

2026-27

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Ph.D. in Curriculum & Instruction



College of Education

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

Welcome!

The Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction prepares aspiring researchers and leaders to meet today's challenges in local to global educational settings. Doctoral students have opportunities to engage in inquiry on critical issues to understand the role of education for an increasingly complex society.



This Handbook is intended for students in the Ph.D. program in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education at the University of Houston. It provides an overview of CUIN Ph.D. program specific requirements and policies. The information included is designed to facilitate students' progress toward attainment of their degree. The purpose of this handbook is to supplement and clarify – not supersede – policies and procedures provided at the College of Education and the University of Houston levels. The College of Education and the University of Houston policies and procedures can be found in [GRADMAP 7000](#) . Students are added to [GRADMAP 7000](#) by the start of the first semester of enrollment in the program.

Please send any questions about this handbook to Dr. Jeannette D. Alarcón at jdalarco@Central.UH.EDU

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Overview

The College of Education

At the University of Houston College of Education, we are working to improve educational and health outcomes for all people and communities through effective teaching, innovative research and strong partnerships. Students learn in the context of a multicultural city from distinguished professors who merge research with real-world lessons. We are preparing future teachers, administrators, counselors, psychologists, health specialists, researchers and other leaders to transform lives in Houston and beyond. Students and prospective employers can be confident in the UH College of Education's commitment to rigorous national standards. Our graduate online programs are consistently ranked in the top 20 in the nation by U. S. News and World Report and the Teacher Education program is a 3- time winner of the Distinguished Program in Teacher Education Award from the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), which recognizes outstanding programs that exemplify collaboration, innovation, and high quality.

Goals of the CUIN Ph.D. Program

The Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction is a 66-hour doctoral program that establishes a link between research and practice by providing opportunities to investigate curriculum, instruction, assessment, and social justice issues within broad educational contexts. Ph.D. students will engage in rigorous research, quality teaching, and contextual service to enhance education, curriculum and instruction, and community connections. Coursework in addition to the dissertation process and other experiential opportunities, prepares students for positions in higher education or other related areas that expect continued examination of research and practice in educational environments.

Innovation, diversity, and excellence are words that characterize this Ph.D. program at the University of Houston. UH is recognized as one of only three national Tier One Hispanic-serving public research universities. It is also designated as an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI). It welcomes the best and brightest local, national, and international students into its Ph.D. program in Curriculum and Instruction.

Specialization Areas and Contacts

The Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction is a 66-hour doctoral program that allows for study in disciplinary specializations. Questions about any disciplinary specialization should be directed to the designated faculty in each of the area; contact information is listed below.

Students are encouraged to take course work across disciplines, depending on the student's professional goals.

Art Education

Dr. Sheng Kuan Chung, skchung@uh.edu

Bilingual/ESL Education

Dr. Mikel Cole, mwcole3@uh.edu

Early Childhood Education

Dr. Xin Li, xli104@Central.UH.EDU

Learning, Design & Technology

Dr. Sara McNeil, smcneil@uh.edu

Mathematics Education

Dr. Jennifer Chauvot, jchauvot@uh.edu

Literacy Education

Dr. Laveria Hutchison, lhutchison@uh.edu

Science Education

Dr. Sissy Wong, sissywong@uh.edu

Teaching and Teacher Education

Dr. Conra D. Gist, cdgist@uh.edu

Important College of Education/UH Resources

GRADMAP 7000– Office of Graduate Student Success

The CUIN PhD Program adheres to all posted UH and COE Graduate Policies. The student is responsible for being aware of and adhering to **all** UH and COE Graduate Policies.

GRADMAP 7000 is the Graduate Student Success (GSS) nexus for all COE grad students and faculty. It's a one-stop shop for:

- GSS and Program Handbooks
- Announcements and Calendar links
- We include important information on deadlines, upcoming events, and public defenses
- Modules specific to Masters and Doctoral students:
 - Benchmark requirements
 - Advising information
 - Processes and Procedures
 - Academic Resources

In the future, the gradebook will be used like a Checklist for your degree progress. No "grades" are held here, but a completion of tasks and what's up next are listed there. The GSS team will use the gradebook for your Graduation Audit starting in Spring 2026. If you have challenges accessing [GRADMAP 7000](#), contact COEGrad@uh.edu.

CUIN PhD SharePoint

A substantial amount of CUIN PhD Program information is available for students in the [CUIN PhD Program SharePoint](#) in the [Program Info](#) folder. Most communications from the PhD Director will come from the SharePoint email. You and your advisor should become familiar with the materials in SharePoint. Once you enroll in your first semester courses, you will be provided with next steps on how to join the SharePoint.

CUIN PhD Program Coursework and Benchmarks

The 66-hour Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction is designed to be completed in 4 to 6 years, provided students complete the coursework and benchmarks on the recommended timeframes.

The purpose of the required coursework and benchmarks is to provide students with opportunities to learn key knowledge and practices for a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD.) in Curriculum and Instruction. The student chooses discipline-focused courses based on interests and career goals.

Broadly, components of knowledge includes:

- Major theories of teaching and learning.
- Major ontological and epistemological perspectives in educational research.
- Major methodological paradigms in educational research
- Relevant literature for curriculum and instruction with an explicit focus on using disciplinary literature to inform a research study

Furthermore, key practices include the ability to:

- Synthesize findings and ideas about a given topic from relevant literature.
- Critically consume educational research studies.
- Design and implement appropriate inquiry methods to study a research question.
- Demonstrate scholarly writing norms of educational researchers.

Degree plans are revised periodically to support continuous program improvement. Students will follow the approved degree plan that is in place *at the time at which they were admitted*. The most current sample degree plan and academic benchmarks follow.

Coursework Overview

The program requires 66 hours where at least six of the hours are dissertation hours. The degree plan framework is provided below.

Degree Plan Framework (66 hours)
Required Research Methodology (9 hours) - CUIN 8370 Introduction to Educational Research - CUIN 8371 Introduction to Quantitative Educational Research - CUIN 8372 Introduction to Qualitative Educational Research
Elective Research Methodology (6 hours) – examples are listed below; see course schedule each semester to discuss option with your advisor
Required Curriculum and Instruction Core (15 hours) - CUIN 8345 Curriculum and Instruction Seminar - CUIN 8341 Critical Issues & Research in Urban Education - CUIN 8329 Academic Publishing/Presenting - CUIN 8361 The State of the Curriculum Field in Education OR CUIN 7373 - Instructional Strategies for Teaching Adults - CUIN 8352 - Technology Applications for Educational Leaders
Specialization Courses & Electives (24 - 30 hours) - Must include CUIN 8393 - Adv Internship & Practicum - Must include CUIN 8398 – Independent Study
Dissertation (6 - 12 hours) CUIN 8699 Dissertation OR CUIN 8399 Dissertation

Elective Research Methodology Courses (6 hours)
Qualitative Methods - CUIN 8377 - Qualitative Inquiry in Education I - CUIN 8378 - Qualitative Inquiry in Education II - CUIN 8386 - Advanced Issues in Qualitative Research - SAER 8320 - Ethnographic Methods Educ - EDRS 8383 - Action Research - CUIN 7370 - Teacher As Researcher - CUIN 8384 - Experience-Based Research I - CUIN 8385 - Experience-Based Research II
Mixed Methods & Survey Methods & Measurement - PHLS 8300 - Advanced Educational & Psychological Measurement - PHLS 8327 - Longitudinal Data Analysis in Psy/Educ Research - SAER 8321 - Survey Methods in Educ - CUIN 8322 - Mixed Methods Research in Education
Quantitative Methods - PHLS 8321 - Structural Equation Modeling in Psychological and Educational Research - PHLS 8322 - Intermediate Statistical Analysis in Psychological and Educational

Research

- PHLS 8324 - Multivariate Analysis in Psychological and Educational Research

Program Evaluation

- SAER 8370 - Program Evaluation Research

Benchmarks Leading to Becoming a PhD Candidate

A University of Houston (UH) **PhD candidate** is a doctoral student who has completed all required coursework and successfully passed their *comprehensive qualifying exams*. In the CUIN PhD program, *the comprehensive qualifying exam* is the successful completion **CUIN PhD Qualifying Portfolio**, comprised of Reviews 1, 2, and 3. Once you become a PhD candidate, your sole focus is completing dissertation research. Ideally, a full-time student should become a PhD candidate by the end of year 3.

The purpose of the Qualifying Portfolio and the corresponding reviews is to provide a scaffolded approach to demonstrate a developing capacity to become an independent researcher/scholar. Successful completion of the Qualifying Portfolio requirement is an indication that the Ph.D. candidate has developed the necessary knowledge and skills in educational research and scholarship within a disciplinary specialization or across disciplines to independently complete the dissertation requirement. The ideal timeline for when benchmark reviews should occur in conjunction with the required coursework is provided next. The timeline assumes that the student is enrolled full-time. The required coursework is offered on specific cycles as indicated. Students should work with their academic advisor to determine appropriate specialization and elective courses, including CUIN 8393 Adv Internship & Practicum and CUIN 8398 Independent Study.

Timeline

Offerings of Required Coursework Benchmark Timing	
Fall	Spring
Year 1	
CUIN 8345 Doctoral Residency Seminar CUIN 8370 Intro to Educational Research Specialization/Elective	CUIN 8372 Intro to Qualitative Research CUIN 8341 Critical Issues Research Urban Ed CUIN 7373 - Instructional Strategies for Teaching Adults
Successful Completion of Qualifying Portfolio Review 1 by the end of Y1 (18 credit hrs.)	
Year 2	
CUIN 8371 Intro to Quantitative Research CUIN 8352 - Technology Applications for Educational Leaders (odd year) OR CUIN	CUIN 8329 Academic Publishing/Presenting Research Elective or Specialization/Elective Research Elective or Specialization/Elective

8361 The State of the Curriculum Field in Education (even year) Specialization/Elective	
Successful Completion of Qualifying Portfolio Review 2 by the end of Y2 (36 credit hrs.)	
Year 3	
CUIN 8398 Independent Study CUIN 8393 Adv Internship & Practicum Research Elective or Specialization/Elective	
Successful Completion of Qualifying Portfolio Review 3 by the end of Fall of Y3 (45 cr hrs.) Once candidacy project is approved, the candidate is eligible to move forward with dissertation proposal phase and enroll in dissertation hours.	
Years 4 – 6*	
Successful Completion of Dissertation Phase * Note: Many factors influence the completion of the dissertation phase. These factors include, and are not limited to, achieving IRB approval, participant recruitment, time to collect and analyze data, and the candidate's academic writing skills. The candidate should work with their advisor to establish a realistic timeline for their specific research project. The student should also be aware of university and college level deadlines for dissertation submissions and graduation.	

The required components of the QP for each review are provided in the tables below, along with the intended learning outcomes. Descriptions and rubrics for the required documents are in the [CUIN PhD Program SharePoint](#) in the [Program_Info](#) folder.

Each review must happen in a different semester. The academic advisor and the student should work closely together to decide when the student's documentation illustrates the indicated learning outcomes.

Qualifying Portfolio Materials and Learning Outcomes

Qualifying Portfolio Review 1	
Required Documents • Approved degree plan • CV • CITI Certification • Teaching Statement • Research Statement	Learning Outcomes <i>Teaching for Higher Education</i> • Able to distinguish between higher education and K-12 teaching • Able to link research agenda to teaching practice <i>Researcher Positionality</i> • Understands theoretical framing for research

	• Able to articulate researcher stance <i>Research Knowledge</i> • Ethics for human subjects research • Introductory understanding of research design
Qualifying Portfolio Review 2	
Required Documents • Comprehensive literature review • Prospectus of a research proposal • Submitted presentation proposal	Learning Outcomes <i>Researcher Positionality/Identity Development</i> • Informed research position • Engages within discipline <i>Research Knowledge</i> • Able to gather, decipher, and synthesize literature in discipline • Articulate initial ideas for original research in discipline • Engage with disciplinary field to share research and scholarship

Qualifying Portfolio Review 3	
Required Documents	Learning Outcomes
Candidacy Project with Oral Defense	<i>Researcher Positionality/Identity Development</i> • articulate research stance connected to proposed project <i>Research Knowledge</i> • Demonstrates knowledge of research project design • Includes viable research questions informed by disciplinary literature

Qualifying Portfolio/Benchmark Processes and Procedures

This section describes the main tasks of the Qualifying Portfolio Review Processes and who is responsible for what task and when the task should be complete.

What	<i>Intent to Submit Form</i>	<i>Identify Committee & Notify Director</i>	<i>Submit Materials</i>	<i>Review of Materials Feedback to Student Re-submission if needed</i>	<i>Final Scores submitted in LMS</i>
Who	Student	Student & Advisor	Student	Committee	Advisor
When	Friday of 2nd week of classes	By Sept 15 (F) By Feb 15 (Sp)	Early Oct (F) Early Feb (Sp)	Oct – Nov (F) Feb – March (Sp)	Last day of the final exam period.

When

Portfolio reviews occur by the faculty once in the fall semester and once in the spring semester. The academic advisor and the student should work closely together at the beginning of each semester to decide if the student will have the required materials that illustrate the indicated learning outcomes for the given review. Students who intend to submit materials for a review will complete an Intent to Submit form by Friday of the second week of classes in the given semester. The PhD Director then enrolls the student in the QP Canvas course. The review process must be complete, with final scores submitted in the learning management system by 5:00 pm, the last day of the final examination period. Students and advisors should note that there cannot be more than one Review in a semester.

The Committee

The reviewing committee of three faculty is identified by the student and their advisor; two faculty must be in the Curriculum and Instruction Department. The review committee can change for each review. Once faculty agree to serve as reviewers, the advisor emails the PhD Director so that the faculty member can be added to the learning management system to have access to the submitted materials.

The Role of the Advisor

The advisor facilitates the review process and submits the final scores in the learning management system at the end of the review. In order to provide adequate time for the student to revise and resubmit, if needed, it is recommended that the required materials be submitted in the learning management system in early October (fall), and early February (spring) so that written feedback can be provided to the student in case revisions are needed. The student and advisor can negotiate this timeline; however, 1) the committee

must have at least five working days to review the materials, and 2) if the scores are not submitted by the last day of the final examination period, the submission is considered incomplete, and the student will need to resubmit the following semester. Students and advisors should note that there cannot be more than one Review in a semester.

Candidacy Project Processes and Procedures

The candidacy project is the required component of the third QP Review. The candidacy project is comprised of two parts, a paper & an oral defense. The purpose is to show evidence that the potential candidate can conduct, write, and present a comprehensive research project. Prior research projects (e.g., master's thesis, published research articles, and evaluation reports) can be submitted upon approval from the advisor, and must be defended before the review committee.

The paper should include at a minimum the following components:

- a theoretical/conceptual framework
- a review of the research/literature
- description of methods or inquiry procedures

The candidacy project shall be reviewed by a three-member committee that includes the advisor plus two faculty agreed upon by the student and advisor.

The paper should follow guidelines appropriate for the discipline, e.g., see the most current version of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA).

The paper must be circulated to the committee members at least five working days prior to the oral defense. Once approved, the Candidacy Paper and the presentation slides are uploaded as assignments in the Qualifying Portfolio Canvas course. The advisor approves the candidacy paper and oral defense following [GRADMAP 7000](#) processes.

The Dissertation

All Ph.D. students will complete a dissertation proposal and a dissertation following either the traditional model or the three-manuscript option. A dissertation is required to demonstrate that the student can carry out important, independent research in their field and describe the project and its outcomes following academic writing norms. Its conceptualization (at proposal stage) and execution (the completed written research report) represent the final assessment points for the Ph.D. candidate.

The dissertation proposal oral defense can occur after a successful Candidacy defense and after the Dissertation Committee is approved. At this point, the student is eligible to enroll in dissertation hours.

All oral defenses, regardless of the model, must be publicly announced at least ten working days prior to the scheduled oral defense. Additionally, committee members must have the final written document at least ten working days prior to the scheduled oral defense.

Dissertation Committee

The candidate identifies a chairperson, based upon a faculty member's expertise, interest, and willingness to serve in this capacity. Per university policy, the chairperson must be a tenured or tenured-track faculty from the candidate's department. A co-chairperson may be from the candidate's department, another department or from outside the College.

The candidate and the chairperson plan the composition of the dissertation committee to provide expertise in the substantive areas and research design to ensure a high-quality study.

The dissertation committee shall be composed of at least four members where at least two are tenured or tenured-track faculty from the candidate's department or College. Additional committee members can be faculty of the College of Education; or faculty of another college or school of the University of Houston; or a person from outside the University.

A person can hold adjunct faculty status at the University of Houston and be recommended to serve on a dissertation committee on a one-time only basis by the committee chair and approved by the appropriate College designee. A complete vita for the faculty member must be submitted with each approval.

The student must complete the Committee Appointment form found in [GRADMAP 7000](#).

To proceed to candidacy, regardless of the dissertation model, students must write and orally defend a dissertation proposal.

Traditional Dissertation Model

The written document presented for a traditional dissertation proposal defense should closely approximate the first three chapters of the final dissertation itself. In essence, it should represent a near final draft of the first three chapters of the final dissertation. Members of the dissertation committee review this document for potential problem areas or insufficiencies; their goal is to suggest improvements to strengthen the and ensure feasibility of the proposed study.

At the proposal stage of the traditional dissertation model the student must demonstrate the ability to identify research questions, explain the importance of those research

questions, situate them in the literature, identify data sources, develop an analytic approach that would enable them to execute the study, and present a concrete plan for execution including the needed study documents. The proposal may identify qualitative, descriptive, quantitative non-causal, or causal empirical research questions that address important issues in education of interest to the student and relevant to the field.

Three-manuscript Dissertation Model

In a three-manuscript dissertation, at least two of the manuscripts must be empirical studies and the other may be a literature review, a manuscript translating research to practice, a meta-analysis, or a meta-synthesis. Approval of the dissertation proposal involves the committee's judgment of the high quality of the proposed work. Neither submission to peer-reviewed journals nor acceptance is required.

For three-manuscript dissertation ***proposals***, the written document presented for the dissertation proposal defense should feature at least one completed manuscript, one manuscript that is completed or in progress, and one manuscript that is at the proposal stage. Members of the dissertation committee review all three manuscripts for potential problem areas or insufficiencies, paying relatively more attention to manuscripts that are at the proposal stage or in progress; their goal is to suggest improvements to strengthen the proposed study.

The proposal should include an introductory document that describes the conceptual linkages among all three manuscripts, briefly summarizes each paper, articulates a progression of investigation in the topical area studied, indicates the candidate's role in each paper, and describes the status of the paper (e.g., manuscript 1 has been revised and resubmitted for publication). The introduction should also include a timetable that details the completion and planned submission of each paper to a peer-reviewed journal.

Co-authored papers with faculty or other doctoral students may be included in the dissertation with approval from the advisor. For a co-authored paper to be approved for inclusion in the dissertation, the student must be the primary contributor to the research ideas(s) and the executor of the paper(s). In many education-related disciplines, this means the student will be first author on the three manuscripts. In disciplines in which authors are not listed in order of principal contributions, a letter from the first author, if not the student, should document the student's role as principal author. If a manuscript has multiple student authors, the manuscript cannot be included in more than one student's

dissertation; the student making the principal contribution has the option of including the manuscript in their dissertation.

Similar to the traditional dissertation model, for each manuscript that is an empirical study, at the proposal stage the student must demonstrate the ability to identify research questions, explain the importance of those research questions, situate them in the literature, identify data sources, develop an analytic approach that would enable them to execute the study, and identify limitations of their approach. The proposal may identify qualitative, descriptive, quantitative non-causal, or causal empirical research questions that address important issues in education of interest to the student. The dissertation proposal must, if executed as proposed, contribute to the field and the resulting manuscripts should be submission-ready to peer-reviewed journals.

Academic Advising, Student Progress and Annual Review

Advising and valid contact information

The student's relationship with his or her faculty advisor is one of the primary means by which the program monitors and facilitates student progress through the program.

Students are expected to maintain regular contact with their faculty advisors throughout their matriculation, keep their faculty advisors apprised of any problems or concerns that may affect their academic work, complete degree plans in close consultation with their faculty advisors, and seek their faculty advisor's consultation and assistance as appropriate.

Students must keep their *myUH* accounts updated with their UH email address and destination email address, mailing address and telephone number that will enable the faculty advisor to reliably contact the student. The faculty advisor must be able to have confidence that time-sensitive and/or important information will be delivered to the student.

Changing Faculty Advisors

Based on similar interests identified during the application process, a doctoral program advisor is assigned to each student upon acceptance into the program. The initial assignment of a faculty advisor considers current faculty advising loads, a variety of other factors, and the compatibility of research interests between the student and the faculty member. This primary advisor assists the student in planning a program of study to meet degree requirements and the student's professional goals. However, during the first year or beyond, a student's research may diverge from the advisor's area of expertise or interest. In this case, the student or the faculty member may request a change in assignment.

Students who desire to change their faculty advisors should first alert their current faculty advisor about this intention prior to soliciting other faculty as potential faculty advisors. Once this reassignment has been approved, the student will complete and submit a Request for Change of Advisor Form in the [GRADMAP 7000](#).

Annual and Ongoing Review

Along with the Qualifying Portfolio reviews, the overall progress of all doctoral students is evaluated annually by faculty advisors associated with the Ph.D. program. Students are given feedback each year concerning the outcome of this evaluation. Students are in good standing if they:

- Register continuously at the University in courses consistent with the approved degree plan or seek a formal leave of absence from the program if they must interrupt their enrollment.
- Maintain close contact with their faculty advisor concerning progress toward the degree.
- Make adequate progress in their research in accordance with the length of time that the student has enrolled in the program.
- Maintain adequate progress and performance in their coursework.
- Maintain adequate progress in their QP Benchmark Reviews
- An annual review is submitted in [GRADMAP 7000](#) no later than May of each year throughout their program.

Adequate Progress

A student is **not** making adequate progress if:

- Enrollment is interrupted without an approved formal leave of absence.
- Student is not making performing adequately in coursework.
- After 27 completed hours, the student has not successfully completed QP Benchmark Review 1
- After 45 completed hours, the student has not successfully completed QP Benchmark Review 2
- After 54 completed hours, the student has not successfully completed the Candidacy Project (QP Benchmark Review 3)

If a student is identified as not making adequate progress, then an Action Plan will be developed by the student and advisor for submission to the CUIN PhD Director and Office of Graduate Student Success. Failure to adhere to the conditions of the Action Plan may lead to dismissal from the program.



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