



*College of*

# EDUCATION

**Department of Education and Human Development**

**Ph.D. in Special Education Program Handbook**

**2023-2024**

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## PhD in Special Education

### Introduction

This handbook has been prepared to provide information about the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree requirements in special education. The PhD degree is a research degree designed to prepare individuals to become scholars who can discover, integrate, and apply knowledge, as well as communicate and disseminate it. The intent of the program is to prepare scholars to contribute to the field of special education. This preparation enables scholars to understand and evaluate critically the literature in the field, to use appropriate principles to recognize, evaluate, and interpret the issues and problems at the frontier of knowledge, and to pursue appropriate research through close association with and apprenticeship to faculty members experienced in research and teaching. Scholars are encouraged to work with faculty to design programs uniquely fitted to their areas of interest. Furthermore, the special education program area encourages prospective scholars to become involved in research under the supervision of a faculty member at the earliest possible opportunity.

In this document, you will find information on faculty, admissions, degree requirements, program policies, and student support services. Please note that this handbook is intended to supplement the Clemson University Graduate Handbook and Clemson Graduate School Website. It is important that scholars in the special education PhD program become familiar with this handbook.

 The Special Education Faculty members maintain the [Special Education PhD Scholars](#) Canvas site. The site provides scholars with resources specific to the Special Education PhD program and serves as the primary method of communication. In addition, scholars submit their Annual Portfolios via the assignment feature on Canvas. Scholars are expected to log on to Canvas on a weekly basis.

### Special Education Program Area

The Special Education PhD Program is housed within the Department of Education and Human Development (EHD). Dr. Debi Switzer serves as the EHD Department Chair and Dr. Shanna Hirsch serves as the Special Education PhD Program Coordinator. Dr. Abby Allen supports the Special Education PhD Program. If you have questions about the Special Education PhD Program, Drs. Hirsch and Allen are your “go-to” people.

- ❖ Abigail Allen, PhD, Associate Professor of Special Education
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- ❖ Catherine Griffith, PhD, BCBA, Clinical Associate Professor of Special Education & Special Education Program Coordinator
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- ❖ Kristina Randall, PhD, Clinical Assistant Professor
- ❖ Joseph Ryan, PhD, Sue Stanzione Distinguished Professorship of Special Education
- ❖ Pamela Stecker, PhD, Professor of Special Education

## Admissions Requirements

For admission, individuals must have completed a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution and have K-12 teaching experience in special education or closely related field (a minimum of two years). Applicants should submit a [Graduate School application](#) which includes:

- Current résumé
- Transcripts: undergraduate and graduate (cumulative *minimum* grade-point average of 3.50 on graduate work)
- Two recommendations, with one from an immediate prior supervisor
- Competitive GRE scores on verbal, quantitative, and writing assessments
- A 2-3 page letter of intent communicating the following:
  - Professional goals in special education
  - Purpose for seeking the doctorate degree
  - Research interests
- A writing sample of professional writing

Applicants whose first language is not English:

- TOEFL or IELTS scores

Applications for admission to the PhD in Special Education program are processed through the Graduate School, E-108 Martin Hall, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina 29634-5120. To apply online, visit <http://www.clemson.edu/graduate/admissions/index.html>

Applicants interested in receiving a graduate assistantship should apply by January 15<sup>th</sup> (priority deadline). Applicants should apply by April 15<sup>th</sup> (traditional deadline) for Fall semester cohorts. Applicants proceed through an initial committee review and those who present a qualifying application packet are invited for an interview.

## Special Education PhD Program Overview

The program is offered through a HyFlex option and can be completed through either traditional face-to-face instruction or online synchronously. Scholars are admitted into a PhD HyFlex program according to the modality selected during the application process (in-person OR synchronous online). Scholars will have the opportunity to change their specified modality prior to the start of each semester. No modality changes will be considered once the semester is in progress. Asynchronous and/or synchronous elements will be included in courses at the discretion of the instructor as stated in the syllabus. In-person students are expected to attend classes in-person unless alternative arrangements have been made with or by course instructors. Scholars receiving an assistantship should consult their employment contract to verify modality requirements.

## Degree Requirements

This program is built upon instruction that emphasizes the application of theory and research to the needs of students with disabilities. Regardless of the modality, all doctoral students must satisfy all requirements of the Graduate School as well as requirements in curriculum (course work), portfolios including the comprehensive exam, the dissertation proposal, and the dissertation as directed by their advisory committee.

The degree requirements are divided into three sections. The information contained in this document is not comprehensive, but it will provide you with an overall perspective of your program, the expectations, and key steps that will lead you to earning your PhD in special education.

The Special Education Program continuously evaluates student progress and skill development. Scholars must maintain “good standing” for the duration of their program. **Specifically, a student must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA and has successfully met other program or Graduate School requirements.** The Graduate School recognizes any course completed with minimum grade of C– (or P) for the course to apply toward a degree. (p.28) **A student must maintain a cumulative average of 3.0 in all coursework taken.** Guidelines for academic progress and probation may be found at <https://www.clemson.edu/graduate/students/policies-procedures/index.html>.

### **Requirement 1: Curriculum**

Most special education scholars complete their degree in four years, although programs may be shorter or longer in duration. The PhD in special education has a minimum requirement of **55 credit hours**. Scholars are required to complete research, core course requirements, elective course requirements, and dissertation credit hour requirement. In addition, students will be required to pass portfolio one, portfolio two, portfolio three (including a comprehensive exam), portfolio four (dissertation proposal defense, and final oral dissertation defense). Fulltime students are encouraged to take multiple electives including directed research credits as part of their program of study.

### **Graduate School Enrollment**

<b>Student Category</b>	<b>Semester Minimum Credit Hours</b>	<b>Semester Maximum Credit Hours</b>
Full-time scholars	9	15
Graduate assistants (11+ hours)	9	12
Part-time scholars	3*	6
<a href="#">Full-time Clemson employees</a>	3	6

\*part-time students are strongly encouraged to take 2 courses each semester

### **Plan of Study**

The plan of study for the degree must be approved by the student’s advisory committee. After consultation and agreement with your doctoral advisory committee, students must submit their proposed plan of study at <http://www.clemson.edu/graduate/students/gs2-hints.html>. Suggested timeline for submission-prior to the end of your first semester of your second year.

***Special Education PhD Program (Approved January 2023)***

***Research Coursework (13 credit hours)***

EDF 9270/9271 Quantitative Research (4)  
 EDF 9770 Multiple Regression (3)  
 EDF 9790 Qualitative Research (3)  
 EDSP 9360 Single Case Research Design (3)

***Core Coursework (18 credit hours)***

EDSP 9390 Professional Writing in Special Education (3)  
 EDSP 9340 Research in Instructional Design (3)  
 EDSP 9350 Research in Teacher Education (3)  
 EDSP 9370 Research in High Incidence Disabilities (3)  
 EDSP 9400 Assessment for Diverse Populations (3)  
 EDSP 9500 College Teaching (3)

***Electives (at least 6 credit hours) Examples (not all-inclusive):***

EDSP 9530 Legal Trends in Special Education (3)  
 EDSP 9300 Critical Issues and Trends in Special Education  
 EDSP 9310 Advanced Research in Learning Disabilities (3)  
 EDSP 9320 Advanced Research in Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders (3)  
 EDSP 9330 Advanced Research in Intellectual Disabilities (3)  
 EDSP 9600 Internship in Special Education (1-6)  
 EDF 9200 Philosophy of Educational Research  
 EDF 9710 Case Study and Ethnographic Research Methods and Design  
 EDF 9750 Mixed Methods Research (3)  
 EDF 9780/9781 Multivariate Statistics (3)  
 ED 9380 Grant Development (3)

***Dissertation (18 credit hours)***

EDSP 9910 Doctoral Dissertation Research

**Minimum Credit Hours Required: 55**

## ***Requirement 2: Active Participation***

### **Advising Meetings**

Scholars should meet at least quarterly with their advisors to plan coursework, review their portfolio, and discuss long-term goals. The content of these meetings is meant to be consultative regarding future planning and evaluative in terms of student experiences and competencies to date. These quarterly meetings are to be formative in nature and evaluation is designed to improve the scholar's skills. It is expected that the scholars will contact their advisor to schedule these meetings at both parties' convenience.

### **Scholar Meetings**

Regular scholar meetings occur during the Fall and Spring semesters and may be held during the summer depending on faculty availability. Scholars are expected to attend all scheduled meetings unless they are traveling or have some other unavoidable conflict. The intent of the scholar meetings is to provide opportunities to connect outside of class, discuss program requirements, receive didactic instruction on a topic (e.g., Portfolios, academic writing, conference presentations, job search).

### **Communication Expectations**

Scholars are expected to be responsive to emails from faculty. To facilitate communication, scholars should respond to emails from their instructors, supervisors, and academic advisors within 2 days of receipt (during business hours: 8am-5pm, M-F). Scholars should also be proactive about their course of study and any questions about the program by contacting their advisor as needed.

## ***Requirement 3: Annual Portfolios: Competencies & Experiences***

The Special Education program faculty have developed a set of competencies for doctoral scholars to meet prior to program completion. These competencies are addressed during required courses and other experiences (e.g., dissertation, directed research). Doctoral scholars are expected to develop competencies in research, teaching, and leadership. It is the responsibility of the scholar and their advisor to ensure all competencies are addressed prior to graduation and materials are uploaded to the appropriate university repository (i.e., Canvas, GS Website, ProQuest). At the same time, scholars are expected to develop their own professional identity.

Portfolios are divided into four sections: Professionalism, Research, Teaching, and Leadership in Special Education. Each section has multiple assignments. All assignments are considered individual assignments unless otherwise noted.

### **Portfolio Deadlines and Review Timelines**

The Special Education area requires scholars submit an annual portfolio beginning in their second year. For example, Portfolio 1 is to reflect their first year in the program. Portfolios 1-4 (with the exception of comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal, dissertation defense) are due on the first day of classes for the Fall semester (see the University's [Academic Calendar](#)). Faculty will provide feedback within 1-2 months of submitting the portfolio.

Category	Assignment/Activity	Portfolio 1	Portfolio 2	Portfolio 3	Portfolio 4+
Professional Identity & Professionalism	Curriculum Vita (CV)	X	X	X	X
	Scholar Survey	X	X	X	X
	Reflective Statement	X	X		
	Job Search Cover Letter			X	
Teaching	Guest Lecture in a Course	X			
	Co-Teaching or Teaching Course	X	X	X	
		<i>One time during Year 1, 2 or 3</i>			
Leadership in Special Education	Review a Professional Organization Membership & Description of Volunteering	X			
	Advocacy Activity		X		
Research	CITI Certification/Recertification (Submit each year)	X	X	X	X
	Conference Proposal	X	X	X	X
	Manuscript: Write & Submit a Manuscript for Peer Review	X	X	X	
		<i>Submit a unique paper for two portfolios during Year 1, 2, or 3</i>			
	Research Study Proposal with a Completed IRB Application		X		
	Complete Comprehensive Exams*			X	
	Dissertation Proposal*				X
Dissertation*				X	

Note. Portfolios are due on the first day of classes each fall semester.

\*The comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal and dissertation defense are due within a specific timeframe determined by the scholar's advisor and committee.

## ***Part 1. Professional Identity and Professionalism***

### **Standard College Resume or Curriculum Vita (Portfolios 1-4+)**

Use APA style, including chronology of most recent to oldest in each section.

### **Scholar Survey (Portfolios 1-4+)**

Each year, scholars are required to complete the annual scholar survey.

The intention of scholar survey is to provide information that should be used in formative evaluations scholars. Prior to the final advising meeting of the year (April-May), the scholar and advisor should independently complete the scholar survey. Then during the meeting, the scholar and advisor will discuss the ratings, and identify areas of strength, as well as areas to strengthen. Once completed, upload a signed copy of this form to Canvas.

### **Reflective Statement (Portfolios 1 & 2)**

The scholar shall submit a reflective statement as one writing sample. The reflective statement includes program goals, specialty area, and career goals (e.g., teacher educator, faculty member in a research intensive university, policy analyst). The reflective statement shall include specific goals and a plan for the attainment of the goals. See Canvas for a list of specific questions.

### **Job Cover Letter (Portfolio 3)**

As part of Portfolio 3, you will write a job cover letter. Please select “your dream” institution, agency, or organization. Next identify a potential position (i.e., assistant professor, research associate, technical assistance director). See Canvas for additional information and resources.

## ***Part 2. Teaching***

### **Guest Lecture in a Course (Portfolio 1)**

Special education scholars are required to guest lecture. As part of the guest lecturer, the scholar must meet with the instructor prior to the lecturer to identify the topic, format, and review the lesson activities. Then the scholar will submit their lecturer materials prior to teaching for feedback. The faculty member will observe the scholar teaching the lesson in person or online. The faculty member will provide feedback on your lesson. For the portfolio assignment, scholars should submit a copy of their lecture slides, notes, handouts, and faculty member’s evaluation of the lecturer.

### **Teaching Mentorship Part 1: Co-Teaching (Portfolio 1, 2, or 3)**

One of the primary ways doctoral scholars gain expertise in their area of specialization is through co-teaching special education coursework. Teaching mentorship is a supervised experience in the design, delivery, and evaluation of a college course. During a teaching mentorship experience, doctoral scholars help prepare a syllabus, select readings, prepare a lecture, and prepare assessments. They also deliver instruction and help grade

assignments and exams.

Doctoral scholars in the special education program are required to complete, at minimum, one teaching mentorship experience during their program of study. A major advisor and/or committee may require additional teaching mentorships based upon academic background. Scholars make requests for teaching mentorship by March 1st for the upcoming summer/fall terms, and October 1st for the spring term by submitting a Teaching Mentorship Request Form to the Special Education PhD Scholar Canvas Page. Completion of the Teaching Mentorship Contract with Supervising Faculty Form is required before each semester begins. Introductory undergraduate courses may be available for independent teaching. For the portfolio assignment, scholars should submit a copy of their Teaching Mentorship agreement and Teaching Observation Forms.

### **Teaching Mentorship Part 2: Professional Development (Portfolio 1, 2, or 3)**

Scholars are required to complete professional development in order to achieve competence in the area of college teaching (in consultation with Major Advisor). A minimum of two workshops are necessary (submit certificates of completion or attendance via the Canvas site) or six conference sessions. These workshops must be completed during mentorship in the course. Additional opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- Participation in workshops offered by the Office of Teaching Effectiveness and Innovation (OTEI) or Clemson Computing and Information Technology (CCIT)
- Attending at least 6 conference sessions related to teacher education (i.e., Teacher Education Division of CEC)

### **Pre-Service Teacher Supervision (Optional)**

Field experiences are critical to the development of pre-service teachers. Therefore, it is valuable for doctoral students gain the necessary skills to supervise teacher candidates within P- 12 special education settings. Depending on the doctoral scholar's interests and program of studies, the scholar is required to successfully complete Supervision Mentorship of teacher candidates under the direction of a special education university supervisor. Doctoral students are assigned to a small group of teacher candidates and are required to attend all observations and meetings with these teacher candidates and assist with the completion of all required documentation for the field experiences/student teaching. Upon successful completion of the Supervision Mentorship, doctoral students would be expected to complete independent supervision of teacher candidates in field experiences/student teaching when included in the program of studies.

During independent supervision, doctoral students will be assigned to a group of teacher candidates. They will primarily be responsible for all observations, meetings, and documentation related to field experiences; however, they will still report to and be under the direction of a special education university supervisor and the Office of Field and Clinical Partnerships and Outreach.

### ***Part 3. Leadership in Special Education***

#### **Review a Professional Organization & Describe Volunteer Opportunities (Portfolio 1)**

Professional organizations (local, state, and national) play a pivotal role in supporting special education and teacher education. Many of the organizations are run by volunteers. For this activity, you will research at least one national, state, or local special education organization. Be sure to include descriptions of the organization's activities as well as your level of participation (or plans for participation). Provide document of involvement (e.g., copy of membership, conference registration, meeting minutes, officer website page).

#### **Advocacy Activity (Portfolio 2)**

As part of the scholar's portfolio, they will provide a clear description of one advocacy activity where they identified a specific problem and took actions to address the problem. In addition, they will follow through on the impact of their advocacy activity.

### ***Part 4. Research***

#### **CITI Certification (Portfolios 1-4+)**

You must abide by all University requirements for working with human subjects. This starts with maintaining CITI certifications (submit certificate via Canvas site). Information about the implementation of these procedures is available from your advisor, and all pertinent IRB procedures and forms can be found at <https://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/forms.html>.

This note concerns ethical practices in education research. It is essential that you are respectful of our research participants and that you comply with all research protocol procedures and the principles of informed consent. In addition to seeing IRB approval, many districts also require a research and data sharing agreement. Communicating with your advisor as well as the IRB and the district administrators begins months before launching a study.

#### **Conference Proposal and Presentation (Portfolios 1-4+)**

Each year scholars are required to write at least one conference proposal (actual submission is encouraged but not required). The proposals should be well written, follow the conference guidelines, adhere to APA style, and stay within required word limits. As part of the Portfolio submission, the scholar must include a copy of the conference call for proposals along with their proposal. Each portfolio should include a unique proposal.

If the scholar intends to submit the conference proposal, their advisor should initially review them to ensure the proposal is of high quality and meets submission guidelines. If accepted, the Scholar can apply for funding through the Clemson Graduate Student Travel Grant and the EHD CORE Award.

#### **Two Research-based or Practitioner Manuscripts (Portfolio 1, 2, or 3)**

Scholars will submit two manuscripts to a peer-reviewed journal (as part of Portfolio 1, 2,

or 3). Scholars are encouraged to talk to faculty members about conferences or papers they are interested in writing well in advance of any deadlines. As part of the Portfolio submission, scholars should upload a copy of the manuscript, along with a letter from the editor acknowledging receipt (email is fine), and a narrative description of the scholar's involvement (conceptualizing and writing the manuscript). Each portfolio should include a unique manuscript.

### **Research study proposal with a completed Institutional Review Board (IRB) application (Year 2)**

Scholars will write the method section of a manuscript and corresponding Institutional Review Board (IRB) proposal.

#### *Part 1. Research Proposal*

The proposal should include a purpose statement with research questions. Next the scholar uses the Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS) to ensure they include the recommended elements of a research manuscript (e.g., participants, setting, measures, data collection, procedures/conditions, research design, data analysis strategy).

#### *Part 2. IRB Proposal*

The scholar will complete a new IRB protocol. They will answer all questions, include components of the research proposal, and all appropriate attachments (e.g., informed consent, measures, recruitment flyers). They will submit the mock IRB proposal to canvas with all the attachments.

### **Grant Proposal Writing: Assist faculty member(s) on a grant proposal (Optional)**

Scholars will work alongside faculty to write a grant proposal. They will support various aspects of proposal writing (fitting aims, literature synthesis, and methods). They will also learn how to construct a budget and create timelines.

### **Comprehensive Examinations (Portfolio 3)**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Comprehensive Exam is to ensure that doctoral candidates have reached a level of competence in areas of research and content that demonstrates potential for and facilitates successful completion of a high-quality dissertation. Completion of comprehensive exams and advancement to candidacy includes candidates' (a) demonstration of knowledge and expertise in specific areas of study through a specialty area paper; (b) ability to integrate and synthesize knowledge and skills across areas of research and content through a comprehensive research proposal that addresses appropriate research questions and appropriate research design/methodology within a relevant area of study; and (c) ability to respond to questions from the field regarding current trends and issues within special education through a synthesis of findings from research and key publications within the field of special education.

Written Comprehensive Exams are administered upon recommendation of the student's Doctoral Committee, typically upon completion of all required coursework (See program of study). Part I (written papers) must be submitted to the committee chair within 3 months of being

administered. Any extensions must be approved by the doctoral committee. Scholars may build upon previous lines of research, but submissions should be original documents.

#### Part I. Written Comprehensive Examination

IA. The **major area paper** requires students to develop an extensive paper that addresses a topic of relevance within the student's program of study. Scholars must present to his/her advisor a written document outlining potential topics that address an important issue in the field of special education. Scholars will finalize their topic in consultation with their major advisor. The paper may be written as a position paper or review of literature suitable for submission for publication. It must adhere to APA format and must address the topic thoroughly and succinctly within no more than 30 pages. The major area paper may be aligned to the dissertation topic at the discretion of the student's major advisor. However, the major advisor instead may assign a topic for investigation based on perceived gaps in the student's expertise. If the topic is related to the student's dissertation, approval of the major area paper does not necessarily constitute approval as the literature review for the dissertation.

IB. The **research proposal** requires students to develop a researchable question and articulate an appropriate design to address the question. The proposal will include the participants, dependent and independent measures, interrater agreement, design and appropriate analyses, and potential limitations of the design.

#### Part II. Oral Comprehensive Exam

The Comprehensive Exam will be disseminated by the student's major advisor to the student's committee upon submission, and a date for the oral defense (typically two weeks after submission of Part I) should be scheduled based on feedback from committee members.

Committee members will rate the responses according to the scoring rubric and provide recommendations to the major advisor within a two-week period. The oral comprehensive exam entails a structured oral presentation, or defense, of the major area paper. The committee members may question the student during this oral exam to clarify any information in the written portion of the comprehensive examination. In addition, committee members may pose other questions about research methodology or special education, as appropriate. A doctoral student becomes a candidate for the doctorate (or is "admitted to candidacy") upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination for the degree and submission to the Office of Enrolled Student Services of Form GS-D, "Results of the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam and Candidacy Form." The student may proceed with the proposal of dissertation upon approval by committee members, and submission (by the student's major advisor) of the GS5D to the graduate school.

## **Dissertation (Portfolio 4+)**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the dissertation is for the doctoral candidate to demonstrate competence in synthesizing relevant literature and in generating new knowledge for the profession using well-established research tools. It is the culminating set of events for the doctoral candidate. Scholars have the option of completing a traditional, book manuscript- style dissertation or a three-manuscript dissertation. The dissertation is the culmination of a scholar's doctoral studies and should represent her or his research interests and capabilities.

Although the dissertation is developed in collaboration with the student's dissertation committee, the student is expected to take the lead in this research endeavor. It is the student's responsibility to convince the advisor and committee that the design and scope of the study are of sufficient quality to be publishable and potentially to make an important contribution to the field.

**Overall Requirements:** All PhD scholars will complete a dissertation proposal and a dissertation following either the traditional, book-manuscript model or the three-manuscript option. The dissertation phase requires a minimum of 18 credit hours.

### **Dissertation Proposal**

Doctoral students must present a prospectus of a study to the doctoral advisor for discussion. For candidates in special education, the dissertation may be quantitative (group or single-case designs), qualitative in nature, or may comprise a mixed methods design. The type of design selected should match the research question(s) posed, and both professional writing and research methodology must adhere to current standards of high quality in the profession. After tentative approval by the advisor, the student typically prepares the written proposal and presents this proposal to the dissertation committee.

### **Dissertation**

Once the committee approves the plan, the candidate conducts an investigation under the leadership of the doctoral advisor and committee. The candidate defends the final research submission to the dissertation committee. After the dissertation committee signs off on the dissertation, an electronic manuscript must be submitted to the Graduate School to make sure it is compliant with Clemson University's manuscript format guidelines.

**Selection of Dissertation Advisor:** Your initial program advisor may or may not be the same person as your dissertation advisor (i.e., major advisor). Your major advisor should be someone who holds rank in the special education program and someone with whom you share a common research interest or methodological practice. Your initial program advisor may be able to help you to identify a potential dissertation advisor. A faculty member may even invite you to work with them on your dissertation. We recommend that you discuss your interests with the person whom you would like to direct your dissertation as early as you are able during your program, but probably after you have had a chance to work with them in class or on a project and have become familiar with that faculty member, their style, and research foci. However, you also should realize that a faculty member may choose not to serve as your advisor, may rather serve only as a

committee member, or even not at all on your committee. The major advisor chairs the advisory committee meetings and serves as primary mentor of the student.

**Selection of Dissertation Committee Members:** You should work with your dissertation advisor to discuss the potential composition of your committee. Your committee, including the major advisor, should be comprised of a minimum of four faculty members. If a minor is declared, then a committee member with expertise in this area must be represented as well. The selection of your committee members is a joint decision made by you and your dissertation advisor. Also, interdisciplinary topics may require more committee members from other departments or colleges.

**All dissertation committees must include at least four members\* as follows:**

- ❖ Chair (or co-chair): the student's dissertation advisor who will serve as the first line of communication between the student and the other dissertation committee members;
- ❖ Content Expert: a faculty member who possesses the necessary content expertise for the student's area of inquiry and will most likely belong to the special education program area or a related area;
- ❖ Methodological Expert: a faculty member with methodological expertise consistent with the student's research questions(s); and
- ❖ Committee member: a faculty member from outside the Clemson University special education area (any faculty member eligible to serve on dissertation committees may serve in this role).

\*Note: One person can serve in multiple roles

Once you and your advisor select the members you would like to have serving on your committee, it is your responsibility to ask these faculty members about their willingness to serve on your committee. Although you may not have worked out all the details for your study yet, once you and your advisor agree on the topic, you should share your research ideas with your prospective committee members. In matters of disagreement, committee members typically yield to the dissertation chair, because the chair serves the primary role of mentor to the candidate.

The responsibilities of the advisory committee are threefold: attending meetings and providing feedback on (a) the comprehensive exams (described elsewhere), (b) the dissertation proposal and (c) the dissertation defense. Feedback often is provided directly to the candidate, but sometimes this feedback is channeled through the dissertation advisor. The advisor has the primary responsibility in working closely with you to help you complete the dissertation. Your plan of study (GS2) lists your coursework and must be filed no later than the beginning of the fourth semester of study. This GS2 form also lists the selection of committee members and requires signatures from all committee members prior to formal filing. The GS2 must be filed prior to taking the comprehensive examinations. Occasionally, coursework may change (e.g., substituting a different course for a requirement or taking an independent study), and sometimes committee members or the advisor may be altered after filing the initial GS2. In such a case, a new GS2 must be filed with the new listing of courses and/or committee.

### ***Traditional Book-Manuscript Dissertation***

The manuscript-model dissertation includes five chapters: introduction (e.g., background, purpose, rationale, and potential significance), literature review, methodology, results, and discussion (e.g., summary and integration of results of the current study as well as in relation to past research, implications for practice, limitations of the study, and future directions). Once the topic and general plan have been agreed upon, the candidate develops the first three chapters of the dissertation: background, literature review, and method. However, the candidate also may need to enlist counsel from one or more members of the committee, especially related to design and analysis. After the first three chapters are developed, the student works with committee members to find an appropriate time for the presentation of the dissertation proposal. The committee may recommend specific changes to these three chapters of the proposal for the actual dissertation. Once the committee approves the proposal, the candidate is able to conduct the investigation, given that the Institutional Review Board also grants approval of the study.

**Chapter 1** introduces the topic to your audience. It should describe general background or context for the topic, the purpose of the study, your research question(s), its rationale, and its potential significance. Special terminology may be defined here.

**Chapter 2** comprises a literature review relevant to your dissertation topic. Information should be synthesized for the reader, but you should demonstrate your knowledge of previous studies. Some literature reviews may be a narrative synthesis; others may be a meta-analysis. Your critique is an important part of the literature review, so it is expected that you highlight similarities and differences among studies. You may critique substantive or methodological features of the studies, perhaps highlighting factors that have not been evaluated, differences in method or type of sample, and so forth. Your literature review should demonstrate critical thinking and set the stage for how your dissertation study will add to the research base.

**Chapter 3** describes the methodology used. This chapter provides the research question(s) and explains the overall design that is used to address the question(s). The plan for analysis is described as well. You should include information about your sample here. Demographic information may be presented. The procedures you use for collecting the data and/or implementing a treatment (i.e., independent variable) must be described in detail. If, for example, you chose to conduct a group design and selected a treatment and control group to contrast, you would need to describe your methods for sample selection as well as the comparability of your groups on key variables. Also included in this chapter is a description of and rationale for the dependent measures you use, including established technical characteristics or pilot study data. Questionnaires and other types of dependent variables are described in text, but the actual questions used may be placed in an appendix.

**Chapter 4** presents the results you obtained from your investigation. Both tables and text may be used to present information, but the same information should not just be repeated in both places. Describe data to demonstrate the fidelity of the study. Report the results of analyses for the dependent measures that were described in the third chapter. For example, if statistical tests were used, typically the test, result, associated p-value, and effect size should be provided. Qualitative information may be provided and results of questionnaires, including open-ended

responses. However, results are presented only: They are not interpreted or discussed until the fifth chapter.

**Chapter 5** summarizes questions and results through discussion. You should explain what your results mean and place them in context with your own design (e.g., to what populations could you most accurately generalize these results) and in context with other studies in your area. Based on what happened with your study, explain why you likely did or did not get the results you anticipated. Discuss your conclusions, but refrain from overgeneralizing your results; rather, you must specify any limitations to your study that might constrain your conclusions. Discuss the implications of your study for practice and specify directions for future research in this area.

**Finalizing the Defense:** After scheduling a defense date and notifying the University community, the defense is carried out, and any necessary revisions are made to the written dissertation.

Once Committee members approve the final manuscript, they sign off on the GS7D form indicating a successful pass. If the candidate should fail to pass the defense, a second defense may be scheduled but only upon advisory committee recommendation. After approval of the dissertation by the committee, the PhD candidate will need to convert the dissertation manuscript to a pdf file and upload it for review by the Graduate School. Additional formatting revisions may be necessary before the dissertation is finally accepted by Manuscript Review. PhD students are asked at that point to complete a survey: Survey of Earned Doctorates.

Because many dissertations require revisions prior to final acceptance, the PhD candidate needs to pay close attention to dates. However, PhD candidates need to remember that the advisor needs time to read and to provide feedback to the candidate prior to the manuscript being sent to the committee members. Likewise, committee members need a minimum of 10 days to read the manuscript prior to the scheduled defense. The Defense Form must be submitted at least 10 days prior to the actual defense, so it gets posted on the Defense Calendar for the University community. The defense date needs to be scheduled, so enough time is allocated for potential revisions by the submission due date should the student desire to graduate that same semester. The University requires that the defense be scheduled at least 3 weeks prior to the commencement date during the semester in which the candidate expects to graduate.

### ***Manuscript Style or Three-Article Dissertation***

A manuscript-style or three-article dissertation is one that takes the form of three thematically linked papers plus an integrative introduction and conclusion. The integrative introduction is a narrative that explains how the papers collectively make progress on the same broad research questions but focus on the questions in different ways. Each of the three papers needs to be stand alone in that they could be submitted independently for publication. The manuscript-style dissertation entails special preparation and comes with its own set of requirements. Scholars should decide as early as possible, in concert with their dissertation chair, whether to pursue the manuscript-style format.

The manuscript-style dissertation is not the ideal format for all scholars. The manuscript-style

dissertation is a useful alternative for scholars who intend to pursue academic careers and want to build a publication record. **There must be coherence among the articles that make up the dissertation, and the rationale for grouping the three articles together must be clear.** Scholars may find it difficult to manage their time between writing the dissertation and the publishing “revise and resubmit” cycle, so careful consideration of the time commitment is needed before undertaking this dissertation format. The manuscript-style option is as rigorous as the traditional dissertation.

### **Requirements**

The completion of a manuscript-style dissertation must be approved by the scholar’s dissertation committee. Ideally this conversation should be undertaken with committee members early in the scholar’s graduate work.

Each manuscript included in the manuscript-style dissertation must represent an original contribution to the field. The dissertation must contain a minimum of two empirical articles, each of which must be suitable for submission to refereed journals for publication. A third article, could describe a relevant theoretical framework (e.g., propose a theoretical model pertinent to the students’ empirical papers), be a critical review of the literature (a systematic or integrated review) that is broader than the literature review provided for each article (i.e., a state of the field type of article), or take the form of an additional empirical article.

### **The Dissertation Proposal**

The dissertation proposal for the manuscript-style dissertation involves additional considerations and requirements. **The written proposal should include a complete literature review, another manuscript that is partially complete, and a description of plans for the remaining manuscript(s).** The proposal should be introduced by a 10 to 15-page introduction or integrative statement, describing the conceptual and theoretical linkages among all three manuscripts.

Further, a timetable should be included that details the completion and planned submission of each paper to a peer-reviewed journal. The proposal meeting typically presents the rationale and logic for each of the three papers. The dissertation committee chair and the dissertation committee will ultimately determine the details of the proposal defense. A successful proposal defense entails:

- Approval to conduct a manuscript-style dissertation instead of a traditional dissertation;
- Approval of the existing manuscript that will constitute part of the dissertation or approval of revisions to the existing manuscripts;
- Approval of the proposed work for the final manuscript(s);
- Review and approval of the scholar’s role on each of the manuscripts that comprise the dissertation.

**A maximum of one article initiated prior to the proposal defense may be included.** This article must represent work undertaken while the scholar is enrolled in the PhD program and be approved by the committee at the time of the scholar’s proposal defense. This article must be connected to the theme or themes of the dissertation.

### **The Dissertation Defense**

The articles submitted for the defense must be of publishable quality. The scholar's dissertation committee decides whether the articles meet this standard. Typical length of the articles is 30 pages. **Articles must have been submitted for possible publication to a journal prior to final approval of dissertation.**

The dissertation must follow our field's formatting requirements (i.e., APA), and the same style guide must be used throughout the entirety of the dissertation, even if the journals to which you have submitted or plan to submit utilize different style guides. In the event of a discrepancy between style guides, the Graduate School's formatting standards will take precedence over others.

### **Authorship**

Scholars must be first author on all articles. As first authors of each article, scholars are responsible for developing and articulating the concept or idea for research, developing the proposal to pursue this idea, developing the research design, conducting research and analysis, writing major portions of the manuscript, designing an intervention or assessment (if relevant), and interpreting results. Co-authors are allowed. Co-authors must be identified and approved, including their relative roles and contributions, at the student's proposal defense. If a previously published article is approved by the committee, the student will be responsible for securing necessary permissions from the copyright holder and role confirmation signatures from other authors.

The journals to which the articles are being submitted must be approved by the dissertation committee. The committee should assist in choosing refereed research journals that represent high quality and offer a reasonable chance of publication success.

### **Copyright Considerations and Requirements**

The inclusion of any previously published articles or articles that have been accepted for publication requires permission from the copyright holder as required by US law. The sections not copyrighted by another party may be covered under the publication of the new manuscript. Up to one article may have been published before the defense. However, if so, the student must obtain copyright permission from the publishing journal to include the article in his or her dissertation. Doing so is required by U.S law.

### **Order of Required Manuscript Elements for the Three-Article Dissertation**

The final dissertation manuscript must follow the Graduate School's formatting standards. Beyond those requirements, the three-article dissertation should include the following:

#### **Prefatory Material**

**Copyright Information:** Please see the introductory information, above, regarding copyright concerns.

**Abstract:** The abstract should synthesize the three articles and the work as a whole.

**Acknowledgements and Dedication (Optional):** Follow the same layout and format as for a traditional dissertation.

## **Table of Contents**

Each article included should be identified in the Table of Contents as a separate section by giving the complete title as it appears on each manuscript. Do not list subheadings that occur within the individual manuscripts (unless required by the Graduate School's formatting requirements). List subheadings from the introductory and summary sections.

Lists of Tables and List of Figures (if applicable)-list all tables and figures that appear within the entire document. Numbering of tables and figures will be dependent upon the chosen style and formatting guide for the document as a whole.

## **Main Body**

Introduction-The introduction should explain why the previously published or publishable papers were chosen, including a substantive discussion of the relationship between the various articles and parts of the research that tie together the articles. The introduction should include a clear statement of the student's purpose or singular research hypothesis to be tested. It should provide necessary background information and a broad statement summarizing study findings. The minimum of three articles should form a cohesive body of work that supports themes that are expressed clearly in this introduction. The need for three articles should be clear and, as noted previously, must be approved by the dissertation committee. Minor tweaks of a work that would be more appropriately reported in just one or two articles is not permitted.

### Chapter/Article 1

- Subsections (e.g., Introduction, Review of Literature, Method, Results, Conclusions)
- Article 1 Reference List
- Article 1 Appendices (if applicable)

### Chapter/Article 2

- Subsections (e.g., Introduction, Review of Literature, Method, Results, Conclusions)
- Article 2 Reference List
- Article 2 Appendices (if applicable)

### Chapter/Article 3

- Subsections (e.g., Introduction, Review of Literature, Method, Results, Conclusions)
- Article 3 Reference List
- Article 3 Appendices (if applicable)

## **Concluding Material**

Overall Conclusion-State the conclusions for the dissertation as a whole. The conclusion should include a general discussion, applications, and ideas for future research that emerge from the three separate articles as well as from the dissertation as a whole.

References-All general references from the introduction, overall conclusion, and any supplementary sections should be included here and should conform to the same style and format as the articles.

Appendices-Include here only any additional appendices that relate to the manuscript as a whole.

## Graduate School Forms and Deadlines

The Graduate School sets deadlines for the following items. The specific dates are determined according to the academic calendar for the semester in which you plan to graduate (see Academic Calendar for details). All Graduate School forms are available online at <https://www.clemson.edu/graduate/students/forms.html>.

Form	Description	Location	Notes
GS2	Committee Selection and Plan of Study (two-part form)	iROAR	Submit GS2 no later than the beginning of fourth semester of study following matriculation.
GS5D	Results of the doctoral degree comprehensive examination	<a href="#">GS website</a>	Submit GS5D to the Office of Enrolled Student Services within three weeks of examination.
Announcement of Dissertation Proposal	Student provides dissertation information to CoE Student Services.	<a href="#">CoE website</a>	Submit this form no less than 10 days prior to their proposal.
Thesis/Dissertation Research Approval	Advisory committee's approval of student's research proposal	<a href="#">GS website</a>	Student brings form to proposal defense to be submitted when successful proposal defense has been verified.
Apply to Graduate	Student notifies Enrolled Student Services of their intent to graduate	iROAR	Submit the Diploma Application only if you are planning to apply for the next graduation date.
Announcement of Dissertation Defense	Student provides dissertation information to CoE Student Services.	<a href="#">CoE website</a>	Submit this form no less than 10 days prior to their defense.
Defense Schedule Notice	Official notification to the Graduate School of student defense	<a href="#">GS website</a>	Submit this form no less than 10 days prior to their defense.
GS7D	Dissertation Defense and Approval Form	<a href="#">GS website</a>	Committee must complete and return to the Office of Enrolled Student Services.
Dissertation Format Approval	Dissertation electronically submitted for format approval	<a href="#">Proquest</a>	See Graduation Deadlines for exact deadline.
Final Dissertation Review	All revisions requested by the Manuscript Review Office (MRO) must be completed and approved by the MRO	<a href="#">Proquest</a>	See Graduation Deadlines for exact deadline.

## Resources to Enhance Scholar Success in the PhD Program



**College of Education: Graduate Student Information:** The College of Education (CoE) maintains the [College of Education Graduate Student Information Canvas site](#) with a plethora of information. The site includes but is not limited to CoE Student Services, Policies & Procedures, Registration Resources, CoE Program Handbooks, Dissertation Resources, Graduate Student Advisory Board Information, Graduate Student Travel, and Graduate Student Research Conference Information.

**Academic Success Center:** The Academic Success Center provides free services, including tutoring, academic coaching, and academic skills workshops, for all Clemson students. Visit the [Academic Success Center website](#) for more information on their services and workshops.

**Writing Center:** Clemson University's Writing Center offers free one-on-one tutoring for all Clemson students. Visit the [Writing Center's website](#) for more information about their services or to make an appointment.

**Cooper Library:** Reference librarians are available in person and via text, phone, email, and chat to answer your research questions. Visit [Ask a Librarian](#) for more information or to get in touch with a librarian.

**Technical Support:** If you are having hardware or software problems, CCIT's Service Desk may be able to help you. Contact them at [ITHELP@clemson.edu](mailto:ITHELP@clemson.edu) with a detailed description of your problem.

**Registrar:** The [Registrar's office](#) provides information about important deadlines, degree and program requirements, and other key information.

**Student Disability Services:** Clemson University values the diversity of our student body as a strength and a critical component of our dynamic community. Scholars with disabilities or temporary injuries/conditions may require accommodations due to barriers in the structure of facilities, course design, technology used for curricular purposes, or other campus resources. Scholars who experience a barrier to full access to this class should let the professor know and make an appointment to meet with a staff member in Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. You can make an appointment by calling [864-656-6848](tel:864-656-6848), by emailing [studentaccess@lists.clemson.edu](mailto:studentaccess@lists.clemson.edu), or by visiting Suite 239 in the Academic Success Center building.

Scholars who receive Academic Access Letters are strongly encouraged to request, obtain, and present these to their professors as early in the semester as possible so that accommodations can be made in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to follow this process each semester. You can access further information here: <http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/sds/>.

### Year 1: Example of Sequence of Events in Doctoral Studies

The following is a sample calendar of events for first year doctoral scholars.

April - August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New doctoral students may register for classes after they have been admitted to the program. Fall enrollment typically occurs mid-April. For specific dates, view the <a href="#">Clemson Academic Calendar</a>.</li> </ul>
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Attend Orientation</i></li> </ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meet with initial advisor to develop a plan of studies and identify a course for a “co-teaching lecture”</li> </ul>
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Attend Scholar Meeting</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sample Topics: Portfolio 1 Plan Review &amp; Spring Courses</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Submit Teaching Mentorship Request (for Spring)</li> </ul>
November & December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Register for Spring classes</li> <li>● Apply for <a href="#">Graduate Travel Grant Service</a> (for Spring)</li> <li>● Submit a request for advisor</li> <li>● <i>Attend Scholar Meeting</i></li> <li>● <i>Apply to present at the CoE Graduate Student Research Forum</i></li> </ul>
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Attend Scholar Meeting</i></li> <li>● Apply for the EHD Cultivating Opportunities for Research in Education (CORE) Funding to defray conference travel expenses (see the <a href="#">CORE Guidelines</a> for details)</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prepare presentation, attend, or present at a local, state, or national conference</li> <li>● Attend the Clemson CoE Graduate Student Research Forum (2/3)</li> </ul>
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Attend Scholar Meeting</i></li> <li>● Prepare presentation, attend, or present at a local, state, or national conference</li> <li>● Submit Teaching Mentorship Request (for Summer/fall)</li> </ul>
April	
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Attend Scholar Meeting</i></li> </ul>
June - July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Apply for <a href="#">Graduate Travel Grant Service</a> (for Fall)</li> </ul>

## Year 2: Example of Sequence of Events in Doctoral Studies

The following is a sample calendar of events for second year doctoral scholars.

August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Submit Portfolio 1</li> <li>● Attend Orientation</li> <li>● Apply for the EHD Cultivating Opportunities for Research in Education (CORE) Funding to defray research and/or conference travel expenses (see the <a href="#">CORE Guidelines</a> for details)</li> </ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meet with advisor to select your committee and formalize your plan of studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Submit your GS2 (no later than the beginning of fourth semester of study)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Identify dissertation committee members</li> </ul>
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attend Scholar Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sample Topics: Portfolio 2 Plan Review &amp; Spring Courses</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Submit Teaching Mentorship Request (for Spring)</li> </ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Register for Spring classes</li> <li>● Apply for <a href="#">Graduate Travel Grant Service</a> (for Spring)</li> </ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attend Scholar Meeting</li> <li>● Submit proposed plan of study to the Graduate School</li> </ul>
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attend Scholar Meeting</li> <li>● Apply for the EHD Cultivating Opportunities for Research in Education (CORE) Funding to defray conference travel expenses (see the <a href="#">CORE Guidelines</a> for details)</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prepare presentation, attend, or present at a local, state, or national conference</li> </ul>
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attend Scholar Meeting</li> <li>● Prepare presentation, attend, or present at a local, state, or national conference</li> <li>● Submit Teaching Mentorship Request (for Summer/Fall)</li> </ul>
April	
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attend Scholar Meeting</li> </ul>
June - July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Apply for <a href="#">Graduate Travel Grant Service</a> (for Fall)</li> </ul>

### Year 3-4+: Example of Sequence of Events in Doctoral Studies

The following is a sample calendar of events for third and fourth year+ doctoral scholars.

Fall Semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Submit Portfolio 2-4+</li> <li>● Attend Orientation</li> <li>● Apply for the EHD Cultivating Opportunities for Research in Education (CORE) Funding to defray research and/or conference travel expenses (see the <a href="#">CORE Guidelines</a> for details)</li> <li>● Meet with advisor to refine/update plan of studies             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify a timeline to complete comprehensive exams (after all required coursework has been completed)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Register for Spring courses</li> <li>● Apply for <a href="#">Graduate Travel Grant Service</a> (for Spring)</li> <li>● If applicable, Submit Teaching Mentorship Request (for Spring)</li> </ul>
Spring Semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attend Scholar Meetings</li> <li>● Apply for the EHD Cultivating Opportunities for Research in Education (CORE) Funding to defray conference travel expenses (see the <a href="#">CORE Guidelines</a> for details)</li> <li>● Prepare presentation, attend, or present at a local, state, or national conference</li> <li>● Attend Scholar Meeting</li> <li>● If applicable, Submit Teaching Mentorship Request (for Summer/Fall)</li> <li>● Work with your advisor to determine the Portfolio 3-4+ timelines and deadlines.</li> </ul>
June - July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Apply for <a href="#">Graduate Travel Grant Service</a> (for Fall)</li> </ul>

Beginning in their 5<sup>th</sup> year, doctoral scholars should submit updated documents (e.g., CV, CITI certification, annual scholar survey, conference proposals)