

2023-24

# STUDENT HANDBOOK

Ed.D. in Professional Leadership – K-12



College of Education

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

**Ed.D. in Professional Leadership  
K-12**

Student Handbook 2023-2024  
(Updated August 2023)

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## Program Director Welcome

The Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 program prepares equity-oriented scholar-practitioners and leaders who are committed to educational justice and the betterment of schooling in the Greater Houston area. As faculty, we are unified by our shared commitments to these very same ideals: equity, justice, and increased opportunities/outcomes. Through your time in the program, you will learn alongside renowned faculty with a rich diversity of educational and professional experiences. We are thrilled to have you as part of the program and look forward to learning from your expertise.

This handbook contains a wide variety of information and policies relevant to graduate studies writ large and the Ed.D. program itself. Before you go on to read the rest of this document, I wish to offer four pieces of advice that should serve you well during your time in the program:

1. *Treat your cohort like a family.* Over the next eight semesters, you and your fellow cohort members will progress through the program of study in lockstep. A lot of life can happen over that time, so it behooves you to be intentional about building rapport. Write together. Break bread together. Celebrate together. Cry together. Be comfortable seeking support from your cohort. Be comfortable providing support to your cohort.
2. *Read independently.* In relation to their dissertation, I often tell students the following: “until you know what has been said, you will have nothing to say”. Beyond those assigned to you in class, you must read peer-reviewed journal articles relative to your topic, or you will fail to develop the expertise necessary to craft a dissertation proposal.
3. *Get engaged.* Your acceptance into this program is only the beginning of the rest of your journey. There is so much more to earning a doctorate than a credential behind one’s name. Submit proposals to present at conferences. Seek scholarships, fellowships, and internships. Join campus, student, professional, and research organizations. Attend board meetings, forums, and other events. Be intentional about expanding your professional network. Lend your expertise and advocacy to others. Share your experiences in the program with others and speak about the program with pride.
4. *Build relationships with faculty.* Graduate school gives you the opportunity to access diverse expertise from nationally known faculty in our program and the greater University of Houston community. Regular, responsive, and professional communication are crucial to maximizing this access. Take advantage of the time you have in courses and as you begin your dissertation research to learn from the full-time and adjunct faculty in the program, and don’t be afraid to reach out with questions about anything. Lastly, think of the faculty in the program not only as your course professors, but as individuals who you can continue collaborating with and reaching out to even after you conclude your studies.

Between the program handbook and the superintendency practicum guide, you will find the primary guidance needed to successfully navigate the program and the certification process. For any questions or concerns not addressed by these resources, I am happy to assist in any way that I can. I look forward to watching your educational journey progress.

Warm regards,

*Dr. Jacqueline Hawkins*

## Faculty & Staff

The Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 is supported by a dedicated group of faculty and staff. Students can learn more about them by visiting the [ELPS page](#).

### Program Director

Students should be proactive and do their level best to find answers to their questions through the program handbook and practicum guide. All other program-specific questions should be brought to the Program Director: Dr. Jacqueline Hawkins ([jhawkins@uh.edu](mailto:jhawkins@uh.edu)).

### Program Manager

The program manager is a full-time member of the staff that assists with a variety of administrative duties relating to the program. You will regularly interact with this person – please be responsive to any communications you receive from them. The program manager is supported by graduate students and work-study employees. They are all part of our extended program family.

### Faculty Advisor

Students should state in their application for admissions what their broad research interests are in the personal statement and mention at least two faculty that they potentially want to work with during the program. The Advisor Selection committee will assign students to faculty upon students' enrollment in the first semester. At the conclusion of the first semester, students will confirm their advisor selection and begin the process of formalizing their advisor in MyAdvisor. Any student who has not identified their advisor by the end of the first semester will be assigned an advisor by the start of the second semester.

### Dissertation Committee Chair

Once a student has secured a dissertation committee chair, that faculty member will then become the first point of contact for all questions relating to development of the dissertation. This includes submission of drafts, setting proposal defense dates, working with IRB, etc. Students should also work with their dissertation committee chair on the timing of the comprehensive examination.

## Program Components and Procedures

The Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 is composed of four major components: courses, superintendent certification, comprehensive examination, and the dissertation. Detailed information about each of these components is provided in the following passages.

### Courses

The Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 is composed of 51 credit hours across 8 semesters. Students that seek to complete the program in just 8 semesters must: 1) enter the program with strong academic writing skills and 2) maintain consistent, on-time completion of critical milestones (see degree plan below).

Because degree plans are enhanced periodically to support continuous improvement planning objectives, students will follow the approved degree plan they have in MyAdvisor. The most current sample degree plan, replete with course numbers/titles, essential tasks, and critical milestones can be viewed on the following page.

Students not seeking superintendent certification will generally be excused from *ELCS 7392 - Internship in Superintendency* and *ELCS 8310 - The Superintendency*. These two courses must be substituted with doctoral classes, each of which should be directly relevant to the student's dissertation topic and/or methodology.

Students whose scholarships or financial aid is reliant upon  $\geq 6$  credit hours of registration, should prepare accordingly for the 8<sup>th</sup> semester of the program. With their dissertation committee chair and Program Director's permission, students may elect to enroll in ELCS 8695, which is a 6-credit hour section of doctoral dissertation.

## Degree plan / Course sequence

Calendar year	20__	20__			20__			20_
Academic semester	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring
Program semester	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
Courses	<p>ELCS 8301 Leadership Theory for School Administrators</p> <p>EDRS 8380 Research Methods in Education</p> <p>ELCS 8191 Special Field Projects (Saturday Seminar)</p>	<p>ELCS 8313 Critical Issues for Urban Education Administration, Leadership, &amp; Policy</p> <p>EDRS 8381 Research Methods (Qualitative Techniques)</p> <p>ELCS 8191 Special Field Projects (Saturday Seminar)</p>	<p>ELCS 8355 Policy, Politics, &amp; Governance of Education</p> <p>EDRS 8382 Statistical Analyses in Education</p> <p>ELCS 8191 Special Field Projects (Saturday Seminar)</p>	<p>ELCS 8310* The Superintendency</p> <p>ELCS 7392* Internship in Superintendent</p> <p>ELCS 8311 Laboratory of Practice: Literature Review</p>	<p>ELCS 8312 Laboratory of Practice: Methods Development</p> <p>ELCS 8361* Public &amp; Community Relations</p>	<p>ELCS 8350* Resource Management</p> <p>ELCS 8371 Legal Issues - School District Level</p>	<p>ELCS 8356* Program &amp; Policy Evaluation</p> <p>ELCS 8395 Dissertation in Practice</p>	<p>ELCS 8395 Dissertation in Practice</p>
Credit hours	7	7	7	9	6	6	6	3
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend orientation</li> <li>Complete certification application</li> <li>Submit degree plan in MyAdvisor (beginning of semester)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify dissertation topic</li> <li>Complete IRB training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Select dissertation chair and update in MyAdvisor</li> <li>Develop draft of chapter 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Log 100 hours of internship activities during 7392</li> <li>Undergo first field observation</li> <li>Develop draft of chapter 2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Log 30 hours of internship activities during 8361</li> <li>Undergo second field observation</li> <li>Develop draft of chapter 3</li> <li>Draft IRB application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Log 30 hours of internship activities during 8350</li> <li>Undergo field observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data collection &amp; analysis</li> <li>Register for and pass Superintendent exam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data collection &amp; analysis</li> <li>Register for graduation</li> </ul>
Critical Milestones				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive examination</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposal defense (early in semester)</li> <li>Secure IRB approval</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final defense Submit approved dissertation</li> </ul>

\* denotes the course belongs to the superintendency preparation program of study



## Superintendent Certification

Superintendent certification is an embedded aspect of the program. Per [Title 19, Part 7, §242.20 of the Texas Administrative Code](#), the following requirements must be met in order to obtain superintendent certification in the state of Texas:

- Successfully complete the required exam
- Successfully complete an approved superintendent preparation program (an embedded aspect of the Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 program)
- Hold a master's degree from a university that is accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Hold a principal certificate or the equivalent issued by the TEA, another state, or country; or
- Have three creditable years of managerial experience in a school district. Experience must include responsibility for:
  - supervising or appraising faculty or staff;
  - conducting district-level planning and coordination of programs, activities, or initiatives; and
  - creating or maintaining a budget.

Additionally, students must complete the program (graduate) before they can be formally recommended for standard superintendent certification. Students seeking superintendent certification must hold principal certification at the time they begin the program. [Please refer to the superintendency practicum guide for detailed guidance on certification requirements and processes.](#)

Non-certification seeking students are not required to submit internship activity logs or observation forms. Further, and as previously mentioned, they are generally excused ELCS 8310 and ELCS 7392. Instead, they must substitute doctoral level courses directly related to their dissertation topic or methodology. Course substitutions are subject to the approval of the student's advisor/committee chair and the Program Director. Early attention to the development of an approved, alternative degree plan is of critical importance to the success of non-certification seeking students.

## Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination ("comps") is a major milestone in the Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 program and is composed of the first two chapters of the student's dissertation. Comprehensive examinations are reviewed by the full-time UH employee members of the student's dissertation committee for a pass/fail determination. Students who do not pass the comprehensive examination after a second attempt will be removed from the program.

When you are nearing the completion of chapter 2, you need to make sure that you have a full committee put together. The COE SOP regarding "Composition of Dissertation and Doctoral Dissertation Research Committee" can be found alongside [all other COE SOP's here](#) and is discussed later on in this handbook.

## Submission and Grading

Comps submissions should be a clean version (no tracked changes) of chair-approved versions of chapters 1 and 2 together in a single document. The document should contain APA-formatted headings with styles

applied (accessible within the Home ribbon of Word). Applying styles to headings facilitates easy creation of tables of contents (or TOC - a requirement for the dissertation and a feature accessible within the References ribbon) and allows use of the navigation pane (accessible within View ribbon) to more easily move about your document. You can learn more [here from Microsoft](#) or here from [Velvette Laurence of the COE's CITE lab](#) (requires CougarNet credentials).

Make sure that you've completed a thorough reference check of your comps. This means that all in-text citations have a corresponding reference entry, *and vice versa*. You or your chair will send the polished document out to the committee for their review. This same document should be uploaded to MyAdvisor when you request comps (more on this later). The committee will typically complete their review within three weeks. Your chair will share the result with you via email and report it in MyAdvisor.

## Dissertation

A primary goal of the Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 program is to fuel inquiry into school and district organization, leadership, and policy. The written form of this inquiry is the dissertation, which is conducted under the close advisement of a committee chair. Through their theses, some students will address highly-specific problems of practice (applied research). Others will seek to create broader forms of knowledge that supplement the scholarly literature supporting their specific area of interest. Whatever pathway students embark upon, they must recognize that a doctoral dissertation is *much* more than a very long research paper. The purpose of a dissertation is to bring about *new* knowledge; this is done by asking research questions that have never been asked, conducting research in a new, unique, or understudied setting (or unique case), or by employing methodological and/or analytical techniques that had not been previously utilized to address a particular research problem.

In order to make a convincing argument as to the scholarly significance of a proposed dissertation, students must have at least an emerging mastery of the literature around their topic. Accordingly, it is incumbent upon all students to maintain a serious program of independent reading outside of that which is required for class assignments. Peer-reviewed journal articles are the gold standard for scholarly literature and should comprise the vast majority of what students select in order to build mastery of the literature around their topic.

Doctoral theses are typically composed of five chapters, the content and order of which is loosely as follows:

1. Introduction
  - Topic background
  - Problem statement
  - Purpose statement
  - Research questions (RQs)
  - Scholarly significance
  - Overview of theory/lens/framework
  - Overview of proposed methodology
  - Researcher statement / positionality
  - Definitions
  - Limitations
  - Outline of remaining chapters
2. Literature Review

- This chapter is not a series of discrete article summaries. Chapter two is a synthesis of relevant literature that a) makes a clear argument as to the significance of the study, and b) provides a bridge between the purpose of the study and the methodology chosen.
  - Theoretical perspective
    - i. Identify and define the chosen framework
    - ii. Description of what makes it appropriate (i.e. how it informs the design of the study and will support the analysis and interpretation of results).
3. Methodology
    - Detailed description of setting, participants, and data
    - Literature-supported rationale for chosen method
    - Description of technique(s)
    - Description of how the analysis will be conducted and how the results will be explained
  4. Results
    - Detailed description of findings with clear interpretations for reader
    - Can be organized around the RQs in the order they were asked in chapter 1, organized around themes, or otherwise.
  5. Discussion
    - Further interpretation of results (e.g., explanations behind what was discovered)
    - Situation of results within extant literature
    - Discussion of implications for research, policy, and practice

Every dissertation is unique, therefore the guidance from each student's chair will not necessarily reflect what is listed above, particularly with regards to verbiage, sections required, and order of content.

### **Proposal Defense**

The purpose of the proposal defense is to ensure students have a cohesive, feasible study: the topic about which they are knowledgeable and the content of which they are prepared to independently execute. Only after the committee chair deems the proposal is ready for committee review can a proposal defense date be set. The committee must be provided no fewer than 2 weeks to review the proposal.

Proposal defenses are met with a pass/fail determination as voted on by the dissertation committee. All proposals will require additional edits and revisions as determined by the committee. Students conducting Human Subjects Research may not apply for IRB approval until after passing their proposal defense.

### ***The document***

The dissertation proposal document is composed of chair-approved versions of chapters 1 through 3 bundled together. It should:

- Contain APA-formatted headings with styles applied (accessible within the *Home* ribbon of Word). Applying styles to headings facilitates easy creation of tables of contents (or TOC - a requirement for the dissertation and a feature accessible within the *References* ribbon) and allows use of the navigation pane (accessible within *View* ribbon) to more easily move about your document. You can learn more here [from Microsoft](#) or [here from Veltette Laurence of the COE's CITE lab](#).

- Adhere to Graduate School dissertation formatting guidelines, including front matter (can be left empty for now - you will fill this in at final defense time).
  - Links to the College of Education’s manuscript formatting resources (including a [sample manuscript](#)) can be accessed [in the CITE lab's document library](#).
  - The Graduate School’s template for front matter of theses can be accessed here: <https://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/academics/dissertation/>.
- Undergo another reference check.

### ***The meeting structure***

Proposal defenses typically last between 75 and 90 minutes. They are composed of the following:

- Greetings/Introduction
- Initial Recess
  - This is when the committee meets in private to discuss the proposal document and share expectations for the presentation. This can last a while, and when it does, that is totally normal.
- Presentation
  - This is when you have the floor. It is here that you pitch the study. More guidance on the presentation itself is provided below.
- Commentary, Question, and Answer
  - At this time, the floor is open to the committee and attendees (all defenses are public) to ask questions or provide commentary.
- Deliberation (second recess)
  - Here, the committee further discusses, in private, the document and your presentation. Additionally, each committee member will then provide their pass/fail vote.
- Announcement of Result
  - Proposal defenses are pass/fail. The committee will share the results of your defense at this time. Nobody receives an unconditional pass – ever. There will always be changes the committee wants to see.
  - If the requested changes are substantial, the committee might ask you to provide them with a series of memos outlining and documenting changes to the document.
- Adjournment

### ***Your presentation***

Unless otherwise directed by your committee chair, your presentation should be 20 to 25 minutes long. You may be cut off at 25 minutes. You should thoroughly proofread your slides and practice the presentation multiple times. Every dissertation is different; however, the following slide organization is suggested:

- Title slide
  - Name, date, full title of dissertation, name of graduate program
- Background (~2-4 slides in all)
  - Cover the information that an attendee who hasn’t read your proposal would need to know in order to come to appreciate the problem you identify.
- Problem (~1-2 slides)
- Purpose (~1 slide)

- Take the main purpose statement directly from the paper.
- Add any bullets that help to further break it down.
- Research Questions (RQs; ~1 slide)
- Significance (~1-2 slides)
  - What makes your study unique?
  - What makes it worthwhile?
  - What do you stand to learn?
- Literature review (~2-5 slides)
  - Your committee has already read chapter 2, so you don't want to break down every aspect of it. Just identify the major sections and key takeaways within each.
- Theoretical framework (~2-3 slides)
  - One explaining what it is and where it comes from.
  - Another explaining how it relates to your study.
  - And perhaps a third where you break down how you intend to draw upon the study during data collection and analysis.
- Methodological approach (~2 slides)
  - Explicitly identify the approach being used (i.e. quant, qual, or mixed)
  - Explicitly identify the flavor of method (i.e. observational, phenomenological, longitudinal, action research, etc.).
  - Provide a rationale for why this approach is best for pursuing your purpose (typically tied to your questions).
- Site/setting (~1 slide)
- Participants (~1 slide)
- Data to be collected (~1 slide)
- Analytical technique (~2 slides)
  - If qual/interviews, you should discuss your coding schema here and how you expect to arrive at themes.
  - If quant, identify the techniques you'll be utilizing, the assumptions of each, and how you'll report the results.
- Limitations (~1 slide)
- Thank you / invitation for questions (~1 slide)

When it comes to the content and appearance of the slides, less is more. Please avoid text-dense slides. Unless your chair instructs you otherwise, there is no need for APA-style citations. Feel comfortable using bullets and incomplete sentences. Ensure consistent font and formatting throughout. Do not read your slides – the committee is perfectly capable of doing that on their own. The slides are a container for the information – a guide, if you will. You are the one with the information, so let your talking convey the finer points.

### ***Scheduling and announcing***

Prior to scheduling the proposal defense, you must submit your dissertation abstract to MyAdvisor.

- *Extremely important:* ensure that you adhere to the [COE SOP titled “Updated Abstract Format”](#) when crafting and submitting your abstract.
- After your abstract is approved and you and your chair have established the date and time for your defense, you should submit that info to MyAdvisor. The related [COE SOP is titled “Dissertation and Dissertation Proposal Process”](#). Be sure to follow this SOP closely.

- Finally, complete the [ELPS Student Proposal Form](#).

### **IRB and Site approval**

The University of Houston is committed to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research and public service. Concomitantly, the university seeks to protect the welfare of every person who may become a participant in research projects undertaken by UH faculty, staff, and students.

Review and oversight of research involving human subjects or identifiable data derived from human subjects is the charge of a federally mandated committee called an Institutional Review Board, or IRB. The IRB is responsible for safeguarding of the rights and welfare of all persons participating in University of Houston research projects in accordance with federal regulations and the ethical principles established by the [Belmont Report](#).

Information about what constitutes “Human Subjects Research”, as well as information about IRB training sessions can be viewed [here](#).

### ***IRB/UH***

Required training can be completed through CITI, which you can learn more about here: <https://uh.edu/research/compliance/irb/hs-training/>. Students of the Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 are part of group 2.

All required forms are submitted, reviewed, and approved through the ICON system, which you can access here: <http://icon.research.uh.edu/>. Required forms include *but are not limited to* HRP-503, which is the basic protocol template. This can be accessed within the library section of ICON or at the Investigator Tools website: <https://uh.edu/research/compliance/irb/policies/>. You will also need to complete a consent form. Templates for this are in the same areas as HRP-503. You may also need to submit recruitment screeners and interview protocols. Confer with your committee chair for guidance and examples.

### ***Site approval***

Site approval is necessary for conducting research within a school or district setting. This cannot be bypassed. Every site has different requirements, and most will require your committee chair to sign an agreement. Find out early if your site approval application will require IRB approval first, as that will determine the order of approvals you should seek

Guidance for the preparation and submission of the proposal defense can be found in the Procedures section of this handbook.

### **Final Defense**

#### ***Applying for graduation***

As you begin what you and your chair agree will likely be your final semester, you will need to apply for graduation. Everything you need to know about graduation (formal recognition of program completion and

conferral of degree) and commencement (the ceremony), including deadlines, can be found on the [College of Education's graduation information page](#).

The final defense follows the same structure as the proposal defense and will have a similar duration. The primary difference will of course be your presentation.

### ***The document***

is composed of chapters 1 through 5 bundled together. It should:

- Contain APA-formatted headings with styles applied
- Adhere to Graduate School dissertation formatting guidelines, including front matter
- Undergo additional reference checks

### ***The meeting***

is ~75-90 minutes in duration and is composed of the following:

- Greetings/Introduction
- Initial Recess
- Presentation
- Question and Answer
- Deliberation (second recess)
- Announcement of Result
  - Nobody receives an unconditional pass – ever. There will always be changes the committee wants to see.
  - If the requested changes are substantial, the committee might ask you to provide them with a series of memos outlining and documenting changes to the document. If you defend late in the semester and get substantial requests for changes, you may have to register for another semester.
- Adjournment
  - You will have an opportunity to recognize and thank folks here

### ***Your presentation***

Your presentation should be no more than 25 minutes and focus on the content of chapters four and five. For the audience to appreciate your findings and discussion, you will of course need to reset the study. You can do so by including ~3-5 slides total relating to your opening sequence (background>problem>purpose>RQs) and methodology. The reset of your study's purpose should take fewer than five minutes. Every study is unique, and by this point in the game, you will know what a good final presentation should look like. Accordingly, no suggested outline is offered here.

### ***Scheduling and announcing***

Prior to scheduling the final defense, you must submit your final abstract to MyAdvisor. Extremely important: ensure that you adhere to the [COE SOP titled "Updated Abstract Format"](#) when crafting and submitting your abstract. After your abstract is approved and you and your chair have established the date

and time for your defense, you should submit that info to MyAdvisor. The related [COE SOP is titled “Dissertation and Dissertation Proposal Process”](#). Be sure to follow this SOP closely. Finally, complete the [ELPS Student Proposal Form](#).

### ***Submission of manuscript***

This process is guided by the [COE SOP titled “Submission Process for a Dissertation or Dissertation”](#). I cannot stress how important it is to: a) follow this SOP to a “T”, and b) ensure that you have perfectly adhered to university formatting guidelines. *Casually submit your final manuscript at your own peril.* If you are treated with anything other than excellent customer service during the submission phase, please let the Program Director know immediately.



## Policies

The Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 program operates under a variety of policies. Some policies come from the department, while others emanate from the College of Education or the university. Some of the more essential policies are outlined below.

### Program Policies

#### Email & Communication

Because personal and work emails are outside of the university's IT infrastructure and thus subject to outages and other problems, students must use their official UH email account for all program-related correspondence. For additional information, please visit the [Student Email page](#).

All email conversations should be treated as professional exchanges. Whenever possible, students should identify themselves and the course/activity about which they are inquiring. Students should check their exchange account regularly or have it forward to an account they check regularly.

#### MyAdvisor

The MyAdvisor portal is the electronic interface for student services in the College of Education. Students use this online application primarily to document their progress toward the degree and to submit required forms for approvals. Please note that students must use their UH CougarNet credentials to log into the [MyAdvisor application, which can be accessed here](#). The following milestones *must* be documented in MyAdvisor:

- Degree plan (*when*: semester one – will pre-populate with default degree plan)
- Change of advisor (*when*: once the student secures a dissertation committee chair)
- Comprehensive Examination application (*when*: once the committee chair approves of chapter 2)
- Dissertation Committee Appointment (*when*: same time as application for comps – requires CV for all external members)
- Dissertation Proposal Abstract (*when*: immediately upon scheduling of the dissertation proposal defense)
- Final Dissertation Abstract (*when*: immediately upon scheduling of final defense)
- Annual Review (*when*: every spring semester when notified by Program Director)

#### Selecting a Chair and forming a Dissertation Committee

Selecting a dissertation committee chair is an important decision in the Ed.D. journey. Whenever possible, students should identify a chair who brings topical and/or methodological expertise to bear. Further, an ideal chair is someone with whom the student communicates well; successful theses are built upon responsiveness to direct, critical feedback. It behooves all students to have a clear conceptualization of what they would like to achieve through their dissertation prior to asking a faculty member to chair their committee. Accordingly, students should consider crafting a 1 to 2 page outline of their topic, intended purpose, potential research questions, and proposed methodology when “shopping” their study.

Junior faculty are those on the tenure track who have yet to gain promotion and tenure (typically, their title is Assistant Professor). In an effort to support their success on the tenure track, the program seeks to limit their participation on dissertation committees. Therefore, students may be turned down by junior faculty, even if the dissertation idea is great. Students struggling to identify a dissertation chair should connect with the Program Director. The program reserves the right at any time and for any cohort, to engage a system in which dissertation chairs are assigned to students. Under such a scenario, the program will consider students' preferences for a chair and make every effort to establish the best pairings possible.

Dissertation committee formulation should be conducted in collaboration with the dissertation chair. Students should confer with their chair about the process for identifying and recruiting committee members prior to reaching out to other faculty. Chair and committee appointments should be formalized through MyAdvisor.

Note: Students must follow the COE SOP concerning "[Composition of Dissertation and Doctoral Dissertation Research Committee](#)". Further program specific guidance is as follows:

- **Chair**
  - Must be a clinical or tenure track K-12 program area faculty member. Dissertation committees chaired by a clinical faculty member must have a tenure-track faculty member as co-chair. Tenure-track status is denoted with the absence of the word clinical and a title of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor.
- **Additional ELPS K-12 program area faculty member**
- **UH faculty member** – this can be someone from within or outside of K-12 program area, so long as they are a full-time UH faculty member.
- **External member** – this is someone with a Ph.D. or Ed.D. who is employed outside of the university. Typically this will be a practitioner that hold or has held a leadership role. Their resume/CV should be submitted to the committee chair and MyAdvisor. Final approval of external members is subject to review by program/departmental leadership and the Office of Graduate Studies.

ELPS faculty titles and program affiliation can be reviewed [here](#).

### **Physical Presence for Face-To-Face Class Sessions**

Given that a core element of the Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 program is the cohort structure, students are expected to be physically present for face-to-face class sessions. That is to say, telepresence is not a suitable replacement for physical presence. This is a Houston-area, cohort-based program for Houston-area educators. Students should keep this policy in mind when considering major life changes such as moves/relocations and changes of employer.

### **Use of a Professional Editor**

Students who want or need assistance with their writing are permitted to hire a professional editor at their own expense. Program faculty can provide recommendations based on previous experiences. Professional editors are permitted to assist students with the editing of drafts, including help with grammar, sentence

structure, formatting, style, and correction of typos. Professional editors are not permitted to do the following: Carry out analyses or write any part of a proposal or dissertation for the student.

Before a student hires a professional editor, they must provide the name and contact information with the chair. The chair has the right to be in contact with the professional editor to ensure that all work being completed is appropriate and in accordance with this policy. Moreover, it is expected that any student working with a professional editor will share evidence of the editor's original feedback with the chair and dissertation committee upon request. Use of a professional editor does not circumvent or supplant the role of the advisor and dissertation committee in developing, supporting and approving the dissertation.

## **Annual Review**

In the spring of each academic year, all students in the Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 program should complete the annual review located in [MyAdvisor](#). The Program Director will notify students when the next year's annual review window has opened. Students should have their program handbook (see right-hand side of [program website](#)) at the ready when completing their review. Faculty will approve or deny all submitted annual reviews. Failure to complete the annual review or obtain approval of a submitted review may result in an academic hold being placed on the student's account.

## **Required Progress**

- Comprehensive Examination Requirement
  - Students who have not passed their comprehensive examination by the Official Reporting Day (as defined by the [academic calendar](#)) of their seventh semester (as defined by the degree plan in their program handbook) will have an academic hold placed on their account.
- Sufficient Contact and Dissertation Productivity
  - Students who have a) fallen out of contact, b) not submitted any substantial new writing in any given semester, or c) have enrolled in six or more total credit hours of dissertation without making substantive dissertation progress, will have an academic hold placed on their account. Dissertation committee chairs have the individual discretion to determine what constitutes sufficient contact, substantial new writing, and substantive dissertation progress. In advance of each semester, and to maintain shared understandings, students and dissertation chairs are strongly encouraged to discuss communication and productivity expectations. Putting these expectations into writing is a practice that is also strongly encouraged.
- Good standing
  - Good standing is maintained through:
    - Continuous enrollment
    - Regular communication with faculty advisor / dissertation chair
    - Progress with the tasks and critical milestones outlined in the program handbook
    - Satisfactory grades (i.e., nothing below C- and a GPA  $\geq 3.0$ )
    - No incompletes
    - No academic holds

## **Academic Holds**

Academic holds prohibit students from enrolling in new courses. These holds can only be lifted by the program. Until and unless students demonstrate acceptable program progress or produce an agreeable action plan (replete with timeline) to achieve substantive program progress, the academic hold will remain. Acceptable program progress is defined as completing an approved dissertation chapter or accomplishing a critical milestone (as identified in the program handbook). The agreeability of action plans will be determined by the dissertation committee chair and/or Program Director.

Removing academic holds that are placed in semester seven or later necessitates a meeting between the student and the student's chair. The chair may elect to invite members of the student's dissertation committee and the Program Director. The goals of these meetings are to: a) calibrate understandings of tasks outstanding and what it takes to successfully complete them, b) identify roadblocks to success and collaborate on solutions for overcoming them, and c) establish a timeline of expectations moving forward. Students must afterward craft an expanded action plan that summarizes the three goals. Approval of the expanded action plan by the committee chair and/or Program Director results in removal of the academic hold.

Within the semester immediately following the lifting of an academic hold, students must fully satisfy their action plan. Students who do not fully satisfy their action plan may have an additional academic hold placed on their account and/or be recommended for Termination of Enrollment. This policy also applies to semesters in which students have a hold lifted and are able to enroll before the last day to add a class.

### **Committee Constitution and/or Advisor Changes**

Advisor changes are permitted under the following circumstances:

- Advisor leaves the institution
- Substantive changes in the topic (to be discussed with the current advisor prior)
- Advisor recommends a shift in committee leadership

The following are **not** reasons for requesting an advisor change:

- Methodological shift on the same topic
- Desire to work with a different faculty
- Discontent with their pace of progress in the program

If the student wants an advisor change, they **must** do the following:

- Provide a written rationale with artifacts and evidence that is appropriate for their request;
- The Advisor Selection Committee will review the request;
- If approved, the Committee (or a subset) will meet with the student to identify potential new advisors, as well as supporting the student in the transition to a new committee chair;
- The student will meet with the current advisor to discuss the upcoming change and identify a new advisor; and
- The advisor change request must be done in writing (e.g. Microsoft Forms document) and must be notated in MyAdvisor.

If the student wishes to reconstitute the committee, they must engage in detailed communication about any change needed in the constitution of the committee with the current advisor and any outgoing or incoming committee members.

## **College Policies**

### **Ethics Guide**

This General Ethics Principles Guide (referred to as “Ethics Guide”) describes the standards of practice expected of all full and part-time faculty, staff and students (collectively referred to as “members”) within the College of Education (“COE”) at the University of Houston. This document contains principles that are considered the hallmark of our profession, and the members of the COE are expected to commit themselves to meeting the needs of all members of our academic community by adhering to this Ethics Guide. Students can learn more [here](#).

## **Grievance**

The College of Education defines a legitimate grievance as a substantive circumstance that a student regards as a just cause for complaint. A grievance can be relevant to any incident involving a classroom instructor, faculty advisor, internship supervisor, administrator, or faculty member in the College of Education. A grievance is a claim that an academic action or decision involved alleged unfair or irresponsible behavior including violations of department, College, or University policies. The College of Education and University have established procedures beginning at the department level for settling academic grievances. Students can learn more [here](#).

## **Additional Standard Operating Procedures**

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are instructions intended to document how to perform a routine activity. The College of Education Office of Graduate Studies uses standard operating procedures to help ensure consistency and quality. Standard operating procedures are also useful tools to communicate important University policies and College best practices. They can be viewed [here](#).

## **University Policies**

### **Academic Honesty**

UH’s academic honesty policy can be reviewed [here](#). It cannot be overstated that instances of academic dishonesty are taken very seriously. Sanctions can include course failure, program dismissal, and university expulsion. Self-plagiarism (typically the resubmission of an older assignment as if it were new) is a form of academic dishonesty. Students seeking to learn more about plagiarism can view [this text](#).

### **Grades & Low Grade Policy**

Passing grades for which semester hours of credit are awarded are A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, and S. A student who receives a grade of C+ or lower and/or a grade of U in 12 semester hours of credit attempted at this institution, whether or not in repeated courses or undergrad courses, is ineligible for any graduate degree at this institution and will not be permitted to re-enroll for graduate study.

### **Petitions**

The university uses a centralized petition form for a variety of special requests including but not limited to the following:

- leaves of absence
- reinstatement

- transfer credit requests
- course substitutions
- late graduation application
- change of program

The form and instructions are viewable [here](#). Petitions should be submitted to the Program Director.

## **University-level Degree Requirements**

There are several graduate degree requirements established by the university with which students should be familiar. The information provided below are but highlights of some of the more important requirements. Students should familiarize themselves all requirements in their entirety by reviewing the [Graduate Catalog](#).

### ***Course Load Policy***

The Ed.D. in Professional Leadership K-12 is designed for full-time working professionals. Accordingly, students in the program are enrolled *part time*. The definitions for full-time enrollment and full-time graduate student status are located in the “Course Load Policy” section of the Graduate Catalog.

### ***Continuous Enrollment***

In general, graduate students are expected to be enrolled in consecutive long terms (i.e., Fall and Spring terms) until the degree program is completed and the degree is awarded.

A graduate student who is not enrolled should not expect to be able to use the facilities of the University of Houston campus. Students who do not enroll in any given term must petition for a leave of absence (LOA) in order to remain in good standing. A student who leaves the university without obtaining a formal leave of absence from graduate study is not automatically readmitted and may be required to reapply for program admission. Doctoral students who have begun their graduate research must be continuously enrolled in each long term unless they have an approved leave of absence. Students seeking to return from an LOA must petition for term activation.

How to petition for LOA or term activation: The College of Education (COE) has a standard operating procedure (SOP) for leaves of absence that can be viewed alongside [all other COE SOPs here](#). The [Graduate and Professional Student Petition can be accessed here](#).

### ***Termination of Enrollment***

A satisfactory rate of progress toward the degree is required throughout a student’s enrollment. A department may terminate enrollment at any time if the rate of progress is not satisfactory. A student whose enrollment is terminated will be notified, with an explanation, in writing by the chair of the department of the major. Copies of this notice and explanation will be sent to the dean of the student’s college. Specific details on the program’s Adequate Progress policy are provided in the “Policies and Procedures” portion of the handbook.

### ***Time Limitations***

Students who enroll as doctoral candidates must complete their degree requirements within 10 years of the date of first enrollment with a doctoral degree objective. Failure to comply will result in the candidate being ineligible for that doctoral degree.

Doctoral students who fail to complete their dissertation within five years after completion of the comprehensive examination must retake the examination.

### ***Transfer Credit***

In cases where credit is transferred from another program or institution, *no more than a combined maximum of 9 credit hours is allowed*. A student seeking transfer credit must provide the graduate program faculty advisor in their academic unit (Program Director) with an official syllabus, catalog, calendar and/or bulletin with detailed course description, in addition to an official transcript including official explanation of the course numbering and grading systems at the school at which the credit was earned. The graduate program faculty advisor may request additional documentation to complete the transfer credit determination. If approved by the department and the college, a [Graduate and Professional Student Petition](#) is submitted to the Graduate School to have the credit posted to the transcript.

## FAQ

*I know there are within-semester deadlines for the final defense, but can I do my proposal defense during an intersession?*

No. Faculty are not obliged to be available during these times. You can reference the [academic calendar here](#) for “first day of class” and “official close of semester” dates.

*Do I have to be registered to complete comps or any other part of the dissertation?*

Yes. Critical milestones cannot be obtained without being an active and registered student.

*What happens if I do not hold my final defense in semester eight?*

You will need to continue registering for ELCS 8395 until you are done.

*What are the deadlines for holding a final defense?*

See “Applying for graduation” subsection under the dissertation heading.

*What happens if I miss the semester deadline for holding the final defense?*

You will need to continue registering for ELCS 8395 until you are done.



## Appendix - Forms