Ed.D. in School Improvement

Student Handbook

2018 - 2019

For Cohort 19 Forward

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UNIVERSITY *of*
WEST Georgia. | College of Education

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Welcome

Welcome to UWG! Congratulations for selecting a premier national and international program in school improvement. Program information, policies, and procedures are included in this handbook to assist you as you move through the course of study.

Our program admission process is selective and rigorous. A quality doctoral program is transformative and requires a high level of discipline, commitment, and sacrifice. At the same time, our college and faculty are committed to fostering innovative, student-focused learning communities. The cohort structure of this program provides strong support to assist students in meeting the academic challenges of a doctoral program. We are pleased you have decided to "Go West."

Mission Statement

Our mission is to develop educators who initiate systemic and sustainable improvements in schools. Graduates will strategically and collaboratively plan, design, implement, and document the impact of educational improvements that promote and increase the academic achievement and social development of all students.

Program Overview

The focus of the program is the development of leaders at all levels of education who will be prepared to lead reform and change efforts in schools. These professionals include classroom teachers, special educators, counselors, school-based social workers, building-level administrators, and district-level administrators. A core tenant of this program is that genuine educational reform and transformation require collaboration, leadership, knowledge, and skills of various educational professionals.

The program has been designed so that students are supported in conducting and completing their dissertations. Through a unique synergy of dissertation classes, workshops, and faculty mentoring, students complete their dissertations simultaneously with coursework. The program prioritizes successfully completing your dissertation. In addition to the core curriculum,

students customize a 12 credit hour Area of Concentration, based on student needs and interests, which provides a focus for studies.

There are only a handful of programs throughout the United States that offer degrees in school improvement, and even fewer that do so at the doctoral level. In this current era of high-stakes educational accountability, individual professional educators need to develop the knowledge and skills that will enable them to successfully implement change in the schools they serve. We are excited to develop leaders who transform schools.

Learning Outcomes

The Doctoral Program in School Improvement faculty have developed five strands known as the program's Core Competencies   Linked to the College of Education Conceptual Framework, the Core Competencies articulate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions graduates of the program will evidence. Key program assessments are aligned to these outcomes and students must achieve and maintain proficiency to remain in Good Academic Standing in the program.

As a result of participating in the Doctor of School Improvement degree program, students will display the following competencies:

• **School Improvement and Reform** – Moving schools and stakeholders in directions that enhance student learning and social development and ultimately benefit society

• **Leadership** – Influencing others toward a shared commitment to a common purpose

• **Teaching and Learning -** Understanding and using the knowledge base on effective teaching and learning to initiate teacher development and school improvement

• **Research and the Effective Use of Data** – Understanding, conducting, and applying impactful research in school improvement and reform

• **Scholarly Persuasion** – Engaging in rational discussion informed by and grounded in the knowledge base and research in education and school improvement

Core Coursework

Teaching and Learning (3 courses; 9 hours)	Leadership for School Improvement (3 courses; 9 hours)	Research and the Effective Use of Data (5 courses; 15 hours)
ϒ **EDSI 9941 (Models of School Improvement and Reform) [3 hrs.]** ϒ **EDSI 9942 (Instructional Leadership that Facilitates School Improvement) [3 hrs.]** ϒ **EDSI 9943 (Models of Professional Development) [3 hrs.]**	ϒ **EDSI 9923 (Leadership for Diversity in the 21st Century) [3 hrs.]** ϒ **EDSI 9925 (Policy Analysis for School Improvement) [3 hrs.]** ϒ **EDSI 9933 (Leadership for Change) [3 hrs.]**	ϒ **EDSI 9960 (Research Design) [3 hrs.]** ϒ **EDSI 9961 (Quantitative Research Methods) [3 hrs.]** ϒ **EDSI 9962 (Qualitative Research Methods) [3 hrs.]** ϒ **EDSI 9963 (Program Evaluation) [3 hrs.]** ϒ **EDSI 9964 (Advanced Research Seminar) [3 hrs.]**

ϒ **EDSI 9901/9902/9903 (Dissertation Mentoring I, II, III) – [2 hrs. each; 6 hrs. total]**

ϒ **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ORIENTATION – On Campus [no credit]**

ϒ **DISSERTATION SUMMER SEMINAR – [no credit]**

Cohort 19 Plan of Study

Year	Time	Course / Title / Semester Hours	Credit Hours
Year 1	**Summer 2018**	• SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ORIENTATION – On Campus • EDSI 9960 - Research Design [3] • EDSI 9933 – Leadership for Change [3]	6
	Fall 2018	• EDSI 9961 – Quantitative Research Methods [3] • EDSI 9943 – Models of Professional Development [3]	6
	Spring 2018	• EDSI 9962 – Qualitative Research Methods [3] • EDSI 9942 - Instructional Leadership that Facilitates School Improvement – [3]	6
Year 2	**Summer 2019**	• EDSI 9171 - Program Evaluation [3] • EDSI 9901 – Dissertation Mentoring I [2] • AoC Course – (Varies for each student [3]	8
	Fall 2019	• EDSI 9923 - Leadership for Diversity in the 21st Century [3] • EDSI 9902 – Dissertation Mentoring II [2] • EDSI 9998 – Research for Doctoral Dissertation [2]	7
	Spring 2020	• EDSI 9903 – Dissertation Mentoring III [2] • EDSI 9998 – Research for Doctoral Dissertation [2] • AoC Course – Varies for each student [3]	7
Year 3	**Summer 2020**	• Virtual Dissertation Boot-Camp • EDSI 9964 – School Improvement Through Data-Driven Decision Making [3] • EDSI 9998 – Research for Doctoral Dissertation [2] • AoC Course – Varies for each student [3]	8
	Fall 2020	• EDSI 9925 – Policy Analysis for School Improvement [3] • EDSI 9998 – Research for Doctoral Dissertation [2] • AoC Course – Varies for each student [3]	8
	Spring 2021	• EDSI 9941 - Models of School Improvement and Reform [3] • EDSI 9998 – Research for Doctoral Dissertation [1]	4
Year 4	(if needed)	• Research for Doctoral Dissertation [1]	
		Total 48 hours of course work include dissertation + 12 hours of AoC = 60 total	60

Assessment and Program Progression

An integral part of the doctoral program is continuous assessment of student learning outcomes to determine whether program learning goals are achieved. These data are then utilized for program improvement.

Throughout the doctoral program, students will maintain an assessment portfolio through TK20. Students may purchase TK20 directly online or may buy a subscription pack at the University bookstore. The online subscription is more cost effective.

The Doctor of School Improvement Degree Advisory Team has developed a series of important program benchmarks which are used to monitor program success in achieving key indicators over time. Key indicators include student evaluations of the orientation programs, student retention rates after two semesters, student evaluations of the dissertation intensive preparation sessions, the percentage of the cohort which achieves candidacy by end of year two, the percentage of cohort which successfully defends their dissertation by end of year three, exit interviews with students who leave the program before completion, active student course evaluations, and graduate completion surveys (two years post-graduation).

In addition to the aforementioned program benchmarks, student progress is monitored in the following key assessments: 1) A *Dissertation Proposal (EDSI 9903)*, 2) *Applied Research Presentation* (*EDSI 9964*), 3) Teaching and Learning Strand key assessment activity (*EDSI 9942*), 4) Leadership Strand key assessment activity (*EDSI 9933*), 5) Dispositions, and 6) external review of completed dissertations. Program staff regularly uses these data to adjust instruction and program outcomes.

Student Advisement

During the first several semesters of coursework, the Program Director serves as the student's academic advisor. After admission to candidacy for the degree, the student's dissertation chairperson serves as the student's primary advisor. The dissertation chairperson facilitates the dissertation process and works with the student to complete required paperwork associated with the dissertation and graduation, including the following:

- *Dissertation Proposal Approval Form*

- *Results of Dissertation Defense Form*

- All dissertation related forms are available on the [School Improvement website.](#)

- All forms related to graduation can be found on the [Registrar's website](#).

Residency Requirement

Every doctoral student fulfills a minimum residency requirement. The requirement is met by completing three consecutive semesters of coursework at the University of West Georgia during which at least three semester hours are completed each semester with a grade of B or higher.

Area of Concentration

Every school improvement student completes an Area of Concentration in addition to the Ed. D. core coursework. The Area of Concentration consists of 12 credit hours, and all 12 hours must be pre-approved by the Program Director. A rationale for the proposed content area is submitted. The student's dissertation study must also be the same general content area as the "area of concentration".

A customized AoC does not have to be taken only at our University. If you want a specialized, unique Area of Concentration, you can "assemble" one from another institution (either online or face-to-face); provided it meets the required "transfer of credit" criteria.

The Program Director facilitates students' completion of the ***[Area of Concentration (AoC) Approval Form](#)***. Using this form, students identify an Area of Concentration theme and or rationale. This form is completed during the first year in the program as soon as the student identifies their interest area.

[AOC Transfer of Credit Form](#) is completed for any courses applied toward the UWG degree from other accredited institutions (Note: if you are applying coursework from UWG, the AOC *Transfer of Credit Form* is not needed). Not all students will have courses that may transfer.

Transfer Credit

In the EDSI doctoral program, a maximum of 12 semester hours of graduate credit may be transferred from another accredited institution or applied from previous coursework at the University of West Georgia, subject to the following conditions:
- Work must have been completed within seven years of the date of admission to the Ed.D. degree program.
- Work must have been applicable toward a graduate degree at the institution where the credit was earned.
- The coursework must be approved by the student's advisor, the Ed.D. Director, and the COE Director of Graduate Studies.
- Courses must have been taken post Master's degree; (normally 7000 level courses or above).
- The courses must meet the requirements for the AOC.
- A grade of B or higher must have been earned in the coursework.

Determining whether courses will be applied toward a student's Area of Concentration involves examining several factors, including:

- The extent to which the course strengthens the student's program.
- The extent to which the course contributes to the student's career objective.
- The student's previous academic preparation.
- The student's professional experience.
- The level and currency of the course.

General Academic Standards

Graduate students must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher to remain in Good Academic Standing. Students must be in Good Academic Standing to be eligible to graduate and for admission to candidacy. Students must also maintain good standing on major program assessments, or will face intervention and consequences.

A student will be dismissed from the program if he or she earns two C's, one F or two U's in dissertation hours.

Grading scale

The doctoral program follows the standard graduate grading policy of the University: A (90-100%), B (80- 89%), C (70-79%), and F (69% or below). Each course instructor, through the syllabus, sets the standard for academic grades. For doctoral work, EDSI 9998 a student is awarded either a S for satisfactory completion of dissertation work or an U for unsatisfactory progress.

Incomplete Grades

In most cases, receiving an "Incomplete" grade in one or more courses removes a student from his or her cohort. If this occurs, the student will have to re-start the sequence where he or she received the incomplete. The Program Director determines when the student may re-enter the program, which normally can occur no sooner than one year after the student is removed from the cohort. In this case, the student resumes courses with a new cohort based on availability of space within the subsequent cohorts.

Leave of Absence

In the event of unusual personal or professional circumstances, the student may request a Leave of Absence from the School Improvement program. The request should be developed in cooperation with the Program Director, using the *Request for Leave Form*. This applies to students enrolled in dissertation courses, and includes summer semesters.

The student must be in academic and professional good standing at the time the request for leave is made. A leave is considered an extraordinary event and will not be considered for convenience reasons.

It is the student's responsibility to submit in writing a request for readmission to the program. The request should be submitted to the Program Director no later than 45 calendar days prior to the beginning of the semester during which the student wishes to reenter the program. An interview may be conducted to determine if the student is ready to reenter the program. If the student is readmitted, he/she may be assigned to the next available cohort starting at the beginning of the term following the last completed term, if space is available.

Memorandum of Understanding

Students will be asked to complete a memorandum of understanding for each year you are in the program. The memorandum includes the essential elements of this handbook. It is a protection for the student and for the program.

Student Review Committee

The purpose of the Student Review Committee (SRC) is to monitor individual student progress within the Ed. D. program. The Doctor of School Improvement Degree Advisory Team members constitute the SRC. The SRC conducts reviews each semester as needed.

Each student is reviewed annually regarding the following:

1. Academic progress and standards,
2. Ethical, legal, and professional standards and performance in the program, and
3. Memorandum of Understanding policies.

Students not performing at the required academic level, not making significant progress toward the dissertation, or judged to be in noncompliance with the ethical, legal, and professional standards or in violation of the Memorandum of Understanding, will be notified. The SRC will recommend a course of action that may include but is not limited to completing a Student Development Plan, placement on academic or other probation, or dismissal from the program.

Appeals and Grievance Procedure

The program follows the applicable appeals procedure developed by UWG.

Academic Honesty Statement

Doctoral students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty throughout the program. Plagiarism occurs when a student represents words, ideas, or information obtained from another person or source without

giving credit. Direct quotations must be indicated and ideas of another must be appropriately acknowledged.

Academic fraud occurs when a student intends to deceive or misrepresent ideas, information, or him/herself. Academic fraud also occurs when a student uses or purchases ghost-written papers or papers developed by another.

Improper academic conduct on the part of the student shall include, but not be limited to: obtaining and/or using information during an examination by means other than those permitted by the instructor, including supplying of such information to other students; submitting through electronic media work that is not the work of the student, such as having another individual post work to Course Den sites in the name of the student; and submitting work that is ghost-written or purchased from any source.

All forms of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, and falsification of academic records, are subject to disciplinary action. Incidents of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Student Review Committee for action.

Program Rigor

Pursuit of the doctoral degree requires students to complete rigorous, time and labor-intensive assignments, and engage in studies in depth. All those who enter doctoral programs should consider whether their life circumstances permit them to complete such programs. Grades of Incomplete are not assigned because students have not adequately planned for the amount of time commitment necessary to complete requirements within the overall context of other life roles and responsibilities.

Admission to Candidacy

In order for a student to be recommended to the Director of the Graduate Studies Office for admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree, the student must successfully complete the entire course sequence for Semesters 1, 2, 3, and 4 and finish a successful dissertation proposal defense.

Certificate Upgrades

Georgia students interested in certificate upgrades are responsible to know and follow all applicable Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) rules. Georgia students eligible for an upgrade must receive notification in writing from the PSC and submit that information to the Program Director. The student is also responsible for obtaining and completing the PSC form required for Level 6 certification. For more information, visit the Professional Standards Commission website at www.gapsc.com.

Dissertation

The program Director works with the students and faculty to identify a dissertation chairperson. Students are responsible for identifying one outside committee member holding a terminal degree. Faculty selections are based on content alignment or methodological needs.

The dissertation committee will follow a collaborative model. While the chair will coordinate committee activities and oversee the completion of the dissertation, each member is expected to make significant contributions throughout the process.

Dissertation Format

The dissertation format must conform to the most recent APA style unless exceptions are otherwise stated in a separate handbook posted on the program website, *UWG General Guidelines for Formatting and Processing*. Students should consult these guidelines as well as the guidelines for format provided by the program early in the dissertation process and become familiar with their use. Students may not formally begin the dissertation until a committee has been identified and has approved the dissertation proposal. Students are responsible to complete Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and receiving approval by the Institutional Review Board as part of the proposal process, prior to beginning their dissertation research. Forms can be obtained at The Office of Research and Sponsored Projects.

The dissertation must be completed and defended within seven years of beginning enrollment in the doctoral program. It is required that students complete the doctoral dissertation with reasonable continuity. Students called to military service or students with other extraordinary circumstances may apply for

an extension of time to the Director, who may consult with the Student Review Committee and the COE Director of Graduate Studies.

Enrolling for Dissertation

The dissertation grade is determined by progress made toward completion of the dissertation. Students who do not make significant progress during a semester will be assigned a grade of Unsatisfactory ("U"). Students are required to complete a minimum of nine hours of dissertation credit but may exceed this amount, if necessary. In order to remain an active student in Good Standing, **students must enroll in at least one hour of dissertation per semester, including summer, beginning in semester 5.** Dissertation hours are typically only offered during one summer session, therefore, students need to be sure they are registered prior to the end of spring semester. This requirement continues until the student successfully defends their dissertation. Students will be dropped from the program if they fail to maintain active status.

It is the student's responsibility to initiate communication and work collaboratively with the dissertation chairperson and committee in identifying goals and timelines for the completion of the dissertation. Students are expected to provide documents to the committee well in advance of meetings and deadlines and should expect to receive feedback in a timely but realistic manner.

The Dissertation Proposal

Once the student has completed the first three chapters of the dissertation, also known as the dissertation proposal, they will submit the proposal to TK20 for assessment. The dissertation proposal serves as a key assessment for the program and as a comprehensive exam. A committee will assess the proposal using the Dissertation Proposal Rubric. Proposals must earn a proficient rating in order to pass the comprehensive exam. Students will have one opportunity to revise the proposal in order to move into the oral defense of the proposal. After two failed proposal attempts, the student will be referred to the student review committee to determine next steps.

Once the assessment committee deems the proposal proficient the dissertation chair and student will schedule the oral proposal defense with the committee. The Dissertation chair will contact the Department of Leadership, Research, and School Improvement if a conference room is needed for the defense. These meetings are scheduled using a virtual platform but a space is available for the chair and committee to gather. This is a closed meeting for the student and dissertation

committee. The [dissertation proposal form](#) should be completed at the conclusion of the proposal defense.

Oral Defense of the Dissertation

Once the dissertation is completed in acceptable form and approved by the dissertation committee, the oral defense of the dissertation may be scheduled. The defense must be scheduled before the EdReview/ProQuest Deadline in order for the student to graduate during that term. It is the student's responsibility to work closely with the dissertation committee to agree on a defense date and then contact the program Director to schedule the defense. At the defense, the student must have available the *[Thesis & Dissertation Defense Results Form](#)*. Based on the results of the oral defense of the dissertation, committee members will make arrangements to provide required signatures.

Submitting the Dissertation

The University of West Georgia uses ProQuest to submit a dissertation electronically. Prior to a dissertation being processed it must meet APA guidelines and be approved by the COE graduate approver. The guidelines posted in the Dissertation General Guidelines for Formatting and Processing provide details regarding how to submit the final draft of the dissertation. All costs incurred for binding and processing the dissertation are the responsibility of the student.

Graduation

Each candidate must apply for graduation the semester before their anticipated graduation. If you do not graduate the semester you applied for graduation the fee will be rolled over into the next semester. If you still do not graduate at that point you will have to reapply and pay the fee again. Please see the [Registrar's website](#) for complete information.

- The *Graduate Student Application for Graduation*
- Graduation fee

These forms should be completed in cooperation with the candidate's advisor. These forms are available online from the [Registrar's Office](#).

Required attire for the graduation and doctoral hooding ceremony are:

- Black doctoral gown
- Gold tassel
- Doctoral hood reflecting the colors of the University of West Georgia
- Either a tam or mortarboard cap

Students may rent, when available, or purchase their regalia for the graduation ceremony. Students should contact the bookstore no later than eight weeks prior to graduation regarding their regalia. Alternately, appropriate regalia may be purchased from Jostens through the bookstore or online.