Educational Theory and Practice, Ph.D.

Degree Offered

- Doctor of Philosophy

Nature of the Program

The Ph.D. in Educational Theory and Practice meets the goals and professional needs of individuals interested in researching and contributing solutions toward theoretical and practical problems in teaching and learning, teacher education and development, and societal, cultural, and critical studies in education. The program serves as a source of preparation for students toward careers as higher education faculty, educational researchers, policy analysts, and those who conduct work in a range of educational agencies and organizations.

Program coursework provides opportunities to examine the theoretical, philosophical, historical, and critical foundations of educational research and practice. Students benefit from a core of courses focused on research methodologies and mentoring by graduate faculty around research and teaching activities. Coursework and programmatic experiences leverage the wide-ranging expertise of our program's faculty and intersect with our programmatic commitments to diversity, inclusion, and social justice in education and in communities. Through their work with program faculty, students also select program electives that align with their interests and deepen their focus in core areas of educational research and practice.

Admissions for 2025-2026

Admission into the Ph.D. in Educational Theory and Practice program is based on the academic strength of the applicant as well as the fit of the applicant’s goals and interests with the program and its faculty. As such, applicants are strongly encouraged to research the nature of the program and the expertise of faculty within the program prior to submitting their applications and to clearly demonstrate in their application the opportunities for connections. Students are selected based on the overall strength of their application, with these considerations in mind.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until March 1 for Fall admission. Files received by December 15 will receive priority consideration for funding opportunities (i.e., graduate assistantships, University fellowships). Applicants to the Ph.D. in Educational Theory and Practice program must comply with the WVU requirements for admission to graduate studies and the requirements of the College of Applied Human Sciences. Admission is contingent on an assessment of complete official transcripts, including all higher education work attempted, and other evidence the faculty may deem necessary in order to judge students' prospective success within the graduate program.

In addition to the minimum required application materials from the University (e.g., transcripts, English proficiency scores for International applicants), applications to the Ph.D. in Educational Theory and Practice must consist of the following materials:

- **Statement of Goals and Purpose:** All applicants should submit a statement related to their professional and research goals and their interest in this specific program. The statement should be no more than three pages (single-spaced). This statement should be well written, should clearly specify the applicant’s goals and scholarly interests, and should articulate the connections between those interests and the ongoing work and expertise of the program's faculty. While this is not an expectation that applicants have their research or dissertation foci finalized, the statement should highlight general questions and issues in education that interest the applicant as well as the applicant's motivations for pursuing those questions and a doctoral program. Statements should also include the explicit identification of 2-3 faculty members who might serve as scholarly mentors. To support this, it is recommended that candidates reach out to faculty members whose interests seem to align and discuss their specific career and research goals with them before crafting this statement.
- **Curriculum vita/resume:** Applicants must provide a history of their academic and professional experience in a vita, serving as evidence that the applicant has appropriate experiences to be able to meet the goals and expectations of the program.
- **Academic Writing Sample**: Applicants must also provide a writing sample (e.g., thesis, submitted or published article, graduate course essay) demonstrating their academic writing abilities, their academic interests, as well as their ability to engage in research and/or scholarship.
- **Three (3) letters of recommendation:** Applicants must provide three letters of recommendation that explicitly address the applicant’s potential as a doctoral student. Letter writers should be familiar with the applicant’s academic performance and potential for success in the Ph.D. in Educational Theory and Practice program, therefore it is recommended that at least two of the writers be professors.

Note that, as of the start of the 2020-2021 academic year, the Ph.D. in Educational Theory and Practice is a "GRE optional" program, meaning that GRE scores are ***not*** required for application or admission, though applicants may still choose to submit GRE or other exam scores as part of the application.

Applications will be reviewed by a committee of program faculty. Applicants may be asked to also participate in an interview to seek additional information as part of the admissions decision. All individuals accepted into the program will receive information about their assigned adviser and guidance on the development of a personalized program of study. Admitted students will also receive information on funding opportunities and other support.

Major Code: 5538

Doctor of Philosophy

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Code	Title	Hours
A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required for all coursework applied toward the major requirements.		
Educational Theory and Practice Program Core		
SCFD 620	Philosophy of Education	3
C&I 706	Theories and Practices of Learning	3
SCFD 610	Foundations of Education	3
C&I 707	Theories, Models and Research of Teaching	3
Research Core		
SCFD 781	Nature of Inquiry 1	1
SCFD 782	Nature of Inquiry 2	1
SCFD 783	Nature of Inquiry 3	1
SCFD 605	Education Research Literacy	3
SCFD 615	Qualitative Research Methods	3
SCFD 715	Advanced Qualitative Research	3
Advanced Research Methods Electives *		6
Research & Teaching Practicum		
C&I 790	Teaching Practicum	3
C&I 797	Research	15
Specialization Track		**12**
Individualized Plan and specific coursework to be developed with advisor and committee		
Total Hours		60

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Advanced Research Methods Electives must be chosen and approved in consultation with the Graduate Advisor/Program Committee.

Satisfactory Progress Review: In addition to the program's main benchmarks—program of study (including minimum GPA requirements), comprehensive exams, admission to candidacy, dissertation prospectus, and dissertation defense—students will be reviewed annually (each spring) by their adviser according to the program objectives. This review will confirm students' maintenance of satisfactory academic progress as well as development toward the program objectives. If a student is not deemed to be making satisfactory academic progress and/or fails to meet programmatic benchmarks, the adviser and committee with generate an agreement that outlines the conditions of the student's continued enrollment in the program. Failure to meet those expectations in the time specified in the agreement will result in the dismissal of the student from the program.

Program of Study: Students, guided by the faculty adviser, will construct a program committee and articulate and approve an initial program of study by the end of their first year. This program will be modified as needed based on student's trajectory and available course offerings. Students may apply up to 18 hours of prior coursework at the graduate level; however the coursework needs to have been completed within 10 years prior to the program of study meeting. Acceptance of prior work toward program requirements will be based upon approval of the student's advisor in consultation with the doctoral committee. The advisor and/or chair will approve other graduate work only if it is consistent in quality, rigor, and purpose with the coursework provided in the current program.

Residency Requirement: Students are expected to complete at least two consecutive terms (fall, spring, and/or summer) of full-time residency (nine or more credits per term).

Written Comprehensive Exam and Candidacy: At the completion of the program's core courses, students will take a written comprehensive exam. Comprehensive exams will be administered by and evaluated by the student's program committee. Students who do not pass their comprehensive exams will be given the opportunity to revise their responses and/or retake the exam in the following semester. Students who are unable to pass their comprehensive exams after a second attempt will be dismissed from the program. After a student passes their comprehensive exams and completes their program of study (excluding dissertation credits), the student completes and submits the CEHS Doctoral Admission to Candidacy form. Note that, once admitted to candidacy, the student has five years to defend their dissertation and graduate and must register for at least one credit in each fall and spring semester as a condition of their continued candidacy.

Dissertation Prospectus: After admission to candidacy, students need to finalize their doctoral committee, consisting of four members, selected according to university and college requirements and based upon the degree to which they help support the research focus and the line of inquiry of the student's dissertation. The dissertation prospectus is the student's proposal concerning a means of investigating a research problem. It is a major step toward completion of the dissertation, which is an original contribution to one's field of study. The prospectus should clearly indicate why the study is of value in the student's field of study and should defend the theoretical basis of the study as well as the analytic decisions and methods for successful completion of a high-quality dissertation. Upon completion, each committee member must receive a copy of the prospectus at least two weeks prior to a scheduled prospectus meeting. The prospectus defense is closed to the public. At the prospectus defense the doctoral committee can either approve or fail to approve the prospectus, or recommend revisions. Failure to approve the prospectus must be accompanied by a plan that outlines the conditions of the student's continued enrollment in the program.

Dissertation and Dissertation Defense: Following the approval of the prospectus, the students must receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before initiating their research activities. After completing the research and writing and finalizing all of the dissertation chapters, the student may schedule the final dissertation defense with their committee. At least three weeks prior to the scheduled defense date, a "request for shuttle sheet" must be received by Allen Hall 806F. Once approved, the dissertation defense will be advertised to the public. The committee must receive the final document at least three weeks prior to the defense date, and all members must be present for the final defense. The dissertation defense is open to the public. Students that successfully defend their dissertation will be recommended for graduation. The final approved dissertation document must be submitted electronically to WVU ETD by the semester deadline published by the university.

Major Learning Outcomes

EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

Objective 1: Students will understand and interpret scholarship on theory, policy, and practice in the fields of teaching and learning, teacher education and development, and/or critical studies in education as the basis for growth over a professional career.

Objective 2: Students will critically evaluate scholarship, policy, and practice in order to promote equity, access, and social justice in educational settings.

Objective 3: Students will plan for, conduct, and report on original research that advances the fields of teaching and learning, teacher education and development, and/or critical studies in education.

Objective 4: Students will demonstrate skills as educators—including designing, implementing, evaluating, and revising educational experiences—as part of preparation for academic careers.