



University of  
**Pittsburgh**

**School of Education**

Doctor of Education (EdD)  
**PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

(March 1, 2024)

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# Pitt Education

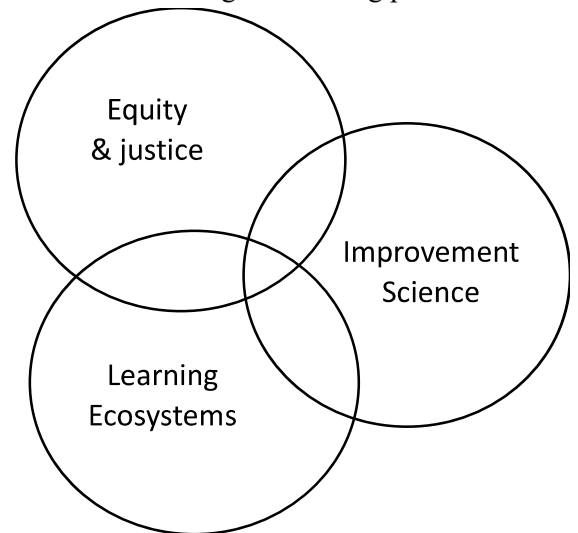
## Mission/Vision Statement

We ignite learning. We strive for well-being for all.  
We teach. We commit to student, family, and community success.  
We commit to educational equity. We advocate.  
We work for justice. We cultivate relationships.  
We forge engaged partnerships. We collaborate.  
We learn with and from communities. We innovate and agitate.  
We pursue and produce knowledge. We research.  
We disrupt and transform inequitable educational structures.  
We approach learning as intertwined  
with health, wellness, and human development.  
We address how national, global, social, and technological change  
impacts learning. We shape practice and policy.  
We teach with and for dignity. We think.  
We dream. We lead with integrity.  
We are the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh.

## Overview of the Doctor of Education (EdD) Program

The University of Pittsburgh is a center for excellence in professional programs, and the School of Education school-wide Doctor of Education (EdD) program is grounded in this commitment to excellence. The program prepares working professionals to become scholar practitioners and leaders, to develop specialized knowledge in their area of focus, and to apply their intellectual and practical skills to address and mitigate enduring problems affecting children, families, and communities. The Pitt School of Education is a member of the **Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate (CPED)**, and is also the headquarters for CPED. Our EdD is a CPED-influenced EdD program. Learn more at [www.cpedinitiative.org](http://www.cpedinitiative.org)

Three pillars guide the Pitt EdD. Our first pillar is to transform health and education to make a more **equitable and just** space for all. Our second pillar is to seek continuous improvement towards equity and justice through the employment of **improvement science**, the signature method of the EdD. Our third pillar is to harness the power of bringing together the expertise and perspectives of students and faculty into **learning ecosystems**.



A distinctive feature of the EdD program at the University of Pittsburgh is the **interdisciplinary cohort model** in which students work with colleagues as a cohort in their academic majors, but they also work across majors in the Foundations and Practitioner Inquiry courses. This allows for collaboration, building strong working relationships across areas, and interdisciplinary approaches to emerge. Students also work closely with a **faculty advisor**, particularly in the third year.

As a result of participating in the University of Pittsburgh EdD program, students and graduates become leaders and change-makers—scholar practitioners who:

- Identify problems of practice, including questions of equity, ethics, and justice
- Use data to inform decisions in daily operations and improvement projects
- Communicate and collaborate with diverse communities and build partnerships
- Lead change that improves practice
- Are committed to using improvement methods to address problems of practice

### Academic Majors

- Education Leadership
- Health and Physical Activity
- Higher Education Management
- Out-of-School Learning
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- Education Policy and Social Change
- Special Education
- Urban Education

## Courses

The EdD program is designed to support students in (a) identifying a problem of practice within their place of professional practice, (b) designing a scholarly improvement project to address that problem, and (c) communicating findings to their immediate as well as the larger professional community of practice. The courses in the EdD program are organized into four categories and, along with milestones, are sequenced to assist students in that work.

### Foundations Courses

- Foundations 1: Becoming a Scholarly Practitioner (EDUC 3002)
- Foundations 2: Contexts of Practice (EDUC 3004)
- Foundations 3: Leadership in Groups and Organizations (EDUC 3003)
- Foundations 4: Policy as a Lever for Change

### Practitioner Inquiry Courses

- Practitioner Inquiry 1: The Science of Improvement (EDUC 3001)
- Practitioner Inquiry 2: Naming and Framing Problems of Practice (EDUC 3006)
- Practitioner Inquiry 3: Developing a Theory of Improvement (EDUC 3007)
- Practitioner Inquiry 4: Planning for Improvement (EDUC 3008)

### Academic Major Courses

- 4 courses, content varies by major

### Additional Courses

- Review of Supporting Scholarship (EDUC 3009; associated with Milestone 2)
- Laboratory of Practice (EDUC 3012; associated with Milestone 4)
- Guidance in Scholarly Practice (EDUC 3099 – 6 credits taken each term in year 3 for a total of 18 credits)

## Requirements

Across the three years, students complete the following milestones and requirements. The first two milestones as well as the Applied Inquiry Plan and Laboratory of Practice are embedded into classes; the rest occur during the third year, which is more independently driven.

| Milestones                                    | Other requirements                             |
|---|--|
| Milestone 1: Problem of Practice Statement    | Plan of Studies                                |
| Milestone 2: Review of Supporting Scholarship | Applied Inquiry Plan                           |
| Milestone 3: Doctoral Committee               | Laboratory of Practice                         |
| Milestone 4: Dissertation Overview            | Approvals related to Dissertation in Practice: |
| Milestone 5: Dissertation in Practice Defense | Institutional Review Board and ETD             |

The next section describes each of these milestones in depth, followed by a chronological view of the three-year program. Guidelines for milestones are available on our EdD Resource site available at [my.education.pitt.edu](http://my.education.pitt.edu). The recording of milestone completion occurs through our online milestone system, also available at the EdD Resource site.

**Milestone 1: Problem of Practice Statement** (drafted in student's major course in the spring of the 1<sup>st</sup> year; milestone completed with advisor)

*Requirement: Advisor approval through online milestone system.*

The Problem of Practice (PoP) Statement presents a problem of practice that you face in your workplace and would like to improve. We encourage students to choose problems related to equity and justice within education

or health. The statement is a 3-5-page paper (excluding references) in APA (American Psychological Association) style that articulates:

- A clear description of topic
- Compelling rationale for significance of topic, based on a preliminary review of literature
- Description of place of practice (context)
- Initial questions about the problem or possible solutions to guide your future review of literature
- Precise use of language and correct use of language conventions

**Milestone 2: Review of Supporting Scholarship** (drafted and graded in EDUC 3009; completed with advisor)

*Requirement: Advisor approval through online milestone system.*

The Review begins with a revised and refined Problem of Practice Statement to guide a scholarly review of literature. This is the final project for EDUC 3009 Review of Supporting Scholarship. The Review of Supporting Scholarship should:

- Identify and synthesize relevant professional books, articles, and reports and peer-reviewed research that utilize both quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- Relate to the problem of practice and is an integrated conceptual synthesis across sources that address these questions:
  - What has been learned about this problem?
  - What has been done to address the problem?
  - What theories, practices, policies, and contested ideas have emerged?

The format for the Review of Supporting Scholarship may vary; for example, it may be a standalone document, or it may be integrated across the three portions of the Applied Inquiry Plan (described later in this document). It should include at least 10 references listed in APA 7 style.

**Milestone 3: Doctoral Committee**

*Requirement: Approval via online milestone system.*

EdD doctoral committees are constructed in consultation between the student and their advisor. Committees must consist of at least three members. Some students choose to invite a 4th member in order to round out the committee's expertise. The following requirements apply:

- All members must have earned a terminal degree (EdD, PhD, JD, MD, MFA, etc.)
- 1 member must be the student's designated School of Education advisor.
- 1 additional member must be full-time faculty of the School of Education: tenured, tenure stream, or appointment stream; one may be recent emeritus (i.e., retired within 2 years).
- 1 member must be a practitioner (currently or previously active) who holds expertise or a faculty member who has appropriate practitioner knowledge related to the student's problem of practice\*.

\*A practitioner (currently or previously active) is defined as a person engaged in (or previously engaged in) the activities related to the problem of practice addressed in the Dissertation in Practice. A practitioner may also be someone who has appropriate practitioner knowledge related to the problem of practice addressed in the Dissertation in Practice. The goal for having this member serve on the Committee is to benefit and advance the student's work by providing specialized expertise and perspectives relevant to practice. This person will facilitate the project by serving on the committee and advising the student in their study. No particular affiliation is required for the practitioner committee member.

The proposed committee goes through the following approval process: it is first approved by the student's advisor, then the coordinator of the student's major, and finally, the Director of the EdD. Any subsequent changes in the doctoral committee must go through this same process.

The doctoral committee will decide on the acceptability of the final Dissertation in Practice submission, with each committee member indicating whether they deem the project to be a pass or fail.

#### **Milestone 4: Dissertation Overview**

*Requirements: Overview approved by all committee members via online milestone system.*

The overview involves a written proposal and an overview meeting. The *Written Proposal* is typically at least 30 pages double-spaced, excluding references. The proposal is built from the Applied Inquiry Plan and Review of Supporting Scholarship (which may be integrated into the Applied Inquiry Plan). The proposal should include a summary of the problem of practice, the theory of improvement, and the plan for improvement. It should feature precise use of language and correct use of language conventions and APA style. You should send your proposal to committee members two weeks prior to your overview meeting.

The *Overview Meeting* should be scheduled (typically 90 minutes) at a time when all committee members can attend. Please work with the EdD office to schedule a room and technology needs. Work with your advisor to plan this meeting; it is typical for students to prepare a 15- or 20-minute presentation, which is followed by questions and discussion with the committee. In cases where a committee member cannot physically come to the overview meeting, virtual attendance via video conference software is acceptable.

*Institutional Review Board (IRB)* approval—or evidence that IRB review is not required—is necessary before carrying out the proposed project. Although the proposal meeting may result in changes to your plan, it is a good idea to have the IRB ready to submit soon after the proposal meeting.

#### **Milestone 5: Dissertation in Practice (DiP)**

The DiP involves (a) a scholarly manuscript, which describes the improvement project you carried out and (b) a verbal defense.

*Requirements: Defense and manuscript approved by all committee members via online milestone system.*

The *Written Manuscript* reports on the improvement science process undertaken. Ultimately this document will need to be in *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD)* format and will be uploaded to D-Scholarship at Pitt (<http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu>), an institutional repository for research, which makes the document publicly available. The written manuscript should include:

- Final Problem of Practice Statement,
- Review of Supporting Scholarship (this may be integrated throughout the document),
- Final Applied Inquiry Plan,
- Description of improvement cycle(s),
- Clear explanation of findings from improvement cycle(s),
- Thoughtful discussion of findings and their relevance to the problem of practice,
- Specific action items that follow from the findings, and
- Conclusions, implications, and recommendations for policy and practice.

Please note that whereas the written manuscript is prepared for the scholarly milestone, we encourage students to produce *additional communications* about their project in order to share their findings both locally and broadly. A typical way to do this is to submit a manuscript for a practitioner journal and to present about the DiP at a national or local conference. Additional artifacts that support impact on your practice and career advancements might include conference presentations, grant proposals, presentations to a board of directors, policy briefs, TED-like talks, video descriptions of the DiP, etc.

The culmination of the DiP is the *Defense Meeting*, where the committee comes together with the student to discuss the project. Defense meetings are open to the public. As with the Overview Meeting, students should work with their advisor to schedule this meeting and notify the EdD office in order to set up a room and technology. Students should submit their written manuscript at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense meeting. Students also should prepare, in conjunction with their advisor, a 15- or 20-minute presentation to begin the defense meeting, to be followed by questions and discussion.

**Applied Inquiry Plan** (completed in three parts across Practitioner Inquiry 2, 3, and 4)

*Requirement: Approved by advisor via online milestone system, grade/feedback given by Practitioner Inquiry (PI) instructors.*

The Applied Inquiry Plan is a document which helps you define and implement an improvement science scholarly project, and this document ultimately becomes the basis for completion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year Dissertation in Practice.

Students complete the Applied Inquiry Plan across three Practitioner Inquiry courses as follows:

- Part A, completed in Practitioner Inquiry 2, focuses on naming and framing a problem of practice.
- Part B, completed in Practitioner Inquiry 3, focuses on developing a theory of improvement.
- Part C, completed in Practitioner Inquiry 4, focuses on planning for improvement.

The Applied Inquiry Plan (parts A, B, C) combined with the scholarly review of literature becomes the basis for your overview document. Some rewriting or tightening up will be required but in general, you will enter your third year near ready to move into the dissertation in practice phase.

**Laboratory of Practice** (completed with EDUC 3012)

*Requirement: Proposal and reflective essay.*

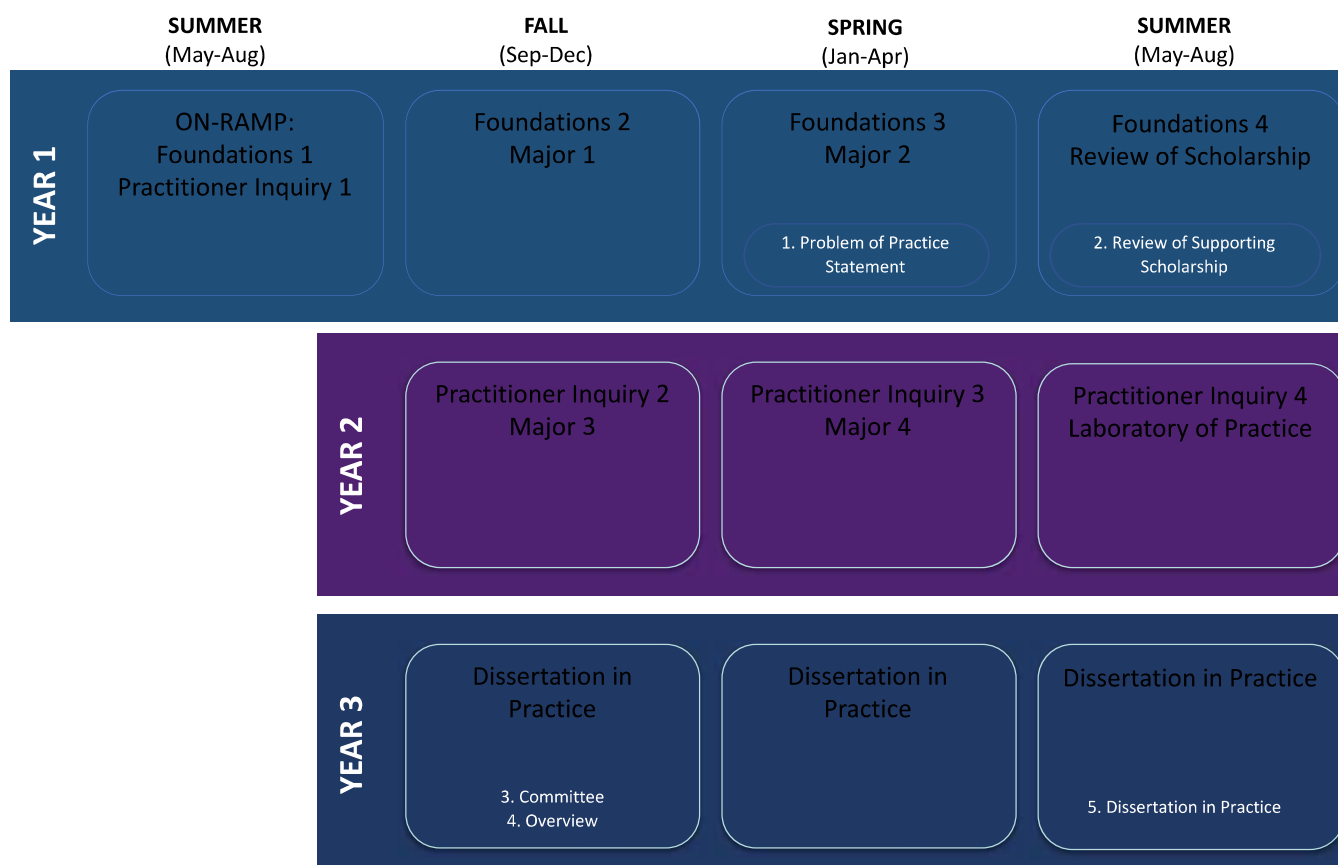
During the fall 2 semester, students propose a Laboratory of Practice to their advisor. The Laboratory of Practice is intended to engage students in integrating the learning that has occurred across multiple experiences and courses throughout the program as well as previous professional experience. Three types of laboratory experiences, or internships are possible:

1. *Job-embedded experience:* Students already working in their field of choice may elect to have their current responsibilities reviewed for eligibility for a “full- time job-embedded internship.” If the advisor and student agree that the students’ current responsibilities represent a relevant and meaningful internship experience, then a plan will be developed that will engage the student in analysis of practice and leadership activities in that context.
2. *Aspirant experience:* Students may elect to have an apprenticeship experience in which they shadow and collaborate with a trained mentor in their discipline.
3. *Global studies experience:* Students may elect to design an international experience that provides direct observation or experience with educational practice or policy in another country.

The milestone typically involves three components, to be agreed upon with your advisor. First, write a proposal that includes a description of the experience, how it connects to your problem of practice and your development as a scholar practitioner, and a proposed timeline. Second, students should keep a log or journal and collect relevant artifacts related to their experience. Finally, students will use that information to compose a reflective essay or other agreed-upon final product.



## The Three-Year Sequence



| YEAR 1   |   |
|----------|---|
| Summer   | <p><b>Foundations 1 and Practitioner Inquiry 1</b></p> <p><i>During the summer on-ramp experience, students begin considering what their problem of practice might be. Students also complete required online courses for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and others.</i></p>  |
| Fall     | <p><b>Foundations: Contexts of Practice and Major 1</b></p> <p><i>During the Fall 1 semester, students continue to consider possibilities for their problem of practice as they complete two courses.</i></p>   |
| Spring   | <p><b>Foundations: Leadership and Major 2</b><br/><b>Milestone: Problem of Practice Statement</b></p> <p><i>During the Spring 1 semester, with support in their Major 2 course, students draft and submit a Problem of Practice Statement (POP). The POP statement is graded by the instructor of the Major 2 course in consultation with the advisor.</i></p>                  |
| Summer 2 | <p><b>Foundations: Policy and Review of Supporting Scholarship</b><br/><b>Milestone: Review of Supporting Scholarship</b></p> <p><i>During the Summer 2 semester, students conduct a Review of Supporting Scholarship, an investigation of published literature guided by specific questions about the area that students have identified as their problem of practice.</i></p> |

| YEAR 2 |  |
|--------|--|
| Fall   | <p>Practitioner Inquiry 2 (PoP) and Major 3</p> <p><i>During the second fall semester, students complete the second in a series of Practitioner Inquiry courses which will guide them in designing an Applied Inquiry Plan Part A, naming and framing their problem of practice.</i></p>   |
| Spring | <p>Practitioner Inquiry 3 (Theory of Improvement) and Major 4</p> <p><i>During the second spring semester, students complete the third in a series of Practitioner Inquiry courses which will guide them in working on their Applied Inquiry Plan Part B, developing a theory of improvement.</i></p>  |
| Summer | <p>Practitioner Inquiry 4 (Planning for Improvement) and Laboratory of Practice</p> <p><i>During the third summer semester, students complete the final Practitioner Inquiry course, which will guide them in working on their Applied Inquiry Plan Part C, testing the change they intend to make as a way to address their problem of practice and planning on how to share their findings. Students also complete their Laboratory of Practice milestone.</i></p>                   |
| YEAR 3 |  |
| Fall   | <p>EDUC 3099 (Guidance in Scholarly Practice) – 6 Credits<br/>Milestone: Dissertation Overview</p> <p><i>During the third fall semester, students meet with their advisors to prepare their Scholarly Inquiry Overview—the plan for their final project. They work with their advisor to put a committee together and most students hold their proposal meeting with this committee in the fall.</i></p>   |
| Spring | <p>EDUC 3099 (Guidance in Scholarly Practice) – 6 Credits</p> <p><i>During the third spring semester, students analyze the findings from their Scholarly Inquiry Project and prepare a written report. That report is presented to advisors for approval, and to any other faculty who approved the proposal. Most EdD students walk in the April/May School of Education commencement ceremonies; however, most defend their Dissertation in Practice in the summer semester.</i></p> |
| Summer | <p>EDUC 3099 (Guidance in Scholarly Practice) – 6 Credits<br/>Milestone: Dissertation in Practice Defense</p> <p><i>During the final summer semester, students complete their dissertation defense. Most students do this in the first 12 weeks of the summer; however, some may complete it before the end of the full summer semester (August).</i></p>  |

## Program Policies

### Attendance

Regular and prompt attendance in the Saturday class sessions (and one-week on-ramp during the first summer) is an essential part of the educational experience in the EdD program. Each course meets only four times throughout the term—missing one of those sessions constitutes a significant portion of the time for face-to-face interaction with instructors and peers.

Although students are expected to attend all Saturday class sessions, working professionals sometimes find themselves in circumstances that cause them to miss these class meetings. Exceptions may be made for a required **work-related commitment, illness, or an emergency**. In such cases, students need to contact the course instructor to determine if there is any way to make up missed classwork.

If you are going to be absent for class because of a required work-related commitment, illness or valid emergency, please follow the following instructions:

1. Email the course instructor(s) with a copy to the EdD Office and your advisor with the reason for missing the class.
2. Complete the course or instructor specific make up requirements for missed classes prior to the next class meeting.
3. Adhere to the acceptable reasons for missing class outlined in the policy above.

### Grading

Some courses in the EdD have letter grades (A, B, C...) and some are set up as satisfactory/unsatisfactory. In the letter grade courses, some EdD instructors use an A or redo policy. These are course-specific policies and your course syllabi should contain more information.

Under certain conditions you may receive a "G" or an "I" grade for a course. The following is directly pasted from the Pitt registrar's grading system:

- **G Grade – Unfinished Course Work (Ongoing):** Class work unfinished because of extenuating personal circumstances. A "G" grade is given by an instructor when class work is unfinished because of extenuating personal circumstances. When given a "G" grade, you are usually instructed to complete some clearly defined work (e.g. a final examination paper) within a specified period of time. The "G" must be completed no later than one year after the term or session in which the class was taken. You should not request or be given a "G" grade if, in actuality, you need to repeat the course. See "Course Repeat" for more information. Once the deadline has passed, the "G" grade will automatically change to "NG" and will no longer appear as "in progress" on a student record. The "NG" grade will remain on the record and the student will be required to re-register for the course if it is needed to fulfill requirements for graduation.
- **I Grade - Incomplete:** Incomplete class work due to the nature of the course, clinical work, or incomplete research work in individual guidance courses or seminars. An "I" grade is also issued by the instructor, and differs from a "G" grade. It is issued in the case of ongoing study such as incomplete research, work in individual guidance classes, clinical work or seminars.

### University Academic Policies

University policies exist for many topics, including academic integrity, disability services, accessibility, and diversity and inclusion. These are made available in each course syllabus and are available online.