

UH Ed.D in Professional Leadership

Program of Studies

Core/foundation courses

Core

CUIN 83xx	Seminal Thinkers Affecting American Education
CUIN 83xx	Issues in Urban Education
EPSY 83xx	Child and Adult Learning and Development

New and redesigned courses will be presented to appropriate governance bodies at the department, college and university levels. Prior to initial implementation of the Ed.D., practitioners will again be invited to review and analyze courses and the program for congruence with their professional responsibilities.

Inquiry courses

Research

CUIN 83xx	Inquiry//problem solving/critical thinking
CUIN 83xx	Qualitative/quantitative research methods
CUIN 83xx	Research in specialization

New and redesigned courses will be presented to appropriate governance bodies at the department, college and university levels. Prior to initial implementation of the Ed.D., practitioners will again be invited to review and analyze courses and the program for congruence with their professional responsibilities.

Internship experiences (or laboratories of practice)

Laboratory of Practice

The Laboratory of Practice is a 6-hour, single-semester, inquiry experience that immerses Ed.D. candidates in investigating practical and significant education-related dilemmas in a Houston-area school, non-profit, or other similar organization.

As part of this practical scholarship, students pose research questions, design a plan of inquiry, search literature, conduct field work, analyze findings, and articulate reasonable solution(s) to the challenge in question. Students work as a collaborative team of fellow educators facilitated by one or more faculty members with experience and interest with the particular dilemma or context.

In order to cultivate the Laboratory of Practice settings, a team of COE faculty has established a formal, working relationship with school districts and other education-related institutions, facilitated through our existing relationship with the Houston Area Teacher Center. This semester of school-based inquiry is so intense and rigorous that it is utterly dependent on persistent participation by both university and school district representatives. The core faculty of the Ed.D are committed to mentoring and providing ongoing leadership with cohort members. Faculty also maintain close and ongoing contact with the school leaders who proposed the dilemmas so that the research team fully understands the dilemma from the unique perspectives and contexts of multiple schools.

Faculty meet with these school representatives on a regular basis to discuss pressing major dilemmas of practice affecting districts and also to facilitate practical matters of research in school settings (e.g., working with the district research departments to procure all research permissions). This faculty team then reviews proposed research topics for feasibility and scope (examples of potential research dilemmas include aspects of retention, measurement of achievement, childhood obesity, professional development issues, administrator issues, etc.), and narrows the research topics to a concise menu from which student cohorts can select.

Based on the available menu of researchable dilemmas, students beginning the Laboratory of Practice semester, self-select into collaborative research teams. As part of a modified action research cycle of *reflect-inquire-collaborate-share*, students begin with a reflection about the dilemma, posing questions and “wonderings” about all relevant aspects. They then draft an initial research design and plan of action that will guide their semester. Depending on the nature of the research dilemma, the research activity may next move to a review of the literature pertaining to the dilemma. Other topics may demand initial field work first to understand the dilemma in practice, either in students’ own districts or in the particular districts who proposed the dilemma. During any period of individual investigation, research teams maintain regular virtual contact by utilizing collaborative Web 2.0 tools to share, co-author, solicit feedback, and communicate. Teams will also regularly cycle back to meet in person for focused and deep analysis of field data and redirection of field efforts.

At the conclusion to the Laboratory of Practice semester, the research team prepares multiple versions of written reports and oral presentations intended to inform various school constituents. The reports include a detailing of all work done by the team, analysis and initial findings, and recommendations for practice, policy, and research. Facilitation by the faculty team at this point is vital in assisting students in framing findings in ways that can be effectively presented to school districts and yet remain valid and true to the data. The research team should also include recommendations for future Ed.D. cohorts who may continue the investigation, recognizing that most educational dilemmas are so complex and multi-faceted that they are not expected to be “solved” in a single semester. Finally, Laboratory of Practice candidates must consider how their findings feed into their own research, as the conclusion of the Laboratory of Practice semester is really not an end to the project but rather a transition into the next phase of individual research and solution implementation to be undertaken as part of the Ed.D. Thesis.

Capstone experiences

Ed.D. Doctoral Thesis

In the culminating activity of the Ed.D., doctoral candidates apply in practice the knowledge and skills in practical scholarship that they have gained throughout the program. For most students, the Ed.D. Doctoral Thesis is the natural continuation of the Laboratory of Practice work, allowing students to focus more deeply, and independently, on solution implementation for dilemmas explored collaboratively during the Laboratory of Practice. Students remain working in close collaboration with their cohort members, each researching related but distinct areas of a dilemma within the context of a supportive research community of practice.

As a work of practical scholarship, the “research question” for the Doctoral Thesis is framed differently from that of a traditional research dissertation. The question implies practical application, and the answer(s) is (are) presented in terms directly applicable to practice. The Doctoral Thesis is a rigorous, comprehensive, reflective study of a substantive dilemma related to educational practice. It requires the ability to engage in systematic inquiry into practitioner problems in educational settings. As such, the Doctoral Thesis requires extensive “on the ground” knowledge about a particular context of practice or about a particular program/practice/policy in two or more contexts. And although the doctoral thesis requires discussion of relevant literature, that literature is likely to emphasize descriptions of existing programs and approaches to an issue/problem of practice rather than a summary of formal research studies.

As a practical scholarship endeavor aimed at informing practice in educational settings, the Doctoral Thesis reflects the kinds of documents that a practitioner is called upon to create, review or act upon (e.g., program evaluation; description/review of existing policy; documentation of data and analysis of implications). The final format of the Doctoral Thesis may resemble more a consultant’s report than a research report. Emphasis is to be placed on providing rich description in language accessible for school practitioners and other school researchers and with detail sufficient to allow its replication in other settings. The final written report is defended in a way similar to a formal dissertation defense, however, the committee often includes a practitioner knowledgeable about the dilemma of practice, and key members of the context under study would be invited to attend.

The resulting collection of doctoral theses related to a central educational dilemma of practice comprises a significant statement on how each educational dilemma is represented in Houston-area school districts.