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***Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership (Ed.D.)***

**DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE**

**Student Guide**

***Updated March 31, 2022***

1. **Introduction**

The dissertation in practice is the culmination of the Ed.D. Program, a practice-oriented doctoral program (see UW’s definition [here](https://grad.uw.edu/policies-procedures/graduate-school-memoranda/memo-45-practice-doctorates/))[[1]](#footnote-1). Reflective of doctoral level study, it is a rigorous, intensive application of a field-based analysis and/or implementation of a structural change project related to educational leadership. The dissertation requires scholarly inquiry that reflects sustained thinking around a theoretical framework, literature-based problem, and related set of activities (e.g., program implementation) that are documented in the form of a comprehensive report, a publication-ready academic article or report, and professional presentation. Each student conducts the dissertation under the supervision of a supervisory committee which approves the completed dissertation, and with support of program faculty through a dissertation seminar. Graduation and conferral of the Educational Leadership doctorate is dependent upon approval by the supervisory committee.

1. **Overview**

In the final year of study, students complete a yearlong, practice-based dissertation, in which they address an actual problem of practice. The dissertation synthesizes coursework and praxis-based study into a comprehensive product to capture the work completed, and can be either a continuation of their praxis efforts, or a new stand-alone project. The dissertation must be in addition to the student’s normal work expectations, which specifically demonstrates leadership at a higher level than that of their current professional context. Dissertations are required to be hands-on, problem-based, applied leadership endeavors with an equity lens, that inform current practice or policy at a national or local level (i.e., with potential influence greater than the local institution).

Although there is latitude in the design of this project, all dissertations must address the following common elements: conceptual grounding in theory and literature, clearly articulated problem of practice, methods, and analysis. All dissertations should either clarify program improvement or other solution(s) to the problem, or clarify implementation of proposed solutions, including, if applicable, evaluation of the impacts.

The problem to be investigated will be highly complex; therefore, students may elect to conduct their dissertation with other doctoral students, forming a dissertation group. In such cases, students must clearly document the roles and responsibilities of each member, and must submit independent, comprehensive reports that address all requirements. Dissertation groups must receive approval from the Director of the Ed.D. Program after committee formation.

Dissertations (including group projects) will be evaluated individually for their achievements by each student’s supervisory committee, in accordance with UW Graduate School requirements for the practice doctorate. This committee formally approves the dissertation proposal and final dissertation in practice. Each student will have a 3-member supervisory committee, which includes a committee chair, an additional University of Washington Tacoma faculty member, and a credentialed, highly experienced, professionally relevant third member.

The Dissertation in Practice committee will include an embedded chair who will teach the *TEDLD 585: Proposal Development* course and will remain the chair during each students third year and will teach the *TEDLD 802: Dissertation in Practice Seminar* course. The Ed.D. Program will support students who require additional guidance in identifying their 2nd and 3rd committee members. In selecting their 2nd and 3rd committee members, students may consider a wide-range of relevant faculty members across the University of Washington Tacoma campus, with encouragement for students to consider faculty in the School of Education. The 2nd committee member must be a UW Graduate faculty member, while the 3rd committee member should represent a professionally relevant content expert. In consultation with the chair, students make recommendations for the 3rd committee member. Students will complete the Supervisory Committee Member forms to formalize their committee chair and committee members with the Director of the Ed.D. Program. The Ed.D. program advisor notifies the Graduate School of the final committee membership.

1. **Practice Doctoral Supervisory Committees (from** [Graduate School Memo 45](https://grad.uw.edu/policies-procedures/graduate-school-memoranda/memo-45-practice-doctorates/)**; see also** [Memo 12](https://grad.uw.edu/policies-procedures/graduate-school-memoranda/memo-13-supervisory-committee-for-graduate-students/https%3A/www.grad.washington.edu/policies/memoranda/memo12.shtml))

The appointment of a practice doctoral supervisory committee indicates that the Graduate Faculty in the student's field finds his/her background and achievement a sufficient basis for progression in the doctoral program. A practice doctorate involves extensive coursework and a dissertation that is in lieu of a traditional Ph.D. dissertation. This dissertation is not filed with the Graduate School but is archived for public access through UWT Library Digital Commons.

The practice doctoral supervisory committee consists of a minimum of three members. At least two committee members, including the Chair, must be members of the UWT Graduate Faculty. The chair and 2nd committee member must hold an “endorsement to chair” doctoral committees and at least half of the total number must be members of the Graduate Faculty. The following applies to all practice doctoral supervisory committees:

* The 3rd committee members who are not Graduate Faculty must be identified by the student's appointing department or program as productive scholars or practitioners in the student's major field and/or subfields.
* The Chair of a committee must be able and willing to assume principal responsibility for advising the student. In addition, the Chair should have adequate time available for this work and should expect to be accessible to the student.
* A Graduate School Representative (GSR) is not required.

Responsibilities of the practice doctoral supervisory committee include approval and oversight of the student’s dissertation proposal and approval of the completed dissertation.

After the practice doctoral supervisory committee has evaluated the final project/dissertation, if a majority of the supervisory committee members agree that the evaluation is positive, the recommendation is made to The Graduate School (via the warrant) that the degree be awarded. If members of the practice doctoral supervisory committee do not agree with the majority recommendation, the minority report portion of the warrant must be used.

**Meetings**

At a minimum, the committee will meet to formally approve the final plan for implementation of the proposal and again to formally approve the final products. Meetings may be conducted digitally if needed. It is up to the student, with support of the chair, to arrange these meetings.

**Role of Committee members**

The **Supervisory Committee Chair** leads the support and evaluation efforts, helping to ensure the student makes satisfactory progress toward completion of the dissertation. The chair will be identified before spring quarter of Year 2 of the program via who the course instructor is for the *TEDLD 585: Proposal Development* class, and will consult with the student during the development phase of the dissertation proposal. Though the chair may work directly with students in developing their proposal, official duties begin with the acceptance of the proposal and continue until approval of the dissertation. In exceptional cases, if the dissertation is not completed within the projected timeline, duties will continue through additional quarters. The chair will, in consultation with other members, determine roles and responsibilities regarding reading, editing, and providing guidance on the applied project, project report, and article. The chair will submit a grade (Credit/No Credit) for the student each quarter as part of *TEDLD/TEDNUR 801: Dissertation in Practice*.

Additional committee members support the student throughout the project and collaborate with the chair as needed.

1. **Related Coursework**

**TEDLD 585: Proposal Development**

Towards the end of the second year, students enroll in *TEDLD/ TEDNUR 585: Proposal Development* the last course in the five-course research sequence. This class focuses on the full proposal of the dissertation as a structured inquiry process. At the end of the class, successful students will have completed a draft of their dissertation proposal having worked with their committee chair and committee members. The supervisory committee chair, in consultation with other committee members, will determine final approval of the proposal and permission to begin the dissertation. This might include modifications of the proposal designed in the course as requested by the chair. The students will have started the IRB application process but will not have submitted it until the chair is selected and the proposal has been approved by the committee.

**TEDLD/TEDNUR 801: Dissertation in Practice**

Beginning as soon as committee formation is approved, students enroll in *TEDLD/TEDNUR 801: Dissertation in Practice*. Students work on dissertations, including project application, inquiry, and writing are encompassed in this course, with credits gradually increasing through Spring quarter. Instructors of this course will be the Committee chairs (and have taught TEDLD 585 in the spring of the 2nd year) and are responsible for submitting Credit/No Credit grades at the end of each quarter.

**TEDLD 802: Dissertation in Practice Seminar**

During the academic year, students enroll in a one-credit course to support the dissertation process. This course includes peer coaching, process support, peer review of drafts, and general advice in relation to completion of dissertation efforts.The instructor for this course is also the chair of the Committee and will be done in a cohort model by specialization/interest area.

**Typical Course and Credit Timeline**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Quarters During Year Three** | **801****Dissertation****Credits** | **802 Seminar Credits**  |
| Autumn | 4 | 1 |
| Winter | 6 | 1 |
| Spring | 7 | 1 |
| **Total Credits** | **17** | **3** |

1. **Group Dissertation in Practice**

In the UWT Ed.D. program, it is permissible to conduct the dissertation as part of a group with approval from the Director of the Ed.D. Program. Each student must specify a unique part of the dissertation, with unique guiding questions. In a group dissertation, there may be one overarching question, and each member could have unique sub-questions, or students may have related, but different questions about a similar project. Each student will produce a final report, as per requirement of the dissertation. It is recognized that there will be overlap in the final reports, but the focus must be unique.

Each student will participate in writing a publishable manuscript or report style document, but this product may be written as co-authors. It would be more beneficial to the student to have each member of the group write a manuscript from his/her perspective, type of inquiry, and focus, thus yielding multiple articles with joint authorship. However, one article with shared authorship may be written if so desired. Negotiation of order of authorship must be conducted early and follow norms of suggested publication.

Group dissertations will be evaluated individually for their achievements by each student’s supervisory committee, in accordance with the Ed.D. Program and UW Graduate School requirements for the practice doctorate. The supervisory committee chair(s) will also advise students on degree of overlap and uniqueness for each part of the report and manuscript.

Permission for group dissertation is granted by the Director of the Ed.D. Program at the same time as committee formation. Students working in groups may choose to request the same committee members, if appropriate. The Director will consult with the potential committee chair(s) and students. The approval form is found under the Student Resources tab on the EdD website, [www.tacoma.uw.edu/EdD](http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/EdD).

1. **Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

All research that involves human subjects must follow appropriate UW Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies and procedures. Prior to conducting any research related to the dissertation, students must have received human subjects’ approval by UW’s Human Subjects Division. Most students’ research will fall into one of two categories: Exempt from IRB review or Expedited/Minimal Risk. Both categories require form submission to the IRB. For more information, including application procedures: <https://www.washington.edu/research/hsd>.

1. **Dissertation in Practice Proposal**

The dissertation should be an applied leadership activity (or set of leadership activities) that align around a central educational leadership issue of concern. This issue should be a multifaceted, large-scale, comprehensive problem relevant to a specific professional context, as well as a tangible issue about which the student can address and/or undertake practical study. When possible and appropriate, the dissertation should be approached through an equity lens. The proposal should clearly document how the issue has been addressed within the research literature, and this problem should directly impact (or be impacted by) educational leadership. The goal is to convey a timely, professionally relevant, academically rigorous dissertation that entails action-oriented efforts that can be conducted within the dissertation timeframe.

1. **Comprehensive Report**

At the culmination of the dissertation, the student will submit a comprehensive report that details the dissertation. The dissertation must provide a conceptual grounding in theory and literature, clearly articulated problem of practice, data collection, and analysis. All projects should either clarify program improvement or other solution(s) to the problem, or clarify implementation of proposed solutions, including, if applicable, evaluation of the impacts. This report should also be shared with appropriate leadership within the professional context under which it was written. This report is in addition to the publishable manuscript.

All written and oral reports must include modification of any identifiable names of persons or institutions by pseudonyms.

1. **Final Manuscript**

At the culmination of the dissertation, students complete a polished draft of a manuscript and/or report written for an identified academic/professional journal and or the respective organization. This manuscript should be publication submission ready for the specific journal and should address the norms and conventions of the journal and field, including standard length, appropriate style of writing, and detailed findings and/or outcomes of the community grounded praxis. If applicable, the manuscript should also be shared with relevant leadership within the professional context under which it was written. (See section above for Group Dissertations).

1. **Committee Review Process**

Once the final comprehensive report is completed, a draft should be submitted to the committee chair. When the committee chair determines the final draft to be sufficient, the student may then submit the final draft to the full committee. Once approval is granted, the student and the committee chair is responsible for ensuring the final report adheres to both Graduate School and library archival policies. A final presentation of the project through a meeting of the student and committee members, as well as other interested parties will be conducted. Assuming that all other graduation requirements are met, approval of the dissertation (through the electronic approval process of MyGrad) formally signifies completion of the Ed.D.

1. **Library Archive**

All final manuscripts and reports as accepted for fulfillment of the Dissertation in Practice will be uploaded and digitally archived through the UWT Library Digital Commons. UW Tacoma Libraries will provide support for this process. This should also be in alignment with what is acceptable to share via the students committee and the community/organizations approval of what is being made available.

1. **Dissertation Timeline**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Quarter** | **Student** | **Faculty** | **Program** |
| **Winter Year 2** | * Develops topic, research questions and literature review (TEDLD 583)
* Identify committee chair via instructor for TEDLD 585 specified section for student by specialization/area of interest (TEDLD 584)
* Develops methodology and approach to applied leadership activity (or set of leadership activities) that align around a central educational leadership issue of concern (TEDLD 584)
 | * TEDLD 583 professor supports development of topic, research questions and literature review.
* TEDLD 584 professor supports development of methodology (and any remaining work on literature review)
 |  |
| **Spring Year 2** | * Develop proposal
* Prepare IRB application materials
* Identify the 2nd and 3rd committee members.
 | * Director of the EdD program approve chair and committee members.
* TEDLD/TEDNUR 583 professor (chair) supports development of proposal
* Committee approves proposal
* IRB paperwork submitted
 | * Add approved student committee to MyGrad
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| **Summer Year 2**  | * Finalize committee (if not finalized)
* Begin dissertation work (if committee approved and all paperwork completed)
 | * Committee approves proposal (if not yet approved)
 | * Add approved student committee to MyGrad
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| **Fall Year 3**  | * Begin dissertation
* Continue dissertation (if already approved)
 | * Committee approval
* Reflective seminar faculty (chairs) meet with students
* Meet with student(s) & committee (outside of seminar as needed)
 |  |
| **Winter Year 3** | * Continue dissertation work
 | * Meet with student(s) & committee
* Reflective seminar faculty (chairs) meet with students (outside of seminar as needed)
 |  |
| **Spring Year 3**  | * Dissertation public presentation
* Comprehensive report
* Final publishable manuscript
* Graduation (if approved)
 | * Final approval by committee
* For those not meeting approval, continued enrollment in TEDLD/TEDNUR 801/802 until completion
 | * Digital archiving
* Submit student degree request to Graduate School via MyGrad
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**Dissertation Checklist**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **STEPS** | **KEY COMPONENTS OF DISSERTATION** | * **CHECK**
 |
| **1** | Develop dissertation proposal (TEDLD/TEDNUR 585) |  |
| **2** | Create dissertation committee  |  |
| **3** | Approval of dissertation proposal by committee |  |
| **4** | Approval by IRB. |  |
| **5** | Conduct dissertation |  |
| **6** | Draft comprehensive report and manuscript |  |
| **7** | Informal approval by chair to share report and manuscript  |  |
| **8** | Committee feedback on report and manuscript |  |
| **9** | Finalize report and manuscript  |  |
| **10** | Committee approval of report and manuscript |  |
| **11** | Public presentation |  |
| **12** | Submission and digital archiving of dissertation report and manuscript |  |
| **13** | Complete graduation coursework  |  |

1. For more information about practice doctorates, see the [Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate](http://cpedinitiative.org/). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)