

HIGHER EDUCATION, PHD

The Ph.D. in Higher Education (HE) is a highly individualized program that prepares students for an academic career in the field of higher education.

Through coursework, research assistantships, and working closely with their academic advisors, students in the Ph.D. in Higher Education program develop the skills they need to conduct primary research in higher education. These skills include understanding research design and the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. This program is highly individualized and students work closely with their academic advisor to draw from courses from the division and from other areas on campus that relate to their area of inquiry. Ph.D. students develop a planned program of study in consultation with their academic advisor.

For more information: <https://www.gse.upenn.edu/academics/programs/higher-education-phd> (<https://www.gse.upenn.edu/academics/programs/higher-education-phd/>)

Curriculum

The PhD program in Higher Education is highly individualized. The program requires students to complete the Penn GSE Doctoral Proseminar on Education Research (EDUC 7132), 2 methods courses as described below. PhD students develop a planned program of study in consultation with their academic advisor.

Code	Title	Course Units
Core Requirements		
EDUC 7132	Doctoral Proseminar on Education Research	1
Select one Quantitative Methods course: Attribute GDHN (http://catalog.upenn.edu/attributes/gdhn/) ¹		1
Select one Methods course: Attribute GDHM (http://catalog.upenn.edu/attributes/gdhm/) ¹		1
Electives		
Select 17 course units at the 5000 level or above ²		17
<i>Additional Requirements</i> ³		
Students must complete all University Milestones for Doctoral Candidates in addition to specific milestones for GSE. These include:		
A Qualifications Evaluation (also known as Program Candidacy)		
A Preliminary Examination (also known as Doctoral Candidacy)		
An Oral Defense of the Dissertation Proposal		
Final Defense of the Dissertation		
Total Course Units		20

University PhD Benchmarks

In addition to Program requirements, the following milestones must be completed:

Code	Title	Course Units
Qualifying Evaluation		
Candidacy Examination		

Dissertation Defense/Oral Exam

Dissertation Deposit

For more information view the University's Academic Rules for PhD Programs (<http://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/academic-rules-phd/>).

- ¹ All HE doctoral students are required to take 2 methods courses either within GSE or another school at Penn. Methods courses must be at the 5000 level or above. One of these courses must be a quantitative methods or statistics course. Students should consult their academic advisor regarding the appropriate methods courses for their program of study. The courses that are used to fulfill these requirements will NOT be allowed to double count to meet other doctoral course requirements.
- ² Electives may be taken at any school at Penn, although the majority of HE students fulfill their electives within the division. Courses must be at the 5000 level or above and students must consult their academic advisor before enrolling in any course outside of GSE. Students without a master's degree in HE may be required to fulfill some of their electives with required coursework from the HE MEd program. GSE will, under certain conditions, accept equivalent credit toward the degree. Up to 8 graduate level CUs taken at GSE, Penn, or another institution, may count toward the PhD degree. Transfer credit is not automatically accepted or applied toward the doctoral degree. Students should consult their academic advisor and the GSE website for the policies governing the application for transfer credit in their first semester of coursework at GSE. Students who are not awarded a full 8 CUs of transfer credit should consult their academic advisor for the appropriate elective coursework to fulfill the coursework required for the PhD degree program. Please consult the GSE website for the proper forms and procedures. Students may not register for more than 4 independent studies (EDUC 9999) over the course of their program. Information regarding program candidacy, doctoral preliminary examination, forming a dissertation committee, holding an oral proposal hearing and scheduling a final defense can be found on the GSE website (<http://www.gse.upenn.edu/phd/>).
- ³ Required GSE Milestones

Qualifications Evaluation (Also known as Program Candidacy): A Qualifications Evaluation of each student is conducted after the completion of 6 but not more than 8 course units. The evaluation is designed by the specialization faculty and may be based on an examination or on a review of a student's overall academic progress.

Preliminary Examination (Also known as Doctoral Candidacy): A Candidacy Examination on the major subject area is required. The candidacy examination is a test of knowledge in the student's area of specialization, requiring students to demonstrate knowledge and reasoning in the key content areas in their specialization as defined by their academic division. This examination is normally held after the candidate has completed all required courses.

Oral Proposal: All doctoral candidates must present their dissertation proposals orally and in person to the dissertation committee.

Final Defense of the Dissertation: The final dissertation defense is approximately two hours in length and is based upon the candidate's dissertation.

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The degree and major requirements displayed are intended as a guide for students entering in the Fall of 2025 and later. Students should consult with their academic program regarding final certifications and requirements for graduation.
