

Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program



Doctor of Education in Education Leadership (EdD)

Doctoral Handbook

Revised Spring 2026

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Program Identity: Scholars of Practice

The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Education Leadership at Texas A&M University–Texarkana is a Scholars of Practice doctoral program designed for experienced education professionals who seek to strengthen leadership practice through applied research and systematic inquiry. The program is a member of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) and is intentionally structured to prepare graduates to address complex, real-world challenges in educational organizations.

Unlike research-only doctoral programs, this Ed.D. emphasizes inquiry as practice. Doctoral candidates examine problems of practice grounded in their professional contexts and use research, theory, and reflective analysis to inform decision-making, guide improvement efforts, and strengthen educational systems. The program prepares graduates to lead with clarity, rigor, and professional responsibility across K–12, higher education, and related educational settings.

Program Vision

The Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program in Education Leadership at Texas A&M University–Texarkana prepares accomplished education professionals to lead improvement efforts through scholarly inquiry, informed decision-making, and responsible leadership across educational systems and organizations.

Program Mission

The mission of the Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program in Education Leadership at Texas A&M University–Texarkana is to prepare experienced education professionals to become scholar-practitioners who use research, inquiry, and reflective practice to examine and address complex problems of practice. Through a structured, cohort-based curriculum aligned with CPED principles, the program emphasizes ethical leadership, continuous improvement, and the application of theory to practice in educational settings.

General Information

Students admitted to the Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program must adhere to the academic policies and procedures outlined in the University Catalog, Doctoral Program Handbook, and Dissertation Manual applicable to their year of admission (cohort). Updates or clarifications to these documents will be communicated through official university email, which students are expected to monitor regularly.

Doctoral students enter the program as part of a cohort and progress through a prescribed sequence of core courses and research tools. This cohort model supports structured progression, collaborative learning, and consistent expectations as students advance toward comprehensive examinations and dissertation completion. The program consists of 60 semester credit hours.

Doctor of Education (EdD) in Education Leadership Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program

GENERAL INFORMATION

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Doctoral students join the program as part of a cohort and progress together through a structured sequence of core courses and research tools. This cohort model allows students to advance in a logical, sequential manner alongside colleagues who share similar professional goals. The program consists of 60 semester credit hours.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Requirements for program completion include the following:

1. Completion of 60 credit hours with a minimum GPA of 3.0 and no grade below a “C”
2. Successful completion of Comprehensive Exams
3. Successful Completion of Dissertation

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Course Work

The doctoral program is a 60 semester credit hours (SCH) Scholars of Practice program with four areas for completion. Students complete coursework in a cohort experience enrolling in 6 SCH (2 courses) each semester including spring, summer, and fall. Courses are delivered online in synchronous and asynchronous formats. Synchronous meetings are held via Zoom on an evening in the week or during the day on weekends at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Components

1. Education Leadership (Core) Content - 8 courses/ 24 SCH. Core courses delivered as part of the cohort model. Students must take all core courses within this model unless they apply for a leave of absence from the program. Core courses are not eligible for transfer or competency credit. Core courses prepare students to complete comprehensive exams successfully. Topics include academic writing, strategic management & change, critical conversations & team building, theories applying to education leadership, strategies for

implementing and measuring for continuous improvement, and contemporary issues in educational leadership.

2. Cognate Courses - 4 courses/12 SCH. A cognate is a block of courses connecting to Education Leadership and doctoral student's professional goals that may be completed prior to admission or after cohort courses are complete. Candidates may complete cognate courses while enrolled in dissertation courses (EDLD 693 – 3 SCH). Students wanting to complete cognate courses while taking cohort coursework must have permission from the program coordinator. Competency-based and/or transfer credit available. Eligible candidates may earn superintendent certification at A&M-Texarkana as a cognate area. Cognate courses must be approved by the program coordinator.
3. Research Tools - 4 courses/12 SCH. Research tools courses prepare candidates for completing a dissertation.
4. Dissertation hours – 4 courses/12 SCH required minimum. Doctoral candidates complete a dissertation upon successful completion of course work (maintain 3.0 GPA with no grade below a "C") and the written comprehensive examination.

Course and Scholarship Related Travel

Travel experiences may include conference attendance, professional presentations, or participation in scholarly or leadership development activities connected to coursework or dissertation work. These experiences are intended to support professional growth, scholarly engagement, and the application of inquiry to leadership practice. The program strives to offer enriching scholarship experiences while ensuring costs remain reasonable. Students should anticipate a financial commitment of up to \$1,000 for these opportunities. The university is committed to supporting students by exploring scholarships, grants, and payment plan options to help fund travel experiences when available.

Comprehensive Examination

The Doctor of Education Leadership Comprehensive Examination is a significant milestone in the academic journey toward candidacy. It serves as an opportunity for doctoral students to:

1. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the program's knowledge base.
2. Chronicle their development as both scholars and educational leaders.
3. Articulate a well-founded vision of leadership within the context of Educational Leadership for the future.

This examination is not intended to be a mere repetition of the knowledge acquired throughout the program. Instead, it is designed to ground students in their academic discipline, enabling them to synthesize knowledge that reflects thoughtful, inquisitive thinking and scholarly engagement.

Dissertation

After doctoral candidates are admitted to candidacy, they are required to enroll in 3 SCH of dissertation writing each fall and spring semester until the dissertation is completed and recommended by the dissertation committee for approval from the Dean of College of Arts, Sciences, and Education and the Provost (or designee). Students who fail to enroll for dissertation during any fall or spring semester after admission to candidacy will be prohibited from enrolling until the tuition has been collected for each semester.

NOTE: Doctoral candidates working on their dissertation will not be required to enroll during the summer term, unless recommended by the dissertation chair. A candidate cannot defend a final dissertation during the summer. Note: students may be required to pay out-of-state tuition after they have completed 130 hours of work.

Students should refer to the Dissertation Manual for further information regarding dissertation processes.

PROGRAM ADMISSION

Admissions Requirements

Applicants to the Texas A&M University–Texarkana Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program (Doctor of Education [Ed.D.] in Educational Leadership) must hold a master’s degree in Educational Leadership or a closely related field. Successful applicants typically demonstrate a commitment to professional growth, continuous learning, effective leadership practice, and readiness for doctoral-level scholarship.

To be considered for admission, applicants must submit the following:

1. **Completed Master’s Degree.**
A master’s degree in Educational Leadership or a related field from an accredited institution.
2. **Official Transcripts**
Official transcripts from all institutions of higher education attended. Applicants must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0, or a 3.0 GPA in the last 60 hours of undergraduate coursework combined with graduate coursework.
3. **Professional Résumé or Curriculum Vitae (CV)**
A current résumé or CV documenting educational background, professional experience, leadership roles, service, and relevant accomplishments.
4. **Program Interview**
Applicants are required to participate in a 15-minute interview with program faculty. The interview provides an opportunity to discuss professional experience, leadership responsibilities, communication skills, and readiness for a practice-focused doctoral program.
5. **Evidence of Academic Readiness**
Evidence of preparation for doctoral-level study, demonstrated through prior coursework, professional experience, written application materials, and interview performance.

Admissions Review

- Applications are reviewed using a holistic admissions process that considers professional preparation, leadership experience, academic record, résumé or CV, interview performance, and alignment with the mission of the Scholars of Practice program.
- Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. Students may be admitted year-round to begin approved cognate coursework; however, core program coursework begins each spring semester.

Notification

Applicants will be notified of admission decisions by the **Office of Graduate Studies**.

Financial Aid and Program Progression

Federal financial aid for doctoral programs generally requires students to enroll in a **minimum of six semester credit hours (SCH) per term**. Students are encouraged to plan carefully to maintain financial aid eligibility and remain in sequence with their cohort.

1. Summer Enrollment and Aid Pacing

- Because the program includes summer coursework, students who use the maximum financial aid disbursement during fall and spring semesters may not have remaining eligibility for summer enrollment.
- Insufficient summer funding may delay program progression and result in students falling out of cohort sequence.
- Students are strongly encouraged to consult with the **Financial Aid Office early in the program** to plan financial aid distribution across all semesters of enrollment.

2. Dissertation Phase Enrollment

- Dissertation courses (EDLD 693) are **3 SCH per term**.
- To qualify for federal financial aid, students must be enrolled in **at least 6 SCH per term**.
- Students who have completed all cognate coursework and enroll only in dissertation hours (3 SCH) will not meet financial aid eligibility requirements. In such cases, students must either:
 - Enroll in an additional approved course to reach 6 SCH, or
 - Pay out-of-pocket for dissertation enrollment.
- Careful planning of cognate coursework is recommended to avoid unexpected financial obligations during the dissertation phase.

3. Military and Veterans Benefits

Students eligible for military or veterans benefits should contact the Veterans Services Office for guidance regarding benefit usage:

- **Location:** 1st Floor, Building of Academic & Student Services
- **Phone:** (903) 334-6602
- **Email:** veterans@tamut.edu

DEGREE PLAN

General Guidelines

The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Education Leadership is a 60 semester credit hour (SCH) doctoral program designed for experienced education professionals. In accordance with university and state requirements, the Ed.D. degree represents a minimum of 90 SCH of post-baccalaureate coursework, inclusive of the completed master's degree and doctoral coursework.

Doctoral coursework is structured, cohort-based, and sequenced to support progressive development of scholarly practice, preparation for comprehensive examinations, and successful completion of the dissertation. With the exception of approved cognate coursework and dissertation research hours, students are expected to complete coursework with their assigned cohort and follow the prescribed sequence.

Time Limitation for Degree Completion

All doctoral degree requirements beyond the master's degree must be completed within ten (10) calendar years from the date of admission to the doctoral program. Coursework completed more than ten years prior to the conferral of the doctoral degree may not be applied toward degree requirements without prior approval.

The ten-year time limitation includes all doctoral coursework, comprehensive examinations, and dissertation research hours. Once students begin enrolling in dissertation research (EDLD 693), they are expected to maintain continuous enrollment in accordance with university policy until the dissertation is successfully completed.

Transfer Credit

With approval from the Program Coordinator, students may transfer a maximum of twelve (12) semester credit hours from another regionally accredited institution toward the doctoral degree. Only courses in which the student earned a grade of B or higher are eligible for transfer, and all transferred coursework must have been completed within ten years of the doctoral degree conferral date.

Transfer credit is limited to approved cognate coursework. Core program courses and research tool courses must be completed within the program and are not eligible for transfer or substitution. All approved transfer credits will be documented on the student's official degree plan. Under no circumstances may more than 12 SCH be applied toward the doctoral degree through transfer credit.

Competency-Based Credits

In limited circumstances, students may request consideration for competency-based credit based on relevant professional experience, external training, or other approved learning experiences. Credit consideration requires submission of formal documentation, such as a portfolio, demonstrating alignment with course outcomes.

Competency-based credit:

- Is not guaranteed
- Is limited to cognate coursework only
- Is reviewed by the Program Coordinator
- Requires approval by the Provost or designee

Competency-based credit is not permitted for core coursework, research tool courses, or dissertation research hours.

COURSE SEQUENCE

The courses listed below represent the **required coursework** for completion of the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Education Leadership. With the exception of approved cognate coursework and dissertation research hours, students are expected to complete all core and research tool courses **with their assigned cohort** and in the prescribed sequence.

Course sequencing is intentionally designed to support:

- Progressive development of scholarly practice
- Early and sustained engagement with problems of practice
- Distributed introduction of research tools
- Preparation for comprehensive examinations
- Readiness for dissertation research

Required Core and Research Tool Courses

Course	Title	Credit Hours
EDLD 611	Doctoral Seminar	3
EDLD 612	Strategic Planning and Change	3
EDLD 622	Theories in Educational Leadership	3
EDLD 625	Field Study in National and International Cultural Perspectives	3
EDLD 626	Improvement Science for Education Leadership*	3
EDLD 627	Frameworks in Research	3
EDLD 632	Contemporary Issues in Education Leadership	3
EDLD 663	Statistical Methods in Education Leadership*	3
EDLD 662	Methods of Inquiry (Qualitative Research)*	3
EDLD 650	Investigating Phenomena Using Quantifiable Data*	3
EDLD 670	Critical Conversations and Team Building	3
EDLD 661	Dissertation Prospectus Development*	3

* Research Tool Courses

Research tool courses provide essential preparation in research design, methodology, and analysis. All required research tool courses must be completed prior to enrollment in dissertation research (EDLD 693).

Cognate Coursework (12 SCH)

Students are required to complete 12 semester credit hours of approved cognate coursework. Cognate courses are intended to support individual professional interests and leadership goals and must be approved by the Program Coordinator or dissertation chair.

The following courses are examples of approved cognate options and may also apply toward Texas superintendent certification:

Course	Title	Credit Hours
EDLD 690	Executive Instructional Leadership of the Education Community	3
EDLD 691	Leadership Internship	3
EDLD 694	Executive Instructional Leadership	3
EDLD 698	Administrative Leadership (Finance)	3

Cognate courses may be replaced by alternative graduate-level coursework in an approved cognate area with prior approval. Cognate coursework may be completed at various points in the program as outlined in the student's approved degree plan.

Dissertation Research

Course	Title	Credit Hours
EDLD 693	Dissertation Research**	3

** EDLD 693 may be repeated as necessary until the dissertation is successfully completed. A maximum of 12 semester credit hours of EDLD 693 may be applied toward the doctoral degree. Enrollment beyond 12 SCH does not count toward degree requirements.

Students may not enroll in EDLD 693 until:

- All required coursework is completed
- Comprehensive examinations are successfully passed
- Dissertation chair approval is obtained

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Purpose of the Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination is a required milestone in the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Education Leadership program. The examination is designed to assess a student's ability to integrate coursework, scholarly literature, leadership knowledge, and professional experience in preparation for dissertation research.

Consistent with the Scholars of Practice model, the comprehensive examination emphasizes application, synthesis, and critical analysis rather than rote memorization. Successful completion of the comprehensive examination indicates that the student is prepared to advance to dissertation work.

Eligibility to Sit for Comprehensive Examinations

To be eligible to sit for the comprehensive examination, students must:

- Successfully complete all required core coursework
- Be enrolled in or have completed required research tool courses, as specified by the program
- Be in good academic standing
- Receive approval from the Program Coordinator or designee

Students are expected to complete the comprehensive examination near the conclusion of coursework, as outlined in the program completion plan.

Examination Format and Content

The comprehensive examination is a written examination administered during a designated examination period. The format and structure are determined by program faculty and may include:

- Application of leadership theory to professional practice
- Analysis of organizational or educational challenges
- Integration of research frameworks and inquiry approaches
- Reflection on professional leadership experiences

Examination questions are designed to align with program learning outcomes and reflect the applied, practice-focused nature of the Ed.D.

Evaluation of the Comprehensive Examination

Comprehensive examinations are evaluated by program faculty using established criteria that assess:

- Depth of understanding of leadership concepts and theory
- Ability to synthesize research and practice
- Clarity, organization, and scholarly writing
- Application of knowledge to real-world educational contexts

Possible outcomes of the comprehensive examination include:

- Pass
- Pass with Conditions
- Not Passed

Retake Policy

Students who do not pass the comprehensive examination on the first attempt may be permitted one additional attempt, subject to program approval.

- Students receiving a “Pass with Conditions” outcome must satisfactorily complete required revisions or additional work within the timeframe specified by the program.
- Students who do not pass the examination after the second attempt may be subject to dismissal from the program in accordance with university policy.

Advancement to the Dissertation Phase

Students who successfully complete all required coursework and pass the comprehensive examination are eligible to advance to the dissertation phase of the program. Enrollment in dissertation research (EDLD 693) is not permitted until these requirements have been met and dissertation chair approval has been obtained.

All dissertation requirements, procedures, timelines, and expectations are governed by the Ed.D. Dissertation Manual applicable to the student’s year of admission. Students are responsible for reviewing the Dissertation Manual prior to enrolling in EDLD 693 and for adhering to all policies outlined therein throughout the dissertation process.

DISSERTATION PROCESS AND MILESTONES

The dissertation is the culminating scholarly requirement of the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Education Leadership and reflects the program’s emphasis on applied inquiry and scholarly practice. Through the dissertation, candidates examine a problem of practice relevant to their professional context and conduct systematic inquiry to inform leadership decision-making and improvement efforts.

The dissertation process occurs in stages and includes the following key milestones:

1. Dissertation Chair Selection

Upon completion of coursework and comprehensive examinations, students work with the Program Coordinator to identify and secure a dissertation chair.

2. Prospectus Development

Students enroll in EDLD 661 (Dissertation Prospectus Development) to refine their problem of practice, research questions, and methodological approach in preparation for proposal development.

3. Dissertation Proposal and Proposal Defense

Students develop a formal dissertation proposal and complete a proposal defense in accordance with program and Graduate School requirements.

4. **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval**
Students must obtain IRB approval, when applicable, prior to initiating data collection.
5. **Data Collection and Analysis**
Following IRB approval, students conduct data collection and analysis under the guidance of their dissertation chair.
6. **Dissertation Writing and Final Defense**
Students complete the written dissertation and participate in a final dissertation defense.

Throughout the dissertation phase, students are expected to maintain continuous enrollment in dissertation research (EDLD 693), communicate regularly with their dissertation chair, and adhere to all timelines and requirements outlined in the Ed.D. Dissertation Manual applicable to their cohort.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Continuous Enrollment and Academic Standing

Once admitted to the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Education Leadership program, students are expected to maintain continuous enrollment in accordance with university and Graduate School policies. Continuous enrollment is particularly important once students enter the dissertation phase of the program.

Students must remain in good academic standing, defined as:

- Meeting all program and Graduate School academic requirements
- Maintaining satisfactory progress toward degree completion
- Complying with enrollment requirements during coursework and dissertation phases

Failure to maintain continuous enrollment or satisfactory academic standing may result in delayed progress, loss of financial aid eligibility, or dismissal from the program, in accordance with university policy.

Advising, Dissertation Chair, and Student Responsibilities

The Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program uses a **faculty-guided advising model** designed to support timely progress and professional development.

Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for:

- Monitoring academic progress and degree requirements
- Maintaining regular communication with faculty advisors and dissertation chairs
- Adhering to published deadlines and program policies
- Seeking guidance proactively when challenges arise

Faculty and Chair Responsibilities

Faculty advisors and dissertation chairs provide academic guidance, feedback, and oversight throughout coursework and dissertation phases. Final approval of dissertation milestones rests with the dissertation chair and Graduate School, in accordance with university policy.

Attendance, Participation, and Professional Responsibility

The doctoral program is designed for working professionals and values flexibility; however, consistent engagement and professional responsibility are essential to student success, particularly in a cohort-based model.

Students are expected to:

- Attend and actively participate in scheduled course sessions and required program activities including coursework
- Communicate proactively with instructors regarding absences or anticipated delays

Chronic absence, lack of participation, or repeated late submissions without communication may negatively impact academic progress and cohort learning and may result in academic consequences at the discretion of the instructor or program.

Expectations related to professional conduct and leadership dispositions beyond attendance and participation are further outlined in the Professional Dispositions and Conduct Expectations section below.

Professional Dispositions and Conduct Expectations

The Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program prepares educational leaders whose work reflects ethical decision-making, professional communication, and responsible leadership practice. Because doctoral candidates serve as leaders within educational organizations, professional dispositions are considered an essential component of doctoral study alongside academic performance and scholarly achievement.

Doctoral study requires engagement in constructive dialogue, openness to feedback, and the ability to participate professionally in collaborative learning environments. Students are expected to demonstrate professional conduct in interactions with faculty, peers, university staff, and external partners throughout all phases of the program.

Professional dispositions include, but are not limited to:

- Respectful and professional communication in written, verbal, and electronic formats
- Openness to scholarly critique and faculty feedback as part of the learning process
- Ethical conduct and integrity in academic and professional settings
- Constructive participation in cohort-based learning and collaborative work
- Responsibility for maintaining a productive and respectful learning environment consistent with program expectations outlined in this handbook
- Professional judgment consistent with expectations for educational leaders

The purpose of this policy is developmental rather than punitive. When concerns related to professional dispositions arise, the program's goal is to support student growth and clarify expectations consistent with doctoral-level study and leadership preparation.

Professional Disposition Rubric

The following rubric provides general descriptors used by faculty when discussing professional dispositions with doctoral students. The rubric is intended to guide professional growth and clarify expectations rather than serve as a grading tool.

Disposition Area	Meets	Developing	Concerning
Professional Communication	Communicates respectfully and professionally in written and verbal interactions; engages in dialogue constructively even when disagreements occur.	Communication occasionally reflects frustration or misunderstanding; receptive to feedback and adjusts communication when concerns are discussed.	Communication is consistently adversarial, dismissive, or disengaged in ways that interfere with productive academic interaction.
Response to Feedback	Demonstrates openness to feedback and uses critique to improve scholarly work and professional practice.	May initially struggle with feedback but demonstrates willingness to engage and revise work or approach.	Rejects or personalizes feedback in ways that impede academic progress or professional interaction.
Collaboration and Cohort Engagement	Participates constructively in collaborative work and contributes positively to cohort learning.	Participation varies; may require guidance to maintain productive collaboration.	Behaviors negatively impact collaborative learning or create ongoing conflict within group work or cohort interactions.
Professional Responsibility	Demonstrates accountability, follows program expectations, and engages responsibly with faculty and peers.	Occasional lapses in responsibility that improve following clarification of expectations.	Repeated disregard for program expectations or unwillingness to engage in resolution processes.
Ethical and Professional Judgment	Demonstrates sound judgment consistent with leadership expectations in academic and professional contexts.	Developing awareness of professional expectations; responds to guidance.	Demonstrates judgment inconsistent with expectations for professional leadership roles.

Process for Addressing Professional Disposition Concerns

When concerns related to professional conduct or dispositions arise, the program's goal is to address concerns early, clarify expectations, and support professional growth. Depending on the nature and severity of the concern, the following actions may occur:

Informal Resolution: In many cases, the faculty member will first address the concern directly with the student to clarify expectations and support improvement.

Formal Disposition Concern: If concerns persist or significantly affect the learning environment, the concern may be documented and shared with the Program Coordinator. The student may be asked to meet with the faculty member and/or Program Coordinator to discuss expectations and identify steps for improvement.

Disposition Improvement Plan: When appropriate, a written improvement plan may be developed outlining specific expectations, supports, and a timeline for review. The intent of this plan is developmental and designed to support successful continuation in the program.

The program reserves the right to move directly to a formal disposition concern or improvement plan when the nature of the situation warrants immediate intervention.

This policy does not replace or supersede university conduct, grievance, or academic integrity policies. Concerns involving violations of university policy will be addressed through appropriate institutional procedures.

Late Work and Communication Expectations

Because coursework is delivered in accelerated **8-week sessions** and assignments are often sequenced and cumulative, timely submission of assignments is essential.

- Students are expected to plan accordingly and prioritize timely completion of coursework.
- When circumstances affect assignment completion, students must communicate with the instructor as early as possible.
- Individual instructors may establish course-specific late work policies consistent with program expectations.
- Repeated late submissions without communication may result in grade penalties or referral for advising support.

This policy reflects the program's commitment to balancing flexibility with accountability and professional preparation.

Feedback and Assignment Sequencing

Courses in the Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program are intentionally designed with assignments that build upon one another and culminate in a final project or paper.

Faculty Feedback

Faculty will make reasonable efforts to provide timely, formative feedback that supports continued learning and application to subsequent assignments.

Student Use of Feedback

Students are expected to review, reflect upon, and apply feedback to future coursework. Late submissions may delay feedback and limit the student's ability to benefit from the iterative nature of course design.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in accordance with Texas A&M University–Texarkana Student Code of Conduct. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, falsification of data, or misrepresentation of work, will be addressed in accordance with University policies address in the university catalog.

Grievances and Appeals

Students who wish to appeal academic decisions or raise concerns related to program policies must follow established Texas A&M University–Texarkana grievance and appeal procedures

outlined in the university catalog. Program-level concerns should first be addressed through appropriate academic channels before initiating a formal grievance.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

The Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program recognizes that generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are increasingly used in professional and academic settings. The program supports the responsible, transparent, and ethical use of AI in alignment with Texas A&M University–Texarkana policies and the expectations of doctoral-level scholarship.

The primary purpose of doctoral coursework and dissertation research is for students to demonstrate independent thinking, scholarly judgment, and professional expertise. AI tools may support, but must never replace, these expectations.

General Expectations for AI Use

- AI tools may be used **only when explicitly permitted by the course instructor**.
- Students must not assume AI use is allowed unless permission is stated in writing.
- Students remain fully responsible for the content, accuracy, originality, and integrity of all submitted work, regardless of AI assistance.

Disclosure and Transparency

Any use of AI tools in coursework must be **clearly and fully disclosed** at the time of submission. Disclosure must include:

- The name(s) of the AI tool(s) used
- A brief description of how and to what extent the tool(s) were used
- A statement affirming that the student reviewed, revised, and takes full responsibility for the final submission

Failure to disclose AI use constitutes a violation of academic integrity.

Academic Integrity and Professional Responsibility

Submitting AI-generated content without disclosure or representing AI-assisted work as entirely one's own original work, is considered academic dishonesty and will be addressed in accordance with university and Graduate School academic integrity policies.

Students may be asked to explain, revise, or reproduce work to demonstrate independent understanding and scholarly engagement.

AI Use Across Program Phases

Expectations for AI use increase as students' progress through the program:

- **During Coursework:**
AI use is governed by individual course policies and instructor guidance.
- **During Dissertation Work:**
Dissertation-related AI use is governed by the Ed.D. Dissertation Manual applicable to the student's cohort, which includes additional documentation and audit trail requirements.

Students are responsible for understanding and complying with AI policies applicable to their current phase of study.

When in Doubt

When uncertainty exists regarding appropriate AI use, students are expected to seek clarification before using AI tools. Transparency, professional judgment, and ethical decision-making are essential components of doctoral-level work.

GENERAL PROGRESSION OF DOCTORAL WORK

The Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership is designed to support rigorous doctoral study while allowing students to maintain full-time professional employment. The program follows a structured, cohort-based sequence that intentionally moves students from foundational leadership coursework to applied inquiry, to independent dissertation research.

Although individual timelines may vary, students typically complete the program in approximately **four years**. In some cases, students may complete the program in a shorter timeframe depending on transfer credit, competency credit, and sustained progress. All degree requirements beyond the master's degree must be completed within ten calendar years from the date of admission.

Coursework Phase

During the first two years of the program, students complete required core coursework and research tools courses in a prescribed sequence. Courses are offered in accelerated formats, including 8-week and 10-week sessions, across fall, spring, and summer terms. Coursework is designed to build progressively, with assignments that support the development of leadership knowledge, scholarly writing, and applied research skills.

Students are expected to remain enrolled with their assigned cohort throughout the coursework phase, with the exception of approved cognate coursework.

Comprehensive Examination Phase

Upon completion of core coursework and research tools requirements, students are eligible to sit for the comprehensive examinations. The comprehensive exams assess students' ability to synthesize leadership theory, research methods, and applied practice in preparation for dissertation work.

Successful completion of the comprehensive examinations is required for advancement to the dissertation phase and admission to candidacy.

Dissertation Phase

Following admission to candidacy, students transition to the dissertation phase of the program. During this phase, students identify a dissertation chair, develop a dissertation prospectus,

complete a proposal defense, and conduct dissertation research focused on a problem of practice relevant to their professional context.

Students must maintain continuous enrollment in dissertation research (EDLD 693) during the fall and spring semesters until all degree requirements are met. Summer enrollment during the dissertation phase is not required but may be recommended based on individual circumstances and graduation timelines. Students should consult with their dissertation chair to determine appropriate enrollment during summer terms.

Ongoing Expectations

Throughout all phases of the program, students are expected to:

- Maintain satisfactory academic progress
- Communicate regularly with faculty advisors and dissertation chairs
- Adhere to program timelines and enrollment requirements
- Engage professionally and responsibly as members of a cohort-based doctoral community

As part of developing a scholar-practitioner identity, doctoral students are encouraged to share and disseminate their work beyond the classroom when appropriate. Dissemination may include professional presentations, conference proposals, practitioner publications, or submission of scholarly manuscripts developed from coursework or dissertation research. These experiences support professional growth, contribute to the broader educational community, and reflect the program's emphasis on applied inquiry and leadership practice. While dissemination is encouraged as part of doctoral preparation, it is not a requirement for degree completion.

Detailed policies governing coursework, comprehensive examinations, dissertation requirements, and academic standing are outlined in subsequent sections of this handbook and in the Ed.D. Dissertation Manual applicable to each cohort.

Honors Distinction in the Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program

The Honors Distinction in the Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program is an optional pathway for students who wish to pursue advanced scholarly engagement and professional service beyond standard program expectations. The Honors designation is designed to recognize sustained commitment to academic excellence, leadership, and contribution to the profession and university community.

Participation in the Honors Distinction is voluntary and separate from degree completion requirements. All requirements for the Ed.D. degree remain unchanged regardless of Honors participation.

Purpose of the Honors Distinction

The Honors Distinction provides doctoral students with an opportunity to:

- Deepen engagement with scholarly and professional communities
- Extend work developed through coursework or dissertation study
- Contribute meaningfully to leadership practice, research, and service

- Receive formal recognition for exceptional academic and professional commitment

While not all graduate programs participate in the Honors College, the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership offers this pathway to recognize doctoral students whose work reflects sustained excellence and engagement.

Recognition of Honors Graduates

Doctoral students who successfully complete the Honors Distinction requirements will receive formal recognition at graduation. In alignment with Honors College practices, recognition includes:

- **Honors Medal**, worn at commencement
- **Honors Seal on the Diploma**
- **Transcript Notation** indicating graduation with Honors

These recognitions signify academic distinction, scholarly engagement, and leadership within the profession.

Eligibility Criteria

To qualify for the Honors Distinction, doctoral students must:

- Maintain a **minimum cumulative GPA of 3.9**
- Demonstrate achievement in **both** of the following areas:
 - **Scholarship** (minimum of two qualifying experiences)
 - **Professional Service and Engagement** (minimum of 10 approved points)

Qualifying Experiences

1. Scholarship

Scholarship is defined as original intellectual contribution or active participation in scholarly discourse. Qualifying experiences may include:

- Presentation of a research paper at an academic or scholarly conference (e.g., SERA, CPED, ICPEL, AERA)
- Submission of a manuscript for peer review in an academic or professional journal (single- or co-authored)
- Contribution to a faculty-led research project resulting in dissemination
- Publication of a research brief, technical report, or policy paper grounded in original analysis

2. Professional Service and Engagement

Students must accumulate **at least 10 points** across approved activities that demonstrate leadership, service, and engagement with the profession or university community.

High-Value Service (4–5 points each) may include:

- Serving as a journal or book reviewer
- Publishing a book review in a professional or peer-reviewed outlet
- Serving on planning or proposal review committees for professional conferences

Moderate-Value Engagement (2–3 points each) may include:

- Delivering a professional presentation at a regional, state, or national conference
- Presenting in a university-sponsored seminar, panel, or interdisciplinary forum
- Serving as a facilitator, panelist, or respondent for Honors College or university events

Introductory Engagement (1 point each) may include:

- Attending Honors College colloquia, invited lectures, or professional development sessions
- Participating in Honors College meetings, workshops, or symposia
- Other approved activities aligned with professional or disciplinary engagement

Students may propose additional activities for consideration by submitting them to the Program Coordinator for approval in advance.

Documentation and Approval

Students are responsible for documenting all Honors-related activities using the Honors Distinction Tracking Form. Activities must be approved by the Program Coordinator to count toward Honors requirements.

Students who complete Honors requirements must submit all documentation by the deadline established for graduation review.

Graduation and Degree Conferral

Filing for Graduation

Doctoral candidates are responsible for filing an application for graduation with the Office of the Registrar by the published deadline for the semester in which they intend to graduate. Graduation deadlines are listed in the official university academic calendar and schedule of classes.

Students are eligible to graduate under the degree requirements outlined in the catalog in effect at the time of admission or a subsequent catalog year, provided all program requirements are completed within the ten-year time limitation.

Filing for graduation does not guarantee degree conferral. All academic, dissertation, and administrative requirements must be fully satisfied prior to degree certification.

Completion of Degree Requirements

To be eligible for graduation, students must have:

- Successfully completed all required coursework and cognate requirements
- Passed comprehensive examinations
- Completed and successfully defended the dissertation
- Submitted the final approved dissertation in accordance with Graduate School and Dissertation Manual requirements
- Met all financial and administrative obligations to the university

Students should work closely with their dissertation chair and the Program Coordinator to ensure that all requirements are completed in a timely manner.

Commencement Ceremony

The doctoral degree is formally conferred at the university commencement ceremony following completion of all degree requirements. Candidates are expected to participate in commencement activities.

If attendance at commencement is not possible, students must request permission in advance from the Provost or their designee in accordance with university policy.

Students earning the Honors Distinction will receive appropriate recognition at commencement, including Honors regalia, as outlined in the Honors Distinction section of this handbook.

Final Note

Graduation marks the completion of degree requirements; however, students remain subject to all applicable university policies until the degree is officially awarded.

Additional information regarding graduation procedures can be found in the Texas A&M University–Texarkana Graduate Catalog and through the Office of the Registrar.

Governing Documents and Policy Authority

This Doctoral Program Handbook is intended to supplement information contained in the Texas A&M University–Texarkana Graduate Catalog, the Dissertation Manual applicable to each cohort, and official university policies. The handbook provides program-specific guidance and expectations but does not supersede university-level policies or procedures.

In the event of a conflict between this handbook and the Dissertation Manual, or other official university policies, the University Catalog and university policies shall take precedence.

The Scholars of Practice Doctoral Program reserves the right to revise policies, procedures, and program requirements as necessary to maintain academic quality, comply with institutional or accreditation standards, and respond to evolving professional and educational contexts. Students will be notified of substantive changes in a timely manner.