Educational Theory and Practice

Degree Offered

- Doctor of Philosophy

Nature of the Program

The Ph.D. in Educational Theory and Practice meets the interests and professional needs of future scholars in the areas of teaching and learning (across various subjects, in- and out-of-school contexts, and ages/grades); teacher education and development (across various subjects and professional levels); and societal, cultural, and critical studies in education. The program serves as a source of preparation for students toward careers as higher education faculty, education researchers, policy analysts, and work with other educational organizations (e.g., non-profits).

Students in the program engage in coursework focused on theoretical, philosophical, and historical foundations of education research and practice. Students also benefit from a core of courses focus on research methodologies. Students are mentored by graduate faculty around research and teaching. Through their work with program faculty, students can further specialize in areas such as: teacher education, education policy, multicultural education, critical theories and pedagogies, mathematics education, science education, English education, social studies education, language/literacy studies, and early childhood education.

Admissions

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 with the goals of the program and the 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 how their goals fit with the program and its faculty. Students are selected based on the overall strength of their application.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until April 1 for Fall admission. Files received by January 15 will receive priority consideration for funding opportunities. 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 Education and Human Services. 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.

Applications will consist of the following materials:

- **Letter of intent/goal statement:** All applicants should submit a goal statement related to the program, including professional and research goals and interest in this specific program. This statement should be well written and clearly indicate how the applicant’s goals fit with the program and faculty. 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. Goal statements should be no more than three pages (single spaced).

- **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.

- **GRE/TOEFL:** All students must submit Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores as part of their application. Students must have earned a score of 300 on the verbal and quantitative parts of the GRE. In addition to submitting GRE scores, international applicants must meet minimum score requirements for English proficiency as specified by the University. Any test scores submitted for consideration must be no more than five years old.

Applications will be reviewed by a committee of program faculty. Some applicants may be asked to participate in an interview to seek additional information. 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.

Doctor of Philosophy

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required of all coursework.

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Program of Study: Students, guided by the faculty adviser, will construct a program committee and articulate 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.

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. 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. 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 CEHS Office of Student Success. 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.
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.

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.