (a) the academic record of the student, (b) the opinion of the supervisory committee concerning overall fitness for Candidacy, (c) an approved dissertation topic, and (d) a qualifying examination as determined by the appropriate department/program. **Please note: Doctoral students must be admitted to Candidacy at least one semester before applying for graduation. Students may not register for dissertation credit until admitted to Candidacy.** The full policy is available in the FAU Course Catalog here:

<https://www.fau.edu/academic/registrar/FAUcatalog/degreerequirements.php>

Application for admission to Candidacy should be made as soon as the qualifying examination has been passed and a dissertation topic has been approved by the student's supervisory committee. To be formally admitted to Candidacy, the student must submit a [Form 8 - Admission to Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree to the Graduate College](#). The student should refer to the Graduate College for additional information about this process.

## **V. Development of Dissertation Proposal & Proposal Defense**

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<sup>5</sup> After Admission to Candidacy, this document refers to the student as a candidate

At this stage in the program, the candidate will be preparing the dissertation proposal (Chapters 1, 2, and 3) and proposal defense. The student should work closely with the dissertation advisor and/or co-advisor and, as appropriate, dissertation committee members.

A dissertation proposal defense meeting will be scheduled at the appropriate time, as advised by the chair and committee. During this meeting, the candidate will present a dissertation proposal and defend Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

The dissertation committee will receive the final written proposal to be defended no later than two weeks prior to the proposal defense.

The candidate should consult their dissertation advisor about protocols and how to prepare for this defense. The student 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 Thesis & Dissertation | Florida Atlantic University (<https://www.fau.edu/graduate/degree-completion/thesis-dissertation/>).

After the proposal is approved or not approved by the committee, committee members sign the department’s Approval of Dissertation Proposal Form, which is placed in the student’s file. The student is required to submit an electronic copy of the proposal that was defended to the department.

## **VI. Conducting Research (and Institutional Review Board Approval If Needed)**

Upon appropriate approval of the dissertation proposal, the candidate begins the research phase of the study.

If the study requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the candidate must complete this process with the guidance of their dissertation chair. <https://www.fau.edu/research-admin/research-integrity/human-subjects-irb/>

- The student must not collect data prior to IRB approval if such approval is necessary for the study.
- If IRB approval is required, the dissertation chair will be the Principal Investigator, not the student.
- The IRB process takes time, and the student must plan accordingly.

With the guidance of their dissertation chair, the candidate collects and analyzes data and writes the findings and conclusions. This phase includes writing the final chapters of the dissertation but will likely include refreshing the chapters defended in the proposal defense.

## **VII. Defending the Dissertation**

A dissertation defense meeting is scheduled when the dissertation committee chair and committee

think the dissertation is ready. The following should be noted:

- There are department, college, and university deadlines for submitting a complete and defended dissertation that should be followed.
- The candidate 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.
- Candidates are responsible for ensuring that all required completed forms and processes are in place with the Graduate College at least one semester prior to graduation.
- The candidate should 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 College's [Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines](#).
- If, during the format check by the Graduate College, there are inconsistencies with the dissertation as approved by the faculty, the student should contact the dissertation committee chair for clarification.
- Notice of the dissertation defense must be made public two weeks prior to the meeting. The student should consult the advisor and department for the appropriate format for the dissertation defense meeting.
- The student should not announce the defense, as this is the responsibility of the chair. However, once announced, the student may be required to upload the dissertation announcement and other documents to the Graduate College to follow their processes.
- The student should consult the chair about inviting guests to the defense.
- Many students benefit from a defense rehearsal, and the student should consult the dissertation chair for guidance.
- At the defense, the student will present their dissertation focusing on the chapters completed since the proposal defense. The faculty committee will ask the candidate questions. The faculty committee will then convene in private and decide if the dissertation will be approved or not.
- The faculty committee will record their decision by completing an Approval of Doctoral Dissertation Defense form where they will communicate if the dissertation is:
  - Approved,
  - Approved with Minor Modification,
  - Approved with Modification,
  - Approved with Major Modification,
  - Denied.
- If modifications are required, the committee will determine who will approve the dissertation with modifications.
- If the dissertation is denied or disapproved, a second defense meeting may be scheduled.

## **VIII. Post-Dissertation Defense Procedures**

Once successfully defended, the candidate must follow all procedures and guidelines on the Graduate College website. The candidate should consult their dissertation advisor for guidance about the post-defense procedures. The following will be useful for understanding this process:

- The post-defense processes and procedures require multiple readers, edits and revisions, and other processes such as registering for commencement with the Registrar. The candidate should work with their dissertation advisor on incorporating these expectations into their timeline.
- The candidate should make any required revisions to the dissertation as soon as possible and submit the revised dissertation to their chair in a timely fashion.
- The Graduate College uses an electronic dissertation approval process, including the signature page. Consult the Graduate College for the most up-to-date post-dissertation requirements.

## **IX. Other Policies<sup>6</sup>**

### **Leave of Absence**

Per the University Catalog, “Graduate students who find it necessary to temporarily suspend their studies may apply for leave of absence from graduate study. Leave of absence is intended for students who are unable to pursue their studies at all, rather than for students who are actively working on a thesis or dissertation after completing coursework. Leave of absence is approved by the Graduate College based on the recommendation of the student's faculty advisor, department chair and college dean. To apply for a leave of absence, students use a Form 10-Request to Waive a University Requirement. Degree-seeking students returning after an absence of more than one year will be subject to the following:

1. File a new graduate admissions application with appropriate documentation.
2. Re-establish Florida residency for tuition purposes.
3. Be in good academic standing (eligible to return) at FAU and at any institution attended since the last period of enrollment at FAU.
4. Provide official transcripts to the Graduate College from any institution attended since the last period of enrollment at FAU.
5. Submit proof of conformity to the Measles Immunization Policy of the State University System for graduate students under the age of 40 who have not previously submitted this information.
6. Students who were enrolled without being fully admitted into a graduate degree program will not be eligible to return.
7. Returning students will be admitted under the catalog guidelines in place at the time

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<sup>6</sup> This is a link to FAU Graduate Specific Policies from the University Catalog:  
<https://www.fau.edu/graduate/degree-completion/academic-policies/>

of re-admission.”

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 requesting 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. This is the link to the policy for Leaves of Absence: <https://www.fau.edu/graduate/degree-completion/academic-policies/>.

### **Withdrawing From the Ph.D. Program**

A graduate student who wishes to officially withdraw from the Ph.D. program must submit a Form 15-Graduate Program Official Withdrawal to the Graduate College.

<https://www.fau.edu/graduate/documents/form15-graduate-withdrawal-form.pdf>

### **Time Limit for Completion of Doctoral Degree Requirements**

The University policy is “All requirements for the doctoral degree must be completed within five calendar years from the time the student passes the preliminary or qualifying examination and is admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree. Leaves of absence do not extend the five-year limit. Extensions (in one-year increments) beyond the five-year limit will be considered through the submission of a formal Form 10 - Request to Waive a University Requirement petition. If the student’s program coordinator, program director and/or department chair does not choose to either approve an Extension of Time (EOT), then the student may no longer be enrolled in that program at Florida Atlantic University.”

### **Recency of Credits**

Per the University Catalog, “No credit that is more than 10 years old at the time the Florida Atlantic University graduate degree is awarded may be counted toward that degree. Credits transferred into or applied to an FAU program are considered earned in the first semester of enrollment at FAU. Note: Individual graduate programs may have stricter recency of credit time limits.”

A student who wishes to pursue their degree after 10 years should notify the department chair in writing of their intentions before the 10-year lapse. University and Graduate Policies and Procedures regarding an appeal and extension of the time limit will be followed.

### **Satisfactory Academic Performance**

Per the University Catalog, “To remain in good academic standing, each graduate student at Florida Atlantic University must maintain a satisfactory record. A cumulative 3.0 average must be maintained on all degree requirements. This is the minimum quality necessary for a graduate degree at Florida Atlantic University.” Note: Individual program concentration may have higher academic performance standards.

In addition to grade point and course grade requirements Ph.D. students must pass the Qualifying

Exam before enrolling in dissertation course and relevant seminars. Dissertation course credits will be graded “S” for satisfactory progress and “U” for unsatisfactory progress if a student receives two semesters of unsatisfactory grades in a row, they will be referred to the department chair or “designee” who will review their performance and possibly form a panel to advise whether the student will be allowed to continue in the program. The student has a right to present their case to the department chair and/or panel. Additionally, the student has a right to appeal a decision about their progress to the chair and the dean of the college.

### **Unsatisfactory Academic Performance - Academic Progression Plan**

A student who falls below the GPA requirements, does not pass the Qualifying Exam, or receives two semesters of unsatisfactory grades is not making satisfactory progress. If the student wishes to continue in the program, they need to complete an Academic Progress Plan and may be placed on academic probation.

Per the University Catalog, “...Graduate students on probation are expected to submit a signed and completed Form 11 - Academic Progression Plan (APP) to the Graduate College to continue in their program of study.

Students will develop an APP with their academic advisor or program coordinator, gather the necessary signatures and submit the form to the Graduate College. The major professor and program director/coordinator will ensure that the student on probation adheres to the approved APP (i.e., registers for the prescribed degree-applicable courses). The advisor or program coordinator may recommend dismissal instead of developing and approving an APP. In this case, the graduate program will initiate the dismissal process as defined by the 2015 Provost's memo.

For a student who fails to meet the requirements stipulated in the APP (i.e., fails to attain a 3.0 cumulative grade point average by the end of the next full term of enrollment), the graduate program will initiate the dismissal process unless a revised APP is submitted and approved by the Graduate College. A revised APP will be required if the department does not recommend dismissal, and pending acceptance by the dean of the Graduate College, the student will be allowed to continue in the degree program. Academic dismissal constitutes a separation of the student from the University for academic reasons. Students on dismissal will not be permitted to register for courses, including registering as a non-degree student. A graduate student who is dismissed and subsequently enrolls as a non-degree-seeking graduate student, or as a graduate student at another institution, may not have this coursework count toward fulfilling degree requirements should the student ever be readmitted into the same graduate program at FAU.”

### **Request to Waive a University Requirement**

Exceptions to graduate policies and procedures must be submitted for approval using Form 10-Request to Waive a University Requirement. All requests must be reviewed by the degree-granting program, the appropriate college dean and the dean of the Graduate College.

### **Continuous Enrollment**

Ph.D. students are required to enroll for at least 1 credit during at least two semesters (fall, spring or summer) of every academic year in order to remain eligible for the degree. Students who fail to maintain continuous enrollment, as defined above, lose their eligibility for the degree. In such cases, students are required to submit a new application and pay the application fee. For additional information refer to the University Catalog and Graduate College.

**Note:** *These policies and procedures document is intended for Ph.D. student advising and is subject to change. The University Catalog is periodically changed and if any aspect of this document is incongruent with university policies and procedures, the university policies and procedures will prevail. This document does not represent a contract explicit or implied.*

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