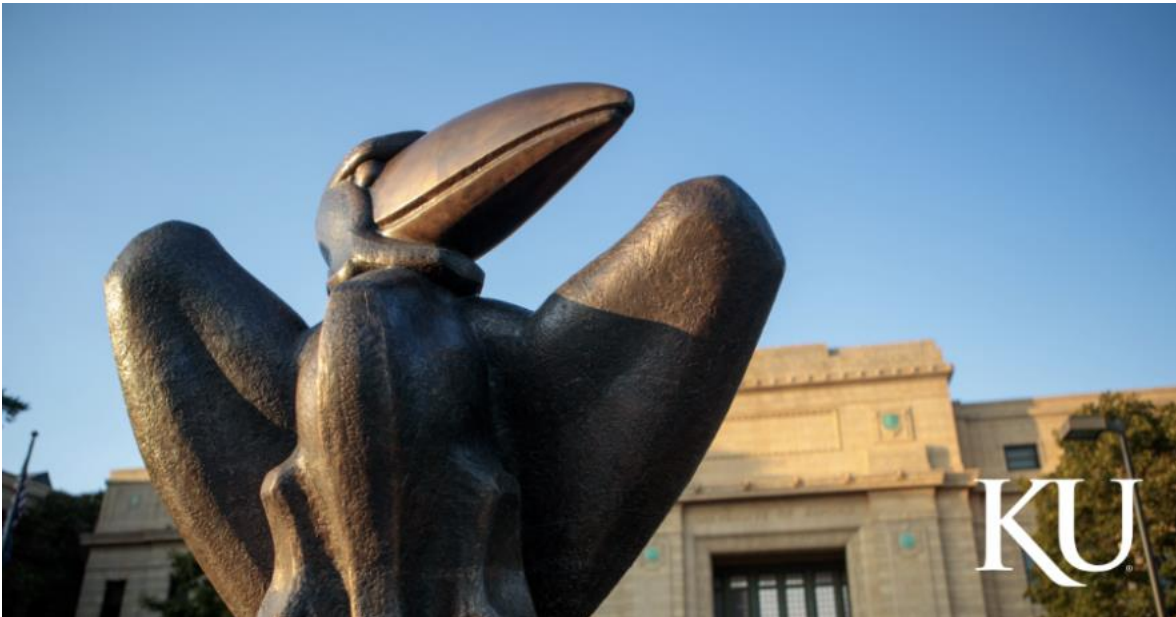


# Online Educational Administration EdD PK-12

## Student Handbook



## University of Kansas

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Website: [Online Ed.D. in Educational Administration](#)

**Note:** Policies, procedures, and requirements change over time. This version of the handbook was updated and approved for Fall 2026.

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## Program Faculty and Staff

Faculty/Staff Member	Position	Email	Phone
Denise Brubaker	Graduate Admissions Coordinator ELPS Department	<a href="mailto:brubaker@ku.edu">brubaker@ku.edu</a>	785-864-7973
Dr. Lena Batt	Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:lenabatt@ku.edu">lenabatt@ku.edu</a>	785-864-5996
Dr. Jennifer Bessolo	Professor of Practice Program Director and Advisor	<a href="mailto:jbessolo@ku.edu">jbessolo@ku.edu</a>	785-864-2095
Dr. Barbara Bichelmeyer	Professor		
Dr. Zak Foste	Associate Professor Department Chair	<a href="mailto:Zfoste@ku.edu">Zfoste@ku.edu</a>	785-864-6279
Dr. Rick Ginsberg	Professor	<a href="mailto:ginsberg@ku.edu">ginsberg@ku.edu</a>	785-864-4297
Dr. Stephen Jackson	Associate Professor	<a href="mailto:stjackson@ku.edu">stjackson@ku.edu</a>	785-864-1601
Dr. Lei Jiang	Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:jiang@ku.edu">jiang@ku.edu</a>	785-864-1620
Dr. Bryan Mann	Associate Professor	<a href="mailto:bryanmann@ku.edu">bryanmann@ku.edu</a>	785-864-2097
Dr. Amanda Mollet	Associate Professor	<a href="mailto:amollet@ku.edu">amollet@ku.edu</a>	785-864-1467
Dr. Lisa Wolf-Wendel	Distinguished Professor Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies	<a href="mailto:lwolf@ku.edu">lwolf@ku.edu</a>	785-864-9722

## Admission

In addition to meeting the requirements outlined in the Admission to Graduate Study policy, applicants must submit:

- A completed [graduate application](#).
- Application fee of \$65 for domestic students and \$100 for international students.
- Official transcripts of all degree-granting post-secondary institutions you have attended and an official transcript for each degree earned.
- Current resume or CV.
- Writing sample - an article, paper, or other composition.
- Reference letter: Name and information for the applicant's supervisor (or former supervisor) who will be asked to submit a letter of recommendation regarding the applicant's leadership experience or aptitude, along with any other notable qualities.
- Statement of Purpose: Applicants to the educational administration concentration should hold a full-time position in an educational setting with at least three years of full-time experience recommended. The statement of purpose should address the items below. Applicants are

encouraged to use the prompts as headings in their statement and to keep the statement succinct and to the point (no more than 5 pages, please):

- Tell us about yourself, your professional goals, and how the EdD will help you achieve those goals.
- Discuss your academic strengths and weaknesses, including any additional explanation for your transcripts.
- How do you define educational leadership? What is needed in the roles of educational leaders today?
- As a full-time employee, motivation and support will be essential to your success as a full-time doctoral student. Provide relevant examples from your past that demonstrate your motivation and capacity to succeed. This is an opportunity for you to highlight areas of particular strength.

For international applicants, the following additional requirements apply:

- [Proof of English proficiency](#)
- English translation of transcripts
- In most cases, KU can evaluate international transcripts internally. In cases where Graduate Admissions cannot, the applicant will be asked to produce an external evaluation through a service such as WES.

Applications generally open in September and are due late March to early April with each cohort beginning in summer. Admissions is holistic and applicants are admitted on a rolling basis. Questions regarding the application process or application status should be directed to Denise Brubaker ([brubaker@ku.edu](mailto:brubaker@ku.edu)).

## Program Description and Objectives

### EdD Program Learning Goals

The EdD program is designed for experienced, practicing administrators who seek to advance to positions of higher responsibility in postsecondary administration.

Coursework will

- Help you do your current job well but also develop abilities to see beyond the immediate to the bigger picture of the larger unit or the college or university itself.
- Faculty members in courses will often encourage you to focus on problems of practice when applying course material. In doing so, we expect students to focus on problems in your realm of practice while at the same time understanding how they are influenced by or influence the larger context in which they work.

### Learning Outcomes

Successful completers in the EdD program for educational administration and policy studies will successfully meet and demonstrate performance in the following program outcomes:

1. **Mission, Vision, and Improvement:** Candidates who successfully complete a district-level educational leadership program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and social-emotional well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to collaboratively lead, design, and implement a school mission, vision, and process for continuous improvement that reflects a core set of values and priorities that include change process, data use, technology, equity, diversity, digital citizenship, and community.
2. **Ethics and Professional Norms:** Candidates who successfully complete a district-level educational leadership program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and social-emotional well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to understand and demonstrate the capacity to advocate for ethical decisions and cultivate and enact professional norms.
3. **Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural Responsiveness:** Candidates who successfully complete a district-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote and advocate for the social emotional well-being of each student and adult and promote the current and future success of each student and adult, by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to develop and maintain a supportive, equitable, culturally responsive, and inclusive district culture.
4. **Learning and Instruction:** Candidates who successfully complete a district-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by adapting and applying emerging knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to evaluate, develop, and implement coherent instructional leadership including leading change; curriculum; instruction; assessments; support systems; technology integration; and data systems throughout the district.
5. **Community and External Leadership:** Candidates who successfully complete a district-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to understand and engage, communicate, and intentionally collaborate with families, communities, and other constituents in the work of schools and the district and to advocate for district, student, and community needs.
6. **Operations and Management:** Candidates who successfully complete a district-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by adapting and applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to lead change, improve management, communication, technology, school-level governance, and operation systems to develop and improve data-informed and equitable school resource plans and to apply laws, policies, and regulations.
7. **Policy, Governance, and Advocacy:** Candidates who successfully complete a district-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the present and future success and well-being of students and district personnel by adapting and applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to cultivate relationships; lead district transformation, collaborative decision making, and governance; and, represent and advocate for district needs in broader policy conversations.

In sum, successful school district administrators will know, understand, critique, and apply current literature and research to understand, study, and improve school district leadership and policy practices.

The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED), a collaboration of universities to provide leadership and guidance on high-quality EdD programs, refers to EdD recipients as scholarly practitioners; and administrators who apply inquiry to translate educational scholarship into practical solutions to affect outcomes ultimately. CPED defines inquiry as practice as follows: “the process of posing significant questions that focus on complex problems of practice and the ability to gather, organize, judge, aggregate, and analyze situations, literature, and data with a critical lens.” Our goal is that you become informed, scholarly inquirers of practice.

## General Information

### Technology

Each course will have synchronous and asynchronous components.

Students are expected to have good internet connections and access to Microsoft Word products. All KU students may download Office 365 from KU at no cost.

Canvas is the KU approved learning management system, and all courses will have Canvas shells. Students are able to make use of Canvas support. If you have issues or questions about Canvas, contact the Educational Technologists.

- Available Monday-Friday (8am-5pm)
  - [itedtech@ku.edu](mailto:itedtech@ku.edu)
  - 785-864-2600
- [Report an issue in Canvas](#)

### Communicating with Students and Professors

The program uses a dedicated Canvas “course site” as a repository of program-related documents and as a vehicle for you to submit documents such as the comprehensive exam, dissertation prospectus, etc.

All students will be enrolled in a section of the EdD Educational Administration Canvas Course specific to your cohort. It should appear on your Canvas dashboard as *EdD Educational Administration Cohort \_\_\_\_*.

We will also communicate with you via e-mail using your KU email address or the one that you have registered with KU. Please either check your KU email account regularly or have KU email forwarded to the email account you check frequently. (Tip: you might add KU.edu to your safe sender lists to be sure KU email is not blocked.). The program is not responsible for you not reading your email messages. Please check with KU IT support if you need help setting this up: 1-785-864-8080.

Student cohorts often create their own internal means of communicating with each other. We encourage you to do so. HOWEVER, remember that this does not and should not substitute for communication about important program information from the program coordinator or your academic advisor.

## Grievance Procedures

The Educational Leadership & Policies Studies Department follows the [School of Education and Human Sciences Grievance Procedure](#).

**Note: This procedure does not apply to graduate students in matters related to their employment as teaching assistants. A separate grievance procedure outlined in the [Memorandum of Agreement](#) between the University of Kansas and the Board of Regents and the Kansas Association of Public Employees is available for that purpose.**

## Petitions

Petitions will be submitted to the program director and reviewed by program faculty within the department. Many petitions require both department and further administrative approval outside of the department such as committees or associate deans. Signature lines on these petitions will articulate if additional signatures are required outside of the immediate program faculty.

## Course Expectations and Engagement

Success in this program depends on your active engagement and consistent preparation. As a doctoral student, you are expected to take responsibility for your learning and contribute meaningfully to the learning community.

Students are expected to:

- Carefully read and follow each course syllabus, including assignment requirements, grading criteria, and course policies.
- Submit all assignments on time and communicate proactively with faculty if challenges arise.
- Attend all synchronous class sessions, arrive on time, and remain engaged for the duration of the class.
- Come to class prepared, having completed assigned readings and coursework.
- Actively engage in asynchronous learning activities, including discussions, peer feedback, and other course requirements.
- Contribute thoughtfully to both synchronous and asynchronous interactions with faculty and peers.

Learning in this program is cumulative and collaborative. The quality of your experience is directly related to the level of effort, preparation, and engagement you bring to your coursework and interactions with others.

### Expectations for Synchronous Class Sessions (Zoom/Teams)

To support a productive and respectful learning environment, the following expectations apply to all live class sessions:

- Check your sound and video before class begins.

- Mute your microphone when not speaking.
- Join class from a space that allows you to focus and participate fully.
- Do not attend class while driving.
- Be on time.
- Come prepared to engage with course material and discussion.
- Be visible during class so that faculty and peers can interact with you. If you have concerns about being visible, speak with your instructor in advance.
- Add a profile photo to your Zoom/Teams account so your presence is still visible when your camera is off.
- Use the chat function for class-related purposes (e.g., comments, questions, resource sharing), except for informal conversation at the beginning and end of class. Maintain a respectful and professional tone at all times.

### Netiquette for Online Interactions

The following guidelines support respectful and productive engagement in an online learning environment:

- **Participate:** Active participation strengthens your own learning and contributes to the success of the class.
- **Be mindful of communication:** Use clear, respectful, and professional language. Avoid comments that may be perceived as offensive, dismissive, or culturally insensitive. Written communication lacks tone and body language—be intentional in how you express your ideas.
- **Respect privacy:** Do not share others’ personal information without permission.
- **Stay on topic:** Contribute meaningfully to discussions and keep posts aligned with the purpose of the activity.
- **Maintain academic integrity:** Do not plagiarize.
- **Use credible sources:** When referencing information, cite reputable sources and provide appropriate attribution.
- **Keep an open mind:** Engage with differing perspectives respectfully. When disagreements arise, approach them constructively.
- **Follow KU policy:** In accordance with KU’s electronic mail policy, students may not use course platforms to solicit, advertise, or communicate for personal financial gain.

### Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI)

This course is designed to ensure regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty, as required for high-quality online learning.

During synchronous sessions, faculty will provide focused lectures, facilitate discussion of key concepts, guide collaborative engagement among students, and respond to questions about course material.

During asynchronous periods, faculty will provide structured learning activities, such as recorded lectures, discussion boards, peer review, and applied exercises. Faculty will monitor participation, provide feedback, and respond to student questions to support ongoing learning.

# Advising

## Program Advisor

The EdD program advisor meets with prospective students, oversees admissions, curriculum planning and scheduling, enrollment, communication with students regarding milestone projects, maintenance of the program Canvas site and engages in other general program oversight. The program advisor is the main point of contact during coursework. The first two years of coursework is meant for students to get acquainted with other faculty in the program.

## Dissertation Advisor Assignment and Role

At the end of the first year in the program, students will be asked to complete a survey that will assist in assigning dissertation advisors. Initial dissertation advisor assignments are made by the program faculty based on student background and interests along with consideration of each faculty member's current number of active advisees. Dissertation advisors will assist students in the completion of their dissertation proposal and defense.

## Changing Dissertation Advisors

Changes to the student's dissertation advisor assignment may be made by consulting with the current dissertation advisor, the new dissertation advisor, and the program advisor. Reasons for requests for new advisors may include (but are not limited to) the student's pursuit of interests that would be more adequately supervised by a different member of the faculty. Dissertation advisor changes may be made at any time during the program and must be approved by the new advisor and the program coordinator.

## Advisor–Advisee Guidance for Dissertation Development

Advisors and advisees should meet at least once each semester, although more frequent communication is highly recommended. Once dissertation advisors are assigned, students are asked to reach out to their advisor and determine expectations and preferences for meetings and communication.

Toward the latter phases of dissertation development, other faculty will be giving feedback on student dissertations. Students can expect to receive timely and regular guidance and feedback from their ELPS 969 Dissertation Seminar I and ELPS 970 Dissertation Seminar II professors in the third year of the program. This guidance will be in addition to regular feedback provided by the student's dissertation advisor in ELPS 999 hours.

Note: Faculty are typically not on contract over the summer months. Please converse with your dissertation advisor about progress, writing, and expectations during the summer semester. Your communication and meeting plan with your advisor may need to be adjusted if they are on sabbatical or personal leave.

## Annual Student Progress Review

At the end of the first year of the program, students will be administered a Self-Assessment Qualtrics Survey and will be contacted if they share any concerns about the program or personal struggles. Professors rate students each year with the Disposition survey and will be contacted with concerns. Students receive consistent support and feedback from dissertation advisors and the program director, including annual advisement for enrollment, milestone preparation, and performance.

## Financial Assistance

Students are encouraged to explore available financial assistance options to support their enrollment in the EdD program.

### Federal Financial Aid

Students should complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine eligibility for federal graduate student loans and other forms of financial aid. Completing the FAFSA is the first step in accessing federal financial support.

### SOEHS Scholarships

EdD students are eligible to apply for scholarships through the School of Education and Human Sciences (SOEHS). The scholarship application portal typically opens each year in **December** and closes in **early February**. Students are responsible for monitoring deadlines and submitting materials on time.

Scholarships are competitive and awarded based on a combination of merit and financial need. Students are strongly encouraged to complete all application components—particularly required essays—carefully and thoughtfully.

SOEHS scholarships are awarded for the **fall and spring semesters**. To remain eligible, students must be enrolled in a **minimum of 6 credit hours per term** during the award period. Students who have completed **18 or more dissertation credit hours** are not eligible for SOEHS scholarships. Students may find more information on the SOEHS website [here](#).

### Conference Travel and Research Support

EdD students may apply for financial support to present at academic or professional conferences **once per academic year**. Funding amounts vary depending on the student's role in the conference (e.g., presenter, panelist, or attendee). In addition, SOEHS provides limited funding to support research-related expenses. These funds are competitive and intended to assist with costs directly associated with student research. Students may find more information about SOEHS travel and research support on the SOEHS website [here](#).

## Emergency Financial Assistance

Students experiencing unexpected financial hardship may apply for support through the [KU Emergency Aid Network](#), which provides short-term assistance in times of need.

## Enrollment

The typical full-time enrollment for a graduate student is 6 credit hours per semester (fall/spring) and 4 credit hours in the summer as laid out in the program course sequence guide. This is the path expected in order to complete the required course sequence in 2 years + one summer. It is the enrollment pattern required to receive financial aid and/or School of Education and Human Sciences scholarships.

For a variety of reasons, students occasionally wish to drop down to one course per semester for the entire program, or one semester. Additionally, the program faculty may have agreed to count a previously taken course toward the EdD program. No more than 3 prior courses may be counted and those must not have been used for a prior degree. Students in this situation will petition to have the total number of hours required for the program reduced. The exception to this is that graduate students are allowed to petition to have 1 or 2 research courses waived. Any modification to the typical full-time enrollment pattern must be discussed and approved by the program coordinator and the student's academic advisor. Modifications may affect eligibility for federal financial aid and SOEHS scholarships.

*Note: EdD courses are offered once per year so dropping down to one course in one semester will likely lengthen a student's program.*

Students will file a program plan in their first year of study. The program coordinator will guide students in this effort.

## Course Enrollment Procedures

The University course enrollment process is completed entirely online. The schedule of courses for upcoming semesters is available on the Schedule of Classes website at <https://classes.ku.edu/>. All active students are notified by the University as the enrollment period approaches. Subsequent changes in enrollment are handled online through add/drop procedures, or with the use of paper forms after the first few weeks of the semester.

Students should be mindful of enrollment deadlines listed on the [Academic Calendar](#). Failure to enroll in at least one course before 12:00am on the first instructional day of the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters for full-term courses is considered enrolling late and students will be charged a [late enrollment fee](#). As such, it is important for students to be aware of issues such as enrollment holds that might inhibit or postpone enrollment.

If a student needs to make a change in enrollment that impacts their enrollment status (such as a Leave of Absence), they should speak to their advisor as well as review the [Considerations and Impacts of a Drop or Withdrawal](#). Enrollment may impact financial aid eligibility and enrollment in locations or courses outside the School of Education and Human Sciences may have a different tuition and fee cost.

## Leaves of Absence

If a student does not wish to or is not able to enroll in courses for a given semester or year, the student must request a [leave of absence](#) using the [Leave of Absence Request form](#) found on the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs website. A leave of absence may be granted when circumstances temporarily prevent a student from continuing graduate study (e.g., cases of illness, emergency, financial hardship, military service), due to family responsibilities, or when a student wishes to pursue full-time activities related to long-range professional goals. A student leave of absence is typically approved for up to one year, but extensions may be granted for extenuating circumstances. All requests for a leave of absence should be discussed and submitted to the program advisor. While the student is the one to request a leave of absence, a faculty member may be the one to reach out and suggest a leave of absence when the faculty member believes the student is not in a position to make satisfactory academic progress. The choice to take a leave of absence is ultimately made by the student. The program, however, can opt to dismiss a student for failure to make progress if the student remains enrolled. It is the student's responsibility to make "satisfactory academic progress" when enrolled.

A leave of absence pauses the time limits set for the program to be completed. This means students are also unable to make progress and access the library, writing center, computer applications, and other KU-provided resources in addition to their advisor. It is understood that students on a leave of absence will not be making progress on their academic degree.

## Time Limits

The University sets time limits on enrollment for graduate students; students are expected to complete all EdD requirements within 8 years from initial enrollment. Students who require additional time to complete the degree must submit a petition for program time extension using the School of Education and Human Sciences [Petition for Time Extension form](#). The proposal for the dissertation must be approved by the student's committee before a petition for program time extension can be granted.

The University of Kansas (KU) policy for [doctoral candidacy](#) states that the oral comprehensive exam must be passed within five years of the dissertation defense. If the exam is older than five years, the student's candidacy will be re-evaluated by the graduate division of their school. The re-evaluation may require the student to retake the exam or demonstrate knowledge in alternative ways as defined by the program faculty.

## Good Academic Standing

Students must maintain a cumulative 3.0 (B) GPA in order to be in good academic standing. Students earning less than a 3.0 cumulative GPA will be placed on academic probation and will normally be given a semester to improve their GPA to a 3.0. Two continued semesters with a GPA below 3.0 may result in dismissal although in cases where improvement is noted, the student may be given an additional semester to raise their GPA. See University policy on probation and dismissal [here](#)..

For students enrolled in dissertation hours the expectation is that students will make satisfactory academic progress. Earning a grade of NP in one semester or earning a grade of LP in consecutive semesters indicates a lack of satisfactory academic progress and will result in probation and may result in dismissal.

## AI Policy

ELPS Department Expectations for the Use of Generative AI in Dissertation Research:

The primary value of completing a dissertation in the ELPS department is to gain a high-level knowledge of the research process of asking researchable questions, utilizing the most appropriate methodologies to gather data about those questions, and analyzing that data to contribute to how we understand problems of practice in the field of education. With that in mind, the *process* of research is just as important as the *result* of that research.

The use of generative Artificial Intelligence is profoundly shifting the way many scholars approach research. In the ELPS Department we affirm the value of a human-centered approach to education, and the use of generative Artificial Intelligence should never undermine the fundamental learning goals of the dissertation process. However, ELPS faculty recognize that there are use-cases where the use of this technology may be appropriate. With the following guidelines, students are permitted to use these technologies as an aid to their research process, but as a supplement, not a substitute, for the critical analysis at the heart of dissertation research.

- If students choose to utilize generative AI in their research, they are expected to do so ethically, accurately, and in compliance with university policies.
- Students are responsible for all content that they submit as part of their dissertation, including any content generated by generative AI.
- Students needing learning accommodations may utilize generative AI in consultation with their advisor.
- Students are required to disclose their intended use of generative Artificial Intelligence in their dissertation proposal. They should also consider the implications of proposing the use of Artificial Intelligence in their proposal.
- Students are required to disclose and cite where appropriate the use of generative Artificial Intelligence in their dissertation.

Students are encouraged to speak with faculty in the ELPS Department about their intended use of generative Artificial Intelligence to fully consider the many ethical and practical considerations of the technology. Faculty will evaluate student use of these technologies in a variety of ways, including, most importantly, an expert evaluation of student work as it proceeds through the writing process. Faculty may also use AI-trackers as an additional source of information about the progress of student work towards a dissertation.

Additional Resource for Guidance: SOEHS “Expectations for Students” listed in the “Guidance for use of Generative AI in Teaching/Research,” created in December 2024.

## Grading

The program uses the traditional SOEHS grading scheme: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, etc. We expect students to earn Bs and As in order to remain in good academic standing. Although grades of C+ and C will count for graduate credit, a course grade of C- will not. Any student who earns a C- in a course must repeat the course.

Letter Grade	Percentage	GPA
A	93–100%	4.0
A-	90–92%	3.7
B+	87–89%	3.3
B	83–86%	3.0
B-	80–82%	2.7
C+	77–79%	2.3
C	73–76%	2.0
C-	70–72%	1.7
D+	67–69%	1.3
D	63–66%	1.0
D-	60–62%	0.7
F	0–59%	0.0

## Incomplete Grades

Students may request the grade of an 'I' (Incomplete) if the student is unable to complete some portion of the assigned coursework because of a significant unanticipated illness, accident, work-related responsibility, family hardship, or verified learning disability. An Incomplete grade is not intended to give the student additional time to complete course assignments or extra credit unless there is indication that the specified circumstances prevented the student from completing course assignments on time. An Incomplete is given at the discretion of the faculty member, who will determine the time frame allowed to hand in the missing work. **Note:** all Incompletes automatically convert to Fs after one academic year.

Per SOEHS policy, all 'I' and 'WG' grades must be resolved prior to taking the comprehensive exam.

## Academic Integrity & Misconduct

The Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies expects students and faculty members to demonstrate academic integrity in conducting their coursework and research. Academic misconduct will not be tolerated in our program. An instructor may, with due notice to the student, treat as unsatisfactory any student work that is a product of academic misconduct. Cases of academic misconduct may result in any or all of the following penalties: reduction of grade, admonition, warning, censure, transcript citation, suspension, or expulsion. The following information about Academic Misconduct is discussed in Article II, Section 6 of the rules and regulations of the University Senate. "Academic misconduct by a student shall include, but not be limited to, disruption of classes; threatening an instructor or fellow student in an academic setting; giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on examinations or in the preparation of notebooks, themes, reports or other assignments; knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work; unauthorized changing of grades; unauthorized use of University approvals or forging of signatures; falsification of research results; plagiarizing of another's work; violation of regulations or ethical codes for the treatment of human and animal subjects; or otherwise acting dishonestly in research." Please know that inappropriate use of AI to generate course material that violates the course policy for AI use falls under the category of academic misconduct and academic integrity issues.

## EdD Academic Program Information

### EdD Course Requirements

Specified courses are required of all EdD students as follows: 27 credit hours (9 courses) core higher education courses, 9 hours (3 courses) of research, and 3 hours of practicum spread out over three summers. Students may review in detail these degree requirements in the [Academic Catalog](#), which serves as the current, official recording of a student's academic degree requirements. Students are subject to the requirements in the catalog of the year they are admitted.

The SOEHS does not allow students to transfer credits into a doctoral program. However, upon approval of the program coordinator and faculty members, students may be able to waive up to 9 hours or 3 courses if those courses have not counted toward another degree. Waiving courses may result in students dropping below 6 hours in one or more semesters and may affect eligibility for federal financial aid and SOEHS scholarships. There are no electives in the program. Students with approved course waivers are responsible for knowing the content taught in our program course equivalent, which may be tested in written comprehensive exams and should also be successfully demonstrated in the dissertation.

EdD courses are offered once per academic year.

Within the first 12 credit hours of doctoral study, students should complete the SOEHS [plan of study](#) form and a [Continuous Plan of Study form](#).

## Core Course Rotation

Course #	Course Title	When
ELPS 956	District Leadership	Summer 1
ELPS 948	Research in Educational Policy and Leadership	Summer 1
ELPS 953	District Human Resource Management	Fall 1
ELPS 837	History of Education and Culture in America	Fall 1
ELPS 954	Sociology of Educational Organizations	Spring 1
ELPS 951	Supervision of Instruction	Spring 1
C&T 903	Curriculum Supervision	Summer 2
ELPS 960	Political and Social Dimensions of Education	Summer 2
ELPS 872	Quantitative Methods	Fall 2
ELPS 955	District Business Management	Fall 2
ELPS 957	Educational Policy, Ethics, and Law	Spring 2
EPSY 871	Introduction to Qualitative Research	Spring 2
ELPS 995	Field Experience (1 credit hour)	Summer 3
	Comprehensive Exams	Summer/Fall 3
ELPS 995	Field Experience (1 credit hour)	Fall 3
ELPS 969	Dissertation Seminar	Fall 3
ELPS 999	Dissertation hours (1 credit hour)	Fall 3
ELPS 970	Dissertation Seminar II	Spring 3
ELPS 995	Field Experience (1 credit hour)	Spring 3
ELPS 999	Dissertation (2 credit hours)	Spring 3

This represents the current schedule of courses effective Fall 2026. The order may change.

## Continued Dissertation Seminar Enrollment

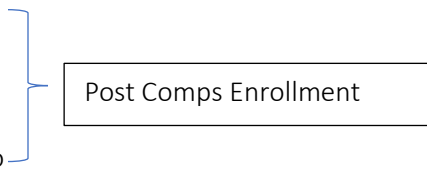
Students will continue to work on their dissertation into Year 4 of the program and beyond and enroll in 6 hours of ELPS 999 with their dissertation advisor Fall of their 4<sup>th</sup> year and then drop down to 1 hour of ELPS 999 with their dissertation advisor Spring of their 4<sup>th</sup> year in the program.

Students without an approved dissertation proposal by the end of their Spring semester in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the program (or equivalent if off traditional program cycle) will be required to enroll in ELPS 969 Dissertation Seminar I for the following fall and ELPS 970 Dissertation Seminar II the subsequent Spring semester of their 5<sup>th</sup> year in the program for additional dissertation support.

## Program Milestones

There are several key [milestones](#) that structure a student's journey from start to dissertation defense. The first three are discussed in this section, and the final three are discussed in separate sections.

1. First Year Review
2. Complete Program of Study and Continuous Education forms

3. Comprehensive exam
    - a. Written portion
    - b. Oral portion
  4. Dissertation proposal
  5. Field Experience and Portfolio
  6. Dissertation defense
- 
- Post Comps Enrollment

### First Year Review

In the spring semester of the first year, students may be asked to complete a self-assessment of their progress to date. The factors considered go beyond traditional classroom measures to include things like participation, engagement with the coursework, etc. Students may also be contacted by the program advisor or a faculty member if there are concerns regarding performance, participation, or other factors that may impact success. If students feel they are struggling at any time in the program, we ask them to reach out to the program advisor and/or dissertation chair or faculty member for resources or guidance.

### Completion of Program and Continuous Education Forms

In the first year of the program, students will complete a program plan and a Continuous Plan of Study form. Templates will be posted and available on the Canvas site and facilitated by the program advisor.

## Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship

The University requires that every doctoral student receive training in responsible scholarship pertinent to the field of research and obtain research skills pertinent to the doctoral level of research in their field(s). These requirements must be completed by the end of the semester that the student takes the oral comprehensive exam. For students in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies EdD, this requirement is satisfied by completion of **ELPS 948**.

## Comprehensive Exams

All doctoral students must complete a comprehensive exam at the end of their formal coursework. The comprehensive exam will assess your knowledge of key course concepts and ability to apply them to a problem of practice and cover topics from multiple courses. Written comprehensive exams are administered in the third summer of the program, with Oral Exams administered in early Fall of the third year of the program.

### Structure and Purpose

The comprehensive exam includes two elements: a written portion followed by an oral comprehensive exam. Students must pass the written portion in order to progress to the oral portion. See [Graduate Catalog](#).

Together, the purpose of the comprehensive exam is to demonstrate that the student has acquired key skills and competencies promoted by doctoral coursework and is ready to move to the dissertation research stage. Key competencies to be demonstrated include comprehension of key concepts and theories from the content courses and the ability to apply this content to practical problems.

The written portion will be due August 15<sup>th</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup> summer followed by the oral exam in the fall semester.

### Comprehensive Exam Committee

The comprehensive exam committee is composed of 4 faculty members all of whom must be appointed to the Graduate Faculty. The committee must include at least 2 regular faculty members from ELPS (including the student's advisor, who serves as chair) and 1 tenure track faculty member from a department other than ELPS, who serves as the Graduate Studies Representative. The chair must be a tenure track faculty member. No more than 1 committee member may hold an Ad Hoc or Special graduate appointment. [Note: Regular graduate faculty are tenured or tenure-track faculty at KU. Special graduate faculty are not tenure-track but teach at KU. Ad Hoc graduate faculty are non-KU persons with a doctorate appointed for a specific committee.]

### Written Exam

The comprehensive exam is an individual performance assessment. Students are allowed to use course materials, course texts, and assignments and may include other scholarly sources as relevant. Students are not allowed to use AI to generate or compile answers to the assessment questions.

The exam asks students to apply concepts from core courses to a problem of practice.

The written exams will be evaluated by core program faculty based on comprehension of the course concepts identified and application to a problem of practice. There are three possible outcomes from the evaluation of the written portion of the exam:

- Pass: The written exams are satisfactory and the student may progress to the oral exam.
- Revision: Portions of the written are fine but others are weak, and the student is asked to address these weaknesses in the oral exam with respect to a revision date set by faculty.
- Fail: The written exam is sufficiently weak throughout, and the student must redo the written portion of the exam. Students are allowed to retake the comprehensive exam twice, and upon agreement of program faculty members a third time. If the student does not successfully pass on the third try, they are dismissed.

The program advisor will post information about the comprehensive exam in late spring of the second year. The written exam is essentially the ticket to the oral exam.

### Oral Exam

The oral portion of the exam is conducted early in the fall semester, assuming the written exam meets #1 or #2 above. Drawing from the written exam, an oral prompt will be provided by the program advisor.

Comprehensive oral exams will be 45 minutes scheduled within a 60-minute block. These will be conducted virtually. There will be an expectation for a 15-minute slide presentation followed by faculty questions of the student. The committee is organized by the program advisor and will consist of the

dissertation advisor, two department faculty members, and one faculty member from outside the department (graduate studies representative).

### Elevation to Candidacy

Following satisfactory completion of the oral exam, the student is elevated to “doctoral candidate” status.

See [Graduate Catalog](#) for complete rules and regulations about the comprehensive exams.

## Post-Comprehensive Enrollment

Doctoral candidates are required, after passing the comprehensive oral examination, to be continuously enrolled in a minimum of 6 credit hours per semester (fall/spring) until such time as the student has completed 18 post-comprehensive credit hours or completed the degree (graduated), whichever comes first. Review the Post-Comprehensive Enrollment requirements on the [Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs website](#).

The goal is for the majority of students to submit the final approved dissertation and all related documentation by the end of the fall or spring semester of their fourth year in the program. However, we realize that is not always possible for everyone. Students should adhere to university policy for required enrollment.

For EdD students, post-comprehensive enrollment hours include the following:

EdD Post-Comprehensive Enrollment Timeline		
Fall, YR 3	ELPS 969 Dissertation Seminar I - 3 hours ELPS 995 Field Experience - 1 hour ELPS 999 Dissertation - 2 hours	6
Spring, YR 3	ELPS 970 Dissertation Seminar II - 3 hours ELPS 995 Field Experience - 1 hour ELPS 999 Dissertation - 2 hours	6
Summer, YR 4	If a student wishes to defend their dissertation or any major milestone in the 4 <sup>th</sup> summer, they must be enrolled in 3 dissertation hours. Otherwise, summer enrollment is not required.	3
Fall, YR 4	If student has not defended dissertation, they must enroll in 6 hours of 999 Dissertation	6
Spring, YR 4	If a student has not defended their dissertation, they must enroll in 3 hours of 999—unless they enrolled for three in Summer 4 but did not defend. In the latter case, they may enroll in 1 hour of 999.	1 or 3

Note: ELPS 969, Dissertation Seminar I is considered part of the student’s required coursework and as such, it cannot count toward post-comp enrollment hours.

Dissertation hours taken during the semester that the student successfully passes the oral comprehensive exam will count towards the 18-hour requirement (if a student enrolls in dissertation hours prior to completing the oral comprehensive exam and fails to successfully pass the exam in that semester, those hours will not count toward the post-comprehensive exam hours requirement).

Summer enrollment is not required; however, if a student opts to enroll for summer, they must enroll in a minimum of 3 credit hours (if they have not yet completed 18 post comp hours), due to the requirement for full-time enrollment post comps. If the student wants to defend a dissertation in the summer, they must be enrolled in dissertation hours.

If after 18 hours of post-comprehensive enrollment the degree is not completed, the candidate must continue to enroll each semester (fall/spring) until all degree requirements have been met, but the enrollment may be less than 6 credit hours per semester.

Students must be enrolled in a minimum of one dissertation credit hour in the semester in which the dissertation is defended and submitted.

### Post-Comprehensive Time Constraints

The student has 8 years from start of program to dissertation defense. Students may apply for an extension as described below.

Under normal circumstances, the doctoral candidacy period between passage of the oral comprehensive examination and the final dissertation defense must last no longer than 6 years. If a student took the oral comprehensive examination more than 6 years prior to the dissertation defense, a re-evaluation of the student's candidacy status is necessary. Reevaluation of the student's candidacy status can include retaking the comprehensive oral examination. Considerations and decisions concerning exceptions to the policy outlined above will be managed by the SOEHS graduate office.

## Field Experience

The field experience is a developmental experience for students to put program standards to practice in a supervised district leadership experience under the guidance of a licensed superintendent or assistant superintendent. This internship requires 150 hours of service in seven identified areas that align with the National Educational Leadership Preparation Standards. The student will put a digital portfolio together that demonstrates their experience, hours, logs, and reflections completed. These identified areas the student will log experience in are as follows:

1. Leadership Area 1: Strategic Leadership and Board Relations
2. Leadership Area 2: Supervision of Instructional Programs, Learning Resources, and Student Services
3. Leadership Area 3: Operational Management of the School District (Fiscal, Human, Nutrition Services, Maintenance, and Transportation)

4. Leadership Area 4: External Relationships, DEIB Efforts, and Community Partnerships
5. Four (4) District-wide Meeting of Administrators
6. Four (4) Board of Education Meetings
7. Long Range Project

There is a requirement to obtain a minimum of 15 hours in each of the 7 areas above. Hours are expected to be completed through the 3 hours of ELPS 995, spread out over 3 semesters in the third year of the program. Several classes in the program will offer projects that provide opportunities for hours towards the 150-hour field experience. There are additional opportunities to gain hours in the field experience areas as will be explained in the first class of the program. However, a signed field experience form needs to be signed before hours can be counted towards the required internship. The 150-hour field experience is required as a component of this program. If seeking district leadership certification outside of Kansas, please reference your state department of education to ensure all requirements can be met.

## Dissertation of Practice

### Description

The typical EdD dissertation centers around a problem of practice, identifying and describing the problem, formulating questions about the problem, and collecting and analyzing data with the goal of improving practice. CPED defines a problem of practice as having the following characteristics: it is persistent, contextualized, and specific and embedded at some level in professional work. The student imagines a particular audience to which the study speaks. Addressing the problem has the potential to inform improved practice (CPED). Practice can be defined broadly as a specific job site, office, or program; division in which the job site is located; institution, or larger community in which the institution or the student functions (Belzer & Ryan, 2013). For an example of the latter, the problem could be located within the student's profession – e.g., staff are leaving the profession.

EdD dissertations can employ a wide variety of methods, including qualitative and quantitative methods, document analysis, analysis of literature, case study, program evaluation, and historical or policy analysis. The typical EdD dissertation does not have to fill a “gap in the knowledge base” and does not need to address an original, unanswered question. However, the dissertation should add something to your knowledge or that of your institution or your profession that will enhance practice. There should be a reason for doing a study.

Students may choose, upon approval of advisor, to engage in a more traditional dissertation that addresses a specific gap in the literature. Expectations may vary depending on the type of dissertation one chooses.

## Process

The dissertation process includes three steps: 1) the proposal formulation, presentation, and defense; 2) data collection, analysis, and writing of findings and discussion/conclusion chapters; and 3) defense of dissertation.

Unlike most course assignments, the dissertation proposal and final document are iterative products involving multiple rounds of feedback and revision.

## Dissertation Proposal Committee

Following successful completion of the comprehensive exam, the student works with a dissertation proposal committee of two faculty members in addition to the dissertation committee chair, who is ordinarily the student's advisor. However, on occasion, the dissertation committee chair may change following the policy described earlier.

The core dissertation committee normally constitutes the majority of the student's dissertation committee.

## Dissertation Committee

The final dissertation must be reviewed and evaluated by a committee of 4 faculty members. The committee must include at least 2 faculty members from ELPS (including the student's advisor, who serves as chair) and 1 faculty member from a department other than ELPS, who serves as the Graduate Studies Representative. The chair must be a tenure track faculty member. No more than 1 committee member may hold an Ad Hoc or Special graduate appointment. [Note: Regular graduate faculty are tenured or tenure-track faculty at KU. Special graduate faculty are not tenure-track but teach at KU. Ad Hoc graduate faculty are non-KU persons with a doctorate appointed for a specific committee.]

## Writing and Preferred Style

The dissertation and proposal should be written in a manner consistent with the guidelines set forth in the most recent edition of the APA Publication Manual.

The KU Libraries provides [instructions and templates](#) for writing and formatting dissertations and proposals.

## Grading

Dissertation credit hours are assigned a grade of SP, LP, or NP.

- Satisfactory Progress (SP): Progress is consistent with the goals for the semester as agreed upon with the advisor; supports timely completion of the degree.
- Limited Progress (LP): Progress is less than what was agreed upon with the advisor; may cause delays in timely degree completion.
- No Progress (NP): The student has provided no evidence of progress on the dissertation work, or the work completed was insufficient to move the dissertation project forward. NPs are not

counted toward the post-comprehensive enrollment requirement which results in wasted credits. If you are unable to make progress in any semester, take a Leave of Absence.

### Dissertation Proposal

A detailed guide to the EdD dissertation proposal is found on the program Canvas site. Module>Dissertation Resources>Dissertation Proposal Template.

#### Purpose: Dissertation proposal

The purpose of the dissertation proposal is to ensure that the student has an understanding of the literature and methods relevant to the intended study, and that the student has used this understanding to develop a high-quality plan for the dissertation (questions are meaningful, manageable, and data can be collected to answer them).

The dissertation proposal should include: (a) a statement of the research problem/issue to be addressed, (b) the research questions being asked, (c) a strategic literature review used to support and frame the study and its methodology, and (d) the methods and procedures (statistical, qualitative, or historical) that will be used to gather data in the proposed study. It is expected that the literature review will be sufficiently complete (detailed and critical) to support the research questions and the methods by which data are collected.

Faculty members vary on expectations for the length and depth of the proposal. Check with your advisor. The traditional dissertation proposal consists of the first three chapters of the dissertation: an introduction, a literature review (what is already known about the problem), and methods (what you will do in your study). Other faculty members prefer a shorter version of the proposal with the understanding that methods and literature review must be fleshed out in the final dissertation. The proposal must be prepared in APA style.

#### Dissertation proposal meeting

The student and the dissertation proposal committee will meet to discuss and approve the proposal. The dissertation proposal must be provided to the 3-person committee members a minimum of two weeks prior to the scheduled dissertation proposal meeting. The student should provide each member of the committee with an electronic version of the proposal two weeks in advance of the agreed-upon date. Dissertation proposal meetings should be scheduled for approximately 60 minutes.

Students should prepare a brief (15-20 minutes) presentation giving an overview of the proposed project, with a focus on the proposed study methods, research questions, and anticipated analyses.

The proposal meeting is not an exam. It is an opportunity for the student and the committee to review the proposal and to discuss how to make the study as strong as possible before the student engages in the research.

Once a dissertation proposal has been accepted by the committee, the advisor will submit the title page of the proposal that includes signatures of the committee members, along with an electronic copy of the proposal, to the School of Education and Human Sciences Associate Dean for Graduate Studies support staff.

Typically, the student applies for IRB approval for their study (depending on the study) after the proposal is approved by the 3-person dissertation proposal committee.

### Dissertation

The final dissertation normally consists of the three chapters submitted as the proposal (augmented and revised as necessary) plus a findings chapter(s), and a final discussion, conclusions, recommendations chapter.

The writing style and format for organization of the dissertation is described by the APA Publication manual and [guidelines specific to KU](#) are available from the Office of Graduate Studies. Of special importance: The dissertation title page and acceptance page require very specific formatting. Please attend to the guidelines for those pages, available from the Office of Graduate Studies, and bring two copies of each of these pages to the defense for signatures.

### Dissertation Defense

The final step in the journey to the EdD is the dissertation defense. The dissertation should be provided to the committee members a minimum of two weeks prior to the scheduled dissertation defense. The student should provide each member of the committee with a final printed copy of the dissertation by the agreed-upon date and normally two weeks in advance of the defense; a committee member may choose to receive an electronic copy in addition to or in place of a hard copy.

At least two weeks prior to the defense, the advisor and ELPS office support staff must file a Progress-to-Degree (PtD) form that includes the following: the dissertation title, day and time of defense, and committee members. The PtD form notifies the School of Education and Human Sciences to send out the appropriate notice of the defense and allows a final check on the student's eligibility to defend and the composition of the dissertation committee.

The student and committee members may attend the defense either physically or virtually (e.g., by videoconference); all must be present for the entire defense.

Dissertation defenses are open to the public, and students are encouraged to attend their colleagues' defenses to gain experience or knowledge of the process.

Dissertation defenses should be scheduled for a minimum of 90 minutes.

Students should prepare a brief (15-20 minutes) presentation giving an overview of the dissertation project, with a focus on study results and implications. Following the presentation, the candidate is then questioned by members of the committee in a way that requires a genuine defense of both the dissertation and its research procedures. All members of the committee will have read and thoroughly familiarized themselves with the dissertation before the examination, and copies of the document will be available for reference during the examination.

When ample opportunity has been given for questions, the candidate and any observers will be asked to leave the room while the committee deliberates and comes to a decision regarding the adequacy of the candidate's performance. When a decision is reached, the candidate is invited back into the room and informed of the committee's decision. Students may access the program's Doctoral Learner Outcome Rubric in the program Canvas site.

Once a dissertation has been accepted by the committee, the advisor will submit the dissertation title page that includes signatures of the committee members to the ELPS department administrative assistant, who will complete the necessary paperwork regarding defense completion and notify the School of Education Associate Dean for Graduate Studies support staff. The chair will also sign and submit the acceptance/certification page.

Any changes recommended by the committee during the defense must be incorporated into the dissertation before it can be formally submitted. It is the student's responsibility to submit the final version of the dissertation (incorporating any required changes) to Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs prior to that semester's submission deadline. Information about submitting the final dissertation is available on the Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs website at <https://graduate.ku.edu/electronic-thesis-and-dissertation>

## Dissertation of Practice Guiding Document

### **Chapter 1:** Introduction (5-7 pages)

In this chapter you introduce the study, the questions that guide your project, and why it is important. This chapter also offers you the opportunity to provide the reader any necessary relevant contexts to better understand your study.

- Introduction
- Purpose of the study and research questions
- Context of the problem
  - Describe the relevant contexts that influence your problem (social, political, educational, etc.)
  - How is this study personally or professionally relevant to you?
  - Study sites/local contexts (school district, department, office, etc.)
- Significance of the study
  - Why is it helpful to answer this question?

- Who should care and why?
- How might your study contribute to issues, policy, problems, or trends of practice in your field or in your daily context?
- Conclusion

## **Chapter 2:** Framing the Study (8-12 pages)

Having introduced your study in Chapter 1, the purpose of this chapter is to link your study to relevant literature on your topic. Review 15-20 peer reviewed studies and organize this body of scholarship into 3-4 overarching themes that speak to the major ideas in the literature related to your topic.

The goal here is to synthesize your 15-20 studies in a way that sets up your dissertation. While most of your 15-20 sources should be peer reviewed, you may also include policy reports, book chapters, or publications from professional associations here. You may also include a section on theory, if, in consultation with your advisor, you have identified a relevant and appropriate theory for the study. Generally, any such theory should be something that was covered in your coursework. You should think of this chapter as a bridge between your research questions and the methods proposed in the next chapter.

- Introduction
- Literature Theme #1
- Literature Theme #2
- Literature Theme #3
- Relevance of Existing Scholarship to Present Study

Conclude this section by explicitly linking the body of scholarship reviewed to your study. This should be done throughout the chapter but it is explicitly stated at the end.

Tips:

- Do not report on individual studies one at a time. Your goal here is to look across studies and report the major themes you've identified in this body of scholarship. Then use individual studies to support larger themes.
- Ask yourself the question: What is the most essential knowledge to set up your study?
- You want to demonstrate engagement with 15-20 relevant studies.

## **Chapter 3:** Research Design (7-10 pages)

The purpose of this chapter is to walk the reader through, in a very practical way, how you plan to design and implement your study. This chapter should be transparent (every step of the design is clear) and tangible (you write in practical ways that demonstrate each successive step of the design process).

- Introduction
  - Restate your research questions
  - State the approach utilized (interview study, survey, historical, content analysis, etc.) and why this approach is appropriate for your questions
  - Sample Selection
  - Sampling Criteria
  - Recruitment Procedures
  - Participants Demographics (this will be included upon completing data collection)
  
- Data Collection
  - Instruments – for quantitative studies, your instrument and measures should link to concepts, theory, or ideas in chapter two
  - Interview questions – link your interview questions to your broader research questions
  - Data Analysis
  - Validity/Trustworthiness
  - Positionality
  - Conclusion

#### **Chapter 4:** Findings (10-15 pages)

The purpose of this chapter is to share with your reader the findings of your study. How this is presented will be somewhat dependent on methodological approach.

- Introduction
- Restate purpose of study
- Provide high level overview of what is to come in the chapter
- Organize findings around research questions. Provide appropriate forms of evidence to substantiate your claims
- RQ 1
- RQ 2
- RQ 3
- Conclusion

#### **Chapter 5:** Implications for Stakeholders (8-10 pages)

The final chapter in your dissertation summarizes the major findings, briefly puts those findings into conversation with the literature you reviewed earlier, and provides actionable takeaways for particular audiences who may have interest in your study. It also invites you to reflect on the experience of developing and conducting the study as a scholar-practitioner.

- Briefly restate the major findings of the study and how these connect to or depart from research reviewed in Chapter 2.

- Identify three stakeholders/constituency groups and write audience-specific implications that flow from the findings of your study.
- Scholarly Reflection: In chapter one you briefly introduced how the study was personally and professionally relevant to you. Having conducted the study, reflect back on the process and outcome of the study, considering:
  - What realizations did you have in conducting the research and sharing your Findings?
  - How has this process (developing and carrying out a dissertation) contributed to your own professional growth?
  - How were your skills as a scholar-practitioner sharpened or enhanced?
  - How have the outcomes of this study influenced how you think about your own practice?
- Conclusion

## Applying for Graduation

Following successful defense of the dissertation, the student is responsible for submitting the final, approved document as instructed and also to complete all required surveys. Students must also apply for the appropriate graduation: May, Summer, or December.

## References

Belzer, A. and Ryan, S. (2013). Defining the problem of practice dissertation: Where's the practice, what's the problem. *Planning and Changing* (44, 3/4), 195-207.

CPED.

[https://cped.memberclicks.net/assets/CPED\\_Documents/Marketing\\_Promotion/CPED\\_Framework\\_Poster\\_Final.pdf](https://cped.memberclicks.net/assets/CPED_Documents/Marketing_Promotion/CPED_Framework_Poster_Final.pdf)

## GUIDE TO THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL MEETING

Congratulations! You have worked hard with your advisor to develop a well-conceived and polished dissertation proposal. Your advisor says you're now ready to move to a proposal defense. Here's a guide for next steps:

### **Scheduling your proposal meeting**

- Identify 3 faculty members willing to serve on your dissertation committee. Do this in consultation with your advisor, who will be one of these three people.
- Email these faculty to schedule a 60-minute meeting time for your proposal defense. A Doodle poll can be useful for this purpose.
- Attach a completed copy of your dissertation proposal to the scheduling email.

*Tips:*

*\*Generally speaking, ensure there are at least 2 weeks between when you provide your proposal to your committee and when you schedule your proposal meeting.*

### **Preparation**

- Plan to present a brief overview of your proposed study—no more than 15 minutes.
- You may create a PowerPoint slide deck to accompany your presentation—no more than 10 slides.
- Provide a copy of your proposal cover page for signatures if your committee approves the study you propose.

*Tips:*

- Your committee will have read your proposal in advance, so provide an overview with particular emphasis on your research questions (Chapter 1), study design, and methods (Chapter 3).
- Approach the meeting as a chance to interact with your committee. Your committee members will ask you questions, make suggestions, recommend resources, request changes, and brainstorm possibilities with you as appropriate. You can also bring some questions to the conversation—are there particular dilemmas or parts of your planned study you would like help thinking through?
- A successful proposal meeting usually ends in one of two ways. Committee members approve the study you proposed with minor suggestions, so they sign your cover sheet with an understanding you'll incorporate their suggestions into your continued work. Or, committee members are agreeable to the proposed study but have particular suggestions they'd like to see reflected in a revised proposal before they approve you to proceed. You will typically work with your advisor to ensure these revisions.

### **After-meeting next steps**

- Submit a clean electronic copy of your proposal to Tracy Rockers at [t221k439@ku.edu](mailto:t221k439@ku.edu).
- Apply for human subjects approval if needed—at KU and any other relevant institutions.+

+In some cases, you will be required to obtain approval from the school or institution in which you plan to collect data. You should check with this organization first to be sure they will grant such approval and ask them what sort of IRB they need. In many cases, documentation of KU approval will suffice.

*Tips:*

*\*Approval from your committee means you have a study plan that is feasible and conceived clearly enough that you know what needs to be done next. While you will conduct your study in a fairly independent fashion, you should also stay in contact with your advisor through the process. It's wise to provide your advisor with updates on your work and seek guidance if needed. We're here to help!*

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

This section contains information on requirements and policies of the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs, hereafter referred to as “the University”. It is not a complete list of all policies pertaining to graduate students. Only those policies that *most commonly* affect graduate students are included. Policies are described in general terms and are intended to help students understand what is expected. They do not reflect the exact language of the official policy and should not be confused with official policy. Specific information and restrictions as well as links to relevant forms may be accessed by clicking on the policy headings. Links to the official policies in the KU policy library are found at the bottom of each policy description. Students are accountable to and should familiarize themselves with the University's official policies.

### GENERAL POLICIES

The following University policies apply to ALL graduate students regardless of degree, program, or department. These are minimum general requirements. Your department or program may have more restrictive policies in any of these areas.

#### Admission

Degree or non-degree seeking applicants must have a bachelor's degree (as evidenced by an official transcript from the institution the degree was obtained).

#### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Admission to Graduate Study](#)

#### English Proficiency Requirements

The University requires all applicants, international or domestic, to demonstrate English proficiency for admission to any graduate program at KU. There are multiple ways to prove English proficiency:

- Declaration of native or native-like speaker status on the online application for graduate study.
- Official scores from an English proficiency standardized test (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS-Academic, or PTE), sent by the testing agency to the University of Kansas. Official scores must be less than two years old. Scores must be reported to KU directly by the testing

service. Self-reported scores or unofficial scores are not accepted. TOEFL scores should be sent by ETS to KU institution code 6871. IELTS should be sent to KU Graduate Admissions via the e-delivery service. PTE score sheets containing the Score Report Code and Registration ID should be emailed to [graduateadm@ku.edu](mailto:graduateadm@ku.edu) for verification.

- Graduation with a baccalaureate degree (or higher) earned in residence from an accredited English-medium college or university or an accredited college or university in the United States. Degrees earned online may not be used to verify English proficiency. Note: this option is not sufficient for employment as a Graduate Teaching Assistant.
- AEC Curriculum: Students who haven't taken one of the listed tests may complete coursework through the KU [Applied English Center](#) (AEC) to demonstrate English proficiency.
- US Military Employment: If you are employed as an officer in the U.S. military with documentation of selection or promotion to the rank of Major or higher (or the equivalent U.S. Navy or Coast Guard rank), then you will be considered fully proficient and will not be required to complete AEC testing.

Additional English Competency Requirements for GTAs:

English proficiency requirements for GTAs are governed by the Kansas Board of Regents and must be met separately from the English proficiency requirement for admission to a KU graduate program. Detailed information on English proficiency requirements for GTAs may be found on Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs' [Spoken English Competency page](#).

**Related Policies and Forms:**

- [English Proficiency Requirements for Admission to Graduate Study](#)
- [Spoken English Language Competency of Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants, Kansas Board of Regents Policy](#)

**Enrollment**

For graduate students, advising on enrollment and course selection take place at the department level. While individual units may have additional enrollment requirements, for students who are required to enroll full-time (e.g. students holding a GTA/GRA/GA appointment, international students on an F-1 or J-1 visa, students receiving federal financial aid, etc.) the University defines full-time enrollment as follows:

Fall and Spring semesters:

- Enrollment in 9 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;

- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s). \*See Doctoral post-comprehensive enrollment;
- Enrollment in 6 competencies for students in a Competency-Based Education (CBE) program.

Summer sessions:

- Enrollment in 6 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;
- Doctoral candidates enrolled in dissertation hour(s);
- Enrollment in 6 competencies for students in a CBE program.

Graduate students are not normally permitted to enroll for more than 16 hours a semester or more than 8 hours in summer session.

While these are KU’s definitions of full-time enrollment, other institutions may have different definitions. Be sure to consult with your financial aid and/or health insurance providers before making enrollment decisions.

**Students not enrolled by 11:59pm the day before the first day of classes will be assessed a late enrollment fee. The University Registrar then deactivates the KU ID of any not enrolled by the last Friday in October (for Fall) or last Friday in March (for Spring).** Students who wish to enroll after that must submit a [Permit to Re-Enroll](#) to be reactivated.

Students who wish to leave their graduate program should inform the department of such plans in writing so that a Voluntary Withdrawal form may be submitted on their behalf. Please note that voluntarily withdrawing from your program does **not** automatically withdraw you from coursework. You must also withdraw from all classes in Enroll & Pay via the “Withdraw from the University” option. Deadlines for adding, changing, dropping, or withdrawing from all courses, as well as any fines associated with the change, are set by the University. **Deadlines vary from year to year. Students should carefully review the current [Academic Calendar](#).**

You may also wish to consult the Registrar's page on [Effects of Dropping or Withdrawing on your Transcript](#).

Your graduate program coordinator (or similar title) is available to guide you through any enrollment scenarios or questions that come up. In order to avoid problems on your record, please consult with them prior to dropping or changing enrollment.

**Related Policies:**

- [Discontinued Enrollment](#)
- [Enrollment](#)
- [Full-time Enrollment for Graduate Students](#)
- [Graduate Coursework Expiration Dates](#)

- [Master's Degree Requirements](#)

## **Graduate Credit (Including Transfer Credit)**

The University's Graduate Credit [policy](#) defines KU's conditions for the following:

- Definition of graduate credit for the purposes of a course "counting" towards a graduate degree or graduate certificate at KU;
- Transfer of graduate credit to KU from an outside institution;
- Reduction in the required number of graduate hours for Master's students;
- Counting credit hours taken as non-degree seeking student towards a later graduate degree at KU;
- Counting credit hours taken as a certificate seeking student toward another graduate degree.

## **Transfer Credit**

The transfer credit option allows master's students to add graduate-level coursework completed at another institution to their KU transcript to count toward their KU degree. Upper-level coursework taken as an undergraduate, even courses numbered at the graduate level, is not eligible for transfer in any case. Additional restrictions apply to what non-KU graduate courses and the number of credit hours that can be counted toward a KU master's degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below, as well as consulting with their DGS. In all cases, transfer credit must first be approved at the department or program level. To begin the transfer process, students should consult with their DGS to submit the required transfer materials. These include a transcript reflecting the courses to be transferred and descriptions and/or syllabi for the courses in question.

No transfer of credits is allowed for the Ph.D. In circumstances where students enter the Ph.D. program with an M.A. from another institution or other relevant graduate coursework, it may be possible for students to request a reduction in the number of hours required for the Ph.D. Students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

## **Reduced Credit Hour Degree**

KU policy defines 30 hours as the minimum for master's degrees. Departments may petition for a reduced hour degree master's degree for individual students in cases where they may provide evidence that the student entered the program especially well-prepared to complete a graduate-level degree and the student is able to maintain a superior grade point average. Reduced credit hour degrees must be based on coursework or experiences that can be objectively measured, such as coursework or qualifying internship or study abroad programs. Professional or life experience does not qualify. A reduction in hours is distinct from a transfer of credit and is reserved for students whose prior coursework doesn't qualify for transfer credit (e.g. was already used to fulfill requirements towards a completed degree) and there are no modifications on the transcript.

Restrictions apply to the number of credit hours that can be reduced for a master's degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related policies below. In all cases, a reduction in hours must first be approved at the department or program level, so to begin the process for approval, students should consult with their DGS. Students must also provide documentation of the coursework or experience being used to justify the reduced hours (e.g. transcripts, program descriptions).

Because there is no minimum number of required hours for the Ph.D., reduction of required hours based on prior degrees or experience is determined solely at the program level. Doctoral students should consult with their DGS about their enrollment plan.

#### **Related Policies:**

- [Graduate Credit](#)
- [Co-enrollment](#)
- [Master's Degree Requirements](#) (on Reduced Hour Master's Degree)

#### **Credit/No Credit**

The University supports and encourages interdisciplinary study, which may include graduate students enrolling in coursework at the graduate level that is outside of their primary discipline. The Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) is an option for graduate students who are taking a course that is not required for their degree or certificate and who do not wish to have the course grade reflected in their cumulative graduate GPA. Rather than a grade appearing on the transcript, the student receives a designation of CR or NC, which does not factor in the GPA.

**No course graded CR/NC will count toward the satisfaction of any graduate degree or certificate requirement.** This includes, but is not limited to, courses taken to fulfill the Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship requirement for doctoral students.

Students make the CR/NC election via the Registrar's CR/NC [online request](#) form. Elections and changes to elections can only be made during the specific CR/NC period. For regular semester courses, this period begins after the last day to add a class and extends for approximately two weeks. Exact dates may be found on the current KU [Academic Calendar](#). Please keep in mind, short courses may have [alternate dates](#).

The student should consult with their own program advisor about the appropriateness of the course prior to enrolling; however, in cases where CR/NC is elected, the course instructor is not informed of the election unless the student chooses to share this information.

Additional restrictions apply. Students should carefully review the information in the link above.

#### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [University Senate Rules and Regulations \(USRR\), Section 2.3.8](#)

#### **Probation & Dismissal**

Probation is an academic status that can be assigned to a graduate student that is not making [satisfactory progress](#) toward completing their degree. The department initiates the probation process and will inform the student of why they are not making satisfactory progress, what they must do to return to good standing, and the deadline for doing so.

**Students are most commonly placed on probation due to their graduate cumulative [GPA](#) dropping below a B average (3.0 on a 4.0 scale).** In these cases, probation occurs automatically and is reflected on the student's record for the semester following the semester in which the student's GPA drops below 3.0. If the student's cumulative GPA is raised to 3.0 by the end of the probationary semester, the student will be automatically returned to good academic standing.

Individual Schools/the College may set more stringent GPA requirements.

Students may also be placed on probation by their departments for other reasons that constituting a failure to make satisfactory progress towards degree. These may include, but are not limited to;

- Lack of progress on the thesis, dissertation, or capstone project;
- Unacceptable academic performance on program milestones outside of coursework (e.g. exams);
- Unsatisfactory grades or GPA within foundational required courses (despite the overall cumulative GPA);
- An unsatisfactory result in their department's annual progress evaluation;
- Nearing or going beyond their maximum time to degree. See the Time Limits section below for more information.

Students should carefully review the [Good Academic Standing policy](#) for graduate students at KU for more information on what constitutes making satisfactory academic progress.

Individual programs may also have additional measures of progress. Students should also consult the Annual Review section of their department graduate handbook or the degree requirements section and with their program advisor for more information.

If a student is unable to raise their cumulative GPA or otherwise meet the communicated terms of the academic probation, the department will reconsider their continuation in the program, and in most cases will recommend the student for dismissal. Once dismissed, a student is no longer able to be enrolled in coursework and cannot complete their degree. Students dismissed from any graduate program may not be admitted to any other graduate program at the University of Kansas.

**A student on probation or facing dismissal should discuss their status with their advisor.**

#### **Related Policies:**

- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)
- [Good Academic Standing policy](#)

## **Grading**

The Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs' (GPA) [Grading policy](#) governs requirements for the grading of graduate students above those described in [Article II](#) of the University Senate Rules and Regulations. Additionally, individual schools, departments, or programs may have grading policies that are more stringent than those of GPA.

Students should also consult their advisor and the departmental grading section of this handbook for additional information that may affect them.

At minimum, for all graduate students at KU, at least a B average is required on course work counted toward any of the master's degrees at KU, and only courses graded A, B, or C (excluding C-) may be counted. Course work counted toward a doctorate, including that for a master's degree if obtained at KU, should average better than a B.

#### **Related Policies:**

- [University Senate Rules & Regulations](#)
- [Grading](#)
- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)

#### **Time Limits**

The University expects that master's degree should typically be completed in two (2) years of full-time study, the doctorate degree in five (5) years of study, and both the master's and doctorate together in six-seven (6-7) years of study.

Students who anticipate exceeding these targets should review the information in the policies below, as well as consult with their program advisor to create a timeline for degree completion. In order to support this process, students are encouraged to use a Mentoring Agreement Template and/or adapt to their own needs to support effective mentoring and a positive mentoring relationship.

Note that individual schools/the College/degree programs may require Mentoring Agreements for students who are nearing their maximum time to degree.

#### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Master's Degree Program Time Constraints](#)
- [Engagement and Enrollment in Doctoral Programs](#)
- [Doctoral Degree Comprehensive Oral Exams](#) (on exam expiration and recertification)
- [Doctoral Program Profiles with Time to Degree Information](#)
- [KU CLAS Mentorship Agreement Template](#)
- [Univ. Michigan Rackham Graduate School Mentoring Plan Templates](#)
- [KU Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs IDP template](#)

#### **Leave of Absence**

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. cases of illness, emergency, financial hardship, military leave, to pursue family responsibilities, or to pursue full-time activities related to long-range professional goals) it

may be necessary for graduate students to take a break from their program temporarily, without having to withdraw entirely from the program. An approved leave of absence allows a student to take a temporary break from enrolling in graduate coursework while remaining in good standing with the University and the department and while “stopping the clock” on their time to degree. When a student is on Leave of Absence status it is understood that they have temporarily suspended their graduate work and therefore will not make use of University resources, including faculty time.

Requesting a Leave of Absence is done through a University petition. University petitions must first be approved and supported at the program level, so students wishing to initiate the petition process should first consult with their Director of Graduate Studies and review their department’s internal petition procedures. Units or the Director of Graduate Study may request documentation to support the student’s need for a leave of absence.

In order for a Leave of Absence to be approved, the student must be withdrawn from all active and/or future enrollment. Withdrawal for the purposes of Leave of Absence is still subject to all Registrar deadlines, required forms, and applicable tuition and fees.

Students on Leave of Absence are automatically reactivated after their leave is over and are eligible to enroll for their intended semester back during the normal enrollment periods. See the KU [Academic Calendar](#) for exact dates that enrollment begins.

If at any time plans change and a student wishes to return and enroll before leave was supposed to end, they may contact their department to be reactivated early.

#### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Leaves of Absence](#)

#### **Required University Milestones**

All graduate students must complete one or more exams as part of their degree requirements. In addition to department or program guidelines, the following milestones are required for all students and specific regulations apply:

- Master's Final Culminating Exam (written or oral)/Thesis Defense for Master's degree
- Doctoral Comprehensive Oral Exam
- Doctoral Final Exam/Dissertation Defense

\*A final culminating effort is not required for departments with an approved coursework-only master’s degree option in the Academic Catalog (note that programs with a capstone are considered coursework only).

Before a student is allowed to complete any of these three exams, pre-approval from the school/College is required in advance of the exam date. This pre-approval request will be submitted on the student’s behalf by their department after the exam date has been scheduled. The school/College reviews the student record and verifies all University requirements have been fulfilled. The full list of these requirements may be found via the link in the heading above. Students should work with their

departments well in advance of their planned exam date, to schedule their exams in a timely fashion and to ensure that all University policies relating to oral exams are being followed.

There are additional policies requirements for oral exams. The following are University policies pertaining to oral exams:

### Oral Exam Committee Composition

All voting committee members must be appointed members of the Graduate Faculty of KU. Additionally, a majority of committee members serving on a graduate student oral examination committee must be tenured/tenure-track faculty in the candidate's department or program of study.

Many additional restrictions apply, especially for doctoral exam committees. Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the University policies pertaining to exams, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies when forming an exam committee. Your graduate program coordinator can assist with confirming the qualifying status of any faculty member at KU, or outside of KU.

### Oral Exam Attendance

Oral Exams may be conducted in-person, remotely, or a hybrid of both. There are no University level requirements for physical presence; however, there are strict regulations on participation.

In all cases, all committee members must be present, either physically or via phone/video conference, for an exam to commence. **If a committee member does not arrive or appear, the exam may not begin and if a committee member leaves or loses connection such that they cannot fully participate, the exam may not proceed. Oral examinations that do not meet these attendance requirements are not valid.**

Master's and doctoral students should carefully review the policies below, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies in the formation of an oral exam committee.

#### **Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Master's Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Doctoral Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Oral Exam Attendance](#)
- [Graduate Faculty Appointments](#)

## DOCTORAL DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the student's individual Ph.D. program's degree requirements, the following are University requirements for graduation with a Ph.D. at KU.

### Enrollment Requirement

Prior to the semester in which the comprehensive exam is held, all doctoral students must complete a minimum program engagement equivalent to two full-time semesters. This may be accomplished through either of the following:

- Two semesters (fall and/or spring) of full-time enrollment in KU coursework, as defined by University policy
- At least 18 hours of enrollment in KU coursework spread out over several part-time semesters

**Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Engagement and Enrollment in Doctoral Programs](#)

**Continuous Enrollment for Post-Comprehensive Students**

During the semester in which the doctoral oral comprehensive exam is completed and each fall and spring semester follows, doctoral students must adhere to very specific enrollment requirements. These requirements may be different than enrollment requirements prior to the oral comp exam. Failure to properly comply with the enrollment requirements may cause delays to graduation or additional enrollment requirements to make up what was missed, increasing tuition expenses near the end of your degree program.

**To avoid delays or additional costs, you are also strongly advised to meet with your graduate program coordinator the semester before your oral comprehensive exam.** Your graduate coordinator will work with you to develop an enrollment plan that meets all policy requirements, while also preventing unnecessary or avoidable fees.

Post-comprehensive enrollment requirements also apply to students with GTA/GRA/GA appointments, but these students must be certified to drop their enrollment levels. Departments are responsible for tracking student enrollment and will submit the certification form on the student's behalf **at least two weeks prior** to the beginning of the semester in which the enrollment will drop below 6 hours. Students who are certified to reduce hours continue to meet the University's definition of full-time enrollment, as well as the enrollment requirements of their employment contract.

**Related Policies and Forms:**

- [Full-time Enrollment for Graduate Students](#)
- [Doctoral Candidacy](#)

**GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (Master's & Ph.D.)**

In addition to all program requirements, students [planning to graduate](#) must complete all University graduation requirements **prior to the published Graduation Deadline** in a given semester. Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for the published Graduation Deadline, which varies by semester.

## GRADUATE & POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS' GRADUATION CHECKLISTS (Master's | Doctoral)

These graduation checklists provide a comprehensive list of all University requirements for graduation and should be consulted by every graduating master's or doctoral student as soon as graduation is expected. Submission of the final draft of the thesis or dissertation is done electronically. Students must comply with all University requirements for [formatting](#) and [electronic submission](#) of the thesis or dissertation. There is no University requirement that students provide a bound or printed copy of the draft.

**We strongly encourage students to submit an Application for Graduation as early as possible; ideally prior to the 20th day of classes of the semester they intend to graduate.**

### GRADUATE STUDIES FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs (GPA) offers funding opportunities in several different categories. Students interested in applying should direct inquiries to the department's Director of Graduate Studies or to GPA. Some of the available funding includes:

[Summer Research Scholarships](#): intended primarily for post-comp doctoral students.

[Graduate Student Travel Fund](#): intended for graduate students presenting a paper at a national or regional meeting of a learned or professional society. A student may receive an award (max \$750) only once per academic year, with priority given to students who have not received the fund previously. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

[Doctoral Student Research Fund](#): Designed to support KU doctoral students who need assistance to carry out research that advances progress toward the degree. Applications for this fund are accepted only for a limited time as funding is available. Students are eligible to receive one award from this fund during their doctoral career. Students should check the link above for additional information and restrictions.