

# **Components of Handbook for Doctoral Students in Education with A Concentration in Special Education**

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This handbook is designed to provide you with important information that complements the material in the University's *Graduate Catalog* (<http://catalog.grad.uconn.edu/>). All University of Connecticut graduate students are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Code of Conduct regarding *Academic Integrity in Graduate Education and Research* that is included in the graduate catalog (on-line catalog version, p. 224). Award of the degree attests to your broad mastery of subject matter relating to special education, acquisition of research skills, and a concentration of knowledge in a specific area or topic. The essence of this degree is your scholarship based upon completion of courses and intense study in your topic of choice.

## **Mission Statement**

Our commitment is to inspire and prepare professionals in special education to create and broaden opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Students are encouraged to develop their interests in educating learners at risk across a wide range of disabilities incorporating a lifespan perspective. The Doctoral Program is designed to enhance independent thinking and leadership qualities through an individualized program embedded in a thorough knowledge of theory and the existing literature and culminating in active research to guide, direct, and inform the field.

## **Getting Started**

Although there is a core of required courses that doctoral students in special education complete, you will have an opportunity to work closely with your major advisor in developing a plan that is individualized based upon your experiences and professional goals. However, coursework comprises only one component of your program. Practica, clinical experiences, and research opportunities also provide an array of activities designed to enhance your preparation. The emphasis on competencies is delineated in the Doctoral Plan of Action, a tool designed to assist you as you work with your major advisor in determining the competencies to focus on.

## **Doctoral Plan of Action**

This Doctoral Plan of Action illustrates that the Doctoral Program in Special Education at the University of Connecticut comprises a multifaceted experience to help students develop the knowledge, research, and leadership skills necessary to fulfill their professional goals. Coursework, practica, clinical experiences, and student/faculty collaboration are intended to provide opportunities for desired learner outcomes. Many of the tasks are developmental (e.g., submit a proposal, make a presentation, evaluate/critique a presentation), occurring as you progress through the doctoral experience. Use this checklist as a tool as you and your Committee discuss your coursework and other opportunities.

# Special Education Doctoral Plan of Action

<u>Task/Outcome</u>	<u>Completed</u>
A. Knowledge	
1. General special education	_____
2. Specialty area _____	_____
3. Related area(s) _____	_____
4. Statistics and research methodology	_____
5. Use of computer and software programs for data analysis	_____
6. Other: _____	_____
B. Research	
1. Participate as a member of a research team	_____
2. Design a research study (other than dissertation)	_____
3. Write and present to faculty an integrated review of the literature on a selected topic (General Exam)	_____
4. Develop a valid and reliable research instrument	_____
5. Other: _____	_____
C. Writing	
1. Write a proposal for grant funding	_____
2. Complete formal reviews of three manuscripts	_____
3. Write a manuscript for a newsletter or non-refereed journal	_____
4. Have a manuscript published in a newsletter or non-refereed journal	_____
5. Write a manuscript which is reviewed for publication in a refereed journal	_____
6. Have a manuscript published in a refereed journal	_____
7. Edit or co-edit a newsletter, technical report, or manual	_____
8. Other: _____	_____

**Task/Outcome**

**Completed**

D. Leadership and Professionalism

1. Make a presentation to a local school, college, or agency \_\_\_\_\_
2. Make a presentation at a state or regional conference \_\_\_\_\_
3. Submit a proposal for a presentation to a national conference \_\_\_\_\_
4. Make a presentation at a national conference \_\_\_\_\_
5. Develop a critique and provide evaluation data for a presentation you've made \_\_\_\_\_
6. Teach a college class (at least one hour lecture/demonstration) \_\_\_\_\_
7. Teach a seminar course (instructor of record) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Co-teach a course \_\_\_\_\_
9. Teach a lecture course (instructor of record) \_\_\_\_\_
10. Supervise undergraduate or graduate students in fieldwork, internship, or student teaching \_\_\_\_\_
11. Provide consultation or technical assistance to a school, parent, group, or agency \_\_\_\_\_
12. Manage or coordinate a program or activity in a school or Agency \_\_\_\_\_
13. Provide professional development to personnel in a school or agency \_\_\_\_\_
14. Develop an instructional material, test, or curriculum \_\_\_\_\_
15. Evaluate an instructional material, test, or curriculum \_\_\_\_\_
16. Provide exemplary clinical/instructional service. Specify type and duration: \_\_\_\_\_
17. Demonstrate effective use of technology in instruction \_\_\_\_\_
18. Demonstrate approaches to dealing with ethical/moral dilemmas in special education \_\_\_\_\_
19. Develop an improved way of delivering a service \_\_\_\_\_
20. Assume a leadership role in professional organizations \_\_\_\_\_

## **Program Course of Study**

Although there is no fixed requirement regarding number of credits, the Graduate School expects about 20 to 24 credits of coursework beyond the Master's degree. Additionally, least 15 credits of GRAD 6950 (Dissertation Research) must be included in the Plan of Study in addition to at least 20 credits of other coursework. GRAD 6950 credits represent the research effort the student devotes to the research leading to the dissertation (<http://catalog.grad.uconn.edu/offerings.html>). Credits from other institutions, as well as nonmatriculated credits, can be included in a Doctoral Plan of Study so long as they are post-Master's degree credits. Credits acquired while pursuing a Sixth Year Certificate ([http://www.education.uconn.edu/departments/epsy/LEAR\\_6YR.cfm](http://www.education.uconn.edu/departments/epsy/LEAR_6YR.cfm)) may also be applied toward a Doctoral Plan of Study with approval of your Advisory Committee.

Although the following courses are generally included in a Plan of Study, exceptions can be negotiated between you and your advisory committee.

## **Course Listings**

### Doctoral Seminars (12 credits)

EPSY 6194: Four doctoral seminars are required. These are designed to provide in-depth exploration and discussion of current topics in special education such as law and policy, issues relating to persons with behavior disorders and learning disabilities, and literacy.

### Research Methods (9 credits)

EPSY 5605: Quantitative Research Methods I (3 credits)

EPSY 5607: Quantitative Research Methods II (3 credits)

EPSY 6601: Methods and Techniques of Educational Research (3 credits)

### Highly Recommended

EDCI 6000: Qualitative Methods of Educational Research (3 credits)

### Dissertation Research (At least 15 credits required)

GRAD 6950: Doctoral Dissertation Research

### Practicum (recommended)

EPSY 6499: Doctoral Practicum (1-6 credits). A practicum comprises an opportunity to apply theory in a student's area of specialization or interest. This may be in conjunction with a graduate assistantship.

### Area of Emphasis

A minimum of 12 credits (which could include independent study) provides an opportunity to develop expertise in a specialty area such as teacher education, cognitive and attention deficit disorders, early childhood special education, and postsecondary disability services.

### Related Area

The Graduate School (<http://catalog.grad.uconn.edu/PDF/standards.pdf>; see p. 33) requires either foreign language proficiency or six (6) credits in a "related area" (typically in a different department). This can be applied toward the 12 "Area of Emphasis" credits, where appropriate.

## **Practicum/Fieldwork Opportunities**

As you plan for a practicum that can include grant related and/or field-based activities, there are a number of possibilities to explore within the Department of Educational Psychology, across the University, and in the greater educational community beyond the campus. Your advisor is a source of information, and you are encouraged to network to identify areas of potential fieldwork.

Opportunities for graduate assistantships include positions with various grant initiatives coordinated by faculty who are Principal Investigators of national, state, and local projects. You are encouraged to explore options with your major advisor as well as to network with other faculty and graduate students to learn about assistantships.

The A.J. Papanikou Center for Developmental Disabilities (<http://www.uconnucedd.org/>), located adjacent to the University of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington, is a member of a national network of centers for excellence in research, education, and service in the area of developmental disabilities. This Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to conduct interdisciplinary training, research, and information dissemination related to disabilities in children and adults. Center projects address many areas of interest to students in special education, including assistive technology, transition from school to work, community living for adults with disabilities, early childhood special education, and special education law. The faculty and information resources of the Papanikou Center are available to all graduate students in the Special Education Program. In addition,

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a number of Center projects support graduate assistantships for doctoral students with interests related to Center areas of emphasis.

## **Program Procedures and Timelines**

### **Admission**

Doctoral applicants come from a variety of backgrounds, including special education, school psychology, counseling, adult services, or services for students with disabilities. Admission to the Doctoral Program is based on a composite evaluation of an applicant's qualifications including scholarly interests, leadership ability, and potential for making a creative contribution to the field. Deadlines for applications are October 31st for the Spring semester and February 15th for Summer Sessions and/or the Fall semester. Specific criteria used in determining qualified applicants for the Doctoral Program are as follows: a) academic background; b) experience; c) alignment of personal research interests with faculty research interests; d) standardized test scores; and e) personal qualities. Additional information about the admissions process is available from the Coordinator of the Special Education Program ([mike.coyne@uconn.edu](mailto:mike.coyne@uconn.edu)) or the Chair of the Special Education Doctoral Admissions Committee ([joseph.madaus@uconn.edu](mailto:joseph.madaus@uconn.edu)). *Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact faculty members for preliminary discussions regarding research interests. The application should clearly demonstrate a match between the applicant's professional interests and goals and the research agenda of a faculty member.*

### **Financial Aid**

Financial aid comes from a variety of sources. Aid based on academic merit includes graduate assistantships, predoctoral and dissertation fellowships, and summer fellowships. Your advisor can provide you with suggestions for exploring these possibilities as well as scholarships available through the Neag School of Education (see general information at <http://www.grad.uconn.edu/policies.html>). Aid based on demonstrated financial need includes Federal Stafford Loans, Federal campus based aid, and University of Connecticut Tuition Remission Grants. Additional information and forms may be obtained from the Student Financial Aid Office ([http://financialaid.uconn.edu/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://financialaid.uconn.edu/index.php/Main_Page)), 233 Glenbrook Road Unit 4116, Storrs, CT 06269-4116, or by calling (860) 486-2819

The University offers limited funding for the Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship Program (<http://www.rac.uconn.edu/docdissfell.html>), which is designed to support advanced doctoral students in the completion of their dissertation. Eligible students can apply for a one-time award not to exceed \$2,000. Information about this competition is available on the Graduate School website or from Douglas Bradway, Coordinator of Research Services, U-1133, Whetten Graduate Center, Storrs, CT

06269-1133; telephone: (860) 486-0986; e-mail: [doug.bradway@uconn.edu](mailto:doug.bradway@uconn.edu). There is also funding available (up to \$500) for non-routine expenses related to data collection for the dissertation.

## Advising

The Graduate School requires the appointment of a major advisor so every graduate student begins a course of study with a designated advisor, based upon your stated preference or a “match” between your research interests and faculty areas of expertise. At times, a change of major advisor may be warranted, particularly if your research interests evolve and incorporate areas of expertise of another faculty. If a change of major advisor is necessary, a Change of Advisor form, available from the Graduate Records Office (<http://www.grad.uconn.edu/forms.html>), must be filed with the signatures of your former advisor and the new advisor.

Selection of an Advisory Committee should occur when you have completed 12 credits of coursework and are preparing an official Plan of Study. The Dissertation Advisory Committee is comprised of a Chair (the Major Advisor) and at least two Associate Advisors. The Chair must hold graduate faculty status in the student’s Area of Concentration (AOC). If there is no AOC, the Field of Study (FOS) takes precedence. At least one of the Associate Advisors must hold University of Connecticut Graduate Faculty status, and at least one must be from your AOC or FOS. If an external Associate Advisor is desired, the guidelines for securing this appointment (found in the Graduate Catalog in the section entitled Advisory System) must be followed. Committee decisions regarding the approval of the dissertation proposal as well as the General Examination, the written dissertation, and oral defense of the dissertation must be unanimous.

## Course Load and Registration

As you plan with your major advisor, the number of credits and course selection you undertake will evolve. Classification as a full-time student can occur in one of three ways: 1) enrollment in 9 or more credits; 2) enrollment in 6 or more credits while holding a graduate assistantship (50% or greater); and/or 3) enrollment in GRAD 6950. At least 15 credits of GRAD 6950 (Dissertation Research) must be included in the Plan of Study, representing the research effort the student devotes to the research leading to the dissertation.

Students holding graduate assistantships must register for six or more credits per semester. Instructions for registration are sent to all students via e-mail, and materials are also available from the Graduate School (<http://www.grad.uconn.edu/registration.html>). Two advance registration periods are available for the fall semester, one beginning in early April and the other beginning in mid-August.

Similar periods for the Spring semester occur in late October and early January. Depending on course selections, most students can register entirely via the PeopleSoft registration site (<http://www.studentadmin.uconn.edu/psp/CSPR/?cmd=login>). Registration can also occur through the College of Continuing Studies (<http://continuingstudies.uconn.edu>). You are encouraged to review information about payment of fees and deadlines for graduate students at the web site of The Office of the Bursar (<http://www.bursar.uconn.edu/>).

It is important to be familiar with the Graduate School's policy regarding requirements for Continuous Registration. You are advised to read about this policy in the Graduate Catalog (<http://catalog.grad.uconn.edu/PDF/standards.pdf>; see p. 24). Registration must be maintained continuously (except summer sessions) each semester after completing course work until all requirements for the degree have been completed. Failure to maintain continuous registration during any semester results in the student's inactivation with reinstatement possible only after payment of all fees in arrears and the reinstatement fee.

### Residency Requirement

Given the nature of a doctoral degree, there is a residency requirement intended to afford a period of time for focused study and concentrated research efforts often relating to the preparation of a doctoral thesis and prospectus. According to Graduate School requirements, the residency period should occur during the second or subsequent years of graduate work. There are several options for fulfilling this requirement. At least two consecutive semesters or one semester and a contiguous 12 week summer period made up of Summer Sessions I and II or Summer Session IV will meet the requirement. Students ordinarily must register for full-time student status during the residence period. More information about the Residency Requirement can be found in the Graduate Catalog (<http://catalog.grad.uconn.edu/PDF/standards.pdf>; see p. 29)

Your advisory committee will work with you to delineate your residency plan which should allow for full-time study without the undue distraction of outside employment. Your committee is responsible for determining whether employment is a barrier interfering with full-time effort focused on your planned program.

### Qualifying Examination

Faculty in the Special Education Program have determined that the qualifying exam consists of an integrative, in-depth paper in an area of research interest that you will develop following the completion

of courses. A presentation based upon the paper is scheduled for members of your Advisory Committee, faculty, and other students. A copy of your paper should be given to members of your Advisory Committee at least two weeks prior to your presentation. Many students find that this qualifying exam results in a thorough review of the literature that subsequently becomes Chapter II of their dissertation (traditional format) or Chapter I (alternative format).

Students become a candidate for the degree upon:

- passing the general exam
- successful review of the status of the Doctoral Plan of Action requirements,
- completion of all courses on your plan of study,
- fulfilling all related area requirements, as well as the residency, and
- having your dissertation proposal approved.

### Thesis Preparation and Dissertation Prospectus

A dissertation prospectus is a written proposal that delineates the critical problem(s) you wish to examine, a supportive literature review, and the methodology for studying the problem(s). A flowchart to guide you in the process is available at <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/dpg/epsypdp.html>. The policy of the Department of Educational Psychology (<http://www.education.uconn.edu/departments/epsy/>) for the review of dissertation proposals is as follows.

### Submitting the Proposal

The student shall submit a written draft of the proposal to his/her Advisory Committee for feedback and preliminary approval. The date of the submission shall be flexible, and determined by the Major Advisor and the student. It is recommended that the proposal follow the guidelines regarding length and format found in Appendix C, although the Advisory Committee may make the determination regarding final format. Note: Each time a revised document is submitted for feedback and approval to members of the Advisory Committee, the student should allow a minimum of 2 weeks for feedback.

### Readers

Upon preliminary approval of the written draft by the student's Advisory Committee, the Major Advisor (acting on behalf of the Head of the Department or Program to which the student was admitted) shall select two readers from outside the Advisory Committee to review the proposal. The readers may be selected from outside the student's field of study and may include any University of Connecticut

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faculty member. In addition, it is acceptable that at least one reader from outside the University of Connecticut be selected. All readers must hold a doctoral degree.

When conducting the review of the proposal, the readers shall use the Dissertation Proposal Review Cover Sheet (see Appendix C) to guide their comments. Written comments, including a decision to approve or revise and resubmit, must be provided by each reader prior to an oral presentation to the Advisory Committee.

After preliminary approval of the document has been granted by the Advisory Committee, the student should prepare 3 copies of the proposal with the Dissertation Proposal Review Form as the cover sheet (student completes top portion of the form only). The sets are then submitted to the Major Advisor who completes the Reader information. One set is filed with the EPSY office and the remaining sets are sent to the readers. Readers shall return the completed form to the Major Advisor while also providing a copy to the EPSY office. The readers should complete their revision within a period of two weeks or within a period agreed upon by the Major Advisor. At this time, the student may tentatively schedule an oral defense date, anticipating a 2-3 week timeframe for completion of the reader review. [Note: At the same time the readers are completing their review, the student should ensure each member of the Advisory Committee has an updated copy (i.e., all requested revisions have been completed) in order to allow sufficient time for review prior to the oral presentation.]

### Oral Presentation of the Proposal

Once feedback from both readers has been received, the student shall orally present the proposal to the Advisory Committee. The readers shall be invited but are not required to attend. This meeting shall be convened and conducted by the Major Advisor. At the discretion of the Major Advisor, the oral presentation shall be open to other faculty and graduate students. Note that if either reader had recommended the proposal be revised and resubmitted, the student may proceed to the oral presentation of the proposal, but the proposal must be revised and resubmitted to the readers following the presentation.

It is the responsibility of the Major Advisor to ensure that the comments and suggestions of the readers are incorporated into a final version of the proposal. In the event that there is disagreement between the readers and the Major Advisor, the Head of the Department or his/her designee shall serve as an arbitrator to resolve the conflict.

### Final Approval and Submission of the Proposal

Final approval of the proposal may not be granted without unanimous approval by the Advisory

Committee and both readers. A cover sheet (Dissertation Proposal for the PhD Degree) bearing the approval signature of each Advisory Committee member shall be attached to the final proposal (three original sets). These sets, along with the PhD Dissertation Proposal Review Cover Sheet indicating approval from each reviewer, shall be submitted to the Head of the Department or Program. The Head's signature on the cover sheet confirms the approval by the committee and readers. The 3 sets of the cover sheet and proposal may then be forwarded to the Dean's Office and then to the Graduate School.

If the proposal is initially rejected, the student shall be allowed a maximum of two more submissions of revised versions of the proposal to receive approval.

After receiving final approval of the proposal, the student must submit a completed IRB-1 protocol (or IRB-5 exemption form) along with a copy of the dissertation proposal to the Institutional Review Board. Final approval and data collection related to the proposal cannot be granted until IRB approval (or an exemption) is obtained.

### Formats for Doctoral Dissertations in Special Education

The dissertation may take one of two forms: a five chapter format including the introduction to the research study, review of the literature, methods and procedures, results, and discussions and implications OR the alternative format. The alternative format consists of three individual manuscripts based upon the research study that are appropriate for submission to peer-reviewed journals. The organization of the dissertation in the alternative format is: introduction (brief overview of the underlying issue[s] that tie the manuscripts together); manuscript 1, a critical, integrative review of empirical literature on a current topic; manuscript 2, a research report including the abstract, introduction/statement of problem, methods, results, and discussion sections; manuscript 3, an application paper written for practitioners and emphasizing the application of the research findings; and appendices.

### Final Examination

The dissertation must meet all standards prescribed by your Committee and the Graduate School. Specifications for its preparation are available online at <http://www.grad.uconn.edu/policies.html> or at the Graduate Records Office. It is important to plan sufficient time for all members of your Committee to make suggestions for revision. A preliminary or working copy must be submitted to the Graduate Records Office at least seven (7) days before the dissertation defense with a tentative approval page signed by all Committee members. Notification of the time and place of the examination should be sent

to the Graduate Records Office. The steps required of students can be found at <http://grad.uconn.edu/announcing.html>.

The dissertation defense is an examination and is conducted as such. All faculty and graduate students are eligible to attend. Only faculty may ask questions. Ordinarily, the defense begins with your presentation of 20-30 minutes, followed by questions that deal mainly with the field of your dissertation.

The Department of Educational Psychology has adopted this policy relating to the approval of the dissertation. At least five members of the faculty, including all members of the Advisory Committee, must be present at the final examination unless approval from the Dean of the Graduate School has been previously secured. Upon agreement of the Advisory Committee, the readers for the proposal may serve as readers for the dissertation. Note, however, that the role of the reader in the final dissertation defense is different from that in the proposal. That is, decisions regarding the outcome of the defense rest solely with the Advisory Committee, taking into account the opinions of other participating faculty members. Since five faculty members must be present at the final defense, the student and Major Advisor may wish to add the two readers of the proposal to the Advisory Committee following approval of the proposal. If so, then written consent to a change in committee membership should be obtained from the Graduate School.

Any exceptions to the above are subject to policy as outlined in the Graduate Catalog.

APPENDIX A  
Faculty Biographies

Biographical information for faculty in Special Education can be accessed via the Website for the Department of Educational Psychology at: <http://www.epsy.uconn.edu>

## **Format of the Dissertation Proposal**

Although the Advisory Committee shall make the final decisions related to format and length of proposal, the following format is strongly suggested:

### Format

1. Title Page
2. Abstract
3. Introduction
4. Statement of the Problem
5. Background of the Study
6. Research Questions and/or Hypotheses
7. Methods and Procedures
8. Limitations
9. References (Limited to those cited in the proposal)
10. Appendices (if necessary)

### Page Considerations

1. The Title Page is not numbered.
2. The Abstract is not numbered.
3. The Introduction starts on a separate page, and is numbered page 1.
4. Ordinarily, the body of the proposal will not exceed 20 pages. This does not include the Title Page, Abstract, References, or Appendices. The format of the proposal shall follow APA guidelines, such as double spacing, minimum of 10 point font, and 1 inch margins.
5. Students should consider the use of Appendices to present such items as instruments, consent forms, tables, figures, and lengthy descriptions that do not need to be in the body of the proposal. If any of these documents are lengthy, they may be abridged.

**Department of Educational Psychology  
Dissertation Proposal Review Form**

**Instructions to the candidate:** Complete the top portion of this form and attach to the proposal. Submit 3 sets (review form and proposal) to the Major Advisor.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Candidate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Major Advisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title of Dissertation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions to the Major Advisor:** Complete the Reader information. File one set with the EPSY office and forward the remaining sets to the readers.

**Reader 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reader 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date review is due to the EPSY Office:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions to Reader:** Please comment on each of the following criteria along with your recommendation on the proposal. Attach narrative explanation using a separate sheet of paper. Please return the form to the Educational Psychology Office, 249 Glenbrook Road, Unit 2064, Storrs, CT 06269-2064 by the date listed above.

	Acceptable	Unacceptable
1. Contribution of proposed project to knowledge within the field.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Demonstration of knowledge of the content area and awareness of relevant research by others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Appropriateness of the methodology to answer the research questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Demonstration of adequate understanding of proposed methodology.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Clarity and organization of writing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Overall Recommendation:</b> Approve as presented <input type="checkbox"/>	Revise and resubmit	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Signature of Reader:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_