10.5 DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

Programs leading to the doctor of philosophy (PhD) degree are offered in counselor education, educational administration, higher education administration, educational psychology, educational research, elementary education, human performance, instructional leadership, school psychology, secondary education (music education is available as a specialization within secondary education), and special education. Programs leading to the doctor of education (EdD) degree are offered in counselor education, educational administration, higher education administration, educational psychology, elementary education, instructional leadership, school psychology, secondary education (music education is available as a specialization within secondary education), and special education. The doctoral programs are designed for school personnel and others engaged in educational service and leadership.

A masters degree from an accredited institution is required for admission into any EdD or PhD program in the College of Education. Other objective and subjective criteria are employed to select students whose success can be reasonably predicted. Some doctoral programs have further prerequisites for admission such as a professional teaching certificate and/or certain experience in teaching or a related activity. Those who wish to pursue doctoral study in the College of Education should communicate directly with the head of the department in which they seek to work.

In planning a program, doctoral students should follow these steps:

Declaration of Intent

Before establishing a doctoral committee, students must successfully complete a screening process in the department in which they wish to study. The applicant initiates the screening process by filing a declaration of intent form with the appropriate department head. The forms are available in the departmental offices.

Preliminary Conference

As part of the screening process, appropriate faculty members review information the applicant has supplied and interview the applicant. In this preliminary conference, consideration is given to factors such as the applicant's academic and professional background, test scores, personal traits, professional goals and aspirations, and other factors that pertain to the ability to complete the program successfully and continue a productive career. The applicant is notified of the decision of the screening committee by the department head within a few days following the preliminary conference. The department head notifies the College of Education Office of Student Services of the decision by returning the appropriately marked declaration of intent form.
Appointment of Advisor and Doctoral Program Advisory Committee

Students accepted for doctoral study will be asked to confer with the appropriate department head regarding the appointment of advisors and program advisory committees. Nominations for appointment to these committees are made by the program chairperson through the department head to the dean of the College.

EdD program advisory committees usually consist of a minimum of three members of the graduate faculty: a chairperson who represents the student's major area of study and who will be the major advisor for the student in program planning and research, and two members (one from outside the department of the College in which the student is majoring) who can also be of assistance in their areas of expertise.

PhD program advisory committees must have at least five members: a chairperson, who is drawn from the graduate faculty and who represents the student's major area of study (the chairperson serves as the major advisor in program planning and research) and four members, one of whom must be from outside the department of the student's major.

Program Planning

As soon as possible after the appointment of the doctoral program advisory committee, but no later than the end of the first semester of doctoral study, the student and the major advisor should convene a meeting of the program advisory committee. At this program-planning meeting, the student provides each member with a formal written summary of graduate study to date. The student and the committee then plan a program of study to meet the academic and professional needs of the student and fulfill all requirements of the program, the College, and the Graduate School. Plan of Study forms for both doctoral degrees may be obtained in the departmental offices.

Official copies of the Plan of Study agreed upon by the student and the committee shall be dated, signed by the committee members and the department head, and distributed to the Office of the Graduate School, to the student's program office for inclusion in the student's program file, to the dean, and to the committee members. Any deviation from the Plan of Study must be approved by the committee and noted by the chairperson on the student's official record. An amended Plan of Study (if needed) must be submitted to the Graduate School when the student submits the form for Admission to Candidacy for Doctoral Degree.

All doctoral students must have a completed Plan of Study approved by the Graduate School no later than the semester during which the student will complete 30 semester hours of UA and/or transfer credit for the doctoral degree. Otherwise, a "hold" may be placed on future registrations.

The program advisory committee continues to assist the student in program planning and advisement until the student satisfactorily completes all major and minor comprehensive examinations.
Degree Requirements

The PhD requires a minimum of 72 hours of graduate study beyond the master's degree, comprising at least 48 hours of coursework and 24 hours of dissertation research. The course of study must include no fewer than 24 semester hours in a major field, a minimum of 12 semester hours in foundational coursework, and a minimum of 12 semester hours in research methods. Although there is no longer a college-wide requirement, individual departments may stipulate additional hours for a minor requirement or research methods.

The EdD degree requires a minimum of 72 hours of graduate study beyond the master's degree, including at least 60 hours of coursework and 12 hours of dissertation research. The course of study must include no fewer than 24 hours in a major field, a minimum of 12 semester hours in foundational coursework, and a minimum of 12 semester hours in research methods. With the approval of the Student's program advisory committee, some departments permit up to 6 semester hours of dissertation research credit to be included in the 60 hours of required coursework. In such cases the minimum number of hours is 66.

Students pursuing PhD and EdD degrees in the College of Education must satisfy the following foundations requirement: 12 hours of graduate coursework comprising (1) any BEF or BEP classes or (2) any non-research methods courses outside the student's department. Foundations courses cannot come from the student's major program. Approved by the program study committee, these classes should introduce the student to theoretical discourses and bodies of knowledge that provide a depth and breadth of understanding necessary for fluency with the research, theory, and scholarship foundational to the student's field of inquiry and dissertation research. A 12–15 semester hour research/statistics competency is also required in all PhD and EdD programs.

Additional information is in the Degree Requirements section of this catalog.

Major and Minor Examinations

Each PhD candidate must demonstrate competence in his or her major fields (and minor fields, if required by the department). Each EdD student must demonstrate competence in the broad area of knowledge and any areas of specialization specified in his or her program of study. Written comprehensive examinations are required to determine competence in the student's major (PhD) or broad area of knowledge (EdD). A student who fails a major or minor examination may repeat it only once.

A student may apply to take the comprehensive examination in the major after filing a Plan of Study, completing at least one semester in residence, and obtaining approval of the department head (or the department head's designee) to take the examination. An examination application should be filed with the appropriate department head at least four weeks in advance of the scheduled testing date.

Comprehensive examinations in minor fields or areas of specialization can be taken after the student has completed all coursework in the minor field. The chairperson of the program or department offering the minor or area of specialization may establish evaluating procedures.
other than a written comprehensive examination.

**Dissertation Committee**

The dissertation committee, with the director of the dissertation as its chairperson, is responsible for assisting the doctoral student in developing and conducting dissertation research. Once the dissertation committee is formed, the student's program planning committee is disbanded. To form the dissertation committee, the student meets with the chairperson of the program advisory committee to discuss a potential dissertation topic and identify faculty with relevant expertise who by virtue of full membership in the graduate education faculty may chair the dissertation committee. The student then requests such a faculty member to chair the dissertation committee, and together they recommend at least four additional members of the committee, at least one of whom is from outside the department that includes the student's major field of study.

The graduate dean’s approval of the proposed dissertation committee is expected to be obtained before significant progress is made on the dissertation--typically just before or just after the dissertation proposal meeting. For this purpose, the student submits the form for **Appointment/Change of a Doctoral Dissertation Committee**.

Selection of the committee chairperson and members should be based on the relationship between the expertise and scholarly interests of the faculty members and the student's proposed dissertation topic. The student and committee chairperson recommend the committee to the program chairperson who recommends the committee to the department head, who in turn recommends the committee to the dean of the College of Education.

The dissertation committee chairperson provides intense counsel in selecting the dissertation problem, developing the proposal, coordinating input from committee members, chairing committee meetings, guiding the student's dissertation research, guiding the writing of the dissertation, and chairing the oral defense of the dissertation. The dissertation committee assists the student in developing the proposal, conducting dissertation research and writing the dissertation, and judges the adequacy of the student's dissertation defense. Close cooperation and involvement of all committee members are expected at all stages of the dissertation process, from the development of the proposal to successful oral defense of the dissertation. The student, in consultation with the chairperson of the committee, is responsible for scheduling committee meetings.

**Dissertation Proposal**

The dissertation is a contribution to research and literature in a field. It represents the student's ability to identify a problem; develop an understanding of the relevant literature and previous research in an area of inquiry; formulate cogent research questions or hypotheses; report and discuss results of investigation; and derive conclusions, implications, and recommendations from results. The dissertation proposal is the first major step in this process.

The topic of the dissertation should evolve from the student's academic and professional interests. The topic will not be accepted until the dissertation committee formally meets and
approves a comprehensive dissertation proposal. While a student may present a brief prospectus to the committee informally, the acceptance of the complete dissertation proposal is necessary before the student has approval from the committee to pursue the dissertation, and before the student is admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree.

The dissertation proposal will include an introduction to the problem, a statement of the problem, research questions or hypotheses, a comprehensive review of literature and related research, a description of the methods of inquiry or research methods to be employed in the investigation, and the results of pilot studies (where appropriate). It is expected that the information presented in the proposal will be comprehensive and will include discussion of the areas just mentioned in a form that is essentially the same as the final dissertation. Some departments require a formal prospectus prior to the dissertation proposal.

Prior to the formal proposal meeting of the dissertation committee, the student should confer with all committee members. The written dissertation proposal must be provided to members of the committee at least 10 working days prior to the proposal meeting. The Graduate School policy on article-style dissertations may be found in the Degree Requirement section of this catalog.

Upon acceptance of the dissertation proposal, including completion of any changes recommended by the committee, each committee member will sign the acceptance page of the dissertation proposal. One copy of the signed proposal will be filed with the chairperson of the dissertation committee and one copy will be forwarded to the program chairperson and department head for the student's permanent file. The student is then eligible for admission to candidacy for the degree; the application for admission to candidacy for degree must be completed. The dissertation proposal will be maintained in the program and departmental office until the student completes and successfully defends the dissertation.

Typically, the student's major advisor (chairperson of the dissertation committee) will serve as the chief advisor for the dissertation research and preparation of the dissertation. However, another advisor may be selected if the choice of topic warrants such action. Such a change must be approved by the program chairperson and department head, in consultation with the student. In addition, more than five faculty members may serve on the dissertation committee. Students are encouraged to seek advice and assistance with their research from any member of the dissertation committee and from staff members in the College of Education Research Assistance Laboratory.

The dissertation must comply with the regulations in A Student Guide to Preparing Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Graduate School deadlines, including each semester's dissertation deadline, are available at the Graduate School's homepage.

Additional information is in the Degree Requirements section of this catalog. The length of work on dissertation research will vary. In no case shall the student be allowed to take an oral examination on the dissertation before having been admitted to candidacy.

**Admission to Candidacy**

After approval of the dissertation proposal, and completion of all major and minor
examinations, the student is eligible for admission to candidacy for the degree. The **Admission to Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree** form for the PhD or EdD degree is provided by the Graduate School. The student completes the form; obtains the signatures of the dissertation committee, department head, and other appropriate officials; and has the form forwarded to the dean of the College of Education for signature. The completed candidacy form is submitted to the Graduate School for final approval. The department head reports the results of all comprehensive examinations to the College’s Office of Student Services and Certification and to the Graduate School.

No student may be admitted to candidacy in a program requiring teaching experience before completing the minimum number of years of appropriate teaching or other experience acceptable to the dissertation committee. A statement of experience from previous employers may be required.

Once a student has met the requirements for admission to candidacy for a doctoral degree, doctoral students (except those in the DMA program) must pursue completion of the dissertation without interruption by enrolling each semester for at least 3 hours of dissertation research; DMA students must enroll each semester for at least 1 hour of document research. This is true whether or not the student has submitted an application for **Admission to Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree**. Each PhD student must have completed a minimum of 24 hours of such dissertation work upon completion of the degree. Additional information is in the **Degree Requirements** section of this catalog.

**Oral Examination**

Since the dissertation research results from the acceptance of the proposal, a minimum of two semesters normally is anticipated prior to oral defense of the dissertation. This time frame ensures adequate attention to discussion of results, their implications for the field, and recommendations for future scholarship.

When all requirements have been met and the dissertation is completed, the student shall arrange a meeting of the dissertation advisory committee; the student shall distribute copies of the dissertation to the members at least 10 working days prior to this meeting.

At least 10 working days prior to defending the dissertation, the student must send an abstract of the dissertation to all faculty in the College of Education along with an invitation to attend the defense that indicates time and place of the defense. The student must defend the dissertation satisfactorily in that meeting and must pass any other examinations considered appropriate. The record of the student's performance on the final defense of the dissertation will be noted on the proper forms, in accordance with requirements of the Graduate School.

These forms will be signed by committee members.

It is the responsibility of the student to submit to the Office of the Graduate School, six weeks prior to graduation, two copies of the dissertation and the abstract in the final, approved form. Further changes or corrections may be suggested by the Graduate School at this time, and these must be completed or reconciled before graduation.
**Time Limits for Doctoral Study**

All degree requirements must be completed within seven years (21 fall, spring, and summer semesters) following admission to the doctoral program. For example, a student being admitted to and enrolled in the 2009 fall semester may utilize appropriate coursework earned during the 2003 fall semester and may also utilize appropriate coursework earned through the 2016 summer semester.

Previous graduate credit may be applied to the doctoral degree if the credit was earned during the six-year period prior to admission to the doctoral program. Such credit must be identified clearly on the Plan of Study and requires Graduate School approval. Only those students graduating within the time limit for their doctoral program may apply previous graduate credit to the doctoral degree if the credit was earned during the six-year period prior to admission to the doctoral program.

**Time Limits Extension Request**

Only under well-documented, extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control, a student may petition for a one-semester extension to the seven-year time limit that, if recommended by the department head and approved by the college dean and finally the graduate dean or his designee, will not require the student to validate any out-of-date courses. Validation of out-of-date courses is not an option in the College of Education. If a student fails to complete all degree requirements within seven years of his or her admission to the doctoral program or within a Graduate School approved one-semester extension, the student will be officially suspended from the doctoral program and must reapply for admission.

**Repeating Courses When Given an Extension**

When requests are made for extension of Graduate School deadlines, and it is deemed that an out-of-date course is integral to the degree program, the dean of the College of Education may request permission of the Graduate School for the course to be repeated. In such instances, both grades shall be used in calculation of the GPA.

**Residence Requirements for Doctoral Study**

A minimum of two academic years of graduate study beyond the master's degree is required for completion of EdD and PhD programs in the College of Education. At least one academic year of doctoral study (or its equivalent, as noted below) must be spent in continuous residence as a full-time student on the campus of The University of Alabama.

Doctoral program advisory committees may approve either of the following alternatives for meeting residence requirements:

- one full summer term and the following fall semester engaged in coursework on a full-time basis on the campus
- a spring semester and the following full summer term engaged in coursework on a full-time basis on the campus
Students pursuing alternative doctoral residency in the Instructional Technology concentration of the Instructional Leadership Ph.D. degree will enroll in 18 hours of approved graduate level coursework across three consecutive semesters. The 18 hours of coursework must include at least nine hours of approved coursework at the Tuscaloosa campus, three hours of coursework in AIL691: Doctoral Seminar: Instructional Technology, and no more than six hours of advisor approved online/distance education/Gadsden coursework.

Students in the secondary education and educational leadership EdD (not PhD) programs have the option to meet the doctoral residency requirement by following an alternative policy that is on file with the Graduate School. Contact the Graduate School for details.

Students at the Gadsden Center may fulfill EdD residency by completing 24 graduate hours while continuously enrolled for a period of 24 months.

**Transfer Credit**

Appropriate graduate credit beyond the master's degree that was earned in other accredited institutions may be transferred (with departmental and Graduate School approval) and applied to doctoral requirements, but in no case can the amount of transferred credit exceed one-half of the hours required for the degree. In calculating the number of transferable hours, dissertation-research credit hours are subtracted from the total degree requirements. A student completes a [Request for Transfer of Graduate Credit](#) and submits it to the Graduate School. The student also must ensure that the Graduate School has an official (not faxed or copied) transcript of the credit involved. It is best to apply for official transfer of credit in the student's first semester of doctoral enrollment; otherwise, the student and advisor will be unsure about the number of course hours needed when submitting the required Plan of Study. Plan of Study forms for both doctoral degrees may be obtained in the departmental offices.

Additional information concerning admission and degree requirements may be outlined in the individual program descriptions in this catalog. Admission and degree requirements for the Graduate School ([Admission Criteria](#) and [Degree Requirements](#)) and the College of Education ([General Admission](#), EdS, PhD) are detailed in earlier sections of this catalog.