



Doctor of Education (Ed.D.):

Student Handbook

Doctor of Education: Educational Leadership

Empowering Scholar-Practitioners for Transformative Equity-Based Impact

Table of Contents

Welcome Message from the Program Director – 3

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – 4

CMU Support Team

CMU & CEH Department Overview - 5

Doctor of Education Overview - 6

Program Overview: Program Mission and Vision – 7

Program Contacts & Supports - 8

Program Faculty - 8

Global and Social Justice Commitment – 9

Technology & Research Resources – 9

CMU Resources – 9

Social Media - 11

Starting a Cohort

Orientation: Summer Doctoral Institute - 12

Get ConnectEdD Mentoring Program – 12

Academic Advising – 12

Graduate Assistantships – 12

Academic Expectations – 13

Cohort Expectations and Norms – 13

APA 7 Style - 14

Programmatic Efforts

Ed.D. Program Overview and Student Learning Outcomes - 14

Ed.D. Course Sequencing - 15

Ed.D. Coursework & Registration - 16

Synchronous Saturdays – 16

Comprehensive Exams

Comprehensive Exam Guidelines – 17

Ed.D. Academic Integrity Policy (Comprehensive Exams and Program Coursework) - 18

Comprehensive Exams and Chair Selection - 19

Artificial Intelligence Tools - 21

Alumni Initiatives

Doctor of Education Alumni Board – 22

Alumni Hall of Fame: Doctorate in Educational Leadership – 22

Appendix - 23

Welcome! You belong here . . . with us at CMU!

Welcome to the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership program at Central Michigan University! You are now part of a community of leaders, scholars, and change agents committed to fostering equity, advancing innovation, and improving systems of education and social practice. This program will support your journey as a transformative educational leader in local, national, and global contexts. The faculty and support team are all thrilled to have you join our community of scholar-practitioners who are committed to transforming education through research, leadership, and equity-focused practice.

Beginning a doctoral journey is a significant milestone—one that will challenge, stretch, and ultimately empower you to change your environment and your educational institution. Our program is designed to prepare you to lead with purpose, think critically about complex problems of practice, and contribute meaningfully to your field and community. You'll find that this experience is not only about gaining knowledge but also about building lasting relationships within your cohort and with our faculty while also developing your voice as a leader and expanding your impact.

Our dedicated faculty and EdD support staff are here to help you every step of the way. You are not alone on this path—you are now part of a vibrant, supportive cohort of professionals with shared goals and diverse experiences with a goal to join our 250+ doctoral alumni.

We are excited to walk alongside you as peers as you grow, lead, and make a difference.

With great enthusiasm,

Eric Buschlen, EdD, Program Director



FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

How fast can I get this done?

Answer: It depends, and each student is different. While you want to stay focused on graduation, a better approach is to focus on semester-by-semester progress. After you pass the comprehensive exam, things speed up. After you pass your proposal, get chapters 1-3 approved, and collect data – things get SUPER fast. Hold on, graduation is near.

When do I select a dissertation chair?

Answer: After you complete your coursework and attend the “Next Steps” meeting with the Program Director, you will select a chair at the start of that fall semester with a goal of having that person in place by the end of September.

How long does it take to complete the dissertation?

Answer: Again, it varies. The fastest internal dissertation was completed in one year.

What do I do if I need to take a semester off?

Answer: Always start with either your academic advisor, dissertation chair, or the Program Director. Course withdrawals (W) are time sensitive, so it is best to start with the program leaders.

My next class starts soon, should I be doing anything?

Answer: Yes, once the BlackBoard shell is available (typically two weeks before the class starts), be sure to log in and peruse the shell and then place the syllabus dates (live classes, assignments, presentations) onto your calendar. There may be a “get to know each other” activity planned, so please complete that too. There may be times when the course shells or semester may overlap, please know that faculty always want you to FINISH the previous semester’s work before leaping forward into a new one.

What do I do if I have a conflict on a synchronous Saturday?

Answer: Always clear your schedule for class. In the rare case that a conflict or high-profile prior engagement emerges, always direct your communication to the course faculty as soon as possible, and an exception may be made.

What do I do if I’m struggling with my relationship with my dissertation chair?

Answer: While this is rare, it does happen. Our faculty is very student-centered and ready to support you. So, the first step might be to ask for a meeting to discuss the relationship and issues. If that fails or if that is not an option, there are steps to support you moving to

another chair. Please contact the Program Director when/if this happens so that they can help guide you in this process. If the Program Director is also your chair, start with the Department Chair.

What do I do if I'm feeling overwhelmed and possibly leaving the program?

Answer: This does happen, but there is hope and support not far away. In every Summer Doctoral Institute since 2020, the first thing all new students are asked about is their unique "why?" We know that some students become overwhelmed in the first-year swirl. You are balancing life, a career, family, community endeavors, sport practices for your kids, and maybe a touch of impostor syndrome. Just know this...half of our applicants did not get your spot. We see in you the ability to be successful in the program and to balance all the spinning plates you have in the air. Sometimes, taking a step back, discussing things with your family or partner, cohort members, and our supportive faculty will help you understand and remember your "why?" If none of that helps, there are options for you to step away and even other options for you to rejoin when ready.

What happens if I don't pass my comprehensive exam?

Answer: If that happens, you will take it one more time with a new exam question. Failing the second attempt leads to dismissal from the program. This is a reality, but one that you can control by having a strong plan, working closely with your chair, who will craft your unique question, being a good student, attending cohort events to discuss the exam, and just being prepared to answer the question.

How many people are on a dissertation committee?

Answer: Three. The three-person committee will consist of your chair, an Ed.D. faculty member, a second internal Ed.D. faculty member, and a third member who holds a terminal degree and may serve as a content expert.

CMU & CEH Department Overview

Central Michigan University (CMU) was founded in 1892 in Mount Pleasant, Michigan, as the Central Michigan Normal School and Business Institute. On June 1, 1959, with 40 buildings standing on a 235-acre campus and an enrollment of 4,500 students, the Institute was renamed Central Michigan University. This designation reflected growth in the complexity of the school's academic offerings and its physical growth. The College of Education and Human Services, one of CMU's flagship colleges based on the university's historical lineage, is comprised of six departments:

- Counseling, Educational Leadership, and Higher Education
- Fashion and Interior Merchandising

- Human Development and Family Studies
- Master of Science in Administration
- Recreational, Parks, and Leisure Services
- Teacher and Special Education

The Department of Counseling, Educational Leadership, and Higher Education (CEH) offers a full range of graduate degrees to prepare individuals for effective performance in roles as professional trainers, mental health providers, school counselors, PK-12 school and district leaders, and leaders in student affairs, higher education, and social justice. Initially, the Doctor of Education program focused on preparing aspiring school and district leaders for K-12 schools and community agency programs under the umbrella of the Department of Educational Administration and Community Leadership, in 2008 we became the Department of Educational Leadership, and in 2022 we merged with Counseling to become the Department of Counseling, Educational Leadership, and Higher Education.

CEH includes three distinct units: Counseling, Educational Leadership, and Higher Education. The Counseling Unit offers a Master of Counseling (CACREP Accredited). The Educational Leadership confers the Master of Arts (MA) degree in Educational Leadership (CAEP Accredited) and the Specialist in Education (Ed.S.) degree (CAEP Accredited). The Higher Education unit awards the Master of Arts (MA) degrees in Higher Education and Social Justice; the Master of Arts (MA) degree with a concentration in Training and Development; and a graduate certificate in Equity-Centered Teaching and Learning. The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) is a joint degree between Educational Leadership and Higher Education. The Counseling Unit also offers a Master of Counseling (CACREP Accredited).

Doctor of Education Overview

The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program was launched in 1998 as an on-campus program and in 2024 we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the program. As stated previously, its initial focus was advanced preparation for leading K-12 schools. In 2002, the Ed.D. expanded to include higher education – student affairs, administration, instruction, and educational technology. The Ed.D.’s currently prepares students to lead PK-12 and post-secondary organizations. The program is offered as a “blended cohort” inclusive of PK-12, higher education, and an occasional student with a training and development or nonprofit background. The program provides substantial advanced skills refinement, in addition to building a progressive knowledge base within a proven transformational model complete with a traditional research-based dissertation. The Ed.D. degree is designed to prepare individuals seeking careers as high-level educational leaders at school sites, school districts, institutions of higher learning, or state or national-level policymaking and implementation roles. Graduates are competent researchers, and some assume faculty positions.

The Ed.D. degree has four concentrations:

- Higher Education Administration
- PK-12 Leadership
- PK-12 Curriculum
- Educational Technology

Currently, the program is delivered in a hybrid format, the current format began in the 2014-2015 academic year. With a majority of the classes being offered online synchronously, as well as a residency in the first two summers (Year 0 – Summer Doctoral Institute and Year 1 - Course). Courses are eight weeks in length with synchronous meetings every other Saturday from 8 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Ed.D. Program Overview: Mission & Vision Statements

Mission Statement:

We are committed to transforming post-secondary learning through equity-centered leadership and offering degrees and credentials that integrate high-impact teaching practices and applied learning opportunities, creating lasting social change.

Vision Statement:

To be a highly regarded unit for professional development and learning for students seeking to lead transformative change in their educational institutions, communities, and workplaces.

Core Values

- **Equity and Inclusion**
 - **Applied Leadership**
 - **Social Justice and Global Awareness**
 - **Community and Collaboration**
 - **Evidence-Based Practice**
-

Program Structure

- **Credits Required:** 63 post-master's credits
- **Typical Duration:** 3–4 years
- **Core Components:**
 - Systems and Organizations
 - Leadership Theory and Practice
 - Research Design and Inquiry

- Equity and Policy in Education
 - Global and Cultural Perspectives
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Program Contacts & Supports

- Ed.D. Program Director: [Dr. Eric Buschlen, 989-774-2857/busch1el@cmich.edu]
 - CEH Office Administrator: [Michelle Carson, [989-774-3205](tel:989-774-3205)/ceh@cmich.edu]
 - Online Course Administrator: [Collen Zeh, 231-715-4125/Zeh1cm@cmich.edu]
 - CMU ORGS (Office of Graduate Studies): [[989-774-3094](tel:989-774-3094)/orgs@cmich.edu]
 - Technical Support: [Help Desk Phone: 989-774-3662]
 - College of Education and Human Services, Dean's Office: [989-774-3205]
 - University Ombud's Office: [989-774-3010/Ombuds@cmich.edu]
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Program Faculty

- The faculty members listed below all have graduate faculty status as defined by the CMU College of Graduate Studies, as having produced peer-reviewed research within the last five years. The faculty represents diversity in both PK-12 and higher education fields. Ed.D. doctoral faculty are continuously engaged in research with students. All faculty teach, advise, chair, and mentor students in the doctoral program, including dissertation support.

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Name	TT/Temp	Rank	Expertise
Anne M. Hornak, Ph.D.	Tenured	Full Professor	Higher education, community colleges, student affairs
Ben Jankens, Ed.D.	Tenured	Full Professor	K-12, organizational theory, charter school
Matt Johnson, Ph.D.	Tenured	Full Professor	Quantitative/qualitative analysis, higher education, student affairs
Eric Buschlen, Ed.D.	Tenured	Full Professor	Leadership education, student affairs, after-school programs
Gregg Dionne, Ph.D.	Tenured	Associate Professor	K-12, organizational theory, PK-12 policy

Sarah Marshall, Ph.D.	Tenured	Full Professor	Higher education, organizational theory, student affairs
Gina Wilson, Ed.D.	Tenure-Track	Assistant Professor	K-12 administration, equity work, character education, mindfulness

Global and Social Justice Commitment

All students are encouraged to engage with global perspectives and equity-centered leadership. This can happen through strategic study abroad experiences or through planned research. A key program goal is to apply research to disrupt inequity and create inclusive systems of practice.

Technology & Research Resources

- **Online Learning Platform:** BlackBoard Ultra: <https://blackboard.cmich.edu/ultra/course>
 - **Library Access:** 24/7 through the university portal: <https://www.cmich.edu/research/cmu-library>
 - **Writing Support:** Available through the CMU Writing Center: <https://www.cmich.edu/academics/colleges/liberal-arts-social-sciences/centers-institutes/writing-center>
 - **Research Support:** Available through the EHS Library Support personnel, Stephanie Mathson, email: maths1sm@cmich.edu
 - **Career Services:** For leadership development and job placement: <https://www.jobs.cmich.edu>
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CMU Resources

CMU has several resources that are valuable to you as a graduate of the Doctor of Education program. As links may change, go to the CMU Homepage and search for the bold headings below.

Graduate Studies

The Office of Graduate Studies supports and assists all students seeking to continue their education with a graduate or doctoral degree from CMU. This website has helpful links, forms, research grants, and deadlines. (<https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/office-research-graduate-studies/graduate-studies/student-services/forms>)

Graduate Bulletins

The Graduate Bulletin allows you to see CMU academic programs, subjects, and departmental course offerings that show all the requirements for that program. (<https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/curriculum-instructional-support/academic-bulletins>)

Academic bulletins change each year and are valid for seven years. Graduate students generally follow the bulletin in effect at the time of program admission. Following consultation with an advisor, students may elect to follow a more current bulletin. You can access bulletins [here](#).

Graduation

Students should submit a graduation application by the semester *before* their anticipated graduation date. Applications can be submitted through Degree Progress. Applications should be submitted based on the following timeline. However, late applicants may be able to participate in graduation.

- October 1st for spring graduation (the May commencement is Friday evening for master's and doctoral programs – this is a more intimate experience).
- February 1st for summer graduation (August)
- April 1st for fall graduation (December)

Follow this link to the Registrar's FAG page for graduation (<https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/registrars-office/graduation-faq>). Please note that you will apply for graduation through your own student portal.

Completion of Degree Policies

Students should be advised that there are policies on time to degree completion. You can find them here: 2024-2025 Graduate Bulletin » Admission » Duration of Admission Status: Time for Completion of Degree; and link to 'Extension of time' forms (<https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/office-research-graduate-studies/graduate-studies/student-services/forms>)

CEH Departmental Policy: Continued Progress Policy

To encourage degree completion and current knowledge of the dissertation process and research methodology, the faculty in the Department of Counseling, Educational Leadership, and Higher Education (formerly EDL) authorized the following policy:

- EdD students must defend their proposal (Chapters 1, 2, and 3) and have an approved prospectus within 18 months of the end of EDL 897 (e.g. complete the Spring EDL 897 section in May of 2025 and the student must have an approved prospectus by December 2026). Prospectus filing and IRB approval take time (approximately 4-6 weeks), please plan accordingly.
- If a student does not have an approved prospectus on file within the allotted 18-month timeframe, the student will be required to retake EDL 897 the next time EDL 897 is offered.
- When EDL 897 is retaken, the 3 credits will not count toward the student's degree completion and cannot be funded by financial aid.

- Students who miss the 18-month timeframe must retake 897 before reengaging with the dissertation process.
- The policy may be subject to other university policies related to remaining active as a student. A three-year period of inactivity will lead to dismissal from the program.

CMU Policy on Incomplete and Deferred Grades

CMU has a policy on I-Grades or Incompletes and deferred grades. You can find them here: 2024-2025 Graduate Bulletin » Policies and General Information » Academic Policies and Information

1. Academic Probation and Dematriculation as part of Academic and Retention Standards, 2024-2025 Graduate Bulletin » Policies and General Information » Academic Policies and Information » Graduate Academic and Retention Standards.
2. Students become inactive after 3 years of no enrollment (they need to re-apply to the program to enroll in courses) 2024-2025 Graduate Bulletin » Admission » Period of Inactivity
3. Course repeat policy: Students can repeat a course two times with the grade from final attempt used in GPA: 2024-2025 Graduate Bulletin » Policies and General Information » Academic Policies and Information » Graduate Repeat Course Policy
4. Continuous enrollment is no longer required for all students by CMU (your program may have a reason to require it). Be aware students lose access to email, etc.. when not enrolled. Ed.D. students do not need to be enrolled in the summer.
5. Extended Access Requests, <https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/office-research-graduate-studies/graduate-studies/student-services/forms>
6. Incomplete Grades: To request an I-Grade, CMU policy states that a student must complete at least 50% or more of the coursework. Any and all I-Grades must be finalized within one calendar year, or the course may have to be retaken. A student with multiple I-Grades may not be able to register until grades are earned in those courses.

Social Media and Listserv Communication

The department uses several forms of media to stay in communication with both current students and alumni. There is a Facebook Page: “CMU Doctorate in Educational Leadership” shares student and alumni accomplishments, pushes out information regarding important events, dates, and scholarship deadlines. Faculty spotlights are also shared.

CMU also offers many Listserv options to allow for mass emails. There are many Listservs managed by CEH Faculty, including both a current student Ed.D. list and an alumni list. You can always opt out of these emails, but then you may also miss out on vital information.

Starting a Cohort

Orientation: Summer Doctoral Institute

New doctoral cohorts begin in the late summer through mandatory attendance at the Summer Doctoral Institute. This satisfies the first-year residency requirement and attendance is required. The Summer Doctoral Institute is an intensive, in-person orientation program. Orientation includes an overview of the program, program expectations, cohort goal setting, goals of the program, purpose, faculty introductions, team building, and introduction to both the academic and student support services. This process also plays a key role in the first class, EDL 899. The class begins in late August and will be the first class related to doctoral-level work based on three elements: reading, writing, and creating (new knowledge) while continuing to develop the cohort's camaraderie.

Get ConnectEdD Mentoring Program

Beginning with Cohort 30, students were paired with an alumnus from the program in the "Get ConnectEdD" mentoring program during their first year for support, guidance, networking, and career-building opportunities.

Academic Advising

New cohort students receive academic advising from a single faculty member starting in the first fall semester of their cohort experience. Degree plans will be confirmed with your faculty advisor and will be completed as part of the first course, EDL 899: Doctoral Seminar.

Graduate Assistantships

The department does offer a limited number of Graduate Assistantships. These positions require 20 hours of work per week and provide tuition waivers. For more information, please contact the Department Chair.

Academic Expectations

- Maintain a GPA of 3.25 or higher
- Demonstrate consistent progress toward completion
- Exhibit high standards of academic integrity and professionalism
- Participate actively in cohort learning and mentoring
- Pass a comprehensive exam (GPA requirements apply and all Incomplete grades must be finished)
- Dissertation: Conduct original research, successfully defend the proposal and defend the final copy.

Cohort Expectations and Norms

No one on earth will understand your experiences in this doctoral program like the members of your cohort. While many efforts will be made to support and unite the group in the Summer Doctoral Institute, the cohort will be charged with maintaining that group cohesion throughout the program. Some groups set up monthly web-based meetings, have group texts, stay after class to chat, have face-to-face meetings, and share a cohort-based Facebook page. When you are in the Summer Doctoral Institute, your group was asked to create some cohort norms – others should be respected as well.

Here are **10 supportive cohort norms** designed to foster collaboration, trust, and academic success throughout your Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program:

1. **Respect Diverse Perspectives**
Encourage open dialogue and value differing viewpoints, recognizing the diverse professional, cultural, and personal backgrounds each cohort member brings.
2. **Practice Confidentiality and Trust**
Maintain a safe environment by respecting the privacy of cohort discussions and personal reflections.
3. **Engage Consistently and Equally**
Show up—physically or virtually—and contribute meaningfully to discussions, projects, and group work with a shared sense of responsibility.
4. **Give and Receive Constructive Feedback**
Offer feedback that is thoughtful, honest, and intended to help peers grow, while being open to receiving the same.
5. **Celebrate Milestones and Progress**
Acknowledge and celebrate academic and personal wins, from finishing a difficult paper to passing comps or reaching dissertation milestones.
6. **Uplift, Don't Compete**
Replace comparison with collaboration. Support each other's goals and recognize that success is not a limited resource. This program is not meant to be a race to the finish line, but rather a supportive journey.

7. **Be Transparent and Communicative**
Share expectations, challenges, and time constraints openly to prevent misunderstandings and build mutual support.
 8. **Honor Commitments and Deadlines**
Respect each other's time by meeting deadlines, showing up prepared for class meetings, and being accountable in group settings.
 9. **Offer Peer Support and Encouragement**
Check in on one another regularly. A simple message of encouragement can make a big difference in sustaining motivation.
 10. **Maintain a Growth Mindset**
Embrace challenges and setbacks as opportunities for learning. Encourage each other to persist through complexity with resilience and curiosity.
 11. **What else?** Develop norms that fit your group dynamic. This will start in the Summer Doctoral Institute.
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APA 7 Style

The American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition is the standard style guide for scholarly writing in the social and behavioral sciences. You will use APA7 to format all your written work in the program unless otherwise noted in the syllabus. It ensures clarity, consistency, and proper attribution of sources in your academic work. Adhering to APA style enhances the credibility and professionalism of your writing. For assistance with formatting, citations, or any other APA-related questions, consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) or the APA Style website. CMU also has a useful website about APA.

Programmatic Efforts

Ed.D. Program Overview and Student Learning Outcomes

Our Ed.D. program equips students to excel in a global and diverse environment by integrating diverse perspectives and inclusive practices throughout the curriculum. In the last five years, CEH/EDL has embedded the values of equity and inclusion into the department bylaws, course syllabi, and course offerings to support the unraveling of institutional racism and other forms of structural oppression. By weaving equity-based perspectives into our courses, we can emphasize leadership in diverse settings, cultural competence, and strategies for addressing systemic inequities. Students engage in collaborative projects, case studies, and discussions that reflect real-world complexities, fostering adaptability and cross-cultural understanding while providing leadership to support lasting positive social change. The program's diverse student body further enhances this preparation, as learners share insights from various academic settings, backgrounds, and experiences. Graduates leave with the skills and mindset needed to lead effectively, promote equity, and navigate the challenges of an interconnected world.

The intended learning outcomes of the Ed.D. program are:

- Students will specialize in educational administration (PK-12) or Higher Education (or an adjacent field) to become exemplary school, college, or university administrators or faculty equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to achieve performance goals, foster an inspiring school environment, and enhance learning for every student.
- Students will analyze their own leadership and ethical orientations using various ethical leadership theories and assume leadership roles as appropriate to advance in the profession.
- Students will conduct original research and practical inquiry using various research methods.
- Students will distinguish among different cultural elements that impact organizational decision-making. Students will also demonstrate the ability to contextualize decision-making in light of external demands, including reactions to policy mandates.
- Students will utilize organizational theories to analyze situations and apply appropriate recommendations for change. Ability to focus on planning that supports the objectives of a learning organization, including issues of diversity and global awareness.
- Students will demonstrate effective oral presentation skills and precise writing that exemplifies critical thinking skills. Ability to shape appropriate communications with constituents that reflect the needs of diverse community interests.
- Students will identify the appropriate steps to negotiate between conflicting interests in reaction to mandates while creating and influencing policy that supports improvements in organizational effectiveness.
- Students will identify important issues in the field and analyze the impact of these issues on the organization. Contextualize current issues within their educational foundations.

Ed.D. Course Sequencing

The core courses taken by students in the first two years of the program and electives are completed after the core (See Appendix A for the course sequence). The Ed.D. program has a common core of 24 credits. These courses are taken in 8-week increments with the cohort. Nine of these credits are research methodology courses, with the other 15 credits being content specific to all educational institutions. There are currently four declarable concentrations for students to choose from: PK-12 Leadership, Higher Education Leadership, PK-12 Curriculum, and Educational Technology. Students must complete a minimum of 21 credit hours in their chosen concentration.

Additionally, students must complete an internship or fieldwork as part of the program. This field experience allows students to bridge research to practice. Students with an earned EdS from NMU, GVSU, or SVSU are considered part of the “Fast Track.” They are not required to take a cognate, concentration, or complete a field study, as their EdS credits transfer in and fulfill those academic requirements. Students with an earned EdS degree are able to transfer up to 27 credits into the EdD program. In these cases, the only coursework remaining for them is the doctoral core and dissertation credits. These students enter the dissertation pipeline quickly, 18 months after first enrolling.

Courses within the research sequence build upon one another and have been appropriately sequenced for student success while leading them to the dissertation phase. See Appendix A for a listing of the curriculum and how the course may vary for Fast Trackers (those with an earned EdS), PK-12, and Higher Education students. The curriculum prepares students for the completion of the dissertation. The curriculum within our Ed.D. has been updated within the last five years to reflect current practices and research. Additionally, all Ed.D. courses are delivered online and/or hybrid. All of our Ed.D. required courses are offered in a cohort model. Only those students admitted into that cohort can take those courses. This allows for the proper sequencing of courses.

Ed.D. Coursework & Registration

The form below is a sample advising sheet used for new cohort students. The dates and times are just a placeholder and will change year to year. Colleen Zeh manages registration for all cohort student courses, except for electives, field study credits, or dissertation credits, which students will register for independently. NOTE: Dissertation Credits (EDL 898) are listed in the online registration portal as “Mt. Pleasant” courses. Students should only register for dissertation credits in concert with their dissertation chair.

Synchronous Saturdays

- Attendance is required, please plan ahead.
- Please treat the virtual class in a manner similar to a classroom-based course (e.g., be civil, be in a distraction-free area, alone, in a quiet room, and ready to actively participate in the class).

Cohort-based courses (research and academic tiers) will have a live component with your cohort and faculty members. These courses are known as Synchronous Saturdays and typically occur every other Saturday from 8am-12 noon, but times may vary. Live class dates will be articulated in each course syllabus. For course electives in your concentration and cognate, these courses may take place on different days/times based on the program of origin.

Comprehensive Exams

Comprehensive Exams Guidelines

Nuts and bolts: Students must take and pass the comprehensive exam within one year of completing all coursework (except EDL 897, 898, or optional 900 or 901). Students must have earned a cumulative 3.25 (GPA) for all CMU EDL courses completed in the student's doctoral program with no I-Grades (incompletes). Students must have an EdD Authorization of Degree Program on file at the College of Graduate Studies.

Application Process for the Exam: Student will author a one-page overview of their topic, and their chair will offer edits. Students will then edit and provide a 1-2 page overview. From that, the chair will craft the student's unique comprehensive exam question. The final 1-2 page overview should be shared with the Program Director via email. The Program Director will share an overview outlining all of the dates related to your specific exam cycle, key elements include:

- Submitting your 1-2 page topical idea to your chair
- Submitting the final draft to the program director.
- Signing and returning the exam Application and Integrity Oath
- After your comprehensive exam question is submitted to the office, you are no longer allowed to speak with your chair on any topic related to the exam. If you have a life emergency that may impact your ability to take the exam, please start with your chair. You can defer one time.
- If you defer BEFORE receiving your exam question, the same question can be used for the next exam cycle.
- If you defer AFTER receiving your exam question, a new question must be created for the next exam cycle.
- Each student has only two attempts to pass the exam.

Exam process: Comprehensive exam topics are developed by the student's chair based on the student's idea. The topic can connect to a potential dissertation topic, one that the student has explored during the program. Exams are completed over the span of 10 days, and the final document is blind reviewed by faculty using a two-part evaluation outlined below. Students will author three, eight-page papers based on the following areas:

- **Part I:** Conceptual understanding and theoretical integration of an argument outlining the study should happen.
- **Part II & III:** Design a qualitative and quantitative study around the Part I topic.
- Faculty blind review (student names are changed to a four-digit code) with a 4-point rubric to show student proficiency: High Pass, Low Pass, Revisions Required, and Fail.

Results/Outcomes: While the goal is to pass, move to candidacy, and enroll in EDL 897, the following outlines all the possible outcomes.

First Attempt

- **PASS** – Student is advanced to Candidacy and enrolled in 897.
- **REVISE/RESUBMIT**- Submit revisions (within 10 days from receiving results), enrollment for 897 on hold.
 - **IF PASS**-Advanced to Candidacy and the student is enrolled in 897.
 - **IF FAIL**- Retake exams with new questions in the following cycle.
- **FAIL:** Retake the exam with a new question in May.

Second Attempt

- **PASS** – Student is advanced to Candidacy and enrolled in 897.
- **REVISE/RESUBMIT**- Submit revisions (within 10 days from receiving results), enrollment for 897 on hold.
 - **IF PASS**-Advanced to Candidacy and the student is enrolled in 897.
 - **IF FAIL**- Removed from EdD program.
- **FAIL:** Removed from EdD program.

Ed.D. Academic Integrity Policy (Comprehensive Exams and Program Coursework)

As a CMU student in the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership degree program, we expect that you will not only live up to these expectations, but you will carry them out in your daily life as an educator and leader, serving as a model for others and helping to uphold these virtues in your work and organization. Therefore, a violation of the CMU Academic Integrity Policy and the aforementioned guidance may result in a failed comps attempt and impact your standing in the program. Students are encouraged to use *SafeAssign* (provided in EDL 899a) to check their work and ensure they meet these requirements. Please consult with the program director for additional guidance. Again, **students found in violation of this policy related to plagiarism and the usage of AI may fail the exam and a formal report will be sent to the CMU Office of Student Conduct. Students who are found in violation will be allowed one retake using a different comprehensive exam question. Failing the exam twice will lead to dismissal from the program.**

Note. Portions of this policy were borrowed from the [University of Michigan's Rackham Graduate School Policy on AI](#).

Integrity of all academic work is of utmost importance, including comprehensive exams. Comprehensive exam responses must reflect your critical thinking and capacities for application and integration. Therefore, the faculty of the Educational Leadership and Higher Education units offer the following guidance and reminders to students regarding plagiarism and the usage of AI tools in the comprehensive exam process.

Consequences

Students found in violation of this policy related to plagiarism and the usage of AI may fail the exam and a formal report will be sent to the CMU Office of Student Conduct. Students who are found in violation will be allowed one retake using a different comprehensive exam question. Failing the exam twice will lead to dismissal from the program.

Plagiarism

The [American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#) defines plagiarism as, “the act of presenting the words, ideas, or images of another as your own; it denies authors or creators of content the credit they are due. Whether deliberate or unintentional, plagiarism violates ethical standards in scholarship.” All comprehensive exam responses are submitted to *iThenticate* to search for plagiarism before faculty review your responses. Students may not consult with anyone regarding their exam, including their chair. Students should be knowledgeable about Central Michigan University’s [Policy on Academic Integrity](#), as it pertains to comprehensive exams as well.

We urge students to pay attention to proper citations of paraphrasing, which are covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the Publication Manual Sections 8.23 and 8.24 and the Concise Guide Sections 8.23 and 8.24. Changing a word or two in a longer passage—even with a citation—can still be considered plagiarism. In these cases, significant paraphrasing or direct quotes with page numbers and quotation marks is required. Students should be familiar with proper citation procedures as outlined in detail in the APA 7th Edition manual. Please consult the APA 7th Edition manual for additional guidance on plagiarism, or visit OWL at Purdue: <https://owl.purdue.edu/>

Self-Plagiarism

Self-plagiarism is a practice where a student submits the same product to satisfy multiple assignments. Much of this is uncovered through the *SafeAssign* or *iThenticate* software embedded in coursework. However, students are permitted to use selected content they have been working on during their doctoral coursework at CMU for the purposes of their comprehensive exams, just as long as it is unpublished (i.e., not formally published in a recognized publication). Please note that while writing and the development of ideas are an iterative process, there is an expectation that prior work continues to improve and evolve with each iteration. Using content from your master’s thesis in this exam is unacceptable and will more than likely show on the *iThenticate* report.

Comprehensive Exams and Chair Selection

The capstone experience for Ed.D. students is a traditional five-chapter dissertation. Candidates undertake original research relevant to their self-selected focus. The student works with a faculty committee of three. The committee helps the student formulate a researchable issue, collect and analyze data, and defend results and implications for the literature and the field. This process

allows students to utilize rigorous and current methodological techniques as well as articulate their contribution to literature in the broader field of educational leadership and administration.

Once a student completes their coursework, they take an at-home comprehensive exam over a period of 10 days. The individualized exam questions are crafted by the student's dissertation chair. Passing the exam allows students to enter the dissertation phase. Here is the list from chair selection to commencement:

- Attend the “EdD Next Steps Meeting” hosted by the Program Director in the year students will take their comprehensive exams. Students will learn about:
 - Dissertation Chair Selection (chair must be selected late August through the end of September of your exam cycle).
 - Meet with chairs (face to face or virtually) in advance of a formal ask.
 - Find the right “fit.”
 - A sample email template will be provided following the event.
 - Application and Integrity Oaths
 - AI and Plagiarism, as it relates to the exam.
- Select a Dissertation Chair by the last day of September of that year.
 - Once a chair is confirmed, at that point in time, that person assumes the role of academic advisor.
- Work with your Dissertation Chair on your exam question topic by submitting a 1-page topic summary as outlined in the Comprehensive Exam Schedule for your respective cycle.
- After passing your exam, discuss the Dissertation Committee with your advisor (the Chair will provide a link for your 3rd to fill out to serve on the committee). The three-person committee will consist of your chair, an Ed.D. faculty member, a second internal Ed.D. faculty member, and a third member who holds a terminal degree and may serve as a content expert.
- You will be enrolled in EDL 897 (Dissertation Colloquium) the semester after you pass the exam.
 - In EDL 897, you will write the Dissertation Concept Paper (DCP) with the support of the EDL 897 Faculty member and then revise it with your chair. The DCP is a brief (5 pages or less) overview of your project.
 - Once the DCP is approved by your chair, you will arrange for a DCP meeting with the entire committee. Please allow two weeks of read time for the committee, and then use a scheduling tool (e.g., Doodle) for the team. This meeting creates alignment with the vision of the pending proposal. This meeting is not punitive, but rather a way to get the team “on the same page” to eliminate any surprises at the proposal defense.
 - Enrollment in 12 credits of EDL 898 (Dissertation) credits. You can enroll in dissertation credits, the semester after you pass your comprehensive exam. Start small with your credit load, as you do not want to run out of credits. You can

always register for additional credits in the semester you defend the final copy. Students can only register for 6 credits of EDL 898 before defending their proposal. While you are registered for most classes, you will register yourself for dissertation credits through the registration portal. Be sure you select “Mt. Pleasant” courses and ask for an “Exception.”

- Write Dissertation Proposal (First 3 chapters) with edits from chair.
- Defend Dissertation Proposal. Similar to the DCP, please allow two weeks of read time for the committee and then use a scheduling tool (e.g., Doodle) for the team. Expect edits from the committee.
 - Once the proposal is successfully defended, students should submit an IRB Application.
 - Data collection begins after IRB approval and prospectus approval through the Office of Graduate Studies.
 - No outreach to potential data locations or sites can occur until IRB approval is attained.
 - Apply for graduation (you may defer graduation, if needed).
 - Submit Prospectus DocuSign form (this is done after IRB approval is secured. Please also prepare a “lay person” summary and a technical summary for the Prospectus.
- Analyze data and write chapters 4 and 5 with review from the chair. Similar to the Proposal Defense, please allow two weeks of read time for the committee and then use a scheduling tool (e.g., Doodle) for the team.
- Defend the final dissertation in a public forum.
 - Alert the Program Director of the date/time/location to be shared publicly.
 - Expect revisions.
 - Submit dissertation revisions to chair and/or committee, if needed.
- Once finalized, submit the Dissertation Completion DocuSign form – Chair submits the final *iThenticate* form by attaching it to the DocuSign form. Chair will provide the link.
- Candidates MAY have edits after the *iThenticate* form is submitted, and that process is guided by the Office of Graduate Studies. This final step does have a deadline, which is often after the commencement ceremony.
- Celebrate your hard work with family and friends at one of three commencement ceremonies. Your chair will attend and place your doctoral hood onto your shoulders.

Artificial Intelligence Tools

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as Google Gemini and ChatGPT have become valuable tools for professionals and students alike. As AI continues to integrate into our applications and daily lives, we believe it is important to establish clear guidelines regarding its permissible use

on comprehensive exams. The following guidelines outline the ethical and appropriate use of AI during comprehensive exams to ensure integrity in this important process.

Permissible AI Usage

- **Research Assistance:** AI tools may be used to gather information and generate initial ideas as part of initial brainstorming. Please be advised that AI tools are notorious for falsifying or “hallucinating” information in rather convincing ways.
- **Language Tooling:** AI-powered tools like Grammarly may be used for grammar and spelling checks or suggestions for reducing wordiness, improving clarity, or generating alternative phrasing.
- **Checking Translation:** AI-powered tools like Google Translate may be used to aid and check the translation of words and phrases.

Prohibited AI Usage

- **Content Generation:** AI tools may not be used to generate substantial portions (e.g., passages, outlines, paragraphs) of exam responses.
- **Replacing Prose:** Use of GenAI tools to generate prose or replace your unique voice and style as the sole author of your responses.

Alumni Initiatives

Doctor of Education Alumni Advisory Board

Established in 2024 in conjunction with the 25th anniversary of the Ed.D. program, the Alumni Advisory Board for the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program was established to foster a deliberate relationship between alumni and the program, provide strategic guidance, and support the program’s mission to produce leaders in the field of education. The board will advise on matters such as curriculum development, manage the annual Hall of Fame awards, student mentorship with the “Get ConnectEdD” program, provide professional development, and create new student engagement while promoting the visibility and impact of the Ed.D. program. Any program alumni (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) is eligible to join and serve a two-year term.

Alumni Hall of Fame: Doctorate in Educational Leadership

Starting in 2024, the department, in conjunction with the Doctor of Educational Leadership Alumni Board, will honor distinguished Ed.D. (and Ph.D.) alumni through induction into the Doctor of Education Hall of Fame. Applications will be solicited each year through emails, listservs, and social media posts. The deadline for each year may vary, but the goal is to have an

open online link for two weeks to accept nominations in early May. Candidates who are self-nominated or nominated by another will be asked to accept the nomination. If the candidate accepts, they will provide a brief list of highlights from their resume/CV related to the award criteria, along with a brief, one-page narrative. Candidate applications will be screened by a diverse group of alumni board members using a rubric related to the following criteria:

- **Educational Leadership & Impact (35%)** – Influence in shaping educational policies, institutions, or student success.
- **Innovative Practice or Research (10%)** – Innovative practices, research contributions, or publications.
- **Equity & Inclusion (20%)** – Commitment to diversity, equity, and fostering inclusive educational spaces.
- **Service & Mentorship (15%)** – Mentorship of students, educators, or community engagement.
- **Sustained Contributions (20%)** – Long-term dedication to improving education

Winners will receive a plaque, and their name will be placed on a larger plaque in the CEH office. The award ceremony will take place in July when a new cohort is on campus for their Summer Doctoral Institute.

Appendix

Appendix A: Curriculum

Ed.D. Cohort # ____
Doctor of Education Course Schedule

Term	Course	Title	Delivery	Dates
		Orientation	On Campus	July 16 @ 6:30 pm
Summer/Fall I 202X	EDL 899*	Doctoral Seminar	On Campus	On Campus July 17-19 + Online
Fall II 202X	EDL 700	Educational Research Design	Online	Live Classes: 10/28, 11/11, 12/02, 12/09
Spring I 202X	EDL 860	Organizational Theory Educ Institutions	Online	Live Classes: 01/13, 01/27, 02/10, 02/24
Spring II 202X	EDL 855	Org Culture/Change in Educ Institutions	Online	Live Classes: 03/09, 03/23, 04/06, 04/20
Summer I 202X	EDL 815	Ethical Leadership	Online	Live Classes: 05/04, 05/18, 06/01, 06/15
Summer II 202X	EDL 800*	Qualitative Research Methods	On Campus	Live Classes: TBD
Fall I 202X	EDL 801	Quantitative Research Methods	Online	Live Classes: TBD
Move to Concentration				

Term	TRACK 1 Earned Ed.S.	TRACK 2 PK-12 Leadership Concentration: Central Office Certification	TRACK 3 Higher Ed. Concentration 1: Administration	TRACK 4 Higher Ed. Concentration 2: Training & Development
Fall II 202X	EDL 899A (Comps)**	EDL 745**	HED 757	HED 681
Spring I 202X		EDL 775	HED 611	HED 682
Spring II 202X	EDL 897 (+EDL 898 Credits)	EDL 760	HED 557 (Alt. EDL 760)	HED 685
Summer I 202X		EDL 766		HED 876
Summer II 202X		EDL 751		EDL 816
Fall I 202X		EDL 767 & 710**	HED 677	HED 680
Fall II 202X			EDL 899A (Comps)	
Spring 202X			EDL 897 (+EDL 898 Credits)	

NOTE: These concentrations are offered as options for each discipline. Please consult with your advisor on your specific degree plan.

*On Campus Presence Required

**16-week course

***Students also need to complete a field study component in addition to coursework

Course Overview

Program Plan (16 courses, 15 dissertation credits - 63 credits)

Research Requirements Core (9 credits)

EDL 700 - Educational Research Design

EDL 800 - Qualitative Research in Educational Leadership

EDL 801 - Quantitative Analysis in Educational Leadership

Academic Core (15 credits)

EDL 815 – Ethical Leadership

EDL 855 – Organizational Culture and Change in Education Institutions

EDL 860 – Organizational Theory in Educational Institutions

EDL 899 – Doctoral Seminar (6 credits)

- Cognate (9 credits) Selected with support from a faculty advisor.
- Concentration (12 credits) Selected with support from a faculty advisor in one of four areas: PK-12 Leadership, Higher Education Leadership, PK-12 Curriculum, or Educational Technology
- Field-Based Experience (3 credits)
- Comprehensive Exam
- Dissertation (15 credits)
- EDL 897 – Dissertation Colloquium
- EDL 898 – Dissertation Credits (12)
 - Dissertation Credits: You can enroll in dissertation credits, the semester after you pass your comprehensive exam. Start small with your credit load, as you do not want to run out of credits. You can always register for additional credits in the semester you defend the final copy. While you are registered for most classes, you will register yourself for dissertation credits through the registration portal. Be sure you select “Mt. Pleasant” courses and ask for an “Exception.”

Appendix B: Program Assessment

(need to add new plan – pending fall 2025 edits)