

Doctor of Education (EdD)

ADVISOR HANDBOOK



University of
Pittsburgh

School of Education

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.

Contents

We created this guidebook with the intent to support advisors in the Pitt EdD program. We tailored the guide for *new* advisors who have not yet supported students through the program, but we hope it will also be useful for seasoned EdD advisors. It also may be helpful to those who are instructors in EdD courses.

Note that we have tried not to duplicate too much information here that is in the student-focused program handbook. The program handbook includes detailed descriptions of the course sequence, milestone requirements, and program policies. We recommend that advisors review both the program handbook and this advisor handbook.

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Acronyms & program-specific terms

So many acronyms & jargon words, am I right? Here’s a guide:

Acronym	Term	Definition
AIP	Applied Inquiry Plan	We use this term to refer to the document used across PI courses to guide students toward their eventual overview and Dissertation in Practice
ARCO	Area of Concentration	The ARCO students choose determines the four ARCO courses they take, influences advisor pairing, and shapes student milestones. A handful of students change ARCOs during the first summer or occasionally later in the program.
CPED	Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate	A professional organization with membership from over 100 colleges and schools of education. Headquartered at the University of Pittsburgh and our program is “CPED influenced”. CPED provides substantial online resources, monthly virtual events, and annual convenings.
DiP	Dissertation in Practice	The culminating project or thesis of the Pitt EdD. We use the term ‘dissertation’ to indicate the large scope of the project and the phrase ‘in practice’ to note the primary focus on improving practice; versus the PhD dissertation pursuit of advancing knowledge. The term is adopted from CPED which defines a DiP as “a scholarly endeavor that impacts a complex problem of practice” (CPED, 2010).
	Driver Diagram	An improvement tool that is used to organize an individual or group’s best thinking at the time, or their theory of improvement. The Driver Diagram shows the aim of the improvement, the leverage points of a system where change might happen, and the potential changes that might be implemented.
	Fishbone	A causal systems analysis tool which allows those affected by a problem (stakeholders) to define the underlying causes of the problem found throughout the system.
IS	Improvement Science	Improvement science is a “methodological approach build on pragmatism and science that uses disciplined inquiry to solve problems of practice” (Perry, Zambo, Crow, 2020)
I/G	Incomplete/ongoing	Both “I” and “G” grades denote unfinished, incomplete work, and both can be completed and changed to a grade. A “G” (ongoing) grade is issued for extenuating personal circumstances and after one year, if not completed, turns into “NG” (no credit). If a student has an NG in a required course, they must retake the course. An “I” (incomplete) does not have an official expiration date. In either case, it is important to communicate with the student a clear plan for completion—what they need to do and a target due date. More details here .
	Laboratory of practice	As defined by CPED, laboratories of practice “are settings where theory and practice inform and enrich each other. They address complex problems of practice where ideas—formed by the intersection of theory, inquiry, and practice—can be

Areas of Concentration (ARCOs)

- Education Leadership (EL)
- Health and Physical Activity (HPA)
- Higher Education Management (HEM)
- Out-of-School Learning (OSL)
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)
- Social and Comparative Analysis in Education (SCAE)
- Special Education (SPE)
- Urban Education (UE)

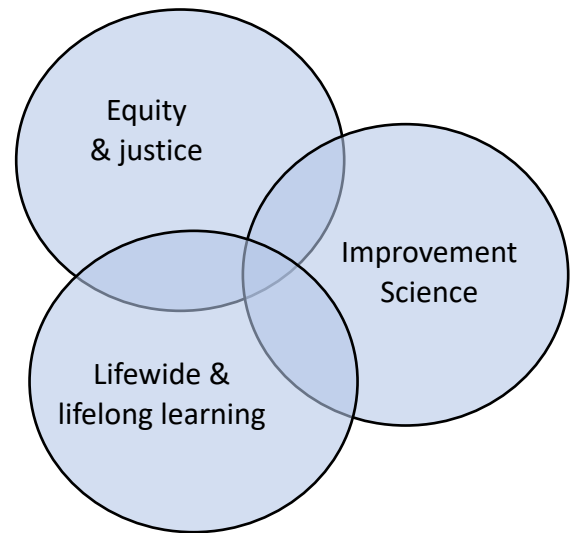
		implemented, measured, and analyzed for the impact made. Laboratories of Practice facilitate transformative and generative learning that is measured by the development of scholarly expertise and implementation of practice” (CPED, 2010).
PI	Practitioner Inquiry	The four methods courses Pitt EdD students take in which they learn the tools of Improvement Science.
PoP	Problem of practice	A persistent, contextualized, and specific to an issue, embedded in the work of a professional practitioner, the addressing of which has the potential to result in improved understanding, experience, and outcomes (CPED, 2010).
	Scholarly practitioner	According to CPED, a scholarly practitioner is one who blends practical wisdom with professional skills and knowledge to name, frame and solve problems of practice; use practical research and applied theories as tools for change because they understand the importance of equity and social justice; disseminate their work in multiple ways; and resolve problems of practice by collaborating with key stakeholders, including the university, the educational institution, the community, and individuals” (CPED, 2010).
	Signature pedagogy	The pervasive set of practices used to prepare scholarly practitioners for all aspects of their professional work: “to think, to perform, and to act with integrity” (Shulman, 2005, p.52). This is a CPED phrase we use to reflect our choice of Improvement Science as the primary method we teach in the program (primarily in Practitioner Inquiry courses).

Part 1. Overview of the Doctor of Education (EdD) Program

The University of Pittsburgh school-wide Doctor of Education (EdD) program prepares working professionals to become leaders, advocates, and scholar practitioners, to develop specialized knowledge in their area of concentration, 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.

Three overlapping priorities guide the Pitt EdD as shown in the image at right. First, transforming health and education to make a more **equitable and just** space for all. Second, improvement science, a process of scholarly continuous improvement, is the signature method of the EdD, and our second pillar is connecting **improvement science** to a focus on equity and justice. Third, we seek to harness the power of bringing together our various areas of concentration in a pillar we call **lifewide and lifelong learning**.

The courses in the EdD program are organized into four categories and, along with milestones, are sequenced to assist students in that work.



Courses

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 (PI) Courses

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

Area of Concentration Courses (ARCO)

ARCO 1 (titles and content vary by ARCO)
ARCO 2
ARCO 3
ARCO 4

Additional Courses

Review of Supporting Scholarship (EDUC 3009; assoc. with Milestone 2)
Laboratory of Practice (EDUC 3012)
Guidance in Scholarly Practice
(EDUC 3099 – 6 credits taken each term in year-3)

Milestones

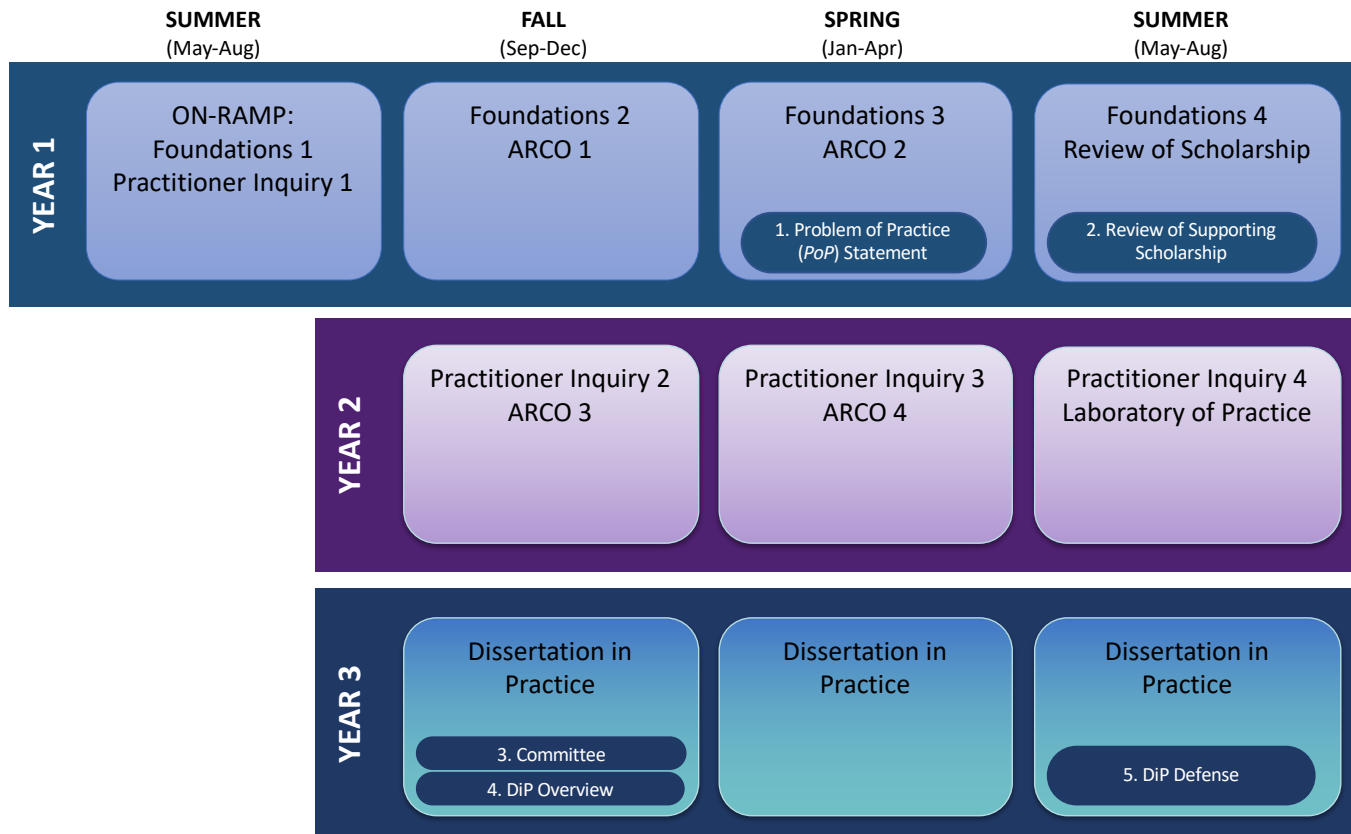
1. Problem of Practice Statement
2. Review of Supporting Scholarship
3. Doctoral Committee
4. Dissertation in Practice Overview
5. Dissertation in Practice Defense

EdD Students

EdD students have work experience and tend to be in leadership positions or headed toward leadership positions in their field. On average, they tend to be older and more experienced than other college students. They tend to have responsibilities outside of being a Pitt student including but not limited to work. This means it's good to provide flexibility in due dates and sometimes offer office hours outside of when we might normally offer them (e.g., Sunday afternoons). Almost all have at least one Master's degree, reflecting the admissions requirement of 30 graduate credit hours. Many have been working in their careers for a decade or more and many, though not all, have established leadership positions. They bring this wealth of experience with them into the program and our program is at its strongest when we both (a) honor and utilize this experience in class or milestone progress and (b) present new knowledge and ways of thinking that help students advance.

EdD students also bring great diversity to the program—yes, in terms of race/ethnicity, but also in terms of rich perspectives and experiences to draw from. Our interdisciplinary diversity is a powerful and distinctive strength of our program. This allows for collaboration, building strong working relationships within and across areas of concentrations (ARCOs) and for interdisciplinary approaches to emerge. Many students build strong relationships with peers in the program, particularly within ARCOs, which are important both in completing the program and beyond.

Part 2. Advisor Expectations across the Three-Year Sequence



The time commitment for advising an EdD student is relatively low during students’ first and second years and then ramps up in their third year. The program is designed so that much of the milestone work is incorporated into courses but the students still benefit from the expertise and guidance of advisors. Some advisors who have multiple advisees host group advising meetings for all their advisees, which offers another way for EdD students to connect with each other. When you meet with students, you can ask them about their class experiences, how they might be applying their EdD learning at work, and their evolving plans for their eventual dissertation in practice. This section provides a broad overview of the three years and the next section provides more detailed guidance related to each program milestone.

YEAR 1 The program begins with an orientation, held in late March or April. Most or all new students attend this orientation and we love to have as many advisors as possible, particularly for lunch. It is a great opportunity to meet students and help them feel welcome as they enter the program. The orientation is followed by the summer on-ramp, which begins in May.

During the summer on-ramp, most advisors attend one or more ARCO lunches, which are held for the purpose of getting to know the new cohort of students. Advisors might then have a conversation or two with advisees during (or even before) that summer. It’s good to meet once at the end of summer or start of fall. Then, meeting once a month or twice a term is typical.

In Year 1, students complete the Foundations sequence and take their first two ARCO courses. Students complete their **Problem of Practice Statement** (Milestone 1) in their spring ARCO course. They draft this in class but the advisor signs off on the completed milestone—usually accompanied by a meeting or two. During their second summer, students draft their **Review of Supporting**

Scholarship (Milestone 2) in a class dedicated to this purpose. They then work with advisors to complete this milestone—typically in early fall of year 2.

YEAR 2 In Year 2, students complete the Practitioner Inquiry sequence (PI2 in the fall, PI3 in the spring, and PI4 in the summer) and their second two ARCO courses. At monthly or twice-per-semester meetings, you can discuss their experiences of the PI courses and their evolving ideas about their Dissertation in Practice (make sure they complete Milestone 2 as described above). In the spring (or sooner) you'll want to start discussing their plans for their **Laboratory of Practice**. This is no longer listed as a milestone because it is tracked as a course. Many students complete job-embedded experiences but other options are also available (see guidelines for more info). Students enroll in this course (EDUC 3012) with you, much like an independent study. The project, which is completed in the 3rd summer, involves at a minimum you approving their proposal and then reviewing their reflective essay. The guidelines are intended to provide some support to advisors but you are free to veer from these guidelines if you like. Some advisors, for example, allow for flexible end products such as a report written for a funder.

Most students start putting their **Proposed Doctoral Committee** together (Milestone 3) in the summer (some start in the prior spring). When they're ready and committee members have agreed to participate, students can make this official by initiating it through the online milestone system. Note that the committee must include two full-time faculty in the School of Education, one outside-the-ARCO person and one practitioner (and they may be the same person). Three is the minimum but some students have four-person committees. The online milestone system has a more comprehensive description.

The summer of Year 2 (which is their third summer) is the final semester in which students take regular, structured courses with Saturday meetings. Instead they work on their Dissertation in Practice with the guidance of their advisor. This marks an important change from a structured hybrid program to one in which students must shape, control, and drive their own progress.

YEAR 3 In Year 3, students enroll in Guidance in Scholarly Practice (EDUC 3099)—in most cases 6 credits per term—and work with the advisor to complete their overview, carry out their DiP, and complete their defense. Most students conduct their **DiP Overview** (aka proposal) in the fall and their **DiP Defense** in the early summer. Note that university policy states that a doctoral student cannot complete their overview and defense in the same academic term.

It is typical for advisors and students to meet regularly during Year 3. Meeting once every two weeks is probably the most common, though some meet weekly or monthly. Make sure you have adequate meetings before the important milestones—overview and defense. Students may require more support than they think they do, so active advising can be really helpful at this stage. See Part 3 for more specifics.

Once the student successfully completes the dissertation, including making any changes suggested by the committee and uploading their document to ETD, your work as an advisor is largely done. The only remaining thing is to attend the Pitt SOE graduation and hood this student—a joyous and fun event for all!

Part 3. Supporting EdD Milestones and other requirements

NOTE: All guidelines documents for Milestones can be found on the EdD Resource Site (Go to my.education.pitt.edu and click on EdD Resources). All are tracked via the online Milestone system (my.education.pitt.edu/advising/edd)

The first two milestones are conducted by the student under the guidance of the advisor but with support from program courses: The PoP Statement (M1) is drafted in the ARCO 2 course, and the Review of Scholarship (M2) is drafted in a course specific to that purpose. The Laboratory of Practice is conducted as an independent study with the advisor. With help from the advisor, the student then assembles a committee (M3), which works with the advisor to provide feedback and support to students for their DiP overview (M4) and DiP defense (M5).

Problem of Practice Statement (Milestone 1)

The PoP Statement is a short essay (3-5 pages) that is the student's first real opportunity to try to put in writing what they think they might work on for their Dissertation in Practice. It may not be fully fleshed out and may change or become refined later in the program (some may switch topics after Milestone 1 or even after Milestone 2) but the Milestone allows students to try on their PoP.

In addition to the written document, the PoP Statement also allows the student to have conversations with you, the advisor, and with others. For some students, these conversations may be more valuable than the written document. In other words, it's arguably more about the idea development than about the writing.

As PoP Statements are drafted in ARCO courses, hopefully your advisee will have received useful feedback before they come to you. But it is your feedback that is most important for your advisee. The Milestone is not completed until the advisor approves it, electronically signing via the online system.

Review of Supporting Scholarship (Milestone 2)

Along with the PoP Statement, the Review of Supporting Scholarship is the other Milestone that is drafted in class then completed with advisor support and approval. We have experimented with formats over the years. At this point, students take a course associated with this Milestone in their second summer of the program—the term after they complete their PoP Statement.

Some important distinctions characterize this Milestone. Unlike a PhD literature review, the goal of the Review of Supporting Scholarship is not to comprehensively review an area *or* to identify gaps in the research literature. Rather, the goal is for students to find relevant scholarship that helps them shape their understanding of their problem and how to address it. We don't expect the instructors of the associated course to be able to provide targeted literature support for every students' problem of practice, but the course helps students prepare a solid draft. The advisor's role is to read the draft critically to ensure the literature reviewed adequately frames the problem practice, recommend additional readings or topic areas, fill in missing pieces, strengthen their logic, etc. The advisor can then help them fill in missing pieces, strengthen their logic, etc.

Laboratory of Practice (Course in 3rd summer)

We do not include this in the online milestone system because a passing grade in the course reflects completion of the requirement. That is, they enroll in a laboratory of practice course with you, much like an independent study. Make sure you read the full write-up of the laboratory of practice. At a minimum, your advisee should submit a plan which you can provide feedback on and approve. Then they conduct the laboratory of practice. At the end, they submit a reflection paper or some other agreed upon final project tailored to their experience. As noted in Part 2, the guidelines for the Lab of Practice are just that—guidelines, and advisors should feel free shape them to allow for flexible plans, processes, or end products or processes.

Proposed Doctoral Committee (Milestone 3)

Make sure you read the doctoral committee requirements carefully (you'll find them in full on the online milestone system). Mostly, it's important that (a) all members have an EdD or PhD and that you have (b) a practitioner and an out-of-ARCO person (they can be the same person), and that you have (c) at least two members who are full-time faculty in the School of Education. Committee members for an EdD do *not* need to be "graduate faculty", a requirement for PhD. If a potential committee member has another terminal degree (e.g., MD or JD), you can ask for an exception. Some students find committee members through courses and their own experiences at Pitt, but some need help making connections to potential members, including those outside of the University. Please share with committee members our Guidelines document .

Dissertation in Practice Overview and Defense (Milestones 4 and 5)

(See after this section for IRB and ETD)

The DiP Overview and defense are parallel in structure. The only major difference, in terms of process, between the overview and defense meetings is that the overview is a closed event typically attended by only the student and committee; whereas, the defense is a public event where other students, friends, and family are welcome. The following is a set of guidelines.

1. Work with your advisee to make sure their document is ready, following the suggested outline (LINK to Pitt DiP Contents and Outlines). This often takes longer than students expect and can involve a lot of back and forth (reviewing and comments). Students usually do not involve the committee for the overview until the advisor is satisfied that the document is ready for the overview meeting.
2. Once you feel an advisee is getting close to having their plans & document ready, have them schedule the overview/defense meeting (several weeks out).
3. Have students send the document to committee members with adequate time for review. Two weeks prior to the meeting is the traditional time table; if a student is not able to send their document two weeks before the meeting, have them email committee members and ask if a shorter time is acceptable. Many students obtain committee member agreement then send one week prior to the meeting (less than a week is not recommended).
4. Support your advisee to create a presentation for the overview or defense meeting. Typically, we ask students to prepare a 15- or 20-minute presentation. Many students want to take more time, so you may need to emphasize this time limit. Strongly recommend to your advisee that they practice their presentation several times, with other EdD students or friends or family as audience members. Some advisors also have student conduct practice talks a few days before their overview/defense.
5. Overviews and defense meetings may be held online, in person (in non-pandemic times), or a combination in which most are in the room but one or more committee members join virtually.
6. At the meeting, you act as host and facilitator. Here is a typical order of events:
 - a. Introductions
 - b. Committee members ask student to leave the room if meeting physically or go into a breakout room if meeting virtually (or this step can be done via email with committee members). Ask committee members if they have any major concerns or questions before the meeting begins.
 - c. Student presents.
 - d. Facilitate Q&A and take notes for the student. Usually questions rotate around the committee (or go back and forth between the other two members). You as an advisor can ask questions but don't necessarily need to. At the defense, the audience questions typically come after the committee members' questions.

- e. After Q&A comes to an end, ask the student to leave the room again or have the committee go into a breakout room. Discuss with the committee overall reflections and how you wish to move forward with the student. Options are:
- Pass with no changes.
 - Pass with minor changes. (if the committee selects this—the most common option—make sure to be very clear with the student about what they need to do. For the overview, a common practice is to ask students to complete a short memo that outlines any changes they may make from feedback and dialog at the overview.)
 - Major changes required. In this case, committee member(s) are unwilling to sign the form without seeing a completely revised document. The committee can decide whether to require another meeting and presentation or to review the revised document and work with the advisor and student without an additional meeting.
- f. Go back into the room (physically or virtually), congratulate the student, and review what the committee decided.

IRB and ETD (also tracked in Milestone System)

The [online milestone system](#) tracks two additional requirements which we do not call milestones.

First, students are required to provide evidence of an approved IRB or indication that such review is not required for their project. Students are introduced to the online IRB system (pittpro.pitt.edu) in class, typically PI3 and PI4. Students can typically not submit their IRB application prior to their overview, because their plans may shift in these meetings in consultation with their committee. However, they get a lot of the basics of the IRB completed beforehand. In other words, students should start their IRB application and complete as much as they can prior to their overview, and then complete and submit their IRB after the overview. Most EdD projects are considered exempt from review and in such cases, IRB officers typically provide an email stating this. Students can upload this email into the online system.

Second, after a student successfully completes their Milestone 5 defense and makes any changes specified by the committee, they put their document into the Electronic Thesis & Dissertation (ETD) format (etd.pitt.edu). This is required for graduation and allows students' Dissertation in Practice documents to be published and available through [D-Scholarship](#). ETD is a format (similar to APA Style) that provides for consistency in published theses and dissertations across the university. A Word template is available and the university sponsors numerous how-to workshops. Most EdD students either put their DiP into ETD format prior to defense (recommended) or cut & paste into this format after their defense. Most do this on their own but some hire others to do this for them.