STUDENT GUIDE

Graduate Programs in Educational Psychology

Department of Leadership, Educational Psychology & Foundations
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115

Carolyn Pluim
Department Chair
cvanders@niu.edu

Lindsay Harris
Program Coordinator
lharris3@niu.edu

Department Website: www.cedu.niu.edu/lepf/

Revised 7/2020
Chapter 1

General Introduction

What is Educational Psychology?
*Adapted from the Division of Educational Psychology of the American Psychological Association*

What are good ways to study? What motivates students? Why are some people better students than others? How do developmental processes affect learning? What is the role of culture in human development and learning? How should reading, writing, and mathematics be taught? Is it better to study alone or in a group? What makes a good teacher? How can technology be used to support learning? Are tests really fair? These are examples of the kinds of questions that educational psychologists seek to answer.

Educational psychology is the branch of psychology concerned with 1) studying how people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities learn from instruction, and 2) developing educational materials, programs, and techniques that enhance learning. Educational psychologists conduct scientific research both to advance theory—such as explaining how people learn, teach, and differ from one another—and to advance practice—such as figuring out how to improve teaching/learning processes in the classroom.

Educational psychology has a long and varied history that dates back to the era in which teaching, learning, and schooling first became subjects of inquiry. Today, educational psychologists are committed to questions about learning and development in multicultural and increasingly interdependent contexts—all defined by escalating expectations and social inequalities. Many educational psychologists are deeply involved in teacher education, but they can also be found in just about any type of work environment. Educational psychology research is typically disseminated to families, teachers, schools, corporate leaders, and educational policy makers.

What do educational psychologists do?

Educational psychologists work in a wide variety of settings. Some educational psychologists work at colleges and universities, often in psychology departments or in schools or departments of education. These psychologists may teach college courses, conduct research, prepare prospective educators, and/or develop statistical and research methods. Also at the college level, educational psychologists may work in study skills programs, and/or curriculum development projects.

Other educational psychologists work in government, school, military, or corporate settings, where they participate in analyzing educational data; developing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs; and training staff.

Still other educational psychologists work in research organizations in which they develop instructional materials that are grounded in psychological theory and/or develop educational tests for schools, businesses, and many professions.
How do educational psychologists help to improve society?

Educational psychologists contribute to science and practice. On the scientific side, educational psychologists create new knowledge concerning how people learn, remember, think, and develop. Research in educational psychology also yields new information on a variety of topics such as what motivates people, how social contexts affect learning, and the broad variety of ways in which humans learn and develop.

On the practical side, educational psychologists contribute to society by working to improve education. By developing instruction and educational programs that are based on psychological theory and research rather than fads or unverified opinions, educational psychologists can contribute to the betterment of all citizens.

What kind of education do educational psychologists need?

Typically, educational psychologists hold a bachelors (B.A. or B.S.) degree in fields such as psychology, education, or a related field, and a graduate degree such as a doctorate (Ph.D. or Ed.D.) or masters (M.A. or M.S. Ed.) in education, psychology, educational psychology, educational statistics, or a related field. In addition, many educational psychologists have had experience working as teachers, support staff, or administrators in schools.

*For more information about careers in educational psychology, go to [apadiv15.org](http://apadiv15.org), the website of Division 15, Educational Psychology, of the American Psychological Association (APA). Or go APA’s main website: [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org).
Brief Description of Program

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology

In the Ph.D. program in educational psychology, students acquire an understanding of psychological processes that underlie human development, learning, and teaching and develop necessary skills to interpret and design research in educational settings. The program provides students with opportunities to develop original and creative thinking and research in the areas of human development, learning, motivation, and culture. Students also may relate the knowledge and skills they gain to selected areas of interest, such as research methods and assessment, teacher education, sociocultural, historical, and philosophical foundations of education, special education, or instructional technology.

The Ph.D. program prepares graduates for a variety of roles in colleges and universities, such as teaching undergraduate and graduate level courses, conducting research, and developing and evaluating instructional programs. In addition, educational psychologists may train staff, develop and implement educational programs, and/or analyze educational data in government, school, or corporate settings. Graduates of our doctoral program have obtained positions as university faculty, program evaluators, school administrators, and educational consultants, among others.

Faculty in the Department of Leadership, Educational Psychology and Foundations

For a current listing of faculty in the department, see the department web page.
Chapter 2

Reminders from the Graduate School

This chapter highlights a few general university requirements and provides some hints about communicating with Graduate School Advisors. The purpose is to assist students with making smooth progress through our degree programs and to facilitate efforts toward graduation. For complete information, students must refer to the Graduate Catalog effective the semester they were admitted; the information in the appropriate catalog supersedes information provided here.

Advisors in the Graduate School

The Graduate School admissions/records staff is responsible for maintaining records of graduate students and applications for admission. Routine communications pertaining to graduate students’ records and progress toward graduation should be directed to those individuals.

Below is a chart that designates students’ Graduate School Admissions and Records Officers. Please note that staffing changes occur often, so this list will not always be current. The phone numbers below should connect you with the graduate school office, even if specific staff has changed.

Note that it is often helpful to consult the LEPF Graduate Advisor about graduate school related questions. They are able to assist with much of the paperwork that must be filed with the graduate school.

LEPF Graduate Advisor office: Graham Hall 225A

Grad School Contact Information

Graduate School Website  
https://www.niu.edu/grad/

Office of the Dean (Williston 100)  
Dr. Bradley Bond  
Dean  

Jonie Barshinger  
Administrative Assistant  

Debbie Williams  
Office Manager  

bbond@niu.edu  
(815) 753-9402  
jonie@niu.edu  
(815) 753-9403  
dwilliams16@niu.edu  
(815) 753-0425
Bonnie Feltz  
Office Support Specialist  
bfeltz@niu.edu  (815) 753-9654

Graduate School Information  
Brenda Hoiness  
Williston 100  
gradsch@niu.edu  (815) 753-0395

Admissions  
Erin Corwin-Surwillo  
Adams 201  
corwinsurwillo@niu.edu  (815) 753-9410  
Graduate international applications

Anne Arne  
Williston 100C  
aarne@niu.edu  (815) 753-4900  
Domestic degree-seeking applications  
Non-degree, student-at-large applications

Jeremy Falk  
Adams 203  
jfalk@niu.edu  (815) 753-9413  
Initial application processing

Enrolled Student Staff  
Michael Castillo  
Williston 100  
mcastillo2@niu.edu  (815) 753-0431  
Schedule/grade changes

Christine Holloway  
Williston 100  
cholloway@niu.edu  (815) 753-9409  
Schedule/grade changes  
Certificates of graduate study

Theresa La Rocco  
Williston 100  
tlarocco@niu.edu  (715) 753-9411

Thesis/Dissertation Office  
Carolyn Law  
Adams 104  
claw@niu.edu  (815) 753-9405

Graduate Career and Professional Development  
Beth Wilkins  
Adams 210  
ewilkins@niu.edu  (815) 753-9406

Technical Support  
Lakeisha Jackson  
Williston 100  
lapplewhite@niu.edu  (815) 753-9414

Graduate Colloquium  
Debbie Williams  
Williston 408  
dwilliams16@niu.edu  (815) 753-0425
Enrollment Requirements

A graduate student must register in the term for which he or she is admitted, or request deferral of admission (for up to two years, subject to departmental approval). Otherwise, admission will be canceled. Provisional admission is not subject to deferral. If a student admitted provisionally is unable to enroll in the term for which provisional admission was granted, the student is expected to arrange to supply the missing credentials in order to be eligible for unconditional admission in a subsequent term.

A student who has been enrolled in a graduate degree program but did not graduate from that program, and whose enrollment has lapsed for 12 months or more, must reapply for admission to the Graduate School in order to pursue either the same or a different graduate program, unless a leave of absence was obtained. (Such leaves are provided for only in the context of requirements for continuous enrollment in courses numbered 699/799; see below.) A student who is readmitted to the same degree program is bound by the program requirements of the catalog in force in the term for which the admission was most recently granted.

As a general principle, a student’s level of enrollment in any term should reflect the level of scholarly activity being undertaken. Also, a student making use of the staff or facilities of the institution in any way that relates to fulfilling degree requirements or earning course credit should be registered; for example, a student must be enrolled in the term in which the candidacy examination is taken. (However, a student who is not otherwise required by departmental or Graduate School regulations to be enrolled need not be registered in the term of intended graduation from a degree program in order to graduate.)

A student who would normally be required to register during some period of time to maintain continuous enrollment in a course numbered 699/799 may occasionally experience circumstances that render continuous enrollment infeasible (prolonged illness, military obligations, enforced absence from the country, etc.). In such a case, the student may petition the Graduate School for a leave of absence for the duration of the special situation. The approvals of the major department and of the associate dean of the Graduate School are required. Note that approval of a leave of absence only relieves the student of the obligation to maintain continuous enrollment and/or to reapply for admission to the Graduate School upon completion of the leave if this would otherwise be required; it does not extend the period of time allowed for degree completion.

Time Limitations and Revalidations of Outdated Course Work

The Ph.D. program in educational psychology is designed so that full or part time students can graduate well in advance of the time limits stipulated by the Graduate School. However, in the event that a student takes longer than expected to complete program requirements, the following selection from the Graduate Catalog is important to review:
Doctor of Education

Except as indicated below, the student must fulfill all requirements for a doctoral degree within nine consecutive years immediately preceding the date of the student’s graduation from that degree program.

The time limit applies to enrollment in all graduate course work applicable to the doctoral degree, excluding deficiency courses and hours waived because a student holds a relevant master’s degree, but including work for which transfer credit is allowed. If any such NIU course does not fall within the time limit defined above, the student must demonstrate competency in the course material to the satisfaction of the department offering the course. Transfer courses falling outside the limitation of time cannot satisfy degree hour requirements.

Revalidating Courses

To revalidate a course, the student must contact the department from which the course is offered currently and follow the appropriate procedures for demonstrating currency as described. Within the LEPF department, students can demonstrate currency in courses in a variety of ways, including passing exams in current courses, writing persuasive papers describing their use of the subject matter of the course in their current professions, and/or responding satisfactorily to a professor’s questions about their knowledge of the subject matter. The decision to require a student to re-take an expired course is at the discretion of the faculty.

Graduation

A student hoping to graduate at the close of a given academic term must have applied for graduation by the deadline in the Graduate School Calendar (may be obtained on the website www.niu.edu). This is true whether or not the student wishes to participate in the commencement exercises. All students who apply for graduation by the deadline are put on the preliminary graduation list for that term (the Application for Graduation form may be obtained directly from the Graduate School website.

If a student applies for graduation in a given term and does not graduate, the applicant must contact the Graduate School to defer graduation, and then must make appropriate arrangements with the Graduate School to re-apply for graduation at the appropriate time.
Clearance for Graduation

After the Graduate School receives the graduation application and the student’s name is placed on the list of potential graduates, the records staff checks the student’s file for eligibility to graduate. A letter is sent to the student, with a copy to the department, indicating any requirements that apparently have not been met. Only one such notification is sent to each student on the graduation list for any given term. It is the student’s responsibility to follow up as necessary. However, the student or advisor may at any time check with the appropriate Graduate School records officer regarding the student’s status with respect to graduation, whether or not problematic issues have been resolved, and so on.

Students who are cleared for graduation for a given term are sent a certificate of completion at the end of that term; the diploma follows some weeks after Commencement. A student who has applied for graduation and has completed all requirements for the degree well in advance of the end of the term may also obtain the certificate of completion prior to the end of the term, upon submission of a written request. The certificate can be sent either to the student or directly to another individual or agency, as the student prefers. Typically, the certificate of completion is accepted without question as “proof of degree.” However, if the student so requests, the associate dean will send a supplementary letter to any employer or other agency, explaining the academic situation.

Participation in Commencement Ceremony

Students on the graduation list automatically receive information about the commencement ceremony and a reply card that they are asked to return if they wish to participate. Should they lose or forget to return this card, they may still participate, provided that they are on the graduation list (however, this omission makes the associate dean’s planning of the event rather more complicated). Students should not plan to participate in the ceremonies before their degree requirements are completed.

With advance notice, accommodation can be made for graduates or guests with vision or hearing impairments, limited mobility, or other special circumstances; please contact the associate dean concerning any such case.

The Graduate School commencement ceremonies are held in the Convocation Center. Please see the Graduate School website for details.
Chapter 3

Financial Support

Graduate Assistantships

Two assistantships will be offered to full-time students who enter the PhD program in each cohort. For students who are interested in being considered for an assistantship, a form will be made available at the time when they submit their application for admission to the program. Educational psychology faculty will review applications to the program during the spring semester. Of the students who are admitted to the program and have expressed interest in an assistantship, 4-5 will be invited to interview for the assistantships. In late April or May, the top two interviewees will be notified that they were selected for an assistantship.

The Department of Leadership, Educational Psychology and Foundations is occasionally able to hire graduate assistants to assist with departmental tasks, faculty research, and/or teaching courses each year. Students who are interested in these positions should inquire about the availability to the program area coordinator.

Part-time Instructor Positions

Doctoral students with master’s degrees and appropriate experiences may apply for positions as part-time instructors in the Department of Leadership Educational Psychology and Foundations. Students may be eligible to teach undergraduate courses in educational psychology and child or adolescent development. Students who wish to be considered for an instructor position should submit a letter of interest and vita to the department chair or assistant chair.

Scholarships, Fellowships & Financial Aid

College of Education scholarships can be found through MyScholarships, a searchable database which is administered by the NIU Financial Aid and Scholarship Office. Applications are typically due by the spring semester for the following academic year.

NIU Financial Aid and Scholarship Office: http://www.niu.edu/fa/
MyScholarships: https://go.niu.edu/MyScholarships

NIU Graduate School Fellowships are awarded competitively each year and can include both tuition remission and stipends.

Dissertation Completion Fellowships provide doctoral students one year of support to complete their dissertations.
Carter G. Woodson Fellowship provides financial support for doctoral students who are U.S. citizens and are African American, Latino, or Native American to begin or complete their degrees. Graduate School Fellowship website: https://www.niu.edu/grad/funding/fellowships.shtml

For further information on additional education scholarships for which you may be eligible, you may wish to contact the following offices:

Illinois Student Assistance Commission: https://www.isac.org
    Advanced Degree page: http://www.isac.org/students/during-college/advanced-degree/
    Email: isac.studentservices@isac.illinois.gov
    Phone: 800.899.ISAC (4722)
    Spanish-speaking counselors are also available.
    Hearing Impaired Voice: 800.526.0857  TDD: 800.526.0844

Conference and Travel Support

Some divisions or special interest groups within professional associations, such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA), will offer financial assistance (covering a portion of travel and conference fee costs) to graduate students whose conference proposals were accepted for presentation. Ask your faculty advisor if he/she is aware of such opportunities available. The LEPF Department may award graduate students some travel funding if the budget allows. Students must submit an application for support to the department as soon as possible after they have been notified that they will be presenting at a conference.
Students have several advisors who serve different functions during their progress toward graduation. In chapter two of this guide, the role of graduate school advisors was described. In this chapter, the roles of program advisors, department chair, and thesis/project/dissertation chairs are described.

Program Advisors

The program advisor is a faculty member within the educational psychology program. Advisement is given regarding planning one’s program of study, selecting the timing of courses within and outside of the major, identifying areas of study, fulfilling deficiencies, meeting prerequisites, arranging internships, discussing potential dissertation topics, responding to general program questions, and directing the student toward helpful resources. Students are responsible for contacting their advisors, making appointments, and communicating with them about their progress on a regular basis (at least once per semester is recommended). It is important to keep in mind that faculty are on nine-month academic year contracts and do not regularly work for NIU during the summer months unless they are teaching a summer course. (Faculty often conduct research, write for publication, write grant proposals, attend conferences, and prepare courses during this time period.) Some faculty members, however, may be available for consultation during portions of the summer. Students should inquire in advance about an individual advisor’s availability. Faculty advisors are responsible for making themselves available to their students, and for conferring with them on issues concerning their program. Program advisors are also responsible for making sure students fulfill deficiencies, as deficiencies are not tracked in the MyNIU system.

Students are assigned to an initial program advisor when they are admitted to the program. As soon as possible after admission, the student should make an appointment with the program advisor, who assists the student in selecting courses for the first semester and discusses the program of study. In most cases, the initially assigned program advisor continues to serve in this advisory role until the student has completed all course work and is ready to complete their qualifying exam (described later in this chapter) to enter the dissertation phase. At the time of the qualifying exam, the student chooses his/her exam committee chair and members, which may or may not include the program advisor.

In rare cases where a change of program advisor is necessary, all parties involved (current advisor, new advisor, department chair) should be consulted about the change, and a form indicating this change should be submitted to the Graduate School. This form should be initiated by the educational psychology graduate secretary.
Program of Courses

Students should meet with their advisor regularly to plan their program of courses. Course work consists of both required courses and electives. Once admitted to the program, students are assigned to a cohort. Students within a cohort take all required courses together in the same sequence. Elective courses should be selected in consultation with the program advisor.

Each student’s program of courses is tracked and managed within MyNIU. Program advisors also have advising sheets that should be updated regularly (ideally, each semester) with students in order to plan courses for future semesters. A maximum of 30 semester hours from a master’s degree may be included in the program of courses.

Occasionally, courses will not automatically go into the correct ‘course slot’ in the official program of study maintained by the MyNIU system, and the system will show that a student has not fulfilled a requirement in his or her program when in fact the student has. In particular, MyNIU does not automatically populate transfer credits from a master’s program (up to 30 hours). A special request has to be sent by the department for the graduate school to do this. The department also has to initiate any course substitutions to MyNIU. The department’s graduate advisor will communicate these changes to the graduate school. All changes to the program must be approved by the program advisor.

Doctoral Degree Requirements

The Ph.D. in Educational Psychology requires the equivalent of at least three years of full-time academic work, or a minimum of 93 semester hours of graduate work beyond the baccalaureate degree, including the following: a maximum of 30 hours from a master’s degree; required courses in learning theory, human development, culture, and research methods (27 hours); elective courses (18 hours); research internship (6 hours); and dissertation (12 hours).

Course requirements appear in the advising form on the following page.
### Ph.D. In Educational Psychology

**Student Advising Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student: ______________________________</th>
<th>Date: __________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisor: ______________________________</td>
<td>Catalog year:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Program filed:** yes ___ no ___ ________

(Please check one) (Date Filed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPS 701</td>
<td>Professional Practices in Educational Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPS 710</td>
<td>Seminar in Lifespan Human Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPS 713</td>
<td>Advanced Educational Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPS 715</td>
<td>Education and Human Cognitive Processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPS 718</td>
<td>Research Seminar in Motivation and Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1. Content Core Courses (15 hours)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ETR 522</td>
<td>Educational Statistics II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPS 524</td>
<td>Ethnographies in Human Development and Learning within Educational Settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPS 723</td>
<td>Design of Research on Human Development and Learning in Educational Settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPS 739</td>
<td>Fieldwork Methods in Educational Research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2. Methods Core Courses (12 hours)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPS 786</td>
<td>Internship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3. Elective Course Work in Cognate Area - Selected in Consultation with Advisor (18 hours)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____________</td>
<td>____________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4. Internship (6 hours)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPS 786</td>
<td>Internship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5. Dissertation (minimum 12 hours)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____________</td>
<td>____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester taken/taking</td>
<td>Credit Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Master’s Courses (maximum 30 hours)

Minimum number of hours = 93
Minimum number of hours = 33

Revised January 2020
Sample Cognate Areas of Study—Doctoral Program

The doctoral program provides the opportunity for students to develop expertise in an area of interest through taking elective courses (for 18 semester hours) related to their anticipated dissertation topic. The following is an example to show how students could pursue particular interests. Many options are possible. Courses can be selected from within or beyond the College of Education, and should be chosen in consultation with the student’s program advisor:

Sample Area of Study: Adolescent Motivation

- EPS 718  Research Seminar on Motivation in Education
- EPS 706  Research in Educational Settings
- ETR 722  Methods of Multivariate Analysis
- EPS 739  Fieldwork in Educational Research
- PSY 671  Human Motivation
- HDFS 684  The Family with Adolescents

Other areas of study may include combining courses within and related to the major; for example, students may be interested in focusing on:

- Culture and Human Development
- Motivation
- Psychology of Reading and Language
- Teacher Education
- Instructional Technology and Learning
- Cognition and Instruction

Course work for some areas of study may be appropriate to apply toward earning different types of Graduate Certificates. These certifications will be recorded on students’ diplomas. For instance, the Advanced Certificates in Quantitative or Qualitative Methodology in Education are strongly recommended.

Certificate of Graduate Study in Behavioral Analysis

Students may choose to specialize in behavior analysis and complete the Certificate of Graduate Study in Behavior Analysis prior to or concurrent with doctoral coursework in educational psychology. All Educational Psychology doctoral students are eligible to complete this sequence of courses, though they need to formally complete an application for the program through the Department of Special and Early Education. These students are exempt from the EPS 739 methods requirement, and their cognate will consist of the following courses:

- SESE 554  Applied Behavior Analysis and Positive Behavior Support in School and Community Settings
- SESE 570  Concepts and Principles of Behavior Analysis
- SESE 603  Functional Analysis for Special Educators
- SESE 792  Seminar: Single-Case Research Methodologies for Behavior Analysts
- SESE 709  Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis and Research-based Interventions for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- SESE 710  Behavioral Applications and Consultation in School and Community Settings
- SESE 711  Ethics and Professional Behavior for Behavioral Consultation in Special Education

The Association for the Behavior Analysis International has approved the listed courses as meeting coursework requirements to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) examination. Individuals will need to meet additional requirements to become eligible for the BCBA examination. Students who complete a behavior analytic dissertation can apply for BCBA-D status, a designation for doctoral-level BCBAs.

**Research Internship**

A research internship is required as part of the doctoral program. The research internship is undertaken with consultation from the student’s program advisor. Students are advised to select an internship that fits their study interests and furthers their professional goals. Thus, it is recommended that students identify an internship supervisor/faculty mentor whose area of research and/or research methods align with the student’s anticipated dissertation project and methods. The internship requirement can only be fulfilled with an internship which spans two consecutive semesters. In order to meet the internship requirement, the student is expected to assist a faculty member with his or her research, or conduct independent research under the close supervision of a faculty member for two consecutive semesters. While collaboration with faculty within the educational psychology program is encouraged, with the approval of the student’s advisor, the internship may involve work with faculty outside of the department or university. The faculty mentor and student will determine the specific responsibilities for assisting with the formulation of a research project and/or data collection and analysis.

Students are expected to spend about 10 to 12 hours per week as an intern. Students are not paid but receive course credit (EPS 786) for successfully completing the internship requirement when the faculty mentor submits a satisfactory grade. The expectation is that at the end of the internship, the student will produce a research paper for presentation or publication or other artifact demonstrating their contribution to the research project.

**Candidacy Exam**

**Purpose**
The candidacy exam is designed as a bridge between coursework and the dissertation proposal. Doctoral students will be guided by faculty members to engage with the research literature to deepen their understanding of theories and methods that will be central to their anticipated dissertation topic. The written responses to exam questions will form the basis for the student’s dissertation proposal.

**Process**
The candidacy exam may be taken after completion of coursework and the internship. You must be enrolled in the term in which the candidacy examination is taken. Students may take 1 hour of independent study (e.g., EPS 797), if they are not enrolled concurrently in another course when completing their candidacy exam.
Candidacy Exam Committee
Although doctoral students are generally assigned academic program advisors upon admission to the program, it is your responsibility to select a chair for your candidacy exam committee. In consultation with your candidacy chair, you will select a minimum of three faculty to serve as your candidacy exam committee. Any faculty member at NIU can serve on the committee, not just those in the Curriculum and Instruction program area, the Department, or the College of Education. But the majority of your committee must be senior graduate faculty in your program area.

Exam Process
Once the committee is chosen, the candidacy exam meeting is held and last approximately one hour. The committee members collectively write three questions (or two depending on the scope and depth) that focus on your dissertation topic (e.g., conceptual/theoretical framework, methodology). Please come prepared to take notes during the meeting about the questions posed. After that meeting, you will be given 6-8 weeks to respond to the questions. Most candidacy exam responses average 15 pages in length.

Your committee will ask you to return your candidacy exam responses electronically and/or in hard copy. Once your responses are submitted for review, the committee will take no longer than two weeks to read and render a decision: pass, re-write before rendering a decision, or fail. In the case of a re-write before rendering a decision, the student is given one week in which to re-submit his/her exam for final review. The chairperson will contact you to share the outcome of the committee’s decision, and a letter will be sent by the department confirming that outcome.

Candidacy Exam Tips
Below are helpful candidacy exam tips:
1. Please write the candidacy question at the beginning of each response, followed by the name of the faculty member who will review.
2. Most candidacy exam questions have multiple components. Thus, re-read the questions often and answer all elements.
3. Remember to use APA citations correctly.
4. Use headings and subheadings as you write and include transitions.
5. Consider adding a summary at the end of long sections.
6. Ask another advanced doctoral student to read your candidacy exam responses before you submit them.
7. Pace yourself! Be sure to spend adequate time on each question.
8. You may ask your committee members for clarification about the exam questions, however, they cannot read or edit your writing prior to the exam deadline.

Candidacy Exam Adjudication
Candidacy exam responses are graded holistically. Each committee member is asked to read a specific exam response(s), provide written feedback (either on the exam question itself or on separate paper), and render a decision as to the quality of the response. All written feedback is be collected and shared with you by the committee chair. Below are common criteria used in rendering a committee’s decision:
- Is the content of the student's answer correct?
• Has the student answered the entire question?
• Is the student's writing clear and well-structured?
• Has the student demonstrated an acceptable grasp of the literature or topic of his/her study?
• Has the student made appropriate use of APA formatting and style?
• Has the student provided a response with enough detail to adequately address the question?
• Are there an adequate number of references to appropriately address the question?
• Does the response represent the candidate’s original work?

The candidacy exam committee may allow a student who fails a candidacy examination to repeat in a subsequent semester. A student who fails a candidacy exam a second time, or is not granted permission for a second attempt, will not be permitted to continue his/her work toward the doctorate, and admission to the doctoral program will be terminated.

The Dissertation Process

Purpose
The purpose of a dissertation is for doctoral candidates to devise and execute an original research project in order to add to the knowledge base of the field of educational psychology and contribute to the candidate’s knowledge about the conduct of research.

Procedures
• The student should consult the Graduate Catalog and obtain “Guidelines for Preparing a Dissertation at NIU,” found on the Thesis and Dissertation Office page of the Graduate School website concerning the conduct and writing of a dissertation.

• The student initiates the process. The student selects and invites an educational psychology faculty member with expertise in the student’s area of study who holds senior status with the Graduate School to chair his/her dissertation. If warranted, given the focus of study and/or seniority of appropriate faculty, co-chairs may be selected. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to select a committee chair from outside of the educational psychology faculty. In these cases, the student may do so with the approval of the educational psychology faculty.

• After an approved dissertation chair accepts the invitation, the student, with advice from the chair, selects a committee. The committee will ultimately consist of at least four faculty members, including the chair. At least half of the committee members need be faculty within the Educational Psychology program area. The committee members are chosen by the student for their expertise on the topic or methodology of the proposed dissertation. See the section on Composition of the Dissertation Committee for specific information.

• The student begins composing a dissertation proposal that identifies questions to be researched and the need for the study based on an extensive literature review. The proposal consists of what will ultimately become the first three chapters of the dissertation (introduction, literature review, methods). Preliminary plans for analyzing data are also included within the methods chapter, though these will be more fully fleshed out in the final dissertation. (See the sample outline for a dissertation/thesis/project proposal presented in this chapter).
• The dissertation chair reads multiple drafts of the proposal and adds, deletes, modifies and discusses the ideas and plans presented. Committee members may also be involved in this phase.

• After a completed draft proposal is approved by the chair, the student contacts the dissertation committee and provides a copy of the draft proposal for review. A proposal meeting is scheduled for the student and committee to evaluate the proposed study. The meeting includes a presentation of the research questions, review of the literature, and proposed design of the study. This presentation provides an opportunity for faculty members to interact with the student and address questions concerning the research being proposed. The proposal presentation requires the student to explain fully and carefully exactly what he/she plans to do and how it fits into existing literature. The student is expected to provide a very detailed explanation and justification as to why the research topic is worthy of study and how the proposed research will be conducted or analyzed. This meeting allows faculty to provide input at the beginning of the study when suggestions for improvement can be incorporated.

• When the proposal is tentatively approved by the committee, the student then redrafts the proposal as advised by the committee, which may involve expanding the related literature and research methodology. The revised proposal may or may not be reviewed again by the entire committee, and may or may not require an additional formal presentation. It is at the committee’s discretion to decide the terms of revision.

• Once the expanded proposal meets the standards of the committee, the student must complete and submit an application to the IRB in consultation with their dissertation chair. Once IRB approval has been granted, the candidate has the go-ahead to complete the study. The candidate must provide a copy of the approved proposal and IRB application to the department for filing purposes (see section below).

• After the proposal and IRB application have been approved, the candidate collects and analyzes the data and then completes the final chapters of the dissertation (Results and Discussion). The candidate will also likely need to make minor revisions of earlier chapters in light of their findings or any modifications they needed to make along the way. Much time-consuming interaction occurs between the candidate and the dissertation chair and, when appropriate, with the other members of the committee, depending on the expertise needed.

• The dissertation proceeds until it is finally approved by the chair and/or dissertation committee for the defense. Upon verbal approval from the dissertation chair to schedule the defense, the student initiates scheduling with other committee members, and finds a room for the defense with the help of the graduate secretary. Completed dissertations must be submitted to the committee and to the Graduate School three weeks prior to the defense date. Dissertation candidates need to plan well in advance in order to meet Graduate School deadlines for graduation within a particular semester.

• The committee chair initiates the appropriate paperwork for the defense. It is a good idea if both the student and faculty chair inform the graduate secretary of developments regarding the defense date and location.
Dissertation Proposal Outline

A traditional dissertation proposal should present the first three chapters that will become the dissertation or thesis, as well as a plan for analysis.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

- Direct statement of the purpose of the study/project
- Introduction to the problem and its importance (connected to theory and research)
- Research Questions (if applicable)

Chapter 2 – Framing of the Study (How this study/project connects to relevant research/theory)

- Why this study/project is needed.
- Discussion of relevant theories in relation to the study/project.
- Analysis of prior relevant research demonstrating how research questions or action plans follow from the research cited.
- Explanation of why the participants and methods for this study were chosen.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

- Setting and Participants
  - Describe the characteristics of the setting in which the study will be conducted.
  - Describe the participants.
  - How many? Characteristics?
  - Recruitment? Will the participants be assigned to groups? How many? On what basis?

- Measures
  - Interview Protocols
  - Observation Protocols
  - Reliability and validity for quantitative instruments.
  - Who will administer each instrument?
  - When will each be administered? In what order? Will they be pilot tested? On whom? How? What will be determined from that?

- Procedures
  - How exactly will you collect data?
  - Why are these procedures justified?
  - Have these procedures been used by previous researchers?
  - Have you conducted a pilot study?

- Plans for Analysis

As an alternative to the traditional dissertation model, students may opt for a 3-papers model in which they write three separate publication-ready manuscripts. Students who select this option must develop their proposal in consultation with their dissertation chair and committee.
Composition of the Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee will consist of at least four members, to be chosen by the student. At least half of committee members must be faculty within the Educational Psychology program. Committee members will include representatives of the student’s major and minor fields and should be selected based on their ability to provide advice and feedback on relevant theory, research methods, and research context(s). Primary advising responsibilities will be addressed by the committee chair throughout the process, with other committee members being asked to contribute their expertise as needed. All committee members will review the full proposal and dissertation prior to scheduled defenses. If not already selected by this point, committee members should be chosen soon after the student passes the candidacy exam. In addition to the four members selected by the candidate, the Graduate School may select a Dean’s Designee, who will review the dissertation manuscript submitted to the graduate school and attend the final defense. The Graduate School invites the dean’s designee and delivers the dissertation manuscript to him/her.

All members of the committee must be appointed to the graduate faculty of Northern Illinois University. The majority of the voting members of the committee must be tenured or tenure-track faculty members at Northern Illinois University. At least one-half of the voting members must be senior members of the graduate faculty, and at least one-half of the voting members, including the committee chair, must be graduate faculty members in the student’s program. The Dean’s Designee will serve as an ex officio, nonvoting member of all committees to conduct the oral defense of the dissertation.

Dissertation Defense

The candidate provides copies of the dissertation to be defended to the committee members and the graduate school at least three weeks prior to the defense date¹. The dissertation chair, committee members, and an outside reader (if designated by the Graduate School Dean) must attend the oral defense of the dissertation, and College of Education faculty and students are invited to attend the defense meeting. The candidate presents a brief justification and overview of the dissertation research and directions for future research in a 20 to 30 minute oral presentation. The presentation is followed by a questioning period, and then the dissertation committee confers about the passing of the oral defense and determines further revisions to be made before the student is able to submit the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School.

Responsibilities of Faculty and Students on Thesis/Project or Dissertation Committee

There are complementary responsibilities of students and faculty members with regard to work on doctoral dissertation committees. They are all responsible for contributing constructively, actively, and knowledgeably to the process.

¹ Check the Graduate School website (https://www.niu.edu/grad/index.shtml) for deadlines regarding the submission of pre-defense copies of the dissertation, and making graduation deadlines.
The committee member will:

1. Be available by appointment to discuss projects, possible areas of interest, research design, proposals, and drafts.
2. Meet with the student on a regular basis, considering the student’s requests and progress. Chairs and co-chairs primarily assume this responsibility.
3. Share responsibility with the student and other committee members for the quality of the study’s design, analysis, and writing.
4. Read and provide feedback on written material, usually within a two-week period.
5. Be reasonably available to provide more immediate feedback to a quick question or two by in-person appointments, e-mail, or phone conferencing (i.e., within a week).
6. In consultation with committee members, approve projects that meet standards of sound design, competent execution of study, appropriate analysis, and proficient writing.
7. Assume shared responsibility for the student’s effective completion of the IRB application. The chair should review and approve the student’s IRB application prior to submission.
8. Encourage students to participate in professional activities in the field. Be available to work within a reasonable time frame (i.e., a semester in advance) to help prepare students for public presentations related to their research.
9. Communicate with the graduate secretary to ensure completion and submission of all necessary paperwork regarding the composition of the dissertation committee, scheduling and outcomes of defense, and final approval of dissertation/thesis.

The student will:

1. Invite faculty to serve on committee (after consultation with program advisor/dissertation chair).
2. Take initiative for maintaining contact through phone calls, e-mail, or other correspondence.
3. Provide any material for feedback at least two weeks prior to deadlines.
4. Communicate feedback from committee members with the committee chair, so that any inconsistencies can be addressed.
5. Address feedback given for written work. Edit or make final copies only after all revisions are made and agreed upon by committee and student.
6. Prepare final proposal drafts and defense copies as if they were the final documents in a manuscript being submitted for publication (e.g., APA format, clean copies, pages numbered, all attached documents organized). This is an important part of the learning process, and conveys professionalism to the chair and committee members.
7. Check with the committee chair (and co-chair, if appropriate) that the dissertation is of a sufficiently high standard before presenting it to committee members or before scheduling a defense date.
8. Schedule defense dates in consultation with the committee. Student needs to allow at least three weeks (preferably four weeks) to advise graduate secretary of defense date as form needs to be filed with the Graduate School three weeks prior to the defense.
9. Submit a paper pre-defense copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School at least three weeks prior to the scheduled defense. (This can be submitted through the LEPF graduate secretary.)
10. Following the defense, complete revisions requested by the committee and submit for review as determined during the defense.
11. Electronically submit the dissertation to the Graduate School once approved to do so by chair and committee.

Process for Submitting Applications for Institutional Review Board (IRB Approval)

Students will be introduced to the ethical standards for the conduct of research with human subjects, as well as the procedures for obtaining approval for conducting research, in EPS 701, EPS 723, and other research methods courses. All dissertations in educational psychology require submission of an IRB application and approval before data can be gathered. With the approval of their dissertation chairs, students may initiate the application process when they are finalizing their dissertation proposals. Students should obtain current guidelines, procedures, and forms for preparing applications from the NIU Office of Research Compliance (www.grad.niu.edu/orc). Students must submit completed applications and supporting materials (e.g., surveys, interview questions, consent forms), with the signature of their dissertation chair, to the LEPF graduate secretary. This application will be forwarded to an Authorized Departmental Reviewer (ADR). When the ADR approves and signs the application, she or he will give it to the department secretary to be forwarded to the Office of Research Compliance. The student must receive formal approval from the ORC before data collection may begin.
## Doctoral Degree Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASES OF GRADUATE STUDY</th>
<th>WHAT TO GET DONE AND WHAT TO ANTICIPATE</th>
<th>FORMS REQUIRED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial advisement</td>
<td>In an acceptance letter from the department’s graduate secretary, admitted students will be assigned an advisor and informed of any deficiencies to be addressed early in the program of study. After acceptance, schedule an initial meeting with program advisor to discuss your goals, interests, course sequencing, and plans to take care of deficiencies, if any. Obtain and review the Educational Psychology Graduate Student Handbook Register for core courses in consultation with program advisor and course schedules. Consult with advisor to plan potential elective courses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of study, courses, internship, candidacy exam phase</td>
<td>Take courses in area of study Plan internship experience with advisor When most of the required coursework has been taken and the internship has been completed, form committee for candidacy examination Schedule date, room, time for candidacy examination When candidacy examination is passed, submit form to Graduate School notifying student has been admitted to candidacy Contact program advisor, make all appropriate changes to program of courses through program advisor, department chair or assistant department chair, and secretary. Check Graduate School calendar for deadlines.</td>
<td>Submit change in Program of Courses form, if necessary Request for Appointment of Committee to Conduct a Doctoral Candidacy Examination form, must be done at least two weeks before the candidacy examination Report on Doctoral Examination form to Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASES OF GRADUATE STUDY</td>
<td>WHAT TO GET DONE AND WHAT TO ANTICIPATE</td>
<td>FORMS REQUIRED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation and preparing for graduation phase</td>
<td>Choose and appoint dissertation director; Graduate School will return form when approved. Work begins on dissertation, registration for EPS 799 (dissertation hours) may begin. A grade of IP (in progress) will be given if satisfactory progress is made each semester for the EPS 799 hours. Continuous registration must be maintained until dissertation is formally approved by GS. Obtain Graduate School Guidelines and APA style booklet. Schedule dissertation proposal meeting. Obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for conducting research. Data collection may begin after IRB and dissertation committee approval is received. When dissertation committee decides student is ready for defense, student schedules date, room, and time. Student should file the application for graduation form with the Graduate School. Student should check the Graduate School website <a href="http://www.grad.niu.edu">www.grad.niu.edu</a> for relevant deadlines. Make all changes to dissertation required by committee and electronically submit committee approved dissertation. Receive clearance from Graduate School for graduation (letter sent to student with copy to department).</td>
<td>Approval of Dissertation Director form to Graduate School. When EPS 799 registration begins, a permit for each semester must be obtained from secretary and approved by the dissertation chair. Approval of Dissertation Proposal form filed with department. IRB form (found online) approved by dissertation chair and appointed faculty IRB reviewer. At least 3 weeks before scheduled defense, student needs to send pre-defense version of dissertation to Graduate School, provide copies for committee. Form also needs to be filed with Graduate School advising of defense date (completed by graduate secretary). Chair obtains rubric from secretary for evaluation of dissertation. When student passes the oral defense, secretary will file Report on Doctoral Examination form and the Approval of Thesis, Dissertation or Documentation form with Graduate School. The student obtains the Application for Graduation form from Graduate School, obtains advisor/chair signature, returns the form to Graduate School the same semester of graduation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above schedule of events should be regarded as a checklist to help students conceptualize the steps to be taken in obtaining the Ph.D. degree in educational psychology. The checklist supplements, but does not replace, the information contained in the Graduate School Catalog.
Resources for Writing Proposals, Theses, and Dissertations

Required


*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th edition)).

Recommended

There are a variety of references for writing theses and dissertations. The following are a few considered helpful:


The following is a quick online reference for APA formatting:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

The Graduate School also features assistance on their web site, www.grad.niu.edu/thesis, which addresses frequently asked questions and general information about office procedures. Also available on this web site is a checklist that alerts students to the most common problems in post-defense versions of theses and dissertations, problems that often result in time consuming corrections for students. The one-page format should be convenient for students to use as they are working on their papers and to remind them to attend to simple issues before they become complex problems that cause frustrating delays.

Sample Theses and Dissertations—NIU

Copies of completed educational psychology theses and dissertations are available on the ProQuest Database or by asking your dissertation chair.

Preparing Theses and Dissertations for Graduate School Readers

Preparing the final dissertation document is very time consuming. If you are formatting your own dissertation, please plan to leave plenty of time for this process. If you are interested in hiring a professional formatter, the graduate school has a list of freelance thesis/dissertation formatters who are familiar with NIUs guidelines. These professionals can be found at: http://www.niu.edu/grad/thesis/
Chapter 5

University Resources

Library Services

Website: http://www.ulib.niu.edu/

This site links to information about:
- Services for persons with disabilities
- Searching electronic sources
- Bibliographic instruction
- On-line tutorials

Full time graduates students can be assigned a locker at Founders Library. Inquire at the library.

Bookstore

Website: http://www.niubookstore.niu.edu

Learning Center

Website: http://www.cedu.niu.edu/learningcenter

Students will be able to find information about the Learning Center in Gabel Hall and information about the:

- Computer Laboratory
- Videoconference classroom
- Media production lab and equipment

Statistics Consulting Laboratory

Website: https://www.niu.edu/statistics-actuarial/scs/index.shtml

Graduate students may get help in having data analyzed through the Statistical Consulting Lab with written permission from their advisor. Information is available at:
Writing Center

Website:  
http://www.niu.edu/uwc/

Information is available about hours when tutors are available for assistance, how to get online assistance, and where to find other links for self-help, pointers about different types of writing and other helpful writing assistance. The writing center provides assistance to advanced writers as well as to struggling writers.

Student Services

Student Life:  
https://www.grad.niu.edu/grad/resources/student-life.shtml
This site contains information about services for students such as housing, health services, recreation, student organizations, accessibility and more at this url:

Gender and Sexuality Resource Center:  
https://www.niu.edu/gsrc/

International Student and Scholar Services:  
https://www.niu.edu/isss/index.shtml

Center for Black Studies:  
https://www.niu.edu/blackstudies/about/who-we-are.shtml

Latino Resource Center:  
https://www.niu.edu/lrc/index.shtml

Department Web Page

http://www.cedu.niu.edu/lepf/
Chapter 6

Graduate Student Opportunities

Committees

Students who wish to serve on Departmental Search Committees are encouraged to tell the department chair or program area coordinator.

The department often gets requests for student representatives on other university committees as well. Inform the department chair if you are interested in serving. Often, faculty will nominate students for such positions based on interest.

Professional Organizations

Students may become student affiliates of the American Educational Research Association. For membership information, see http://www.aera.net.

Students may become student members of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association. For information, see http://www.mwera.org/membership.html

Student memberships in APA Div 15, Educational Psychology, are recommended. It is not necessary to become a member of APA. For information, see http://www.apadiv15.org/index.php/resources/membership