



EdD Student Handbook

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Doctor of Education Degree in Educational Leadership

The EdD is a professional degree that has two main elements; the study and research of specific aspects of educational leadership practice and the development of individual candidates in relation to their professional work.

- (a) The research element while focusing on leadership broadly conceived is also intended to make an original contribution to field in the study of practice, policy or theory.
- (b) The personal element seeks to develop the qualities, understandings and knowledge necessary for leadership in complex educational environments that requires the exercise of individual responsibility and autonomous initiative.

The EdD is equivalent in standards to the PhD but is different in its approach to the achievement of the doctorate. The EdD is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following:

- (a) the systematic acquisition and interpretation of a significant body of knowledge necessary for the advanced academic study of professional practice,
- (b) a detailed understanding of applicable methods for research and advanced academic enquiry,
- (c) the ability to conceptualize, design and implement a research program for the generation of new knowledge to a quality to satisfy the highest standards of academic and professional review

The Dissertation Pathway: Key Steps in the Process

DISSERTATION PATHWAY

Semester	Courses	Dissertation	Committee	Resources
1	Educ 9XX-5	Focus on broad area and approach for research		Education Librarian workshop
2	Educ 9XX-5	Review and narrow focus		
3	Educ 9XX	Revise focus	SS and ACOS considered	Visit Library
4	Educ 9XX-5	Initial draft of research proposal	SS and ACOS considered	Visit Library
5	Educ 9XX-5	Initial draft of dissertation proposal	Create Supervisory Committee - approval	Dissertation Librarian workshop
6	Comps Exam 983-5	Completed proposal draft of Chapter 1 Completion plan approval	Meet with Committee Review Completion plan Readers appointed	
7	Doctoral Thesis 899	Research first draft of dissertation	Regular meetings/communication with committee	
8	Doctoral Thesis 899	Research second draft of dissertation	Regular meetings/communication with committee	
9	Doctoral Thesis 899	Research third or final draft of dissertation	Regular meetings/communication with committee Examiners appointed	
10	Doctoral Thesis 899-10	Dissertation complete Defence Thesis to Library		
Spring/ Fall	Degree Awarded	Graduation/Convocation		

Supervisory Committee

The basic EdD Supervisory Committee consists of the senior supervisor and one other person who may be a faculty member or other suitably qualified person. Further members may be appointed. Supervisors are selected from the following groups:

Senior Supervisors

- Faculty of Education tenured and tenure-track faculty
- Faculty of Education Emeriti

Co-supervisors

- Faculty of Education Emeriti
- Associate Faculty
- Adjunct Professors

Supervisory Committee Members

- Faculty of Education tenured and tenure-track faculty
- Faculty of Education Emeriti
- Associate Faculty
- Adjunct Professors
- Research Associates
- Suitably Qualified Individuals

The Senior Supervisor

Faculty members may choose to act as senior supervisors for individual EdD students in the traditional direct manner or with an adjunct co-supervisor.

If, in an individual case, a faculty member works with an adjunct co-supervisor the administrative and academic responsibilities, such as, dissertation completion and the oral examination, will be variously assigned on the basis of university regulations.

Members of faculty and emeriti, who are not part of the EdD instructional team, may be invited to act as senior supervisors for individual EdD students where and when appropriate.

Co-Supervisors

A co-supervisor may be designated when a member of the supervisory committee exercises a degree of supervision and support similar to that of a senior supervisor.

In the EdD program the reasons for approving co-supervision are that the co-supervisor will be providing significant supervision in a field outside the senior supervisor's area of academic expertise or in an area of leadership practice that requires extensive field based experience and knowledge.

Appointment as co-supervisor recognizes significant contribution of time, expertise or financial resources. However, the supervision of the student remains the responsibility of the senior supervisor.

The co-supervisor will be expected to work with the senior supervisor in taking responsibility for the following:

- Assisting in setting and grading the comprehensive examination
- Developing the dissertation proposal
- Regular meeting/communication with student and senior supervisor
- Coordination of the committee communications
- Editing the various drafts
- Assisting with setting up the defense
- Ensuring that all changes that are suggested by the examiners are made and ready for the library

Committee Members

When necessary other committee members may be appointed where specific expertise is required.

Examining Committee

Supervising Committee

Examiners

Graduate Student and Supervisor Agreement

Ground Rules

Experienced supervisors recommend that "ground rules" for interactions with students be established early and maintained. Here is a list of ground rules that should be clarified in initial meetings between a graduate student and his/her supervisor:

- * How frequently you will meet and why (data updates, literature reviews, etc.).
- * The student's role with regard to the data collection and analysis.
- * The supervisor's role with regard to the student's data collection and analysis.
- * Who will train the student to do technical work, and what is the role of the program technician.
- * Standard hours for office space, weekend work or labs.
- * A timeline for the research program, which may include experiments, data analysis, manuscript writing, and thesis writing.
- * Presentations at conferences and meetings: how many, how often and who pays.
- * The use of university computers and accounts for research, net surfing, games, personal work, etc.
- * Applicable funding sources and the duration of such funding.

Comprehensive examination

Comprehensive examinations will take place during the sixth semester of the student's program. Students in a cohort will take the examination at the specified dates prior to the sixth week of the semester. Two members of the Supervisory Committee and one external reader will grade examination papers. External readers will be mainly drawn for the Adjunct Co-supervisor group. Normally the marking session will take place prior to the ninth week of the semester. Any re-takes must take place prior to the twelfth week. These will be graded by the coordinator and director as well as the original faculty members.

Dissertation

Because this is a professional doctorate, the study should address an issue that is pertinent to professional knowledge and practice. At the completion of the Ed D the student should be able to say what significant contribution has been made to professional knowledge and practice. It is therefore vital at the outset that students are clear about what contribution they are attempting to make.

Focus

It is often difficult to focus on a dissertation topic area. Deciding on an area of study within a particular discipline, such as financing in higher education, and formulating this into a researchable question or problem can be challenging. But it is important for each student to be clear on core interests before making a commitment to a particular area of study. Graduate work is self-directed and while it focuses on discovering new knowledge and understanding it is also vitally important to have some personal motivation to learn more about a topic area.

Initial ideas for research topics/questions are often interesting but unmanageable within the time and resources available. An inevitable scaling down may be required to convert these ideas into a more manageable one. This process needs to have been completed *before* the dissertation is begun (conceptually or empirically or both) rather than later in order to avoid ending up with a topic that is too broad in scope or an over-ambitious design.

Research methodology

This will vary according to the problem which you are addressing.

Problem and Product

Essentially, dissertation 'problems' can be derived from professional practice, current policy debates, or theory.

There are various kinds of 'product' which can be generated by research. Broadly speaking, contributions may be made to **practice, policy, or theory**. Each dissertation will contribute to more than one of these 'products', but the emphasis may legitimately vary quite widely.

Practice

Problems which arise from practice may well be ones which students have experienced in their own professional lives, such as those encountered in carrying out your responsibilities or in the functioning of their institutions.

Here the product would constitute advice to professional practitioners about the effectiveness - or otherwise of particular practices and approaches. Such a study would essentially involve an evaluation of some aspect of professional practice, drawing upon the considerable array of evaluative methods and may, or may not, entail an intervention.

Policy

These may have their origin within the organization or are external to it, e.g. government policy. The dissertation will, through systematically examining this question, address a 'substantive' problem with a view to casting new light upon it either in the specific context of a particular institution or profession or more generally.

The product here might be one of several kinds, such as:

- **an investigation** into how a particular policy was formulated, entailing a critically-informed judgment of the appropriateness or otherwise of the procedures followed;
- **an evaluation** of the relationship between the intention of those who formulated policy and its effectiveness at the institutional level; or
- **an analysis** of the policy as formulated in official documents to establish the degree of internal consistency, consequences of the policy etc.

Theory

Problems which arise from theory will be generated by reading the existing literature which may include previous research, existing theory or accounts of policy or practice.

There are perhaps three kinds of contribution which can be made:

Testing theory: this entails seeking to confirm or refute propositions derived from the existing literature.

Generating theory: the testing of theory should itself contribute to theory building but the generation of ‘grounded’ theory by refining and testing initial observations and hunches is also possible.

Advancing theory: unlike empirical dissertations, this would be an essentially library-based dissertation which maps, critiques and, above all, makes a distinctive contribution to the advancement of prevailing theory in a particular area.

Whether approaching a ‘substantive’ or ‘theoretical’ problem may well determine the research strategy. However, it is expected that each dissertation will address both a theoretical context and practical implications. Students must take time to allow the process of evolution from interest to problem, from problem to design and from design to product.

In preparation they should read broadly, discuss, collect quotes and ideas. At this stage, an important filter for reading is the extent to which they address aspects of the question posed, or raise new questions that may be addressed.

Students should also talk to other EdD students about how they decided on a subject for study and find out what worked and didn’t work for them, and how they made their final decisions.

Dissertation Proposal

Your dissertation proposal should be developed in consultation with your supervisor and committee.

The proposal should include:

- a background theory
- a working hypodissertation
- a methodology which should be organized under chapter headings
- a body of work for analysis
- a bibliography

What does a completed EdD dissertation look like?

Current participants are required to submit a dissertation of 40,000 words. It is often a struggle to stay within this word length (plus/minus 10%). For participants who joined the programme from October 2004 the new word limit will be 45,000 words.

The EdD dissertation differs from a PhD thesis only in length and scope and not in quality. An EdD dissertation will be expected to elaborate a 'thesis' in the sense of a sustained argument, a point to which further reference will be made below.

The structure of an EdD dissertation will be similar to that of a PhD thesis in the following respects:

- **Problem identification:** the problem addressed will be such that, on seeing the title of the dissertation, or a publication arising from it, a potential reader should say to themselves: "that sounds interesting" and having read it will see the issue addressed in a new light and consider the research a valuable intellectual and/or theoretical contribution.
- **Theoretical basis:** whatever the nature of the problem addressed it should be located in an appropriate theoretical context.
- **Literature review:** this may well be shorter and more highly focused than that of a PhD. Above all, it should be critical and cumulative, each of the referenced works being cited in a context and discussed in a way that makes a contribution to the overall argument.
- **Methodology:** the design of this will be appropriate to the problem addressed and hence, in scope, consistent with the time and resources available. The rationale for the design adopted will display a thorough understanding of the methodological assumptions entailed and the pros and cons of choices made.
- **Data:** the kind and amount of data collected will be determined by methodological and resource decisions. It is worth reiterating that the doctoral level of the work will be assessed not by the sheer quantity of data collected but by its appropriateness to the problem addressed, its sufficiency for generalizable conclusions to be drawn, and the quality of the discussion which it generates.
- **Product:** this term has been discussed above (Section 4 iii) and, in the context of these guidelines, means the contribution made by the dissertation to theory, methodology, practice and/or policy. The quality and validity of this contribution will, in large part, reflect the quality of the dissertation as a whole.

Examiners and the Oral Examination

Unfortunately it is almost impossible to answer the question “when is it good enough?” in a satisfying way and the resulting ambiguity is a bane of participant’s lives. Basically your work will need to satisfy two examiners (one from within the University, usually within the department but not your supervisor; the other from another institution) that it reaches the required standard for EdD. These examiners will be experienced academics who can compare your work with that of other candidates they have supervised and examined, and they are chosen because of their expertise in the area of your work. You should be able to discuss with your supervisor possible names for examiners.

Dissertation Defence: Presentation Skills

Part of your success in defending your dissertation will depend on your ability to present yourself and your research effectively and confidently. Becoming an effective and confident presenter can be learned through practice and feedback. As well, there are some basic skills and techniques that will help you in any presentation situation.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies Professional Development Initiative and SFU’s Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth both offer workshops that may help with your presentation skills. Workshops can provide participants with tips and techniques that will help them present effectively and confidently, and some workshops will give you the opportunity to practice your presentation skills and get feedback on them in a supportive environment.

The Dry Run

Before the actual defense, do at least one dry run in front of trusted friends or colleagues who can give you honest and helpful comments. The dry run audience should be able to:

- give you feedback on the coherence and effectiveness of your presentation
- ask questions you haven’t thought of yet
- ask you some of the questions that you think the examining committee will ask
- give you feedback on your skills as a presenter, including noting distracting or ineffective verbal or physical behaviours
- tell you what you are doing well, effectively, and right

Be sure to schedule your dry run well in advance of the actual defense, so you have time to make the necessary adjustments to your presentation. One graduate student offers this advice on dry runs: "I did two dry runs and I found that both were very helpful. For my final defense I would do three or more if possible."

Anticipating Questions

In an oral dissertation defense, examiners often ask questions related to their own specific fields of study. Before your defense, take some time to become familiar with the particular areas of research interest held by the members of your examining committee. Write down some of the questions you think they might ask and formulate your answers. Then get together with a fellow graduate student. Ask each other the questions you think the examiners will ask, and practice your answers until you feel comfortable with them.

Some graduate students have found it useful to meet their examiners beforehand so they can get acquainted and learn more about the questions examiners may ask.

Organizing the Content

At the beginning of the oral defense of your dissertation, you will have an opportunity to give a brief (e.g. 30 minute) synopsis of your research as a presentation. Here are some tips for organizing this presentation.

You won't be able to cover all your research in the time allotted to you, so consider carefully what to include and what to leave out or mention only briefly. Remember, many of the details of your research will be revealed during the question period. When you consider the content to include, ask yourself the following questions:

- What aspects of my research will help me show how the work fits together logically?
- If my dissertation were a story, what parts would be essential for my examination committee to hear, and what parts are less important?
- How can I explain these essential aspects of my dissertation clearly? Do I need to use figures or graphs? Should I have the components stated in point form? Would a flow chart help?

Organizing the Structure

There are many different ways to structure a presentation. The one you choose should be determined by the purpose of your presentation. In a dissertation defense, the purpose is usually to inform and provide a convincing argument about the value of your work as a significant contribution to your content area. Here are a few suggestions for structuring the content of your presentation:

Opening: You should always have some sort of opening to your presentation to get your audience focused on what you have to say.

Purpose: Let your audience know what you hope they will get from your presentation, what you are going to tell them about.

Body of Presentation: This is the main content of your presentation. This section should connect directly to your opening and purpose. The following are some possible methods of structuring this section of your presentation:

- Chronological/historical: past, present, future
- Sequential: first, second, third
- Geographical: north, south, east, west
- Categorical: oranges, apples, bananas
- Compare and Contrast: negative vs. positive, our side vs. their side
- Hierarchical: top, middle, bottom
- Review of options: option 1, option 2, option 3, recommendation
- Expanding radius: individual, neighbourhood, community

Closing: The most important part about the closing is to have one! Here are some suggestions for closing:

- Close your presentation by referring to your purpose
- Summarize the main points of your presentation
- Make a statement
- End the way you began
- Thank your audience

i) *The Process*

As it is very difficult to generalize about how orals are conducted, these notes should be taken as a guide only.

Candidates should be prepared to respond to questions which may be variously phrased but essentially invite the following:

- An account of why the topic chosen for investigation was of particular interest to the candidate.
- A summary of the ‘dissertation’ of the dissertation. A response should express the central argument in three or four short, logically-related sentences.
- A summary of the ‘product’ of the dissertation. Examiners will be looking for a distinctive contribution to theory, methodology, practice and/or policy. The Dissertation Guidelines gives examples of types of ‘product’.
- A clear rationale for the methodology used.
- An account of what has been gained personally from undertaking the study.
- Answers should be succinct and logical. Prior rehearsal - mental, written or oral - would help.

ii) *Criteria for judging the dissertation*

Though not exhaustive, the following list indicates some of the criteria which internal and external examiners are likely to apply to an EdD dissertation:

1. The degree of originality in the topic chosen.
2. The clarity of the formulation of the problem.
3. The relevance of the data collected to the problem.
4. The appropriateness of the methodology to the problem.
5. The strength of the rationale for the chosen methodology.
6. The skill entailed in the use of the chosen methodology.
7. The critical qualities brought to the literature review.
8. The quality of the dissertation as a piece of academic writing.
9. The cogency of the dissertation.

The above criteria are self-evident and are clearly related to the questions posed above but perhaps the last of these criteria needs some clarification. The connotation of *dissertation* as a piece of work submitted for a doctoral degree has become uncoupled from its original meaning of a sustained argument. The criteria given above refer to the latter connotation. A good dissertation will have a strong dissertation. It is the nature and strength of this that the oral will explore. In this sense, the dissertation is the argument running through the dissertation, the position with respect to which the theory, data and literature will be organised, and which they are designed to illuminate. In another context it might be called a ‘story-line’ or ‘voice’. This does not mean that the dissertation should be dogmatic. The appropriate criteria of scholarship must be followed but, throughout, the writing should indicate that you know what you want to say - even if your material eventually shows that what you hypodissertationed turned out not to have been supported.

The above criteria are relevant to empirical studies. For a library-based study, criteria three to six should be replaced as follows:

- clear rationale for any alternative theory, model or set of propositions;
- tightness in conceptualisation and argument.

One would, of course, expect these qualities in empirical studies but for library-based studies they are essential since, in assessing such pieces, the quality of the argument takes the place of the quality of the data.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

Dissertation proposal

First chapter

Completion plan

Committee

Reviewed for approval in the middle of the sixth semester by the EdD team and SS/ACOS

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PROCEESS

Copies distributed to EdD team and SS/ACOS

Review meeting

Pass or revised

Dissertation contract approved

STUDENT DISSERTATION RECORD (Electronic)

The following should be kept in the record:

Semesters 1- 4 Focus drafts

Semester 5 Dissertation Proposal

Semester 6
Dissertation proposal
First chapter
Completion plan
Committee
Dissertation contract

Semesters 7-9
Meeting records
Examiners
Defense data
Completion data