# SOE Programs of Research

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PHD EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The School of Education’s Doctor of Philosophy degree programs expands previous learning within a discipline and fosters critical thinking, research, and problem-solving skills that practicing professionals need to excel as scholar-practitioners and emboldened leaders in a global society.

Within the School of Education, there are ten PhD Specializations. Each of these specializations has Programs of Research, or research topic areas which are appropriate and relevant to their field, and are represented within that Specialization by faculty who have an interest and expertise in those topics. The following document details the Programs of Research for each of these Specializations:

1. Curriculum & Instruction
2. Instructional Design for Online Learning
3. K-12 Studies in Education
4. Leadership in Educational Administration
5. Leadership in Higher Education
6. Nursing Education
7. Post Secondary & Adult Education
8. Professional Studies in Education
9. Special Education Leadership
10. Training & Performance Improvement

The PhD Education faculty in each of these specialization suggest learners use the information in this Programs of Research resource as guidelines. If your research plan includes theories and topics or research methods other than those listed in this document, or in the current SOE PhD Dissertation Handbook, you are encouraged to discuss your research plan with your Colloquium faculty instructor and/or mentor, and then gain topic approval (Milestone 2) by the Faculty Chair for your specialization.
CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION SPECIALIZATION

Guidelines
Learners in the doctoral Curriculum and Instruction specialization develop and demonstrate the research-based knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective classroom, building, and district-level leadership in curriculum and instruction. The specialization is designed for teachers and administrators interested in leadership careers as building or district-level administrators, or as teacher-leaders guiding curriculum and instructional improvement initiatives supported by current theory and research in curriculum design, instructional models, and assessment strategies focused on increasing student achievement. Learners participate in course discussions and activities that provide practical experiences and projects that demonstrate innovative and timely theory, research, and practice.

A dissertation in Curriculum and Instruction at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand. A dissertation in Curriculum and Instruction should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Education. A dissertation in Curriculum and Instruction should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Dissertations which are solely: 1) replications; 2) problem solution oriented; 3) focused on practice; 4) local program evaluations; or 5) classroom educational action research are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives
A variety of theories and perspectives frame scholarly research in Curriculum and Instruction. These include:

- Adult Learning Theory
- Andragogy
- Behaviorism
- Bloom’s Taxonomy
- Constructivist Theory
- Experiential Learning
- Hierarchy of Needs
- Learning Style Theory
- Modes of Learning
- Multiple Intelligences
- Situational Leadership
- Social Learning Theory
- Transformational Leadership

Appropriate Topic Areas
Dissertation Topics in Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) must be focused on curriculum and instruction. Curriculum and Instruction programs are designed for teachers and administrators interested in leadership careers as building or district-level administrators, or as teacher-leaders guiding curriculum and instructional improvement initiatives within the P-12 school environment. Therefore, learners should select dissertation topics with a leadership emphasis focused on current theory and research in curriculum design, instructional models, and assessment strategies focused on increasing student achievement.
Dissertation Topics should advance the scientific knowledge base in the field by meeting one or more of these four criteria:

- The study should address something that is not known or has not been studied before.
- The study should be new or different from other studies in some way.
- The study should extend prior research on the topic in some way.

When contemplating topics for dissertations in the C&I Specialization learners should consider the following questions:

1. Will the results of the research be useful to the C&I Specialization?
2. Is the study about variables that are of interest to C&I Specialization?
3. Will the study add to the C&I Specialization body of knowledge?
4. Does it have a connection to C&I Specialization knowledge base?

This list represents overarching areas from which a research topic might be derived in which at least half of the C&I faculty indicate a shared interest. No rank order of importance, preference, or level of generality is implied.

- 21st Century Skills
- Supervision and Evaluation Issues
- Data Driven Decision Making
- Differentiated Instruction
- School Culture/Climate
- Assessment and Grading
- Effective Teaching and Leading
- Brain-Based Learning
- Curriculum Content Standards
- Understanding By Design
- Classroom Management
- Multicultural Education
- What Works in Schools
- Common Core
- Multiple Intelligences
- Supervision and Instructional Leadership
- School Improvement (Input/Output)
- Professional Development/Practice/Effect on Learning/ Achievement
- Measuring Teacher Effectiveness
- Performance-Based Evaluation
- Leadership Style and School Improvement

**Inappropriate Topic Areas**

Topics that are not particularly suitable are those that are related to specific work-related projects that are only applicable to a particular work place and action research. Additionally, topics outside of the realm of P12 education are not approved.

**Important Journals and Resources**

**Journals**

- Child Development
- Curriculum and Instruction
• Curriculum Administrator
• Curriculum Inquiry
• Curriculum Review
• Developmental Psychology
• Diversity Journal
• Early Education and Development
• Early Childhood Research and Practice (on line journal)
• Early Childhood Research Quarterly
• Educational Administration Quarterly
• Educational Leadership
• Educational Management Administration and Leadership
• Educational Technology
• Ethics
• International Journal of Instruction
• International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education
• Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies
• Journal of Curriculum and Instruction
• Journal of Curriculum Studies
• International Journal of Early Childhood Special
• International Journal of Science Education
• International Journal of Social Education
• Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy
• Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology
• Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education
• Journal of Early Intervention
• Journal of Educational Administration
• Journal of Educational Change
• The Journal of Effective Teaching
• Journal of International Social Education
• Journal of Mathematics Education at Teachers College
• Journal of Research in Childhood Education
• Journal for Research in Mathematics Education
• Journal of Research in Science Teaching
• Journal of Science Teacher Education
• Journal of Scholarship and Practice
• Journal of Teaching and Learning
• Journal of Urban Education
• Journal of Vocational and Technical Education
• Leading and Managing
• Literacy Research and Instruction
• Mathematics Teacher Educator
• NASSP Bulletin
• Phi Delta Kappan
• Reading Research Quarterly
• Reading Research and Instruction
• Schools: Studies in Education
• Social Education
• Social Studies Research and Practice
• Teachers College Record
• The Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership
• The Reading Teacher
Resources

These publications may be useful to learners seeking additional guidance. NOTE: The ISBN numbers are provided for ease of ordering purposes. These are not to be included in reference citations when applying APA Style.


Important Professional Organizations

- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Arizona School Administrators
- Colorado Association of School Executives
- Consortium for School Networking
- Illinois Association of School Administrators
- International Society for Technology in Education
- Minnesota Association of School Administrators
- New Jersey Association of School Administrators
- Phi Delta Kappa
- South Carolina Association of School Administrators
- Texas Association of School Administrators
INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN FOR ONLINE LEARNING SPECIALIZATION

Guidelines

The doctoral specialization in Instructional Design for Online Learning is designed to prepare professionals to lead and manage instructional design challenges in a variety of traditional and online settings in educational institutions, corporations, health care and government agencies, and the military. The curriculum emphasizes research and leadership in the instructional design, development, and implementation of educational interventions. Successful graduates of this specialization are prepared to pursue leadership roles in producing and applying research in instructional design and development.

A dissertation in Instructional Design for Online Learning at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand. A dissertation in Instructional Design for Online Learning should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Education. A dissertation in Instructional Design for Online Learning should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Dissertations which are solely: 1) replications; 2) problem solution oriented; 3) focused on practice; 4) local program evaluations; or 5) classroom educational action research are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives

A variety of theories and perspectives frame scholarly research in Instructional Design for Online Learning. These include:

- Bloom’s Learning Taxonomy (Bloom)
- Andragogy (Knowles)
- Multiple Intelligences (Gardner)
- Constructivist Theory (Bruner)
- Experiential Learning (Rogers)
- Adult Learning Theory (Cross)
- Social Development (Vygotsky)

Appropriate Topic Areas

Dissertations in IDOL must relate to the field of instructional design. Instructional design is a systematic process for creating instructional materials and learning activities to meet the needs of learners in a particular target group. The process includes assessing the need for instruction, analyzing the characteristics of the learners, determining the instructional objectives, creating the assessment, developing the instructional materials and activities, trying out the materials to see how effective they are, making revisions, and, finally, implementing and maintaining the instruction.

The focus of instructional design is the design of effective instruction. Instructional designers translate general principles of learning and instruction into plans for instructional materials and learning activities. Instructional design is NOT about teaching, or teaching practices – in classrooms or online. Dissertations in IDOL do NOT have to involve online learning. Online learning, face to face learning, and hybrid approaches to learning can be considered within the context of how the instruction is designed for these venues of learning.

Dissertations in IDOL must relate to the instructional design and development knowledge base (Richey & Klein, 2007; Richey, Klein & Tracey, 2011). Topics related to these 6
components, either alone or in combination, are appropriate for dissertations in IDOL. Dissertations in IDOL must have a clear relationship to one of these 6 areas.

1. Learners and how they learn
2. The context in which learning and performance occur
3. The nature of content and how it is sequenced
4. The instructional strategies and activities employed
5. The media and delivery systems used
6. The designers themselves and the processes they use (Richey and Klein, 2007, p. 3)

Learners may be asked to situate their topics within this knowledge base and to defend the connection between the topic and the knowledge base.

When contemplating topics for dissertations in IDOL, learners should consider the following questions:

1. Will the results of the research be useful to the instructional design community?
2. Is the study about variables that are of interest to instructional designers?
3. Will the study add to the instructional design body of knowledge?
4. Does it have a connection to the instructional design and development knowledge base?

**Inappropriate Topic Areas**

The following topics* are **not appropriate** for dissertations in IDOL:

- Teaching online
- Learning styles
- Comparisons of online courses to face-to-face courses
- Comparisons of instruction with technology versus without technology
- Work projects
- Faculty development
- Learner retention and attrition

*Note that cases can be made for exceptions. In such cases, contact the Chair.

**Important Journals**

- American Journal of Distance Education
- Educational Technology
- Educational Technology Research and Development
- Instructional Science
- International Journal on E-Learning
- Journal of Applied Instructional Design
- Journal of Computing in Higher Education
SOE PROGRAMS OF RESEARCH

Important Professional Organizations

- Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT)
- American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) (Now American Society for Talent Development)
- eLearning Guild
- International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI)

Other related associations:

- American Center for the Study of Distance Education (ACSDE)
- American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC)
- American Educational Research Association (AERA)

AERA Special Interest Groups (SIGs) of Interest:

- Advanced Technologies for Learning
- Problem-Based Education
- Open Access Journals in the Field of Education
- Association for Telecommunications Professionals in Higher Education (ACUTA)
- Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE)
- EDUCAUSE
- Distance Education and Training Council (DETC)
- Federal Government Distance Learning Association (FGDLA)
- Instructional Telecommunications Council (ITC)
- International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)
- Interactive Multimedia and Collaborative Communications Alliance (IMCCA)
- International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE)
- International Multimedia Teleconferencing Consortium (IMTC)
- International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)
- Society for Applied Learning Technology (SALT)
- United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA)
- World Association for Online Education (WAOE)

Other Resources


K-12 STUDIES IN EDUCATION SPECIALIZATION

Guidelines
The doctoral K–12 Studies in Education specialization is designed for K–12 career-oriented professionals who wish to excel as scholar-practitioners. The specialization delivers research-based competencies focused on current issues in education including such broad topics as school governance and leadership and such focused topics as math instruction, science instruction, virtual school teaching, and teacher leadership. The specialization’s flexibility permits learners to create an individualized doctoral program whatever their K–12 research interests.

A dissertation in K–12 Studies in Education at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand. A dissertation in K–12 Studies in Education should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Education. A dissertation in K–12 Studies in Education should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. PhD dissertations which are solely: 1) replications; 2) problem solution oriented; 3) focused on practice; 4) local program evaluations; or 5) classroom educational action research are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives
A variety of theories and perspectives frame scholarly research in K–12 Studies in Education. These* include:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bloom</td>
<td>Levels of Learning</td>
<td>Suggests different learning levels to promote critical thinking. This theory focuses on the revised version of the original taxonomy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruner</td>
<td>Constructivist Theory</td>
<td>Individuals actively construct knowledge by comparing new ideas or concepts with their current knowledge (schema or mental models).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewey</td>
<td>Experiential Learning</td>
<td>Learning occurs through experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardner</td>
<td>Multiple Intelligences</td>
<td>Each individual possesses seven distinct and measurable forms of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, and interpersonal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maslow</td>
<td>Hierarchy of Needs</td>
<td>Humans naturally strive to satisfy needs. The five levels of needs, from lowest to highest, are: physiological, safety, love, esteem, self-actualization. Lower level needs must be satisfied before the individual can</td>
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SOE PROGRAMS OF RESEARCH

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<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rogers</td>
<td>Experiential Learning</td>
<td>Two types of knowledge: academic and experiential. Unlike academic knowledge, experiential knowledge is acquired to meet the needs of the learner, usually to complete an important, real-life task. Example: Learning to drive a car.</td>
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*Retrieved from: http://www.teachersgarden.com/professionalresources/learningtheorists.html*

**Appropriate Topic Areas**

Topics should be relevant to teaching and learning in K-12 settings in the following areas:

- Reading and Literacy
- Special Education Teaching
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Early Childhood Education
- K-12 Studies in Education
- English Language Learning and Teaching

When choosing a topic, first ask yourself....

- Is the study about variables that are of interest to my specific specialization?
- Does it have a connection to my specific specialization knowledge base?
- Will the study add to my specialization’s body of knowledge?
- Does the study address an important problem?
- Has the research topic already been address adequately by the existing literature?
- Will the study generate, extend, refine, or test theory?
- Will the study have scientific merit?

Important tips:

- Be familiar with the topic – do not choose something about which you have no knowledge, or want to find out more about. A thorough review of the literature should satisfy that kind of curiosity.
- Be interested in the topic – very interested.
- Be convinced that your research will add to the body of knowledge in your specialization and be valued in the profession – it should matter.

This list represents overarching areas from which a research topic might be derived in which at least half of the K-12 Studies in Education faculty indicate a shared interest. No rank order of importance, preference, or level of generality is implied.

- Data Driven Decision Making
- Differentiated Instruction
- Assessment and Grading
- Effective Teaching
- Curriculum Content Standards
- Understanding By Design
- Classroom Management
• What Works in Schools
• Professional Development/Practice/Effect on Learning/ Achievement
• Measuring Teacher Effectiveness
• Performance-Based Evaluation

**Inappropriate Topic Areas**
Topics that are not particularly suitable are those that have been saturated in the literature such as learning styles and cooperative learning.

**Journals**
The following list of educational journals is just a sample of the many journals from which you can choose when developing your literature review. There are many more journals than those on the list.

**Reading and Literacy**
- The Reading Teacher
- Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy
- Reading Research Quarterly
- Literacy Research and Instruction
- Reading Research and Instruction

**Special Education**
- Exceptional Children
- Teaching Exceptional Children
- International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education
- The Journal of Special Education
- Journal of Special Education & Rehabilitation
- Journal of Special Education Leadership
- Special Education
- Rural special education quarterly
- Journal of Special Education Technology
- British journal of Special Education

**Curriculum and Instruction**
- Journal of Curriculum and Instruction
- Journal of Curriculum Studies
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Educational Leadership
- Curriculum Administrator
- Curriculum Inquiry
- Curriculum Review
- International Journal of Instruction
- Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies

**Early Childhood Education**
- Child Development
- Developmental Psychology
- Early Childhood Research and Practice (on line journal)
- Early Childhood Research Quarterly
SOE PROGRAMS OF RESEARCH

- Early Education and Development
- International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (online journal)
- Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology
- Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education
- Journal of Early Intervention
- Journal of Research in Childhood Education
- International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education

K-12 Studies in Education

- Schools: Studies in Education
- Teachers College Record
- Journal of Mathematics Education at Teachers College
- Journal for Research in Mathematics Education
- Mathematics Teacher Educator
- Journal of Science Teacher Education
- Journal of Research in Science Teaching
- International Journal of Science Education
- International Journal of Social Education
- Journal of International Social Education
- Social Education
- Social Studies Research and Practice

English Language Learning and Teaching

- Language Learning Journal
- TESOL Quarterly
- TESOL Journal
- Bilingual Review
- Bilingual Research Journal
- Critical Inquiry in Language Studies

General Research Journals

- American Educational Research Journal
- Educational Researcher
- Review of Educational Research
- Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
- Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics
- Review of Research in Education

Capella Dissertation Resources

- Dissertation Research at Capella
- Research Resources in the School of Education
- PhD Dissertation Manual
- School of Education Dissertation Handbook
- Dissertation Format
- Dissertation Template

Additional Resources


**Professional Organizations**

- American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD)
- American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT)
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)
- American Educational Research Association (AERA)
- American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE)
- Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)
- Association for Education Communications and Technology (AECT)
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
- Association of Teacher Educators (ATE)
- Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)
- Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
- Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
- International Reading Association (IRA)
- International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)
- International Technology Education Association (ITEA)
- Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)
- National Art Education Association (NAEA)
- National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT)
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)
- National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE)
- National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)
- National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC)
- National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)
- National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)
• National Education Association (NEA)
• National Middle School Association (NMSA)
• National Science Teachers Association (NSTA)
• National School Boards Association (NSBA)
• Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
SPECIALIZATION

Guidelines
The doctoral Leadership in Educational Administration specialization is aligned with nationally recognized leadership standards and is designed to help learners develop and strengthen the knowledge, skills, attributes, and dispositions needed to successfully meet the challenges of an ever-changing educational system as ethical and innovative leaders. Upon successful completion of this specialization, learners have the knowledge and skills necessary for providing school or district leadership and are prepared to pursue licensure as P–12 principals or superintendents in most states.

A dissertation in Leadership in Educational Administration at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand. A dissertation in Leadership in Educational Administration should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Education. A dissertation in Leadership in Educational Administration should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Dissertations which are solely: 1) replications; 2) problem solution oriented; 3) focused on practice; 4) local program evaluations; or 5) classroom educational action research are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

The curriculum provides learners the opportunity to pursue emphases in School Leadership or District Leadership, both of which offer focused exploration of the research, leadership, management, and problem-solving skills the current student achievement-focused P–12 environment requires of its principals and superintendents.

School Leadership emphasis - The School Leadership emphasis is intended for learners who want to build their knowledge and skills as school principals who provide vision, guidance, and oversight within a school. The curriculum focuses on the principal’s role in articulating, developing, and implementing a school vision that aligns with and supports district priorities. Learners assess issues associated with procuring and managing school funds; evaluate research-based approaches for supervising and evaluating teachers and managing the school learning environment, school operations, and resources; examine the role of technology in supporting instructional programs and school operations; and apply best practices for communicating and collaborating with school stakeholders.

District Leadership emphasis - The District Leadership emphasis is intended for learners who want to build their knowledge and skills as superintendents who provide vision, guidance, and oversight across a district. Learners evaluate the cultural, social, economic, political, and legal contexts of district leadership; assess the strategic planning and processes associated with managing district operations and resources; explore ways to leverage data to make informed district decisions; and apply best practices for communicating and collaborating with district stakeholders.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives
A variety of theories and perspectives frame scholarly research in Leadership in Educational Administration. These include:

- Adult Learning Theory
- Andragogy
- Bloom’s Taxonomy
Appropriate Topic Areas

This program is designed to prepare candidates to meet the growing leadership challenges of the 21st century P–12 school. Curricular experiences allow candidates to explore ideas, confront educational issues, consider alternatives, create change, make decisions, and apply knowledge and skills in practical situations. Therefore, LEA Learners should seek dissertation topics within the PK-12 educational arena to include public, private or charter schools, with a leadership emphasis focused on aspects of learning and leading continuous school improvement efforts.

Dissertation Topics should advance the scientific knowledge base in the field by meeting one or more of these four criteria:

- The study should address something that is not known or has not been studied before.
- The study should be new or different from other studies in some way.
- The study should extend prior research on the topic in some way.

When contemplating topics for dissertations in the Leadership in Educational Administration Specialization learners should consider the following questions:

1. Will the results of the research be useful to the Specialization?
2. Is the study about variables that are of interest to P-12 School Leadership?
3. Will the study add to the P-12 School Leadership body of knowledge?
4. Does it have a connection to P-12 School Leadership knowledge base?

This list represents overarching areas from which a research topic might be derived in which at least half of the LEA faculty indicate a shared interest. No rank order of importance, preference, or level of generality is implied.
Inappropriate Topic Areas

Topics that are not particularly suitable are those that are related to specific work-related projects that are only applicable to a particular work place and action research. Additionally, topics outside of the realm of P12 education are not approved.

Important Journals and Resources

Journals

- American School Board Journal
- Child Development
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Curriculum Administrator
- Curriculum Inquiry
- Curriculum Review
- Developmental Psychology
- Diversity Journal
- Early Education and Development
- Early Childhood Research and Practice (on line journal)
- Early Childhood Research Quarterly
- Educational Administration Quarterly
- Educational Leadership
- Educational Management Administration and Leadership
- Educational Technology
- Ethics
- International Journal of Instruction
- International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education
- Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies
- Journal of Curriculum and Instruction
- Journal of Curriculum Studies
- International Journal of Early Childhood Special
- International Journal of Science Education
- International Journal of Social Education
- Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy
- Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology
- Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education
- Journal of Early Intervention
- Journal of Educational Administration
- Journal of Educational Change
- Journal of Education Finance
- The Journal of Effective Teaching
- Journal of International Social Education
- Journal of Mathematics Education at Teachers College
- Journal of Research in Childhood Education
- Journal for Research in Mathematics Education
- Journal of Research in Science Teaching
- Journal of Science Teacher Education
- Journal of Scholarship and Practice
- Journal of Teaching and Learning
- Journal of Urban Education
- Journal of Vocational and Technical Education
- Leading and Managing
- Literacy Research and Instruction
• Mathematics Teacher Educator
• NASSP Bulletin
• Phi Delta Kappan
• Principal
• Principal Leadership
• Reading Research Quarterly
• Reading Research and Instruction
• Schools: Studies in Education
• Social Education
• Social Studies Research and Practice
• Teachers College Record
• The Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning
• The Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership
• The Reading Teacher

Resources

These publications may be useful to learners seeking additional guidance. NOTE: The ISBN numbers are provided for ease of ordering purposes. These are not to be included in reference citations when applying APA Style.


Important Professional Organizations

• American Association of School Administrators
• Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents
• Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
• Arizona School Administrators
• Colorado Association of School Executives
• Consortium for School Networking
• Georgia Association of Educational Leaders
• Illinois Association of School Administrators
• International Society for Technology in Education
• Minnesota Association of School Administrators
• National Alliance of Black School Educators
• National Association of Elementary School Principals
• National Association of Secondary School Principals
• National Association of School Superintendents
• National School Board Association
• New Jersey Association of School Administrators
• Phi Delta Kappa
• South Carolina Association of School Administrators
• Texas Association of School Administrators
• United States Distance Learning Association
• Urban Superintendents Association of America
LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION SPECIALIZATION

Guidelines
The doctoral Leadership for Higher Education specialization integrates current, recognized theory and best practices with practical application. Learners engage in a curriculum that emphasizes leadership theories and models; higher education history, politics, law, assessment, funding and financing, human resource management and administration; and the future of teaching and learning. Throughout the specialization, learners focus on developing the research and problem-solving skills needed to meet leadership challenges in higher education and guide traditional and distance education programs. Successful graduates of this specialization are prepared to pursue academic or executive leadership positions at community colleges; universities; or other public, private, or for-profit postsecondary educational institutions.

A dissertation in Leadership for Higher Education at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand. A dissertation in Leadership for Higher Education should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Education. A dissertation in Leadership for Higher Education should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Dissertations which are solely: 1) replications; 2) problem solution oriented; 3) focused on practice; 4) local program evaluations; or 5) classroom educational action research are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives
A variety of theories and perspectives frame scholarly research in Leadership for Higher Education. These include:

- Transformational Leadership
- Transactional Leadership
- Servant Leadership
- Change Leadership
- Strategic Leadership
- Situational Leadership
- Culture and Diversity
- Learning Organizations (Senge)

Appropriate Topic Areas
This specialization is designed to prepare candidates to meet the leadership challenges in higher education through research and problem-solving skills. Leadership in higher education covers most if not all aspects of the higher education field in that leaders and administrators are responsible for overseeing every aspect of the higher education environment. Therefore, "leadership" as a topic in and of itself as well as issues relating to any division of a higher education institution, is appropriate for dissertation research. Topics must contribute to the body of knowledge in leadership and administration of higher education.

When contemplating topics for dissertations in the Leadership in Higher Education Specialization, learners should consider the following questions:

1. Will the results of the research be useful to the Specialization?
2. Is the study about variables that are of interest to my specific specialization?
3. Will the study add to my specialization’s body of knowledge?
4. Does it have a connection to my specific specialization knowledge base?

This list represents overarching areas from which a research topic might be derived in which at least half of the Leadership in Higher Education faculty indicate a shared interest. No rank order of importance, preference, or level of generality is implied.

- Leadership in Higher Education settings
- Enrollment Management
- Assessment
- Evaluation
- Community College Leadership
- Cultural Competency
- Online program development
- Curriculum Development
- Data-driven decision making
- Administrative and Management Issues
- Retention
- Organizational structures
- Student Support Services
- Career and Occupational program development

**Inappropriate Topic Areas**

Topics outside of the realm of higher education are not approved. Topics relating to leadership in K-12 education and topics relating to the broader study of education, teaching and learning, will not be approved.

**Important Journals**

- The Journal of Higher Education
- The Review of Higher Education
- Research in Higher Education
- Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management
- Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice

**Important Professional Organizations**

- American Council Education (ACE)
- American Association of College Registrars Admissions Officers (AACRAO)
- American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)
- American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
- Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)
- American Association for Higher Education (AAHE)
- American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)
- American Association of University Women (AAUW)
NURSING EDUCATION SPECIALIZATION

Guidelines
The doctoral Nursing Education specialization is designed to prepare nurses for advanced roles as nurse educators in higher and adult education. The curriculum presents nursing concepts and theories and provides learners with essential knowledge and skills in curriculum development and evaluation, teaching strategy, and scholarship. The Nursing Education specialization trains learners to design, deliver, evaluate, assess, and lead nursing education programs and function as effective nursing educators.

A dissertation in Nursing Education at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand. A dissertation in Nursing Education should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Education. A dissertation in Nursing Education should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Dissertations which are solely: 1) replications; 2) problem solution oriented; 3) focused on practice; 4) local program evaluations; or 5) classroom educational action research are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives
A variety of theories and perspectives frame scholarly research in Nursing Education. These include:

Learning Theory Examples
- Behaviorism
- Constructivism
- Social Learning Theory (Bandura)
- Problem-Based Learning (McMaster University Medical School in Canada)
- Emotional Intelligence (Goleman)
- Experiential Learning (Kolb)
- Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow)
- Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom)
- Multiple Intelligences Theory (Gardner)

Nursing Theory Examples
- Florence Nightingale - Environment theory
- Hildegard Peplau - Interpersonal theory
- Virginia Henderson - Need Theory
- Ida Jean Orlando - Nursing Process theory
- Dorothy Johnson - System model
- Martha Rogers - Unitary Human beings
- Dorothea Orem - Self-care theory
- Imogene King - Goal Attainment theory
- Betty Neuman - System model
- Sister Calista Roy - Adaptation theory
- Jean Watson - Philosophy and Caring Model
- Madeleine Leininger - Transcultural nursing
- Patricia Benner - From Novice to Expert
- Margaret Newman - Health As Expanding Consciousness
- Rosemarie Rizzo Parse - Human Becoming Theory
Appropriate Topic Areas

This specialization prepares nurses for advanced roles as nurse educators in higher and adult education. No clinically oriented topics are allowed. When contemplating topics for dissertations in the Nursing Education Specialization, learners should consider the following questions:

1. Will the results of the research be useful to the Specialization?
2. Is the study about variables that are of interest to my specific specialization?
3. Will the study add to my specialization’s body of knowledge?
4. Does it have a connection to my specific specialization knowledge base?

This list represents overarching areas from which a research topic might be derived in which at least half of the Nursing Ed faculty indicate a shared interest. No rank order of importance, preference, or level of generality is implied.

- Teaching Styles Online / Teaching Styles in Traditional Learning Environments
- Learning Styles Online / Learning Styles in Traditional Learning Environments
- Asynchronous versus Synchronous online learning environments
- Faculty Development (Traditional and/or Online)
- Emotional Intelligence
- Curriculum Development

Topic Areas that Need Clarification Prior to Approval

- Critical Thinking (Needs to be clearly defined – focus on adding to body of knowledge)
- Simulation (Needs to be clearly defined – focus on adding to body of knowledge)
- Horizontal Violence/Incivility in nursing education (Needs to be clearly defined – focus on adding to body of knowledge)
- NCLEX

Non-Acceptable Topics or Focus

- Specific work-related projects that are only applicable to a particular work place
- Practicing nurses involved in clinical working environments with patients
- Classroom-based studies using educational action research

NLN Research Priorities in Nursing Education 2012 to 2015

I. Leading Reform in Nursing Education

A. Education-Practice Linkages

- Identification and evaluation of education models focused on delivery of team-based, patient-centered care to diverse patient populations in a variety of clinical settings
- Evaluation of new curriculum models related to inter-professional education and practice
- Evaluation of effectiveness of education-practice academic progression models
- Identification of education-practice partnerships designed to relate innovative teaching models to quality patient care outcomes
- Identification of the effectiveness of clinical residency programs in facilitating transitions in practice
SOE PROGRAMS OF RESEARCH

• Analysis of the effectiveness of various faculty/staff/student partnership models in affecting instruction and knowledge acquisition
• Testing of evidence-based teaching innovations to support learner acquisition of quality and safety competencies (QSEN)
• Examination of teaching approaches that affect patient care delivery systems

B. Domain Specific Knowledge

• Identification of the effectiveness of various creative teaching-learning approaches to foster development of clinical reasoning in situated patient care contexts
• Development and evaluation of teaching-learning approaches that relate knowledge acquisition and evidence-based practice to the patient’s actual care experience
• Evaluation of the use of situated coaching in a variety of clinical education settings

C. Technology in Nursing Education

• Identification and evaluation of effectiveness of emerging technologies in the teaching of nursing decision-making skills
• Development and evaluation of partnerships for studies linking simulated learning experiences with program outcomes and graduate competencies
• Measurement of the cost-effectiveness of technologies, i.e., on-line, simulation, telehealth, used to expand capacity in nursing education

II. Advancing the Science of Nursing Education

A. Robust Research Designs

• Promote development of multi-site, multi-method research studies to determine suitable measures for the assessment of learning outcomes, particularly those relevant for a practice discipline
• Encourage replication of studies in varied educational and practice settings
• Conduct systematic reviews and meta-analyses of literature related to teaching methods, evaluation protocols and other pertinent issues in nursing education
• Identification and testing of models of ethical codes of conduct for research in nursing education

B. Educational Measurement and Evaluation

• Determination of the quality of and exposure to educational interventions that aim to achieve desired learning outcomes
• Identification of ways to measure the link between educational innovations and practice outcomes
• Examination of innovative program evaluation models
• Identification and testing of valid and reliable instruments for educational research

C. Research Scholar Development

• Evaluation of effectiveness of new and existing doctoral education models that have been designed to ensure that graduates acquire competency in evidence-based pedagogy
• Exploration of effectiveness of career development models for research scholars in nursing education
• Identification of organizational culture and environmental strategies to support faculty developing programs of research in nursing education

III. Developing National and International Leaders in Nursing Education

A. Nursing Education Workforce Diversity

• Identification of institutional characteristics that best contribute to the success of diverse national and international educators in academic settings
• Evaluation of methods to recruit, retain, and graduate diverse students in both undergraduate and graduate programs
• Examination of global partnerships to build a robust international nursing education workforce experienced in educational research

B. Building Capacity

• Identification of the personal and professional characteristics most essential to fostering the success of nursing education program leaders
• Identification and testing of educational innovations that have the potential to increase leadership competencies of faculty in a variety of practice settings
• Examination of innovative professional development programs in order to increase funding for mid-career scholars engaged in nursing education research.
• Identification of creative approaches to enhance nursing faculty competency in health and education advocacy and public policy development
• Identification of the characteristics of mentors who are most successful in recruiting and training scholars to develop sustained programs of research in nursing education

Important Journals

• Adult Basic Education
• Adult Basic Education and Literacy
• Adult Education and Development
• Adult Education Quarterly (AAACE)
• Adult Learner
• Adult Learning (AAACE)
• Australian Journal of Adult Learning
• Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education
• Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education
• Catalyst
• Education and Training
• Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education
• International Journal of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning
• Journal of Adult Development
• Journal of Adult Education
• Journal of Continuing Higher Education
• Journal of Transformative Education (AAACE)
• Lifelong Learning
• New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education
• New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education (quarterly)
• New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development
• Studies in Continuing Education
• Studies of the Education of Adults
• The Journal of Human Resource and Adult Learning

Nursing Education Journals

• Journal of Nursing Education
• Nurse Educator
• Journal of Nursing Scholarship
• International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship
• The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing
• Teaching and Learning in Nursing
• Journal of Professional Nursing
• Western Journal of Nursing Research
• Nursing Education Perspectives
• Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing

Important Professional Organizations

Please see the comprehensive list of Nursing Organizations links located on the Nurse Practitioner Central’s gateway website and Nursing Organizations.
POST SECONDARY & ADULT EDUCATION SPECIALIZATION

Guidelines
The doctoral Postsecondary and Adult Education specialization is designed to enhance learners’ qualifications in adult education and college teaching. The curriculum emphasizes major theories of adult learning, the needs of the multicultural adult learner, the development of effective learning communities and environments, critical analysis, program and curricular evaluation, and best practices in postsecondary instruction. Learners who successfully complete this specialization are prepared to pursue instructional leadership positions in a variety of postsecondary education settings, including adult education, distance education, continuing higher education, health care education, community development, and military education.

A dissertation in Postsecondary and Adult Education at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand. A dissertation in Postsecondary and Adult Education should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Education. A dissertation in Postsecondary and Adult Education should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Dissertations which are solely: 1) replications; 2) problem solution oriented; 3) focused on practice; 4) local program evaluations; or 5) classroom educational action research are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives
A variety of theories and perspectives frame scholarly research in Postsecondary and Adult Education. These include:

- Andragogy
- Self-Directed Learning
- Transformational Learning
- Experiential Learning
- Workplace learning
- Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences

Appropriate Topic Areas
This specialization is designed to enhance learner’s qualifications in adult education and college teaching. Approvable topics should focus on a significant issue or problem occurring in one or more postsecondary and adult education setting. Research should focus on postsecondary and adult education instruction, training, student learning, planning, administration, evaluation, development, etc. and contribute to the scholarly literature of the field.

When contemplating topics for dissertations in the Postsecondary and Adult Education Specialization, learners should consider the following questions:

1. Will the results of the research be useful to the Specialization?
2. Is the study about variables that are of interest to my specific specialization?
3. Will the study add to my specialization’s body of knowledge?
4. Does it have a connection to my specific specialization knowledge base?
This list represents overarching areas from which a research topic might be derived in which at least half of the Post-Secondary and Adult Education faculty indicate a shared interest. No rank order of importance, preference, or level of generality is implied.

- Teaching adults
- Postsecondary marketing and enrollment management
- Postsecondary instructional strategies
- Postsecondary instructional evaluation
- Online and hybrid instructional techniques for postsecondary learners
- Adult learning theories and practices
- Adult earner attrition and retention
- At-risk learners
- First generation college students
- Program planning and administration
- Program evaluation
- Postsecondary program leadership and administration
- Program evaluation
- Adult student training and development
- Adult student advising and counseling
- Student mentoring
- Adult learner diversity
- Program budgeting and finance
- Mentoring adult learners
- Strategies for enhancing critical reflection

Inappropriate Topic Areas
Topics that are not problem focused and/or do not occur within a postsecondary and adult education setting.

Important Journals
- Adult Basic Education
- Adult Basic Education and Literacy
- Adult Education and Development
- Adult Education Quarterly (AAACE)
- Adult Learner
- Adult Learning (AAACE)
- Australian Journal of Adult Learning
- Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education
- Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education
- Catalyst
- Education and Training
- Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education
- International Journal of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning
- Journal of Adult Development
- Journal of Adult Education
- Journal of Continuing Higher Education
- Journal of Transformative Education (AAACE)
- Lifelong Learning
- New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education
- New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education (quarterly)
- New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development
- Studies in Continuing Education
• Studies in the Education of Adults
• The Journal of Human Resource and Adult Learning

**Important Professional Organizations**

• American Council Education (ACE)
• American Association of College Registrars Admissions Officers (AACRAO)
• American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)
• American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
• Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)
• American Association for Higher Education and Accreditation (AAHE)
• American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)
• American Association of University Women (AAUW)
• American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)
• American College Personnel Association (ACPA)
• American Council on Education (ACE)
• American Distance Education Consortium
• Association for Continuing Higher Education (ACHE)
• Association for Gerontology in Higher Education
• Association for the Study of Higher Education
• Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)
• Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)
• Education Commission of the States
• League for Innovation in the Community College
• National Association for Multicultural Education
• National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
• National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
• American Center for the Study of Distance Education (ACSDE)
• American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC)
• Association for Telecommunications Professionals in Higher Education (ACUTA)
• Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE)
• Association for Educational Communications & Technology (AECT)
• Federal Government Distance Learning Association (FGDLA)
• Instructional Technology Council (ITC)
• Interactive Multimedia and Collaborative Communications Alliance (IMCCA)
• International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE)
• International Multimedia Teleconferencing Consortium (IMTC)
• International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)
• Society for Applied Learning Technology (SALT)
PROFESSIONAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION SPECIALIZATION

Guidelines
The doctoral Professional Studies in Education specialization is designed for experienced career professionals in a variety of teaching and/or education training situations. Learners may come from areas of P–12, alternative programs, adult education, allied health care, military, higher education, government, or other occupations and professions, but are united by the motivation to excel as educators and leaders. Professional studies learners seek this specialization whether they want to remain in their current profession or be prepared to change professions. The Professional Studies in Education specialization provides optimal opportunity to customize a program of study that meets the unique needs of a diverse group of learners. The entire doctoral experience is designed to create scholar-practitioners with advanced skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and research.

A dissertation in Professional Studies in Education at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand. A dissertation in Professional Studies in Education should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Education. A dissertation in Professional Studies in Education should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Dissertations which are solely: 1) replications; 2) problem solution oriented; 3) focused on practice; 4) local program evaluations; or 5) classroom educational action research are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives
A variety of theories and perspectives frame scholarly research in Professional Studies in Education. These include:

- Adult Learning Theory (Knowles)
- Constructivist theory (Bruner)
- Observational Learning Theory (Bandura)
- Experiential Learning (Dewey)
- Multiple Intelligences (Gardner)
- Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow)
- Transformational Learning Theory (Mezirow)
- Experiential Learning (Rogers)
- Operant Conditioning (Skinner)
- Social Learning Theory (Vygotsky)

Appropriate Topic Areas
Dissertation Topics in Professional Studies in Education are related to the field of Education. PSE provides the opportunity for elective choices in Higher Education, community college, advising, leadership, curriculum and instruction, adult education, P-12 education, online learning, charter schools, special education, and content fields that include an Education focus.

Dissertation Topics for the Professional Studies in Education should advance the scientific knowledge base in the field by meeting one or more of these criteria:

1. The study should address something that is not known or has not been studied before.
2. The study should be new or different from other studies in some way.
3. The study should extend prior research on the topic in some way.
4. The study should be based within the existing scholarly literature; and should not reflect a local project-based emphasis.
5. The study should include evidence of the scholarly literature in Education at a minimum. Fields outside of Education such as educational psychology, human services, business, etc. may contribute to the study’s literature base; however, clear identification of the Education literature is required. Note: The doctorate is a PhD in Education. A foundation in the scholarly literature of Education must be clearly evident.

When contemplating topics for dissertations in the Professional Studies in Education Specialization, learners should consider the following questions:

1. Will the results of the research be useful to the Specialization?
2. Is the study about variables that are of interest to my specific specialization?
3. Will the study add to my specialization’s body of knowledge?
4. Does it have a connection to my specific specialization knowledge base?

This list represents overarching areas from which a research topic might be derived in which at least half of the PSE faculty indicate a shared interest. The individual needs to demonstrate a close and evident tie to the scholarly literature within the Education field. No rank order of importance, preference, or level of generality is implied.

- Higher Education topics
- Community College
- Adult Learning
- Teaching and Learning
- Teaching and Learning online
- Instructional methods
- Assessment
- Professional Development/Practice/Effect on Learning/Achievement
- Content fields combined with a focus in education scholarly literature. For example: Mathematics or Physics Education in the community college.
- Leadership
- Advising
- Character Education
- Multicultural Education

**Inappropriate Topic Areas**

- Topics which are not embedded with an explicit connection to the field of Education literature. NOTE: The connection is demonstrated through reference lists.
- Topics which are project-level and not generalizable to the existing scholarly literature.

**Important Journals (The following is a sampling, and not an all-inclusive listing)**

- Art Education
- Adult Education Quarterly
- American Educator
- American Journal of Education
- American School Board Journal
- Bilingual Review
• Children & Schools
• College Teaching
• Dance Teacher
• Early Childhood Education Journal
• Education and Urban Society
• Education Review
• Education Week
• Elementary School Journal
• Exceptional Children
• Harvard Educational Review
• High School Journal
• History of Education
• Independent School
• New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education
• Journal of Educational Psychology
• Teachers College Record
• American Educational Research Journal
• Review of Educational Research
• Learning and Instruction
• The Clearing House

Important Professional Organizations

• American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)
• Academic 360
• Adjunct Nation
• American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)
• American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
• American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
• American College Personnel Association (ACPA)
• American Council on Education (ACE)
• American Distance Education Consortium
• Association for Continuing Higher Education (ACHE)
• Association for Gerontology in Higher Education
• Association for the Study of Higher Education
• Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)
• Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)
• Education Commission of the States
• EDUCAUSE
• League for Innovation in the Community College
• Learning Point Associates
• National Association for College Admission Counseling
• National Association for Multicultural Education
• National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
• National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
• Professional Nurse Educators Group (PNEG)
• The Sloan Consortium
• American Center for the Study of Distance Education (ACSDE)
• American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC)
• Association for Telecommunications Professionals in Higher Education (ACUTA)
• Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE)
• Association for Educational Communications & Technology (AECT)
• Federal Government Distance Learning Association (FGDLA)
• Instructional Technology Council (ITC)
• Interactive Multimedia and Collaborative Communications Alliance (IMCCA)
• International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE)
• International Multimedia Teleconferencing Consortium (IMTC)
• International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)
• Society for Applied Learning Technology (SALT)
• The Sloan Consortium
• United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA)
• Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET)
• World Association for Online Education (WAOE)

Education: K-12

• American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)
• American Association of School Administrators (AASA)
• American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
• Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
• Association of American Educators (AAE)
• International Reading Association
• Literacy Research Association
• National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
• National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
SPECIAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP SPECIALIZATION

Guidelines
The doctoral Special Education Leadership specialization focuses on P–12 special education leadership skills, including knowledge of laws and regulations, curriculum and instruction, financial resources, and community and family collaboration. Applicants must hold a master's degree in education and a certification or license in special education. The course work, internship, and colloquia competencies are based on Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) national standards. Upon successful completion of this specialization, learners are prepared to pursue leadership roles at the school, district, state, or higher education levels.

A dissertation in Special Education Leadership at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand. A dissertation in Special Education Leadership should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Education. A dissertation in Special Education Leadership should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Dissertations which are solely: 1) replications; 2) problem solution oriented; 3) focused on practice; 4) local program evaluations; or 5) classroom educational action research are discouraged and generally will not be acceptable.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives
A variety of theories and perspectives frame scholarly research in P-12. These include:

- Andragogy
- Behaviorism
- Bloom’s Taxonomy
- Brain-based Learning Theory
- Constructivist Theory
- Experiential Learning
- Hierarchy of Needs
- Learning by Doing
- Learning Style Theory
- Multiple Intelligences
- Situational Leadership
- Transformational Leadership

Appropriate Topic Areas
The Special Education Leadership program is designed to prepare teachers and administrators for leadership positions to meet the growing and challenging demands of the 21st century P–12 school within the Special Education environment. Curricular experiences allow learners to explore ideas, confront educational issues, consider alternatives, create change, make decisions, and apply knowledge and skills in practical situations. As a result, learners should find dissertation topics focused on learning and leading in the P-12 Special Education school environment to facilitate continuous school improvement.

Dissertation Topics should advance the scientific knowledge base in the field by meeting one or more of these criteria:

- The study should address something that is not known or has not been studied before.
• The study should be new or different from other studies in some way.
• The study should extend prior research on the topic in some way.

When contemplating topics for dissertations in the Special Education Leadership Specialization learners should consider the following questions:

1. Will the results of the research be useful to the Specialization?
2. Is the study about variables that are of interest to P-12 School Leadership?
3. Will the study add to the P-12 School Leadership body of knowledge?
4. Does it have a connection to P-12 School Leadership knowledge base?

This list represents overarching areas from which a research topic might be derived in which at least half of the Special Ed Leadership faculty indicate a shared interest. No rank order of importance, preference, or level of generality is implied.

• Differentiated Instruction
• Effective Teaching and Leading
• Classroom Management
• Multiple Intelligences
• Response to Intervention (RTI)
• Supervision and Instructional Leadership
• Performance-Based Evaluation
• Leadership Style and School Improvement

Inappropriate Topic Areas
Topics that are not particularly suitable are those that are related to specific work-related projects that are only applicable to a particular work place and action research. Additionally, topics outside of the realm of P12 special education are not approved.

Important Journals and Resources

Journals

• British Journal of Special Education
• Diversity Journal
• Early Education and Development
• Educational Administration Quarterly
• Educational Leadership
• Educational Management Administration and Leadership
• Educational Technology
• Ethics
• Exceptional Children
• International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education
• International Journal of Special Education
• Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Profession
• Journal of Early Intervention
• Journal of Educational Administration
• Journal of Educational Change
• Journal of Special Education & Rehabilitation
• Journal of Special Education Leadership
• Journal of Special Education Technology
• Journal of Teaching and Learning
• Phi Delta Kappan
• Special Education
• Teaching Exceptional Children
• The Beacon: Journal of Special Education Law & Practice
• The Journal of Effective Teaching
• The Journal of Special Education
• Rural Special Education Quarterly

Resources

These publications may be useful to learners seeking additional guidance. NOTE: The ISBN numbers are provided for ease of ordering purposes. These are not to be included in reference citations when applying APA Style.


Important Professional Organizations

• American Academy of Mental Retardation
• Autism Society of America
• Council for Exceptional Children
• Council of Administrators of Special Education
• Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders
• International Dyslexia Association
• Learning Disabilities Association
• National Association for the Deaf
• National Association of Private Special Education Centers
• National Association of State Directors of Special Education
• National Education Association
• The Association for the Gifted
• Women’s Organization for Special Education Professional
TRAINING & PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

Guidelines
The doctoral Training and Performance Improvement (T&PI) specialization is designed for experienced career professionals who wish to advance to leadership roles such as chief learning officer, training director, professor, or manager of learning and performance improvement. Required courses broaden and deepen the learner’s understanding of both strategic and tactical issues that are important to the success of any performance improvement intervention. The entire doctoral experience is designed to help create reflective scholar-practitioners and innovative thinkers with advanced skills in critical thinking, research, and problem solving. The curriculum in our specialization is based on the Performance Improvement/ Human Performance Technology (HPT) Model adopted by the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI).

A dissertation in Training and Performance Improvement (T&PI) at Capella University can take a variety of forms. It may be quantitative or it may be qualitative, but regardless of the methodology it should add to the existing literature on the topic at hand.

A dissertation in Training and Performance Improvement (T&PI) should be founded on established or emerging theoretical and conceptual frameworks within the discipline of Education.

A dissertation in Training and Performance Improvement (T&PI) should make a unique or original contribution to the literature of the field. Our field is holistic in that we view organizations from multiple perspectives and seek to understand how they function and ways to improve their ability to attain their mission and goals. This may involve their internal structure as well as their external environment. We also examine a wide variety of performance improvement opportunities, usually called interventions, including those directed to solve problems with work design, quality, information, people, performance support systems, organizational design, financial systems, and so on.

Appropriate Theories/Theoretical Perspectives
A variety of theories and perspectives are appropriate with Training and Performance Improvement (T&PI). The primary theoretical foundation in our field is the Performance Improvement/HPT Model (Van Tiem, Moseley, & Dessinger, 2012). All studies should cite an element or elements from the model that relate to the problem being studied. Dissertations should expand our knowledge and understanding of this model, be grounded in the field of training and performance improvement, address something that is not known, something that is new or different from prior research, something that extends prior research, or something that fills a gap in the existing literature.

Embedded in the Performance Improvement/ HPT Model are a wide variety of related theories that support each phase of the model. In addition to identifying the element(s) of the model the study will address, the study should also identify the specific theory or theories that provide the conceptual foundation for the context of the study. These theories are selected based on the problem, purpose, and research questions. These supporting theories may come from the fields of sociology, anthropology, behavioral psychology, economics, organizational theory, and other related fields of study and practice. The study must demonstrate both practical as well as theoretical implications for the field.
Appropriate Topic Areas

Examples of appropriate topics for learners in the PhD program in Training & Performance Improvement include research focused on adult performance issues in a wide variety of organizational settings: manufacturing, service, military, education, technology, government, and non-profits to name a few. Performance issues may focus on individuals, teams, processes, or whole organizations. Performance improvement has systems, psychological, and economic implications, and studies in this field should address issues that address these factors, though not all are necessary in any given dissertation. For learners who completed their Residency requirement prior to Q4-2015, research topics can be studied using qualitative, quantitative, or action research methodologies. Following Q4-2015, all T&PI learners will be limited to studying research topics using only those methodologies that are listed as acceptable by the School of Education starting on page 44 of this Programs of Research document.

Inappropriate Topic Areas

Special cautions and safeguards apply to the use of existing data as well as research done in the military. Please confer with T&PI faculty when developing your initial research plans since our specialization has distinct approaches and requirements. Dissertation researchers in T&PI do NOT study the following topics:

- Academic achievement or performance of children/ youth.
- Adult learning theory
- Instructional design of training interventions
- Program evaluations in isolation from planned interventions or Action Research studies
- Return on Investment (ROI) impact studies.

Important Journals

- Human Resource Development Quarterly (HRDQ)
- Performance Improvement Journal (PI)
- Performance Improvement Quarterly (PI)

Related Journals

Note: Additional professional organizations and journals are selected by dissertation learners based on their area of professional practice and study.

- Harvard Business Review (HBR)
- Human Resource Management (HRM)
- Management Communication Quarterly (MCQ)
- Training and Development (T+D)
- Total Quality Management (TQM)

Important Professional Organizations

- [Academy of Human Resource Development](https://www.ahrd.org) (AHRD)
- [Association for Talent Development](https://www.astd.org) (ATD) (Formerly the American Association for Training and Development) (ASTD)
- [International Society for Performance Improvement](https://www.ispi.org) (ISPI)
Related Professional Boards, Organizations and Institutes

Note: Additional professional organizations and journals are selected by dissertation learners based on their area of professional practice and study.

- American Evaluation Association (AEA)
- American Management Association (AMA)
- International Association for Continuing Education and Training (UACET)
- International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction (IBSTPI)
- International Coach Federation (ICF)
- National Council for Workforce Education (NCWE)
- Project Management Institute (PMI)
- Return on Investment (ROI) Institute
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)
- Society for Quality Assurance (SQA)
SOE ACCEPTABLE RESEARCH METHODS AND RESEARCH DESIGNS

Introduction
This document will identify and describe research designs that are acceptable for dissertation research in the School of Education.

Acceptable Quantitative Research Designs

Quasi-experimental Designs – An experimental approach (control and test groups) where participants are randomly assigned but not randomly selected, or groups such as classes are assigned either randomly or not randomly. For example, an acceptable quasi-experimental research design for the School of Education is a Non-randomized Control Group Pretest-Posttest Design.

Descriptive Comparative Designs – Descriptive comparative designs describe differences between two or more groups by comparisons made with one or more variables of interest. Although such comparisons might produce statistically significant differences between groups, such studies cannot explain why those differences occur. Therefore, no inferences of causality can be made from the results of descriptive comparative designs.

Note that such designs need to have testable research questions that lead to testing the null hypotheses. The data used can be archived and recent (no more than five years old) or can be collected from participants.

Causal-Comparative Designs – Causal-comparative descriptive designs extend descriptive comparative designs by adding rigor. A causal-comparative design is a rigorous non-experimental design that can be used to speculate on causal relationships. Causal-descriptive designs are also called Ex Post Facto designs because they typically use archival data. A rigorous causal-comparative design will include researcher controls, also called partial controls, such as having a control group, pair-wise matching, comparison of homogenous sub-groups, statistically estimating the effect of extraneous variables on the dependent variables, analysis of covariance to control for pretest differences and or other extraneous variables, and discussion of ways of ruling out alternative explanations for test differences. “Much of the work in designing a high quality causal-comparative study is focused on measuring and controlling possible extraneous variables” (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p. 270). A good way to begin is to think through every possible explanation for the difference in scores caused by something outside of the intervention and then see if that possible explanation can be measured or was measured and ruled out.

If those researcher controls can be included and a significant effort is made to rule out the most plausible other alternative explanations for a difference in the mean gains scores, then the study can be considered a causal-comparative design from which speculations of causality can be made. Note that the results of a causal-comparative design are not demonstrations or measurements of causal relationships; the results are used to speculate on causality.

Correlational Designs – These designs include, bivariate analysis, simple linear regression, simple logistic regression, multinomial or multivariate logistic regression, multiple linear regression. Note that these multivariate designs can be quite complex and should be supervised by mentors who can evaluate the statistical procedures of these designs. As with comparative descriptive designs correlational designs can use archived data (no more than five years old) or collect data from participants. No inferences of causality can be made from these designs.
Acceptable Qualitative Research Designs

**Basic Qualitative Design** – Merriam (2009) describes a basic qualitative research study as having philosophically been derived from constructionism, phenomenology, and symbolic interaction and is used by researchers who are "interested in "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to **understand** how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (p. 38). A basic qualitative study can also be used to uncover and illuminate the details of an educational or leadership process from the experiences of the individuals who created and or apply the process. A basic qualitative study is not opinion or perception research. Instead it focuses on experiences, meaning making and or processes. A basic qualitative study will not investigate the participants’ perceptions or beliefs regarding something external to their own experiences or processes.

**Case study** – “A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon or social unit” (Merriam, 1988, p. 21); thus the case occurs in some form of bounded context. For example a case could be a classroom, a program, a process, etc. A strong case study is often the end product of field work research and thus relies heavily upon observations over an extended period of time. Interviews are typically used to clarify and verify observations and artifacts. Although case studies do not need to have this longitudinal aspect and could be done without observations, what they have in common is multiple data collection methods to develop thick rich holistic cases. “Understanding the case in its totality, as well as the intensive, holistic description and analysis characteristic of a case study, mandates both breadth and depth of data collection. Data collection in a case study is a recursive, interactive process in which engaging in one strategy incorporates or may lead to subsequent sources of data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 134). Descriptive and explanatory case studies are typical for School of Education learners. Please note that the Capella IRB will not permit a case study of a single individual. A collective case study with three or four cases (e.g. three or four teachers) that includes both within-case and cross-case analyses is acceptable; however, multisite case studies should be avoided as they are too complex for novice researchers.

**Phenomenological Design**– Qualitative researchers focus on the essence or structure of an experience or phenomenon. Patton (1990) describes this type of research as based on:

> the assumption that **there is an essence or essences to shared experience.** These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. The experiences of different people are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to the identity of the essences of the phenomenon, for example, the essences of loneliness, the essence of being a mother, the essence of being a participant in a particular program. The **assumption of essence, like the ethnographer's assumption that culture exists and is important, becomes the defining characteristic of a purely phenomenological study.** [p. 70, emphasis in original]

Phenomenology is focused on individuals' meaning making as the quintessential element of the human experience (Patton, 2002). The important findings derived from phenomenology are an understanding of a phenomenon as seen through the eyes of those who have experienced it. Phenomenological inquiry holds the assumption that there is an essence or essences to shared experience (Patton, 2002). The focus of a phenomenological study is in uncovering and interpreting the inner essence of the participants’ cognitive processing regarding some common experience. Thus meaning is central to the experience. In general “a phenomenological research is well suited for studying affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 26). Although an acceptable SOE research
design, phenomenological designs are not as common in educational research as in disciplines such as psychology or counseling.

When considering the phenomenological design as appropriate and in developing research problems and purpose statements, learners need to keep in mind the ways in which a phenomenological study differs from other qualitative designs:

- it is the only design in which the researcher assumes that a shared essence of the experience will be uncovered;
- it is the only design that focuses exclusively on cognitive processing of the experience (a single phenomenon);
- it is the only design that has a purpose of such detailed description of a phenomenon that the reader should come away believing the reader now understands the experience as if reader experienced it himself or herself.

Learners must be able to articulate the process for carrying out a phenomenological research design along with a rationale for why a basic qualitative research design cannot be used. As with a basic qualitative research design, phenomenological research is not used to obtain perceptions, opinions, or beliefs.

Other Research Designs that Require Permission on an Exceptions Basis

Other possible research designs not typically done by PhD learners in the School of Education if proposed by a learner, would require permission on an exceptions basis and the learner would need to provide evidence of doctoral level knowledge of and expertise in the design. The mentor and specialization chair in consultation with the Chair for Research and Doctoral Processes would need to pre-approve any of these research designs if proposed by a learner. Learners are encouraged to select designs from the list of acceptable research designs above.

References


