

2025-26

# STUDENT HANDBOOK

Ph.D. in Higher Education Leadership  
& Policy Studies



College of Education

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

## Welcome

Congratulations on your acceptance to the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies (ELPS) in the University of Houston’s College of Education! By joining our graduate, certificate, and accelerated certification programs, you become part of a Tier One research community dedicated to preparing compassionate, transformative leaders who improve educational outcomes for every learner. Whether you aspire to lead a school, district, university office, community organization, or policy initiative, ELPS offers the rigorous curriculum, scholarly expertise and richly diverse Houston partnerships to help you advance your career and serve the public good.

This Student Handbook complements—yet does not replace—the University of Houston and College of Education policies and procedures outlined in their official documents (including the College’s Graduate Student Success Handbook). Here you will find ELPS- and program-specific expectations, milestones, resources, and support services to guide your academic and professional journey. Because policies evolve, the information in this handbook is subject to change; your program will keep you informed of any updates, and individual programs may issue additional handbooks for specialized requirements.

We are thrilled to welcome you to our vibrant community of students, faculty, and alumni committed to leading equitable, evidence-based change across the educational pipeline. We look forward to learning with you and celebrating your accomplishments!

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## Educational Leadership & Policy Studies (ELPS) Team

The ELPS Department supports students from application to graduation—and beyond—as you grow into a transformative leader and Coog alum!

The Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies provides leadership and ongoing support for our graduate programs, faculty, and students. Our goal is to foster excellence in all aspects of the graduate experience, including teaching, advising, scholarship, and professional development. We serve as a hub for communication, guidance, and advocacy within the department and act as a liaison between our students, program faculty, and the College of Education. We work closely with the College's Graduate Student Success team and the UH Graduate School to help ensure our students have access to the resources, services, and support needed to achieve their academic and professional goals.

### Team members

- Dr. Kristen Hassett – Department Chair & Clinical Professor, [khassett@cougarnet.uh.edu](mailto:khassett@cougarnet.uh.edu)
- Dr. Keith Butcher – Associate Chair for Certification & Accreditation, [kbutche2@cougarnet.uh.edu](mailto:kbutche2@cougarnet.uh.edu)
- Dr. Vincent Carales – Associate Chair for Research & Development, [vcarales@cougarnet.uh.edu](mailto:vcarales@cougarnet.uh.edu)
- Dr. Charlotte Carp – Associate Chair for Curriculum & Student Success, [ccarp@cougarnet.uh.edu](mailto:ccarp@cougarnet.uh.edu)
- Mr. Norquezdan Florence – Program Manager 2, [njfloren@cougarnet.uh.edu](mailto:njfloren@cougarnet.uh.edu)
- Ms. Deborah Gary – Program Coordinator 2, [dagary@cougarnet.uh.edu](mailto:dagary@cougarnet.uh.edu)

### Contact us

- McElhinney, Suite 3001
- Email ELPS: [delps@cougarnet.uh.edu](mailto:delps@cougarnet.uh.edu)

### Higher Education Faculty

Additional information about the Higher Education program faculty is available on our website:

<https://www.uh.edu/education/departments/elps/faculty/>.

## Institutional and College of Education Resources

For information about university-wide and college-level resources, please refer to the Graduate Student Success (GSS) Handbook. The following section provides department-specific resources and guidance relevant to students in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies.

### Departmental IRB Requirement

When submitting your IRB application, please select **Dr. Vincent Carales** as the Department-level approver for Educational Leadership & Policy Studies (ELPS). This step is required for routing and review of your IRB application.

### Higher Education Listservs and Microsoft SharePoint and Stream

All students are added to a program listserv using their UH email and are expected to read emails regularly. Program faculty share important information via the listserv, e.g., program deadlines, funding opportunities, professional development events, announcements, etc.

All students also have access to the [HELPS Community SharePoint and Stream](#) platforms through Office365. The SharePoint site serves as a repository for resources related to our program. Students should bookmark this page to reference often, as program documents and links are accessible through the site. The Microsoft Stream site includes video recordings of past professional development sessions. Students should be automatically added to these platforms, but can also [request access](#).

### Grievances

Students may grieve any faculty decision or action that affects their progress through the program. If the student chooses to grieve, he or she must follow the formal [grievance](#) procedures as specified in the [ELPS Student Grievance Policy](#), the [College of Education Student Grievance Policy](#), and in the [UH Graduate Studies Catalog](#).

## Advising

The student's relationships with their academic and faculty advisor are the primary means by which the program monitors and facilitates student progress through the program and professional and personal competency development. Students are expected to maintain regular contact with their advisors throughout their matriculation, keep their advisors apprised of any problems or concerns that may affect their academic work, complete degree plans in close consultation with their advisors, and seek their advisor's consultation and assistance as appropriate.

Each Ph.D. student is matched with a faculty advisor upon admission into the Higher Education program. This assignment is based on scholarly and methodological congruence and is highly related to student preference. Faculty advisors will serve as chair for the student's candidacy and dissertation research unless the student requests and is approved to switch faculty advisors (please see the next section for more details related to this process). The faculty advisor and administrative staff within the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies serve as resources and will provide guidance on where to go to get more information about the University of Houston, College of Education, and ELPS policies and procedures. Information about these policies and procedures as well as program requirements not described in this handbook can be discussed with your faculty advisor.

Visit the [ELPS website](#) to access faculty and staff contact phone numbers and email addresses.

### Changing Faculty Advisors

Students who desire to change their faculty advisors should first alert their current faculty advisor and the Program Director about this intention prior to soliciting other faculty as potential faculty advisors. Once this reassignment has been approved, the student must complete and submit a Request for Change of Advisor Form on MyAdvisor so that this change is officially recognized. If the student's efforts to secure another faculty member to serve as faculty advisor are unsuccessful, the student's current faculty advisor should bring this matter to the attention of the Associate Chair for Curriculum & Student Success. The student's current faculty advisor continues serving in this capacity until another faculty member in the Program agrees to accept the student as a new advisee. If none of the faculty are willing to accept the students as an advisee, the ELPS Department Chair will appoint an advisor on a time limited basis.

## Student Benchmarks

### Degree Plan Approval

Students in the program are required to complete a Degree Plan via MyAdvisor that lists the coursework a student will complete for the degree. The degree plan should be submitted in the early stage of a student's program, by the end of the first semester. Degree plan approvals are automatically routed to the appropriate signatories. To make changes to an approved degree plan, students submit via MyAdvisor a "Submit/Change Degree Plan" form indicating the changes to the degree plan and the reason for such changes. Please contact your advisor if you have questions about your degree plan.

### Coursework & Benchmark Requirements

The curriculum for the HELPS Ph.D. program involves the completion of specific coursework that includes foundations of educational theory, leadership and administration, public policy, statistics, and research methodology. Completion of the program typically requires at least three years of full-time study and four years of part-time study, inclusive of coursework, candidacy research project, comprehensive exam, and dissertation.

Since degree plans are enhanced periodically to support continuous improvement planning objectives, students will follow their approved degree plan that is in place at the time in which they complete an official, approved degree plan.

The specific course sequencing for each incoming cohort will be provided at the beginning of the program. Contact your advisor regarding questions related to course content, course sequence, and benchmarks.

There are four (4) key benchmarks within the HELPS Ph.D. Program: Doctoral Residency Report, Candidacy Research Paper, Comprehensive Exam Portfolio, and Doctoral Dissertation. These benchmarks are scaffolded in a way that assists students in developing the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions for graduate student socialization, as well as to successfully complete this doctoral degree.

### Core Requirements and Continuous Enrollment

The University of Houston requires that doctoral students complete a period of full-time residency consisting of one academic year (i.e., fall, spring, and summer in each year) of continuous full-time enrollment. Students in the HELPS doctoral program are required to complete at least 6 hours of coursework each semester (i.e., Fall, Spring, and Summer) to satisfy doctoral residency requirements. Students should reference the schedule of course offerings and, in consultation with their faculty advisor, identify the courses required for a given semester.

#### *Program Core Requirements (30 hours)*

Students in the HELPS doctoral program are required to complete a Program Core consisting of 10 courses (30 hours). The 10 required courses are listed below.

| <b>Course Number</b> | <b>Course Name</b>                 |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| ELCS 8342            | Current Issues in Higher Education |

| <b>Course Number</b> | <b>Course Name</b>   |
|----------------------|--|
| ELCS 8375            | History & Philosophy of Higher Education                     |
| ELCS 7371            | Higher Education Law   |
| ELCS 8331            | Finance in Higher Education                                  |
| ELCS 8332            | Student Development in Postsecondary Institutions            |
| ELCS 8335            | Seminar in Adult Education                                   |
| ELCS 8338            | Administration of Higher Education in Multicultural Settings |
| ELCS 8380            | Higher Education Policy                                      |
| ELCS 8360            | Studies in Postsecondary Education                           |
| ELCS 8397            | Seminar Topics in ELCS: Economics of Education               |

*Research Methods Core Requirements (15 hours)*

Students in the HELPS program are required to complete a Research Methods Core consisting of 5 courses (15 hours).

| <b>Course Number</b> | <b>Course Name</b>                |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| EDRS 8380            | Research Methods in Education     |
| EDRS 8382            | Statistical Analyses in Education |
| SAER 8320            | Ethnographic Methods in Education |
| ELCS 8330*           | Statistical Analyses              |
| ELCS 8322*           | Advanced Ethnographic Methods     |

*\*Students may substitute ELCS 8330 and ELCS 8322 for other Advanced Methods Courses with Advisor Approval*

*Independent Research Requirements (9 hours minimum)*

- SAER 8388 Residency Research Course** - This course is primarily designed to provide students with an opportunity to work toward developing a candidacy or dissertation research proposal in higher education leadership and policy studies. Throughout the semester, students will explore with their peers' research problem development, theoretical foundations, methodology, and data analysis strategies to launch their candidacy or dissertation research. The format is intended to facilitate substantive progress towards refining a candidacy or dissertation topic and preparing a draft proposal. This course is also designed to help students cultivate effective academic writing habits by introducing and reinforcing academic writing support strategies.
- ELCS 8399 Doctoral Dissertation (for a total of at least 6 hours)** - As described in more detail below, students are required to complete at least 6 hours of Dissertation during their studies. Three (ELCS 8399) of the six dissertation hours must be taken in the semester when students complete their Doctoral Dissertation (i.e., the semester of final defense of the dissertation). Students may register for additional dissertation hours, but only 6 hours may be listed on their degree plan. After first enrolling in dissertation hours, a student must be continually enrolled in dissertation hours (at least 3 hours) every Fall/Spring semester until they graduate.

*Doctoral Residency Report – Professional Development Activities*

In addition to full-time enrollment, students in the HELPS program must complete a Professional Development requirement during their first year. Students are required to complete a separate Residency Report via MyAdvisor following the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters of their first year in the program that will serve to satisfy their doctoral residency/professional development requirements. Copies of this form are available online at MyAdvisor. These forms must be approved by the student's academic advisor, the associate chair for curriculum & student success, the chair of the department, and the Dean or their designee.

Within the residency year (Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters of the first year), the following professional development activities listed below are required. **Activities completed each semester should be listed on separate Residency Reports for each semester.** At a minimum, students should complete activities and list them on the first page of the Residency Report for each semester. Students should consult with their advisor regarding selection of additional activities that will augment their academic preparation in scholarship, teaching, and service, such as attending presentations of scholarly speakers at the University of Houston or elsewhere (e.g., Rice University, the Medical Center, in the community), and assisting other doctoral students with data collection, etc.

1. Attendance at least one defense of a dissertation proposal in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.
2. Attendance at least one defense of a dissertation final paper in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.
3. Attendance in at least two (2) professional development experiences. These can include:
  - a. a local, state, or national conference that pertains to education or a relevant social science. The sessions attended should be individually listed.
  - b. an academic or professional conference, sponsored by the College of Education, when offered. The sessions attended should be individually listed.
  - c. a higher education conference, sponsored by the University of Houston or other Institution of Higher Education in Houston (e.g., Rice University, Texas Southern University, Prairie View A&M University, Houston City College, etc.).
4. Student or professional membership in a professional organization (e.g., American Educational Research Association (AERA), Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, ACPA – College Students Educators International, Council for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC)
5. Meet with a Higher Education faculty member, external of your advisor, with whom you may have scholarly or professional alignment.

The following activities are encouraged to support your transition into and socialization within the academic community:

1. Serve as a peer reviewer for an academic conference (e.g., AERA, ASHE, CSCC, etc.) or peer-reviewed journal.
2. Schedule a one-on-one meeting with the University of Houston Librarian for the College of Education to help advance your ability to access and use information for your coursework and research.
3. Schedule a graduate consultation with the UH Writing Center, as “they work with students to develop and structure their ideas and organize their thoughts by engaging them in meaningful and purposeful conversations about their writing, usually within the context of given assignments.”

## Academic Milestones

Students in the HELPS program are required to satisfy three academic milestones:

- (1) Candidacy Paper
- (2) Comprehensive Portfolio
- (3) Doctoral Dissertation.

### Candidacy Research Paper

Doctoral students in the Higher Education Ph.D. program must successfully complete a candidacy paper aimed towards a dissertation-quality proposal as a benchmark for advancement to candidacy. The evaluation committee reviews the submitted candidacy paper using the HELPS evaluation rubric and assigns a result of Pass, Conditional Pass, or Fail. Successful completion of this benchmark is required before students can advance to the dissertation proposal phase.

Working independently, students prepare a manuscript that includes the first three chapters of a traditional dissertation—Introduction, Literature Review, and Methodology—or, for a manuscript-based dissertation, a unifying introduction and detailed proposals for three related manuscripts. Students are advised to start planning their candidacy research paper early in their program of study. The progress of a student could be delayed significantly if a candidacy research paper is not completed during the Spring semester of the second year for full time students and during the Spring semester of the third year for part time students. The candidacy research paper requirement must be successfully completed before a student can schedule their dissertation proposal defense meeting.

The following are some guidelines for doctoral students regarding the completion of a candidacy research paper:

#### *Forming a Candidacy Evaluation Committee*

- a. A student's Candidacy Evaluation committee must consist of at least four faculty members. The candidacy committee must be chaired, or co-chaired, by a core program faculty member (tenured or tenure-track) of the HELPS program. The faculty member who chairs the student's candidacy paper becomes the student's dissertation advisor. If the research area of a student is not matched by members of the HELPS core program faculty, the student should consult with their academic advisor to identify an external faculty of the higher education program to co-direct the candidacy paper and serve as co-chair of a student's candidacy committee.
- b. The student and the candidacy chair identify individuals to serve on the student's committee based on the nature of the research questions and the methods adopted. It is important for the committee to consist of individuals who can provide conceptual and methodological support for the student's specific research area. In all cases, the committee must have at least two core program faculty members with appointments in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. The candidacy committee must also include a designated methodologist.

- c. If an external member is needed due to their specialized expertise, they can serve as the fourth committee member. External committee members can be external to the University of Houston but must hold a Ph.D. or other terminal degree in a relevant field.

### Comprehensive Examination Portfolio

All students in the HELPS program are required to submit a Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Portfolio and pass the faculty review of this portfolio. This section describes the current requirements, policies, and procedures regarding this process.

#### *Timeline*

Students are advised to become familiar with and initiate work on the components of the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Portfolio in the first two years of doctoral studies; however, it may take two or more years to satisfy all requirements. Successful completion of the Comprehensive Examination Portfolio must occur before a student can schedule their dissertation proposal defense. In some cases, students may defend their dissertation proposal in the same semester when they submit their Comprehensive Examination Portfolio; however, they can't schedule their dissertation proposal until they pass the Comprehensive Examination Portfolio. Students will have multiple opportunities per year to submit their portfolio materials. Typically, these deadlines will occur on the first day of the month each academic semester (e.g., September 1, October 1, November 1, December 1). Exact dates for the application deadlines are available in the [HELPS SharePoint](#). To initiate a review of their portfolio, students should complete the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Portfolio Application form available online through MyAdvisor prior to each monthly submission deadline.

#### *Required Components and Supporting Evidence*

The Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Portfolio requires students to gather and present evidence that they have successfully completed activities/requirements in each of six components that together make up the portfolio. The six components include:

1. Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Submission Form,
2. Goal Statement and Curriculum Vita,
3. Foundations of HELPS Program,
4. Scholarship,
5. Teaching, and
6. Professional Development.

A more detailed description of the requirements of each component can be found in the [HELPS SharePoint](#). Except where specifically noted in these policies or previously approved, accomplishments or experiences substantially completed prior to initial enrollment in the HELPS program cannot be used to satisfy any of the portfolio components. It is in the best interest of the student to consult with their advisor from the beginning of the doctoral studies as to the best way to match portfolio components to the student's career goals. The importance of seeking faculty input on these matters cannot be overstated! Students must provide specific supporting evidence to document that they have successfully completed each of the necessary components of the Comprehensive Examination Portfolio. Materials must be submitted online via MyAdvisor (signed forms or other artifacts should be scanned and submitted as PDFs). In addition, Higher Education faculty may

request specific additional materials when necessary to better document the successful completion of any component.

### *Evaluation Procedures*

Portfolio materials are reviewed by the Higher Education Faculty. Faculty evaluators will consider independently all materials submitted by each student. Next, the Higher Education Faculty will meet to complete a single Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Evaluation Form for each student's portfolio. Using this form, designated faculty evaluators will assign a score of Pass or Fail to each portfolio component. A minimum of two faculty members (faculty are excluded from evaluating their own student advisee's portfolio) must agree that the student has fulfilled the necessary portfolio requirements. All six components must receive a Pass for the overall portfolio to be given an overall score of Pass. The Higher Education faculty will provide a written evaluation of the comprehensive exam portfolio for all students within 45 days of each submission deadline.

### *Remediation*

If faculty who evaluate a student's portfolio determines that the student has not fulfilled the necessary requirements for any component of the portfolio, the student has failed that component and cannot pass the overall Comprehensive Examination Portfolio. The student will receive an explanation as to why they have failed to pass the doctoral comprehensive examination and identify any specific deficiencies needing improvement. For any subsequent submission deadline, students can revise and resubmit their portfolio materials. Any specific portfolio components that were passed in the first doctoral comprehensive examination submission will be considered passed for the second doctoral comprehensive examination submission and will not be re-evaluated. The student will only be required to resubmit supporting materials (i.e., revised doctoral comprehensive examination submission form, revised supporting evidence) for the doctoral comprehensive examination component(s) that they did not pass on a first attempt. Alternatively, the student may opt to submit supporting materials for a specific doctoral comprehensive examination component that was not previously reviewed by the doctoral comprehensive examination evaluation committee but also satisfies the requirements and replaces the originally reviewed component. Doctoral students can apply and submit Comprehensive Examination Portfolio materials for review a maximum of two times. A student who fails to pass all components of the Comprehensive Examination Portfolio upon the second attempt will be terminated from the HELPS program and become ineligible for the degree.

### *Doctoral Dissertation*

The final milestone in the HELPS program is the completion of a doctoral dissertation. A student is expected to complete a major research study within the general domain of higher education independently, but under the direction of a faculty dissertation advisor. The HELPS program provides two options students can choose from to fulfill the dissertation requirement: the 'traditional' format, and the manuscript-based (three journal articles) format. The decision regarding which dissertation format to follow should be informed by the student's scholarly and professional goals. Accordingly, before beginning their dissertation work it is imperative that each student make this decision in close consultation with the chair of their dissertation committee. Students must receive approval from their dissertation chair to conduct a manuscript-based dissertation. A supplemental document that outlines the difference between these two formats and provides guidelines for students who wish to complete a manuscript-based dissertation is included in the appendix and is uploaded to the HELPS SharePoint.

The dissertation committee must be chaired, or co-chaired, by a core program faculty member (tenured or tenure-track) of the HELPS program. The college policies regarding the completion of a doctoral dissertation are presented in the Doctoral Policies, Procedures, and Program Guide and in the College of Education Thesis and Dissertation Guide. It is the responsibility of students to be aware of college rules and regulations, including those concerning doctoral dissertations. The doctoral dissertation requires frequent communication between the faculty and the student. Students are permitted to do formal dissertation work after they have successfully completed the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Portfolio.

#### *Registration for Dissertation Credits (6 hours minimum)*

Once students sign up for dissertation credits, they must continuously enroll for a minimum of 3 credits of dissertation every subsequent Fall and Spring semester until the Dissertation is completed. **During the semester of the final defense, students must enroll for 3 credits of Dissertation Hours.** Summer enrollment is only required if the student is actively engaged in the Dissertation and using university resources (meeting with faculty, using library or computer resources, discussing content with faculty on the telephone or via email, requesting feedback, etc.).

The following is a step-by-step description of the dissertation process:

#### *Forming a Dissertation Committee*

- a. A student identifies a core program faculty member (tenured or tenure-track) of the HELPS program to serve as a dissertation chair and research advisor. If the research area of a student is not matched by members of the HELPS core program faculty, the student should consult with their faculty advisor to identify an external person to co-direct the dissertation and serve as co-chair of a student's dissertation committee.
- b. The student works with their dissertation advisor to identify a general research area, the literature base of this area, and the research questions to be addressed.
- c. The student and their dissertation chair identify individuals to serve on the student's dissertation committee based on the nature of the research questions and the method adopted. It is important for the committee to consist of individuals who can provide conceptual and methodological support for the student's specific research area.
- d. A student's dissertation committee must consist of at least four members. At least two of the members of the student's dissertation committee must be core program faculty of the HELPS program with appointments in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. One committee member must be designated as a methodologist. One of the committee members may be an external person.
- e. If there is a need to invite an external member because of their expertise, this external person can serve as the fourth or fifth committee member. External committee members can be external to the University of Houston but must hold a Ph.D. or other terminal degree in a relevant field<sup>1</sup>.
- f. Approval is needed to formalize the committee by submitting an Appointment of Dissertation/Thesis Committee form online via MyAdvisor. This form must be approved by the students' advisor, the Chair of the Department, and the Dean or their designee.
- g. Changes in a student's dissertation committee must be formally approved by the Dean or Dean's designee.

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<sup>1</sup> Students must upload the CV and contact information for external committee members in MyAdvisor (as an attachment together with the Appointment of Dissertation Committee Request form).

### *Dissertation Proposal Defense*

- a. Students are expected to develop a dissertation research proposal under the supervision of their dissertation chair.
- b. A preliminary draft of a student's dissertation proposal must be approved by all members of the dissertation committee. After the approval is obtained, the student is required to write an abstract of this proposal to be distributed electronically to all the faculty members of the College of Education at least 10 working days prior to the proposal's defense meeting. The student is also responsible for notifying the ELPS department of the defense date so that it can be publicized.
- c. The student must schedule an oral defense of the proposal when approval is received from the dissertation committee chair and members. The Dean or their designee must be notified of the date and time of the proposal defense at least 10 working days before the actual date of the oral defense. This is done by the student in MyAdvisor (upload abstract and defense date, time, and location). The student is also responsible for notifying the department of the defense date so that it can be publicized. The student must have successfully completed the comprehensive examination portfolio prior to holding an oral defense of their dissertation proposal.
- d. During the scheduled oral defense, students are expected to present their research proposal to all the members of the dissertation committee. Utilizing the HELPS Candidacy and Dissertation rubric, members of the committee may approve the proposal as written and presented, suggest changes, or disapprove the proposal. Dissertation proposal defense meeting will be a meeting open to students and faculty of the university; the student and guests will be asked to leave the room when the committee is deliberating before and after the oral presentation.

### *IRB Training/Data Collection for Doctoral Dissertation Research*

Review and oversight of research involving human subjects or identifiable data derived from human subjects is the charge of a federally mandated committee called an Institutional Review Board, or IRB. The University of Houston has two IRBs, collectively known as the Committees for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS). CPHS is responsible for safeguarding the rights and welfare of all persons participating in research projects.

All University of Houston faculty, staff, or students proposing to engage in any research activity involving the use of human subjects must have approval from the Committees for the Protection of Human Subjects prior to the recruitment for, and initiation of, research procedures.

It is important to remember: The University of Houston will not allow data collected prior to IRB certification or IRB research study approval to be utilized for any research project. Practically, the previous statement means that any student preparing to collect qualitative or quantitative data for thesis development, proposal, or doctoral thesis MUST BE certified by the [University of Houston Institutional Review Board](#).

Then, the student must fill out the appropriate IRB forms - and receive approval - to collect data. [IRB training information](#) is available online.

Contact your dissertation chair with questions. Students may pursue IRB as soon as the dissertation chair agrees on the question. The proposal does not need to be defended prior to pursuing IRB.

### *Data Collection and Initial Drafts for Dissertation*

- a. Students are not permitted to carry out data collection for dissertation until the proposal is formally approved by all members of the dissertation committee after an oral defense. Data that are collected before the proposal is officially approved may or may not be considered acceptable by the dissertation committee. Students may be required to collect additional data.
- b. If data collection is required, the student must obtain approval from the University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects before starting data collection. Approval by this committee is also needed in cases where archival or public data is used. The approval process can take up to one to two months. Information regarding human subjects approval is available from the [Office of Policies, Compliance, and Committees](#).
- c. Students are expected to carry out the research study described in the proposal under the supervision of the dissertation chair. Planning is important, and each student should meet and design a timeline with their research advisor. Students must take into consideration the time it takes to complete the data collection and analysis, and the time needed for faculty to review the paper.
- d. After data collection and analysis are completed, students write an initial draft of the dissertation. Feedback and comments based on the initial draft should be solicited primarily from the student's chair and methodologist. The student should obtain feedback from other committee members on subsequent drafts. All committee members must have an opportunity to provide feedback and suggest revisions before the final defense copy of the dissertation is completed.

### *Final Draft and Dissertation Defense*

- a. A dissertation must be formally presented to the members of the student's dissertation committee. Prior to the scheduled defense, a student obtains approval from the chair and members of the committee. A final defense draft of the dissertation must be submitted to all the members at least 10 working days prior to the defense date.
- b. Students must prepare an abstract of the dissertation (500 words or less) that meets College of Education standards. The abstract of the final defense draft of the dissertation must be distributed electronically to all the faculty members of the College of Education at least 10 working days prior to the final oral defense meeting.
- c. The student must schedule the final oral defense when approval is received from the dissertation committee chair and members. The Dean or their designee must be notified of the date and time of the final oral defense at least 10 working days before the actual date of the final oral defense. This is done by the student in MyAdvisor (upload abstract and defense date, time, and location). The student is also responsible for notifying the ELPS department of the defense date so that it can be publicized.
- d. During the final oral defense, the committee may approve, suggest changes, or disapprove the dissertation. Dissertation final oral defense meeting will be a meeting open to students and faculty of the university; student and guests will be asked to leave the room when the committee is deliberating before and after the oral presentation.
- e. Students must make an appointment in advance and meet with a graduate studies staff person in the College of Education Office of Graduate Studies to submit a final copy of their dissertation. Information concerning the formal requirements of the final copy of your dissertation (e.g., type of paper, number of copies, etc.) is described in the Thesis and Dissertation Guide.

*Doctoral Dissertation Proposals and Defenses Information*

Information regarding dissertation submission deadlines, formatting, and the final submission process is available online on the Theis and Dissertation Resources webpage: <https://www.uh.edu/education/student-services/graduate-office/current-students/grad-student-resources/index.php>. The page also contains information about upcoming dissertation proposals and final defenses in the College of Education.

*Doctoral Dissertation Resources*

The CITE Training Library, located at <https://uofh.sharepoint.com/sites/citelab/SitePages/training-library.aspx>, is the primary location for students at the dissertation stage to view step-by-step video tutorials, view an approved sample manuscript, view tips, etc. that meet APA, UH, and College standards.