



Ed.D. Degree in School Improvement

A student resource for:

- **Program Information**
- **Requirements**
- **Coursework**
- **Policies**
- **Graduation**



Student Handbook
2011-2012
Beginning with Cohort 12

UNIVERSITY of
West Georgia
College of Education



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Welcome

Welcome to UWG! Congratulations for selecting a premier national program in school improvement. Program information, policies, and procedures are included in this handbook to assist you as you move through the course of study.

Our program is selective and rigorous. A quality doctoral program is transformative and requires a high level of discipline and sacrifice. At the same time, our college and faculty are committed to fostering innovative, student-focused learning communities. The cohort structure of this program provides strong support to assist students in meeting the academic challenges of a doctoral program. We are pleased you have decided to “Go West.”

Mission Statement

Our mission is to develop educators who initiate sustainable and systemic improvements in P-12 education. Graduates will strategically and collaboratively plan, design, implement, and document the impact of educational improvements that promote and increase the academic achievement and social development of all students.

Program Overview

The focus of the program is the development of leaders at all levels of education who will be prepared to lead reform and change efforts in schools throughout Georgia and the nation. These professionals include classroom teachers, special educators, counselors, school-based social workers, building-level administrators, and district-level administrators. A tenant of this program is that genuine educational reform and transformation require the collaboration, leadership, knowledge and skills of various educational professionals.

The program has been designed so that students are supported in conducting and completing their dissertations. Through a unique synergy of dissertation classes, workshops, and faculty mentoring, students complete their dissertations simultaneously with coursework. Our faculty prioritizes successfully completing your dissertation. In addition to the core curriculum,

students customize a 12 credit hour Area of Concentration, based on needs and interests, which provides a focus for studies.

There are only a handful of programs throughout the United States that offer degrees in school improvement, and even fewer that do so at the doctoral level. In this current era of high-stakes educational accountability, individual professional educators need to develop the knowledge and skills that will enable them to successfully implement change in the schools they serve. We are excited to develop leaders who transform schools.

Course of Study (Cohort 12)

<p>Teaching and Learning (3 courses; 9 hours)</p>	<p>Leadership for School Improvement (3 courses; 9 hours)</p>	<p>Research and the Effective Use of Data (5 courses; 15 hours)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9941 (Models of School Improvement and Reform) [3 hrs.] <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9942 (Instructional Leadership that Facilitates School Improvement) [3 hrs.] <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9943 (Models of Professional Development) [3 hrs.] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9923 (Leadership for Diversity in the 21st Century) [3 hrs.] <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9925 (Policy Analysis for School Improvement) [3 hrs.] <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9933 (Leadership for Change) [3 hrs.] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9960 (School Improvement Through Data-Driven Decision Making) [3 hrs.] <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9961 (Quantitative Research Methods) [3 hrs.] <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9962 (Qualitative Research Methods) [3 hrs.] <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9963 (Action Research for Change I) [3 hrs.] <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9964 (Action Research for Change II) [3 hrs.]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> EDSI 9901/9902/9903 (Dissertation Mentoring I, II, III) – [2 hrs. each; 6 hrs. total] <input type="checkbox"/> SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ORIENTATION – On Campus [no credit] <input type="checkbox"/> DISSERTATION PREP SUMMER INSTITUTE – On Campus [no credit] 		

Year 1		
Summer	Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ORIENTATION</u>–On Campus • <u>EDSI 9960</u> (School Improvement Through Data-Driven Decision Making) – Online [3] • <u>EDSI 9901</u> Dissertation Mentoring I–Online [2] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>EDSI 9941</u> (Models of School Improvement and Reform)–Online [3] • <u>EDSI 9961</u> (Quantitative Research Methods)–Online [3] • <u>EDSI 9902</u> Dissertation Mentoring II–Online [2] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>EDSI 9962</u> (Qualitative Research Methods)–Online [3] • <u>EDSI 9903</u> Dissertation Mentoring III–Online [2] • <u>AoC Course</u>-Student choice

Year 2		
Summer	Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>EDSI 9925</u> (Policy Analysis for School Improvement) – Online [3] • <u>EDSI 9963</u> (Action Research for Change I)–Online [3] • Dissertation Prep Summer Institute–On Campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>EDSI 9964</u> (Action Research for Change II)–Online [3] • <u>EDSI 9998</u> (Research for Doctoral Dissertation) [2] • <u>AoC Course</u>-Student choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>EDSI 9942</u> (Instructional Leadership that Facilitates School Improvement) – Online [3] • <u>EDSI 9998</u> (Research for Doctoral Dissertation) [2] • <u>AoC Course</u>-Student choice

Year 3		
Summer	Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>EDSI 9943</u> (Models of Professional Development) – Online [3] • <u>EDSI 9998</u> (Research for Doctoral Dissertation) [2] • <u>AoC Course</u>-Student choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>EDSI 9923</u> (Leadership for Diversity in the 21st Century) – Online [3] • <u>EDSI 9998</u> (Research for Doctoral Dissertation) [2] • <u>AoC Course</u>-Student choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>EDSI 9933</u> (Leadership for Change)–Online [3] • <u>EDSI 9998</u> (Research for Doctoral Dissertation) [1] • <u>AoC Course</u>-Student choice

Year 4 (If Needed)		
Summer/Fall/Spring		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>EDSI 9998</u> (Research for Doctoral Dissertation) [1] 		

Learning Outcomes

The Doctoral Program in School Improvement faculty have developed six strands known as the program's Core Competencies. Linked to the College of Education Conceptual Framework, the Core Competencies articulate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions graduates of the program will evidence. Key program assessments are aligned to these outcomes and students must achieve and maintain proficiency to remain in Good Academic Standing in the program.

As a result of participating in the Doctor of School Improvement degree program, students will display the following competencies:

- **School Improvement and Reform** – Moving schools and stakeholders in directions that enhance student learning and social development and ultimately benefit society,
- **Leadership** – Influencing others toward a shared commitment to a common purpose
- **Teaching and Learning** - Understanding and using the knowledge base on effective teaching and learning to initiate teacher development and school improvement,
- **Research and the Effective Use of Data** – Understanding, conducting, and applying impactful research in school improvement and reform,
- **Scholarly Persuasion** – Engaging in rational discussion informed by and grounded in the knowledge base and research in education and school improvement,
- **Technology** – Developing sound technological literacy that impacts professional competence and school improvement.

Assessment and Program Progression

An integral part of the doctoral program is continuous assessment of student learning outcomes to determine whether program learning goals are achieved. These data are then utilized for program improvement.

Throughout the doctoral program, students will maintain an assessment portfolio through their subscriptions to [TK20](#). Students [may subscribe directly](#) online or may buy a subscription pack at the University bookstore.

The Doctor of School Improvement Degree Advisory Team has developed a series of important program benchmarks which are used to monitor program success in key indicators over time. Key indicators include student evaluations of the orientation programs, student retention rates after two semesters, student evaluations of the dissertation intensive preparation sessions, the percentage of the cohort which achieves candidacy by end of year two, the percentage of cohort which successfully defends their dissertation by end of year three, exit interviews with each student who leaves the program before completion, active student course evaluations, and graduate completion surveys (two years post-graduation).

In addition to the aforementioned program benchmarks, student progress is monitored in the following key assessments: 1) A *Research Prospectus*, 2) *Applied Research Presentation* (EDSI 9964), 3) portfolio entry concerning the Teaching and Learning Strand, 4) portfolio entry regarding the Leadership Strand, and 5) external review of completed dissertations. Program staff regularly uses these data to adjust instruction and program outcomes.

Student Advisement

During the first several semesters of coursework, the Program Director serves as the student's academic advisor. After admission to candidacy for the degree, the student's dissertation chairperson serves as the student's advisor. The dissertation chairperson directs the dissertation process and works with the student to complete required paperwork associated with the dissertation and graduation, including the following:

- *Dissertation Committee Approval Form*
- *Dissertation Proposal Approval Form*
- *Oral Defense of Dissertation Announcement Form*
- *Results of Dissertation Defense Form*

All [dissertation related forms](#) are available on the School Improvement website.

- All forms related to graduation can be found on the Registrar's website at [Graduation Forms](#)

Residency Requirement

Every doctoral student fulfills a minimum residency requirement. The requirement is met by completing three consecutive semesters of coursework at the University of West Georgia during which at least three semester hours are completed each semester with a grade of B or better.

Area of Concentration

Every school improvement student completes an Area of Concentration in addition to the Ed. D. core coursework. The Area of Concentration consists of 12 credit hours, and all 12 hours must be pre-approved by Program Director. A rationale for the proposed content area is submitted.

A customized AoC does not have to be taken only at our University. If you want a specialized, unique Area of Concentration, you can "assemble" one from another institution (either online or face-to-face); provided it meets the required transfer of credit criteria.

The Program Director facilitates students' completion of the [*Area of Concentration \(AoC\) Approval Form*](#). Using this form, students identify an Area of Concentration theme and or rationale. This form is completed during the first year in the program as soon as the student identifies their interest area.

The [*AOC Transfer of Credit Form*](#) is completed for any courses applied toward the UWG degree from other accredited institutions (Note: if you are applying coursework from UWG, the *AOC Transfer of Credit Form* is not needed). Not all students will have courses that may transfer.

Transfer Credit

A student may request up to twelve credit hours of graduate studies from previous coursework be applied toward the Area of Concentration the Ed. D. degree, with approval. Courses may be transferred from another accredited institution or may be applied toward the Ed. D. degree from other coursework taken at the University of West Georgia.

In order to be approved, courses must meet all of the following criteria:

- work must have been completed within ten years of the date of admission to the Ed. D. degree program;
- work must have been applicable toward a graduate degree or certificate at the institution where the credit was earned;
- courses must have been taken post-Master's degree;
- courses must meet the thematic requirements for the AoC,
- a grade of B or higher must have been earned in the course; and
- courses must be approved by the Ed. D. Director.

Determining whether courses will be applied toward a student's Area of Concentration involves examining several factors including:

- The extent to which the course strengthens the student's program;

- The extent to which the course contributes to the student's career objective;
- The student's previous academic preparation;
- The student's professional experience; and
- The level and currency of the course.

General Academic Standards

Graduate students must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher to remain in Good Academic Standing. Students must be in Good Academic Standing to be eligible to graduate and admission to candidacy.

A student will be dismissed from the program if he or she earns two C's or one F.

Grading scale

The doctoral program follows the standard graduate grading policy of the University: A (90-100%), B (80- 89%), C (70-79%), and F (69% or below). Each course instructor, through the syllabus, sets the standard for academic grades.

Grades reported as incomplete

The program follows the [“Incomplete” policy](#) of UWG as detailed in Policy 205.

In most cases, receiving an “Incomplete” grade in one or more courses removes a student from his or her cohort. If this occurs, the student will have to re-start the sequence where he or she received the incomplete. The Program Director determines when the student may re-enter the program, which can occur no sooner than one year after the student is removed from the cohort. In this case, the student resumes courses with a new cohort based on availability of space within the subsequent cohorts.

Leave of Absence

In the event of unusual personal or professional circumstances, the student may request a Leave of Absence from the School Improvement program. The request should be developed in cooperation with the Program Director, using the [Request for Leave Form](#).

The Director may consult with the Student Review Committee to determine whether leave should be granted. The student must be in academic and professional good standing at the time the request for leave is made. A leave is considered an extraordinary event and will not be considered for convenience reasons.

It is the student's responsibility to submit in writing a request for readmission to the program. The request should be submitted to the Program Director no later than 45 calendar days prior to the beginning of the semester during which the student wishes to reenter the program. An interview may be conducted to determine if the student is ready to reenter the program. If the student is readmitted, he/she will be assigned to the next available cohort starting at the beginning of the term following the last completed term, if space is available.

Student Review Committee

The purpose of the Student Review Committee (SRC) is to monitor student progress within the Ed. D. program. The Doctor of School Improvement Degree Advisory Team members constitute the SRC. The SRC conducts reviews each semester as needed.

Each student is reviewed annually regarding the following:

1. Academic progress and standards, and
2. Ethical, legal, and professional standards and performance in the program.

Students not performing at the required academic level, not making significant progress toward the dissertation, or judged to be in noncompliance with the ethical, legal, and professional standards of the program will be notified. The SRC will

recommend a course of action that may include but is not limited to completing a [Student Development Plan](#), placement on academic or other probation, or dismissal from the program.

Appeals and Grievance Procedure

The program follows the applicable [appeals procedure](#) developed by UWG.

Academic Honesty Statement

Doctoral students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty throughout the program. Plagiarism occurs when a student represents words, ideas, or information obtained from another person or source without giving credit. Direct quotations must be indicated and ideas of another must be appropriately acknowledged.

Academic fraud occurs when a student intends to deceive or misrepresent ideas, information, or him/herself. Academic fraud also occurs when a student uses or purchases ghost-written papers or papers developed by another.

Improper academic conduct on the part of the student shall include, but not be limited to: obtaining and/or using information during an examination by means other than those permitted by the instructor, including supplying of such information to other students; submitting through electronic media work that is not the work of the student, such as having another individual post work to Course Den sites in the name of the student; and submitting work that is ghost-written or purchased from any source.

All forms of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, and falsification of academic records, are subject to disciplinary action. Incidents of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Student Review Committee for action.

Program Rigor

Pursuit of the doctoral degree requires students to complete rigorous, time and labor-intensive assignments, and engage in studies in depth. All those who enter doctoral programs should consider whether their life circumstances permit them to complete such programs. Grades of Incomplete are not assigned because students have not adequately planned for the amount of time commitment necessary to complete requirements within the overall context of other life roles and responsibilities.

Admission to Candidacy

In order for a student to be recommended to the Director of the Graduate Studies Office for admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree, the student must successfully complete the entire course sequence for Semesters 1, 2, 3, and 4 and complete a successful dissertation proposal defense.

Certificate Upgrades

Georgia students interested in certificate upgrades are responsible to know and follow all applicable PSC rules. The student is also responsible for obtaining and completing the PSC form required for Level 6 certification. For more information, visit the Professional Standards Commission website at www.gapsc.com.

Dissertation

The program has developed a separate website resource regarding dissertations, which is more comprehensive than this source. ([*Dissertation Resource Guide*](#))

Students consult with the program Director to identify a dissertation chairperson. The student and dissertation chair identify the remaining committee members, with the candidate assuming responsibility to identify the In-Field Authority. The committee membership and rationale for the membership must

be submitted to the Director and approved before work with the student begins.

The dissertation committee is generally comprised of three or four members. Two committee members should hold graduate faculty status in the College of Education, the College of Arts and Humanities, College of Science and Mathematics, College of Social Sciences, and/or the Richards College of Business. One committee member should be an In-Field Authority. A fourth member may be added as needed to provide research methodological support, but is not required to be a member of the dissertation committee. The In-Field Authority must hold a terminal degree from an accredited institution and should have completed a traditional dissertation in order to serve on the committee.

The dissertation committee will follow a collaborative model. While the chair will coordinate committee activities and oversee the completion of the dissertation, each member is expected to make significant contributions throughout the process. While the In-Field Authority provides important feedback and direction throughout the dissertation process and during the oral defense of the dissertation, in accordance with Graduate Studies Office policy, they do not formally vote during the oral defense of the dissertation. They may, however, indicate their approval of the dissertation by signing on the approval certification page.

Dissertation Format

The dissertation format must conform to the most recent APA style unless exceptions are otherwise stated in a separate handbook posted on the program website, *The UWG General Guidelines for Formatting and Processing*, and/or the Graduate Studies Office. Students should consult these guidelines as well as the guidelines for format provided by The Graduate Studies Office early in the dissertation process and become familiar with their use. Students may not formally begin the dissertation until a committee has been identified and has approved the dissertation proposal. Students are responsible to complete Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and receiving approval by the Institutional Review Board as part of the proposal process, prior to beginning their dissertation

research. Forms can be obtained at [The Office of Research and Sponsored Projects](#).

The dissertation must be completed and defended within seven years of beginning enrollment in the doctoral program. It is expected that students will complete the doctoral dissertation with reasonable continuity. Students called to military service or students with other extraordinary circumstances may apply for an extension of time to the Director, who may consult with the Student Review Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Enrolling for Dissertation

The dissertation grade is determined by progress made toward completion of the dissertation. Students who do not make significant progress during a semester will be assigned a grade of Unsatisfactory (“U”). Students are required to complete a minimum of nine hours of dissertation credit but may exceed this amount, if necessary. In order to remain active students in Good Standing, students must enroll in at least one hour of dissertation per semester (including summer) after completion of their ninth semester in the program. This requirement continues until the student successfully defends their dissertation. Students will be dropped from the program if they fail to maintain active status.

It is the student’s responsibility to initiate communication and work collaboratively with the dissertation chairperson and committee in identifying goals and timelines for the completion of the dissertation. Students are expected to provide documents to the committee well in advance of meetings and deadlines and should expect to receive feedback in a timely but realistic manner.

If, for some reason, a student finds it necessary request opting out of working on the dissertation for a period of time, the Director must be contacted in writing with a request from the student not to enroll for dissertation credit that semester. This is considered an extraordinary event, and will not be approved unless there are compelling reasons. The student should not enroll again until enrollment is requested in writing to the

Director. Note that this does not extend the seven year time span to complete the dissertation and doctoral program.

Oral Defense of the Dissertation Proposal

Once the student has completed the first three chapters (or equivalent*) of the dissertation, also known as the dissertation proposal, the dissertation chair and student will schedule the proposal defense with the committee. This is a closed meeting for the student and dissertation committee. The [dissertation proposal form](#) should be completed at the conclusion of the proposal defense.

*some studies may use a different chapter format. What must be included in the prospectus/proposal are: the introductory chapter, proposed methodology, and review of literature unless the study methodology requires the literature review to be completed after the study (e.g., grounded theory studies).

Oral Defense of the Dissertation

Once the dissertation is completed in acceptable form and approved by the dissertation committee, the oral defense of the dissertation may be scheduled. The defense must be scheduled before the final defense date listed on the [Registrar's website](#) in order for the student to graduate during that term. It is the student's responsibility to work closely with the dissertation committee and to schedule the defense using the [Oral Defense Announcement Form](#). All dissertation defenses must be announced at least two weeks in advance. Dissertation defenses are open to interested faculty, students, and community members, although their participation is limited to the questioning session after the committee has deliberated on the outcome of the oral defense. At the defense, the student must have available the Approval Certificate Page of the dissertation, the *Report of the Oral Defense Form*, and other forms required by Graduate Studies for dissertation completion and graduation. Based on the results of the oral defense of the dissertation, committee members will make arrangements to provide required signatures.

Submitting the Dissertation

A minimum of four final copies of the dissertation must be submitted to The Graduate Studies Office for processing and binding. The guidelines posted in the *UWG General Guidelines for Formatting and Processing* provide details regarding how to submit the final copies of the dissertation. In addition, it is expected that final copies will be provided to all dissertation committee members. All costs incurred for binding and processing the dissertation are the responsibility of the student.

Students are not required to file a copyright for their dissertation but may do so at their own expense.

Graduation

Each candidate must apply for graduation the semester before their anticipated graduation. Please see the [Registrar's website](#) for complete information.

Candidates should work with Graduate Studies Office personnel to identify and complete necessary paperwork, which includes:

- The *Graduate Student Application for Graduation*
- Graduation fee

These forms should be completed in cooperation with the candidate's advisor, and then submitted to the Director for signature and forwarding to the Registrar's Office. These forms are available online from the [Registrar's Office](#).

Required attire for the graduation and doctoral hooding ceremony are:

- Black doctoral gown,
- Gold tassel,
- Doctoral hood reflecting the colors of the University of West Georgia, and
- Either a tam or mortarboard cap.

Students may rent, when available, or purchase their regalia for the graduation ceremony. Students should contact the bookstore no later than eight weeks prior to graduation regarding their regalia. Alternately, appropriate regalia may be purchased from Jostens through the bookstore or online.