



# Doctoral Programs Handbook

Department of  
Leadership,  
Technology, &  
Workforce  
Development

## **Ed.D. Handbook for Faculty and Students**

This handbook is designed to bring together the relevant guidelines and procedures for completing the Ed.D. programs in the Department of Leadership, Technology, and Workforce Development at Valdosta State University. Please note that the handbook is meant to supplement, not replace, the VSU Academic Catalog.

The handbook includes program information and links to most forms needed by current Ed.D. students, program coordinators, and dissertation committee members.

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Valdosta State University is a Regional University of the University System of Georgia. It is an equal opportunity educational institution which does not discriminate against any applicant for admission or any student or employee based on the sex, race, religion, color, national origin or disability of the individual.

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## **Overview**

The Department of Leadership, Technology, and Workforce Development (LTWD) offers three Doctorate in Education programs – Ed.D. in Adult Learning and Development, Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, and Ed.D. in Leadership. Each is an advanced program of study preparing graduates to serve in leadership roles in their specific disciplines. The components of the curriculum provide an intellectual framework for investigating, understanding, and affecting the broad range of academic, social, economic, and cultural issues and pressures facing modern organizations. Through the research and course requirements of their programs, students gain the expertise needed to affect the significant educational changes within the region.

## **Program Administration**

Each of the three Doctor of Education programs is administered by the program's doctoral coordinator. In addition, a departmental Doctoral Program Committee oversees all cross-curricular program policies and curriculum operations and is chaired by the departmental program coordinator. These operations are carried out under the direction of the department head and the dean of the Dewar College of Education and Human Services and the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Research.

## **Program Mission**

The mission of Valdosta State University's Doctor of Education program is to provide advanced professional education for experienced practitioners to meet society's growing needs and challenges.

## Program Curricula

Each program's curriculum is available online via the LTWD department website and by the VSU Academic Catalog.

LTWD Website: <https://www.valdosta.edu/ltdw>

VSU Academic Catalog – LTWD Graduate Programs:

<http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/graduate-degree-programs/education-human-services/leadership-technology-workforce-development/>

Questions about course requirements, transfer credits, programmatic deadlines, and matriculation requirements should be directed to the program coordinator for the degree in question.

### Adult Learning and Development (55 credit hours)

The Ed.D. in Adult Learning and Development degree provides advanced, professional learning individuals interested in technical and higher education, career and technical secondary education, community development, workplace training and development, and any other context in which adults are learning. This program prepares learners to engage thoughtfully and skillfully in their teaching-learning with adult learners by providing in-depth engagement in the theories of adult learning as well as curriculum design and facilitation, while also preparing learners to become independent practitioner-scholars.

### Curriculum and Instruction (55 credit hours)

The Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction degree provides interrelated courses and guided experiences to develop candidates' understanding of effective P-12 instructional systems and the application of theoretical foundations in curriculum and instruction. Courses require doctoral candidates to research, design, develop, implement, evaluate, and disseminate innovative educational practices in a variety of learning environments. Candidates are expected to lead P-12 curriculum design, development, and evaluation in their respective disciplinary fields of concentration.

### Leadership (55 credit hours)

The Ed.D. in Leadership degree program develops effective, ethical, and diverse leaders who maximize performance in schools and other organizations. Skill applications serve as the connection between knowledge and inquiry skills developed in the core curriculum, interdisciplinary, and research courses leading to restructured practice and school or organizational improvement. The Ed.D. in Leadership program of study does not automatically result in leadership certification. Individuals interested in school leadership certification should contact the program coordinator.

### Degree Inscription

The degree conferred upon program graduates is Doctor of Education.

## Program Policies

The following sections address policies specific to Ed.D. program in the department of Leadership, Technology, and Workforce Development. They do not supersede university policies.

### Coursework

The doctoral program will be at least 46 semester hours of coursework and nine semester hours of dissertation credit. Additional hours may be added by the doctoral advisor, depending upon the student's academic record, work experience, career goals, etc.

Requirements for residency are fulfilled upon completion of two consecutive semesters of full-time doctoral study as designated on the Declaration of Residency Intent Form submitted to the Graduate School.

Courses taken more than seven years prior to admission to candidacy cannot be used to meet graduate degree requirements.

### Program Electives and Transfer Credits

Electives must be at the graduate level and approved by the advisor.

Students may petition to transfer up to nine hours of post master's level work appropriate to their program. The advisor must approve all transfer credits, and courses must be 7 years or less in age at the time the student is admitted to candidacy.

### Academic Standards

Throughout their program, a student's performance must be acceptable on a continuing basis. Students must always maintain a grade-point average of at least 3.25 or face academic sanctions as determined by the Doctoral Coordinating Committee. No grade below C will be credited toward a graduate degree. Any student acquiring any combination of two grades, D, F, WF, or U may be dismissed by the Graduate School.

Effective Fall 2024, students may petition to retake up to two courses in which they previously earned a D, F, WF, or U grade in order to have a new grade of C or higher replace the original grade. The petition must be approved by their advisor and the Graduate School. There are restrictions on the number of courses that may be retaken and how/when they may be retaken. This petition process is a last resort for students; it is not a crutch for poor performance.

### Admission to Candidacy

Doctoral students are admitted to candidacy and approved to begin dissertation research upon successful completion of all course work and capstone assessment, see Admission to Candidacy form: <https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/documents/admission-to-candidacy.pdf>

### Extension Guidelines

Doctoral students may take up to five years from the term in which comprehensive assessments are taken and passed to complete their dissertation work. A one-year emergency stop-out may be requested by students to address unforeseen, uncontrollable issues that impede completion of their dissertations. During the stop-out period, the student must register for a minimum of 1 hour of dissertation credit per term. An additional extension of up to two years beyond the 5+1 year limit

would require successful completion of a second comprehensive exam (or its equivalent as determined by the Doctoral Coordinating Committee) that is scheduled, taken, and graded within one term of the expiration of the 5+1 year limit. The extensions are awarded in one-year increments. Meeting the designated milestone before the end of the first year's extension can result in the awarding of the second one-year extension. Failure to pass the second comprehensive exam will terminate the dissertation process.

## **Graduation**

Students must apply for graduation during the semester prior to the semester in which they plan to graduate. Applications are completed by the student and the doctoral advisor. The Registrar and Graduate School should be consulted for procedures, deadlines, and fees.

## The Dissertation

General dissertation requirements are published in the Thesis and Dissertation Guide, available online at the Graduate School website: <https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php>

### Dissertation Hours (ACED 9999, CIED 9999, LEAD 9999, and RSCH 9999)

All students must register for two (2) or more dissertation hours, i.e., 9999-hours, each semester. Students will register for dissertation hours in their dissertation chair's section. If a student does not have a dissertation chair, s/he will register for dissertation hours in the program coordinator's section until a chair is found. Once a researcher methodologist is added to the dissertation committee, students will register for dissertation hours in both the chairs and the researcher's respective sections, splitting the hours equally. If a student registers for an odd number of dissertation hours, the extra hour is allocated to the chair.

At least nine semester hours of dissertation credit across three semesters are required for the degree. Students must be enrolled in dissertation credit hours in the semester in which they graduate.

Students making meaningful progress towards completion of the dissertation, as determined by their chair and researcher, earn Satisfactory (S) grades each semester in their dissertation hours. Students who do not make meaningful progress will receive In-Progress (IP) grades for the semester lacking progress. If IP grades are earned in two consecutive semesters, the student will be prohibited from registering for another semester until satisfactory progress is made. Once satisfactory progress is made, the IP grades will be changed to S grades and the student will be allowed to register for additional dissertation hours.

### Dissertation Process

When students are ready to begin their dissertation, a committee to supervise the dissertation must be formed and approved using the Dissertation Committee Appointment form: [www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/forms/dissertation-committee-appointment-form.pdf](http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/forms/dissertation-committee-appointment-form.pdf) More information about the makeup of the dissertation committee is provided later in this document. Upon approval of the committee, students may begin developing the proposal under the committee's guidance.

In consultation with the dissertation chair, a student prepares a proposal that details the proposed research project. The student will convene the dissertation committee to approve the project. The Dissertation Proposal Approval form: [www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/documents/diss-proposal-approval-form.pdf](http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/documents/diss-proposal-approval-form.pdf)

Upon approval of the dissertation proposal, the student and their chair and/or researcher will work with the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research to secure Institutional Review Board approval before beginning the collection of data to be included in the final study. The forms and procedures for securing IRB approval are available at: [www.valdosta.edu/irb](http://www.valdosta.edu/irb)

Three types of dissertation structures are accepted: Traditional, Journal-Ready, and Monograph. The type is determined in the proposal defense and all dissertation committee members must approve the student's selected type of dissertation.

The dissertation committee chair will inform the student when the dissertation committee considers the document ready for its final defense. The chair will notify the Graduate [School in writing of the date](#), location, and time of the defense at least two weeks in advance. The Dissertation Defense Notification form: [www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/forms/dissertation-defense-notification1.pdf](http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/forms/dissertation-defense-notification1.pdf)



The final defense of the dissertation should be completed in a timely manner to meet the approved dissertation submittal date of three weeks before the scheduled graduation date. The oral defense is open to the academic community and others by invitation. The deliberations regarding the defense will be conducted by the committee members only. Successful dissertation defense requires at least three positive votes by the dissertation committee. The dissertation committee shall certify to the Vice President of Graduate Studies the student's dissertation has been approved via the Signature page in the dissertation's preface pages.

The final approved dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School by the designated Deposit Date for that semester. Typically, this is 4 weeks before the graduation date. The Graduate School will conduct a final review of the dissertation's formatting. Upon their approval, students will submit the final copy of the dissertation to the VSU V-Text Repository. Once the Graduate School receives confirmation of the V-Text Repository deposit, they will notify the Registrar to award the degree.

A complete Procedural Checklist for the entire dissertation process, including dissertation Submission Procedures for defended dissertations, is available at: [www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php](http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php)

## **Dissertation Committee**

The committee will be composed of at least three but no more than five members. There are three faculty roles on a dissertation committee – chair, researcher, and reader. The chair or the researcher must be full-time faculty in the Department of Leadership, Technology, and Workforce Development. In addition, to serve as sole chair, the faculty member must have co-chaired a dissertation from one of the three departmental programs to completion, i.e., graduation. The reader may come from outside of VSU so long as they qualify for Graduate Faculty Status.

A dissertation chair will be selected by the student no earlier than the semester in which the Comprehensive Assessments are scheduled to be completed. The dissertation chair and the student will select committee members collaboratively.

All faculty serving on dissertation committees must be approved members of the Valdosta State University Graduate Faculty. Chairs and researchers also must be approved by the Dewar COEHS Dean's Office. The approval process for both Graduate Faculty Status and COEHS approval is facilitated by the department head.

Upon selection, the Dissertation Committee Appointment form, linked above, must be submitted to and accepted by the doctoral coordinator who forwards it to the Graduate School for final approval.

### **Primary Functions of the Dissertation Committee**

- Work closely with the student to ensure proper conceptualization, design, and execution of a methodologically sound research study;
- Guide the student's work to ensure that the dissertation is consistent with both the goals of the program and the professional needs of the student;
- Evaluate the student's oral presentation of a dissertation proposal; and
- Evaluate the student's final, public dissertation defense; and approve the final submitted dissertation.

## Faculty and Student Responsibilities

Students and faculty alike share responsibilities throughout the entire program. The following sections outline the general responsibilities of each party.

### Faculty - Academic Advising

The program coordinator is responsible for advising students within their respective program. As an advisor, the program coordinator guides the student through coursework and approves a program of study. The initial program of study must be planned during the first semester in which the student is enrolled. Students must consult their program coordinator/advisor every semester to register for classes. Copies of the program of study will be provided to the student and retained in their advising folder.

### Faculty - Teaching

All faculty teaching in the Ed.D. program must be approved members of the Valdosta State University graduate faculty and the doctoral faculty.

The Dewar College of Education and Human Services Course/Instructor Evaluation form is to be used for all doctoral level coursework to allow for appropriate comparisons across courses. Instructors outside the Dewar College of Education and Human Services may supplement this evaluation instrument.

For faculty serving on dissertation committees, they will fulfill additional tasks unique to their individual roles on doctoral dissertation committees. These tasks are provided in Appendix A.

## Student Responsibilities

### Ethical and Professional Conduct

Students are expected to demonstrate high professional and ethical standards while in the Ed.D. program. A Code of Ethics is presented in the VSU Student Code of Conduct:

[www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/student-handbook.php](http://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/student-handbook.php)

The VSU Graduate School Dismissal & Readmission Policy has additional guidelines:

<https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/documents/dismissal-readmission-policy3.pdf>

Examples of appropriate conduct include:

- Respectful communication among peers
- Allowing an adequate amount of time for professor response time to student inquiries.

### Attendance & Engagement

Each student is expected to engage fully in their courses, both asynchronously and synchronously as required by their courses and other scheduled program meetings or seminars. High quality work is expected as is punctuality when completing course assignments/activities. Students with valid reasons for an absence or early departure should arrange with instructors in advance. In case of emergency, a student is expected to inform the instructor and arrange to make up work.

### Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is required at all times by all students. Academic dishonesty involves acts that may subvert or compromise the integrity of the academic process. Grades and degrees earned by plagiarism, defined as “the copying of the language, structure, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and

passing off same as one's own, original work," cheating, and other dishonest means devalue those earned by all students. Incidents of academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade for the assignment, or for the course, and in some cases, dismissal from the program following an appropriate disciplinary hearing process.

Appropriate Use of Artificial Intelligence – students may use AI-based tools solely for the purpose of gathering information. However, at no level are AI or other resources to be used to aggregate, synthesize, outline, draft, or contribute to a student's writing of the actual dissertation. This includes, but is not limited to, having an AI tool draft phrases, sections, or sentences so the student, in turn, paraphrases the work done by the AI. All writing and thoughts included in a student's dissertation must be his or her own.

### **Regulatory Compliance**

Students are responsible for complying with all relevant regulations concerning the use of human and/or animal subjects, radioactive or other hazardous materials, legend drugs, and recombinant DNA in research, study, and experimentation. Approval by the Institutional Review Board is needed prior to beginning any research. Contact the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Administration for more details at: [www.valdosta.edu/irb/](http://www.valdosta.edu/irb/)

### **Program Checklist**

To assist students in monitoring their progress toward completion of requirements, consult your program coordinator and/or dissertation chair as well as the Procedural Checklist available at: [www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php](http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis-and-dissertation-information.php)

## Appendix A: Dissertation Roles & Responsibilities

(Originally Drafted: June 2017 by Dr. Herb Fiester)

By way of guidance for the dissertation project, the following are the responsibilities of candidates, chairs, and committee members:

### Responsibilities of Candidates

As author of the project, doctoral candidates are ultimately responsible for the design, execution, and documentation of the dissertation project through all of its phases including the completion of a final manuscript that has been properly edited and follows all of the expected conventions described by the Valdosta State University (VSU) Graduate School. The dissertation must be a substantial research project, which makes a creative, original contribution to the existing knowledge base. The candidate is expected to engage in active preparation for the dissertation process from the onset of their doctoral program, understanding that the coursework phase of the program serves as the foundation for the dissertation process. The candidate is responsible for selecting a topic for approval, submitting edited drafts of materials to relevant committee members, preparing adequately for meetings, thoroughly reviewing all VSU dissertation policies and procedures, and communicating on a regular basis with their chair and/or researcher via email, phone, or other agreed upon protocols. In addition, the candidate is expected to:

1. Recognize that crafting a dissertation is an iterative process between the student and their dissertation committee. As such, the candidate is expected to be responsive to feedback provided in a timely manner if they are to expect the same from the chair and/or the committee. The candidate needs to also be respectful of the fact that chairs and other committee members have many other duties, along with dissertation responsibilities. Realistic expectations should be adopted for holiday and vacation times as well as normal busy periods (e.g., ends and starts of semesters).
2. Use their chair as the central point of contact for the development of ideas, selection of an appropriate committee, and development of early drafts; the approval points for submission of materials to the committee; and the gatekeeper of a final manuscript for submission to the Graduate School.
3. Schedule regular meetings with dissertation chair to discuss the project and its development, and, when directed/suggested by chair, with members of the committee.
4. Submit all original work and, as appropriate to the conduct of research, properly cite the works of others that inform the study. The candidate should be familiar with and adhere to policies on academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Misconduct in these arenas is treated seriously and can result in academic dismissal.
5. Submit correctly edited manuscript drafts. The candidate is responsible for editing or locating an editing service to assist with editing. Prior feedback should be addressed prior to submitting a new draft.
6. Obtain and maintain human research participant certification (CITI); complete IRB study proposal paperwork, as applicable. Complete annual renewals to keep IRB approval current.
7. Take personal initiative to move the project forward and to discuss with the dissertation committee chair any problems that may arise. In the event that there are issues that arise with the dissertation chair that cannot get resolved or that are best discussed with another person, the candidate may opt to discuss them with the department chair or Program Coordinator.
8. Be intimately familiar with the dissertation materials published by VSU, such as the VSU Graduate School and departmental web sites.
9. Be aware of and accountable to established defense date and manuscript submission deadlines.
10. Use published VSU Graduate School deadlines to plan successful completion of the dissertation

project.

11. The candidate should contact the chair in the event of any significant changes in his/her personal or professional life, which may interfere with program completion.
12. Register for a minimum of 2 dissertation credits when actively working with any dissertation committee member; register for a minimum of 1 dissertation credit when not actively working on the dissertation.

### **Responsibilities of Chairs**

Chair selection should be based on topic interest or subject matter expertise, experience in dissertation direction, or methodology expertise. The chair is responsible for guiding the candidate to produce doctoral level, original scholarship in the proposed topic area. The chair must be approved by the home college of the candidate and hold Valdosta State graduate faculty status. Chairs are expected to:

1. Ensure the candidate is qualified to begin the dissertation phase by confirming the candidate has been admitted to candidacy and that a program of study form documenting that the coursework phase of the student's program is complete.
2. Be clear about expectations of the candidate during their dissertation process.
3. Provide timely and thorough guidance to the candidate on the various elements necessary for the planning and execution of a dissertation study.
4. Help the candidate formulate a long-term plan for the research and writing of the dissertation, including a timetable and tentative completion date. Ask the candidate to revise the plan, if needed.
5. Assist with proposal development and preparation.
6. Recommend appropriate members to serve on the committee and to determine when distribution of materials to members of the committee is appropriate.
7. Advise on proposal and final defense protocols, ensure that the candidate and the manuscript are adequately prepared for defenses, facilitate the defenses, and ensure the candidate understands needed revisions.
8. Advise/remind the candidate of VSU Graduate School deadlines as well as proposal or final defense time needed to get a manuscript ready for review prior to the manuscript being sent to the VSU Graduate School.
9. Be accessible to the candidate for dialogue and formal meetings as needed.
10. Respond to the candidate's drafts in a timely manner. A reasonable guideline is no more than 10 working days turn-around time upon receipt of a draft or a response to the candidate within that 10 working day window if more time is needed.
11. Be intimately familiar with dissertation materials published by VSU, such as the VSU Graduate School and departmental web sites.
12. Maintain Graduate Faculty status.
13. Guide the candidate toward achieving a high level of technical and ethical quality in the dissertation research.
14. Formally announce the dissertation defense two weeks prior to the defense date.
15. Assign grades for dissertation credits and convert any "IP" grades to "S" grades when dissertation requirements have been satisfied.
16. Assist with required paperwork associated with the dissertation.
17. Be present at graduation to hood candidates unless alternative arrangements are made.

Chairs who feel that they can no longer provide collaborative guidance to candidates should consult with the candidate's department chair to determine appropriate actions.

### **Responsibilities of Researchers**

1. Assist with proposal development and preparation.
2. Be accessible to the candidate for dialogue and formal meetings as needed.

3. Respond to the candidate's drafts in a timely basis. A reasonable guideline is no more than 10 working days turn-around time upon receipt of a draft or a response to the candidate within that 10-working day window if more time is needed.
4. Maintain Graduate Faculty Status.
5. Guide the candidate toward achieving a high level of technical and ethical quality in the dissertation research.
6. Guide the candidate in the selection of methods/procedures for data collection and analysis
7. Correspond with the chair and candidate as needed for clarification/resolution of methodological issues during the Dissertation process.

A Researcher should be selected who has particular expertise in the type of study the candidate is pursuing (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods).

### **Responsibilities of Committee Members**

1. In collaboration with the dissertation chair, provide meaningful guidance to the candidate on project development and/or manuscript drafts.
2. Respond to candidate drafts in a timely basis. A reasonable guideline is no more than 10 working days turn-around time upon receipt of a draft or a response to the candidate if more time is needed within that 10-working day window. Keep the chair informed of feedback being provided to the candidate outside of the formal defense settings.
3. Provide subject matter expertise as requested by chair or candidate.
4. Attend, evaluate, and provide substantive feedback at proposal and final defense.
5. Maintain their Graduate Faculty Status.

Members who feel that they can no longer provide collaborative guidance to candidates should consult with the candidate's department chair to determine appropriate actions.