

**Doctorate of Education in Special Education**

**Student Handbook**

**Arcadia University**

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## **Doctor of Education Program Ed.D. in Special Education**

**Arcadia University**

### **Program Description**

#### **Overview of Program**

Arcadia's doctoral program in special education offers a Doctor of Education (Ed.D) degree earned by engaging in intensive study and completing an approved doctoral dissertation. The program is designed to increase the students' levels of professional expertise in the field of special education, and to develop the skills necessary to implement best practice programs effectively in natural settings. This program focuses on preparing educational leaders for schools in supervisory, curricular, and/or administrative capacities.

#### **Philosophy and Rationale**

The changes in demands placed on educators in our society illustrate the need for progressive higher education programs. Educators must be prepared to meet the challenges of a multi-ethnic, multi-racial, socio-economically diverse population in the 21st century. The gap between scholarship and practice must be bridged, enabling practitioners to operate from a solid base of information and scholars to engage in research shaped by the reality of practice. By offering this doctoral program, Arcadia University positions itself as an institution responsive to the needs of the community through advancing programs of doctoral level study in education that will prepare students to integrate scholarship and practice.

The guiding philosophy of the special education doctoral program is comprised of several key components integrated into the program through expectations, coursework, and mentorship. Students are challenged to work toward integrating the following into their academic performance and professional lives:

- Willingness to consider new ideas
- Embracing community inclusion and diversity
- Critical thinking
- Systemic critique and reform
- Collaboration and team work
- Critical self-reflection
- Social action
- Ethical practices and conduct
- Ongoing professional development and life-long learning
- Research-based practices

The Ed.D. Program in Special Education facilitates collaboration and teamwork through a **modified cohort model**. Students will enter the program with a group of colleagues with whom they will take courses and progress through the program. Cohort models have a number of advantages for students and faculty alike:

1. Cohorts provide students with study and support groups that enable them to gain maximum benefits from coursework and research;
2. Cohorts enable students to support each other as a group while accomplishing the major milestones of the program, including their qualifying paper and dissertation;
3. Because students move through the core program as a group, faculty are aware of what they have been taught and what is yet to be covered; this is especially important in addressing the research/critical thinking portion of the curriculum and building solid research skills;
4. Cohorts provide for high levels of ongoing support for individual student work and research development.

The cohort model allows students to move through the critical thinking/research component of the program as a group and, as such, to work supportively and collaboratively on developing, implementing, and writing their qualifying papers and dissertations.

Students' progress and timelines will vary during the dissertation proposal, implementation, and writing process. Contributing factors include the subject of their dissertation, the meeting of established timelines, issues of participants and implementation, data analysis, and writing skills.

## **Goals and Objectives**

### **Major Goals of the Program**

The overarching goal of the special education doctoral program is to prepare doctoral students to develop and embrace leadership roles in special education, general or higher education, or community-based services. Doctoral graduates may pursue careers as program directors in schools or agencies, administrators, advocates, planners, consultants, professors in higher education, teachers, and/or curriculum specialists. All students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of critical issues in special education including cultural influences, legislation, due process, curriculum assessment, intervention, ethics, and current best practices in public and private settings. In addition, opportunities to obtain a supervisory or principal's certificate are provided through collaboration with the educational leadership program.

This overarching goal encompasses the mission of Arcadia University. Arcadia is dedicated to producing problem solvers and scholars who are willing and able to effectively confront real-life problems, to contribute positively to society, and to help diverse populations build better lives through enhanced education and career opportunities.

### **Specific Objectives of the Program**

The specific objectives of the program are for students to develop:

1. The ability to systematically address issues concerning the education of students with special needs in the least restrictive settings possible using research-based practices;
2. Current knowledge in the field of special education and related fields and disciplines;
3. Critical analysis skills that will enable students to improve current practices in special education;
4. The ability to develop best practice programs in multiple fields;
5. The ability to use available resources and technology to maximize effective programs for students;
6. The motivation and skills to stay current once their formal educational program is completed.
7. Knowledge and skills related to practical research methodology and its application to special education.

**Structure of the Program**

A minimum of 60 credit hours post master's degree, including 9 credit hours of dissertation work (3 semesters of 3 credits each) are required for the doctoral degree.

Course work is organized around a series of courses including: (1) essential background courses; (2) research methods; and (3) content area information. Each semester's courses will integrate these three curricular areas so that students have continuous exposure to and practice in critical thinking and research methods as they gain content area knowledge.

The focus of all course work is to teach students how to think critically and systematically about special education at both the micro level (i.e., the impact of various programs or interventions on students and classrooms) to the macro level (i.e., school or district-wide impact). The program will stress the cultural, social, political ramifications of special education categorization, curriculum, instruction, as well as models and methods of service delivery. From the first day of the program, students will utilize real-life cases and analyze relevant materials as they examine special education programs operating in schools, communities, and agencies.

## **Enrollment and Admissions**

### **Application and Enrollment**

The application process can be completed on line at <http://apply.arcadia.edu> or by requesting an application packet through the Enrollment Management Office. Enrollment Management handles all applications through completion and can answer any questions students have about the admissions process. Once the application is complete and all supporting documentation has been received the student's file is sent to the Director of the Doctoral Program to be reviewed by the doctoral faculty. Decisions are then made as to which applicants will be interviewed. Faculty and a representative from the Graduate Office and or the Enrollment Management Office will conduct the interviews and make decisions as to which candidates will be selected to enroll. Approximately 11-13 students will be selected each year to become members of the newest cohort. Ensuring high quality students in the program is the first concern of the admissions and enrollment process.

### **Admissions Guidelines**

What follows are the criteria for admission to doctoral level study in the Ed.D. Program:

- An earned master's degree in special education or a related field
- A satisfactory score on the Miller Analogy Test
- A GPA in education courses of 3.5 or better
- Three letters of recommendation from professors or other individuals who can attest to the candidates potential for success as a doctoral student
- Completion or credit for the 12 pre-requisite credits
- An interview with representatives from the special education program, the graduate office, and the Education Department.

Completed applications for admission must be filed in the Enrollment Management Office on or before February 15<sup>th</sup>. Students admitted must begin study in September of their entrance year or request a deferral in writing to the Graduate Office, copying Enrollment Management, and the Director of the Program.

Employees of the University wishing to enroll in this program will be admitted according to the same criteria as all other applicants. Please contact human services for the tuition remission policy.

## **Required Coursework**

### **Essential Background Courses (12 credits mandatory)**

Students entering the doctoral program will be required to have essential background knowledge in special education. These courses are designed to provide the student with minimal necessary background information concerning students with special needs, special education programs, and best practices. It is assumed that the majority of entering doctoral students will have extensive background knowledge in the field and will have completed a master's degree in special education or a related field and therefore will enter having completed the essential background courses. However, for those students entering the program without the necessary background knowledge, one course in each of the following special education content areas will be required:<sup>1</sup>

1. Introduction to special education or inclusive education
2. Supporting students with low incidence disabilities
3. Supporting students with high incidence disabilities
4. Positive behavioral support/classroom management

Determination of the need to take essential background courses or to improve background knowledge will be decided based on the entering student's transcript and a meeting with the admissions committee. Options for meeting these requirements may include recommendations for students to: 1) take one or more of the prerequisite courses for credit; 2) audit one or more courses; and/ or 3) engage in reading current literature in one or more areas. Based on a potential student's credentials, the admissions committee will decide whether prerequisites must be met prior to being interviewed, accepted, or starting the doctoral program.

### **Research Methods (18 credits mandatory)**

The research courses are designed to advance students' abilities to:

- Ask critical questions and/or identify problems
- Think critically about systems and issues of organizational development
- Design strategies for approaching questions or problems
- Collect and analyze data
- Develop and implement interventions
- Conduct ongoing programmatic assessments to determine the success or failure of interventions

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<sup>1</sup> Courses covering these content areas are regularly taught as part of Arcadia University's Masters of Special Education program

- Communicate and disseminate their findings and recommendations effectively to multiple audiences
- **Practitioner Research I & II (750 & 751).** Students will learn to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods in order to conduct research, evaluate programs, assess student progress, as well as to design, implement, and monitor educational innovations in applied settings.
- **Advanced Research Methods (803).** Course content includes single subject methodology, survey and interview construction, IRB procedures, and quasi-experimental methodology. Students will advance their knowledge of statistical analysis and the graphic display of data. This seminar is designed to allow students to continue working on the development of their dissertation proposals with a focus on methodology. Ongoing feedback concerning the development or analysis of the students' dissertations' will be provided by both the professor and the cohort.
- **Doctoral Project Seminar I, II, III (800, 801, 802).** Content for the Dissertation Seminars will focus on problem solving and integrating research methods with real-life problems faced by school personnel. Methodological content will include learning single subject design, quasi-experimental designs, and furthering knowledge of action and practitioner research and qualitative design methodology begun in the Practitioner Research courses. Students will take Dissertation Seminar (3 credit hours each semester) for 3 concurrent semesters. During this time students will develop proposals, implement and conduct their research, and write their dissertations. Students must register for at least 1 credit of dissertation work every semester until their dissertation is defended and approved.
- **Dissertation Preparation I (901).** Students can elect to sign up for this no-credit course which will enable the Chair of their committee to provide support for dissertation proposal development during the summer of Year 2. There is no charge for this course nor are grades given.
- **Dissertation Preparation II (902).** Students must register for 902 until the successful defense of their dissertation. Students will be charged the equivalent of 1 credit for the course each semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer) after completing all doctoral course work. No grade is assigned. Non-credit course.

### **Content Seminars (30 credits mandatory)**

Content seminars are designed to provide students with a foundation of shared knowledge and skills from which to move forward with their doctoral work. Additional core courses are designed to present students with a consistent and shared body of knowledge addressing the central issues and current best

practices in special education. Seminar content and offerings may change over time due to the changing nature of special education and current issues and trends in the field.

- **Best Practices: Curriculum and Instruction (705).** This seminar is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills to appropriately modify curriculum, instruction and assessment; and to make the necessary accommodations to adapt teaching and learning for all students. Cognitive and social learning theories will be discussed in light of specific learning problems and orientations toward intervention.
- **Disabilities Studies (701).** This doctoral seminar explores the experiences of people with disabilities across the lifespan and critically studies policies, movements, and philosophical models that impact the lives of individuals with disabilities. Topics include independence, productivity, education and community inclusion, self-determination, Disabilities Rights Movement, various models of disabilities, and diversity within disability.
- **Inclusive Education and Post Secondary Life (762).** This doctoral seminar is designed to promote a comprehensive understanding of the parameters of implementing inclusive education and post secondary transition services. Students will explore the complex issues involved in the development of educational systems that are designed to effectively educate all children to become adults who are interdependent, productive, included, and self-determined, and who can make contributions to their communities of choice. In this Seminar, students will take a critical look at research, best practices, legislation, and advocacy that shape inclusive education and post secondary life. The topics of this doctoral seminar will be proposed by the students, in order to ensure that they engage in critical inquiry, current practice reflection, and take action based on their own professional needs and interests.
- **Law and Disabilities (760).** An overview of special education and disabilities law, policies, and procedures involved in federal, state, and local governance including due process issues and mediation.
- **Low Incidence Disabilities: Issues and Trends (70?).** This seminar will explore current issues in the education and life of students with low incidence disabilities. Students will explore current literature and best practices in relation to supporting these individuals as well as the skills needed in order to support these individuals in leading independent, productive, included, and satisfying lives in the communities of their choice.

- **Multicultural Issues in Special Education (704).** This course provides an intensive study of the needs of diverse students and families and effective and appropriate responses to these needs within educational settings. During this course students will examine the intersection of socioeconomic status, cultural and linguistic background, gender and sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity with responses to atypical learning and disability within educational environments. Students will conduct critical analyses of their own personal and professional beliefs concerning diverse student populations and will critique their own professional contexts in terms of sensitivity and responsiveness to diversity. Students must provide and implement concrete recommendations for improved cultural sensitivity within their professional contexts. They also analyze organizational data relative to proportionate representation of CLD students in special education programs and provide an action plan based on research to remedy any disproportionality identified.
- **Organizational Change & School Based Data (706).** Exploring organizational development and systems theory, this course focuses on the critical examination of institutional culture as well as the reasons for and realities of school change and resistance to such change. Using school based data and data based decision making, students will learn to set goals, develop effective change processes, and evaluate their school's and program's effectiveness in ways that lead to ongoing development.
- **Positive Behavior Support (703).** This seminar provides students with in-depth information on current interventions and therapeutic techniques for dealing with children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral challenges. Various topics may include cognitive interventions, play therapy, and/or effective treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, etc. Theoretical orientations will be taught and discussed as well as implications of various orientations and strategies for linking assessment to theory to interventions.
- **Special Education Leadership/Consultation and Collaboration (761).** This seminar is designed to teach students the range of administrative and leadership skills necessary to manage a public or private program for children and adolescents with special needs. The course will emphasize the leader's responsibility as a change agent and on the importance of consultative and collaborative roles in moving organizations forward.

### **Elective Seminars (3 credits mandatory)**

Elective seminars are designed to reflect the fluid nature of the field of special education and to enable students to pursue individual areas of interest. Topics for elective seminars will be developed over time and will change to reflect the current nature of the field.<sup>2</sup> In addition, students may take a course toward their supervisory or principal's certification or the letter of eligibility requirements.

- **Curriculum Theory.** This seminar focuses on the construction of school knowledge. By school knowledge, we mean both the curriculum of the schools and the implicit pedagogical techniques embedded in the various subject matters. Students will survey a range of curricular theories including: structural theories, neo-Marxist critical theories, critical race theories, feminist theories, post-structural theories and postmodern approaches. The purpose of the survey is to provide students with the analytical tools to examine and adapt school knowledge in their own practice in order to promote full inclusion in the Least Restrictive Environment.
- **Independent Project Seminar.** This seminar will be used as an opportunity for students to continue with either a research project or a field experience that may require continuation or follow-up from another doctoral seminar. Special permission of the student's advisor is necessary to take this class.
- **Instructional and Assistive Technologies (700).** This hands-on advanced seminar will be designed to provide prospective teachers with computer skills and experiences necessary for successfully incorporating technology into their professional careers. Students will learn to use, examine, and develop teaching and learning materials through the use of technology. In addition, this seminar will address the use of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.
- **Knowledge of the Learner.** This seminar will explore the ways in which learners typically learn, including those with disabilities. It will focus on the student as a life-long learner. This seminar will teach students to develop instructional and assessment techniques based on the theories of child learning (pedagogy) and adult learning (andragogy).
- **University Teaching Experience (804).** This course is designed for students who would like the opportunity to co-teach an undergraduate or master's level course with an Arcadia professor. Students will learn how

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<sup>2</sup> In special situations, students can take electives offered at other universities. They must petition the program faculty for approval, at least 1 semester prior to enrolling in the course.

to design a course, develop syllabi, design and deliver effective instruction, and assess students. Special permission of the student's advisor is necessary to take this class.

### Course Layout and Timeline<sup>3</sup>

| Program Year                                     | Fall <sup>4</sup>  | Spring   | Summer  |
|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Year 1</b><br><br><b>Credits</b><br><b>18</b> | 701 Disabilities Studies<br><br>750 Practitioner Research I<br><br><b>Doctoral Student Orientation</b>                                 | 703 Positive Behavior Support<br><br>751 Practitioner Research II<br><br><b>Qualifying project due</b>   | 706 Organizational Change/<br>School Based Data<br>705 Best Practices: Curriculum<br>and Instruction<br><b>Continuation decision made</b> |
| <b>Year 2</b><br><br><b>Credits</b><br><b>18</b> | 761 Special Education<br>Leadership/Consultation &<br>Collaboration<br><br>704 Multicultural Issues in<br>Special Education            | 800 Doctoral Project Seminar I<br><br>762 Inclusive Education & Post-<br>Secondary Life<br><br><b>Select dissertation committee &amp;<br/>begin proposal development</b> | 70? Low Incidence Disabilities<br><br>803 Advanced Research<br>Seminar<br><br>901 Dissertation Preparation I<br>(optional)                |
| <b>Year 3</b><br><br><b>Credits</b><br><b>12</b> | 801 Doctoral Project Seminar II<br><br>760 Law and Disabilities<br><b>Dissertation proposal<br/>defended; implementation<br/>begun</b> | 802 Doctoral Project Seminar III<br><br>Elective Seminar or College<br>Teaching (804)<br><b>Conduct dissertation and analyze<br/>data</b>                                | <b>Continue dissertation and<br/>data analysis</b>  |
| <b>Year 4</b>                                    | 902 Dissertation Preparation II<br><b>Complete implementation,<br/>analysis, and writing of<br/>dissertation</b>                       | 902 Dissertation Preparation II<br><br><b>Dissertation defended<br/>Final revisions due</b>  | <b>Graduation</b>   |

<sup>3</sup> Timelines based on student completion of requirements.

<sup>4</sup> This is an example of the course sequence. Doctoral seminars with the exception of practitioner research may be rotated within the 3 semesters each year.

## **Program Requirements**

### **Completion of Coursework**

A minimum of 60 credit hours post master's degree, including 9 credit hours of dissertation work (3 semesters of 3 credits each) are required for the doctoral degree.

### **Continuous Enrollment**

Students must be enrolled continuously in the Ed.D. program. In case of a personal emergency, the student may petition the Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies for a leave of absence (this is not guaranteed).

### **Time Limits**

All course work must be completed within 5 years of admission to study. Dissertation must be completed within 5 years of admission to candidacy. Students who do not complete the dissertation at the end of the third year will be required to enroll in an ongoing one-credit per semester Dissertation Preparation II (902) until their dissertation is completed, defended, and approved.

While the program is designed to be completed in 3-4 years, the amount of time students may need to complete their dissertation, write, and defend may vary. We believe that students will complete the program in either their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> years depending on project length, complexity, and time available to devote to the project.

### **Candidacy**

Students will advance to doctoral candidacy upon successful completion of all of the following requirements: (1) the first year of study with a minimum GPA of 3.5; (2) a successful First Year Evaluation and faculty approval for continuance; and (3) passing the qualifying paper (pilot study). A copy of the qualifying paper will be submitted to the Department Chair and the Graduate Dean for review.

### **Dissertation Completion**

The dissertation is considered complete once the student has successfully defended the dissertation, made all recommended revisions, and submitted the required copies and forms to the Graduate Office of Arcadia University.

## Advising and Mentoring

Advising concerning coursework as well as policies and procedures will be the primary purview of the Program Director, Dr. Christina Ager, and the doctoral program Secretary. The doctoral program secretary is responsible for all record keeping, semester course registration, and the maintaining of records and files documenting student progress including qualifying projects, proposals, and dissertations as well as other administrative duties. Students should notify the secretary whenever contact information (phone numbers, email addresses, home addresses) changes.

The Enrollment Management office supports students through the application and admissions process as well as schedules interviews with potential students. Enrollment Management is also responsible for advertising and recruiting of potential applicants.

**Mentoring** will focus on: (1) supporting students in developing their research focus and projects; (2) refining their critical thinking skills; and (3) general professional goals and development. Each cohort will be assigned a faculty mentor. Dr. Peggy Hickman will coordinate the mentoring process. The cohort mentor will meet with first year students during the year and at the conclusion of first year course work to review each student's First Year Evaluations with them. Once a student has selected his/her Dissertation Committee, the Chair of the Committee will become the student's primary research mentor.

### Doctoral Student Files

The secretary to the doctoral program will maintain a paper file on each doctoral student as well as a data base for each cohort. The paper file will include:

1. Application to the program including letters of reference & essay
2. Qualifying Project Candidacy Form
3. First Year Evaluation
4. Dissertation Proposal Approval Form
5. Copy of IRB Approval Letter for Dissertation
6. Dissertation Defense Approval Form
7. Dissertation Manuscript Cover Sheet

Students are responsible for making sure to give all the necessary documentation to the doctoral program secretary with the exception of the Application and the First Year Evaluation forms.

The data base will contain all information on doctoral students by cohort group. Each record will include the following for each student:

1. Admission date
2. Start date
3. Date of Qualifying Project Candidacy Form approval
4. Date Dissertation Proposal Defense was passed
5. Date Dissertation Defense was passed
6. Course completion date
7. Revision completion date
8. Graduate Office sign off date

### **General Requirements<sup>5</sup>**

The following are general requirements for maintaining doctoral student status:

- Maintenance of a 3.5 GPA
- Timely completion of all requirements and gates
- Ethical behavior
- Collaborative and cooperative participation as part of the cohort
- Meeting all financial responsibilities

### **Exit Strategies**

Students who are not making appropriate progress will be counseled out of the program at the end of that given year of coursework. Students who engage in any other reason for dismissal (cheating, plagiarism) may be asked to leave immediately or at the end of the semester. Continuance in the program for those with under a 3.5 GPA will be conditional for the next semester provided their grade point average improves to at least that level during that time.

### **Reasons for Dismissal**

- Cheating
- Plagiarism
- Inadequate GPA
- Failing to pass pilot study/qualifying project
- Noncompliance with all requirements or not completing gates

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<sup>5</sup> Students are also expected to adhere to all general policies as outlined in the Arcadia University Graduate Student Handbook.

### **Faculty Contact Information**

|                                |              |  |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Dr. Christina Ager             | 215-572-2115 | <a href="mailto:ager@arcadia.edu">ager@arcadia.edu</a>                     |
| Dr. Kim Dean                   | 215-572-8629 | <a href="mailto:deank@arcadia.edu">deank@arcadia.edu</a>                   |
| Dr. Steve Gulkus (Dept. Chair) | 215-572-2120 | <a href="mailto:gulkus@arcadia.edu">gulkus@arcadia.edu</a>                 |
| Dr. Peggy Hickman              | 267-620-4132 | <a href="mailto:hickmanp@arcadia.edu">hickmanp@arcadia.edu</a>             |
| Dr. Graciela Slesaransky-F     | 215-572-4692 | <a href="mailto:slesaranskypoe@arcadia.edu">slesaranskypoe@arcadia.edu</a> |

### **Gates to Completion of Doctoral Degree**

**Gate 1: Successful Completion of Course Work.** Successful completion (3.5 GPA) of the first 6 courses in the doctoral program requires engagement in critical thinking, reflective analysis of practice, professional development, reading and reflecting on assigned material, completion of course requirements, and responsiveness to faculty feedback and suggestions.

**Gate 2: Pilot Study/Qualifying Paper.** In the first and second semester of their first year of doctoral study (Practitioner Research I & II) students will undertake and complete their pilot study which serves as their qualifying paper for candidacy. Through completing this requirement, students will demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of an area of interest. The pilot study/qualifying paper will include: 1) a comprehensive review of the literature; 2) questions or issues in need of research; 3) a rationale for the questions asked or issues of proposed study; and 4) site-based data collection and analysis.

The final pilot study/qualifying paper (completed in spring, first year) will be reviewed and assessed by the professor of Practitioner Research and one other professor in the program (selected by the professor of Practitioner Research). A passing grade (B or better) is required for successful completion.

**Gate 3: Advancement to the Second Year of the Program.** Based on the student's performance on Gates 1 & 2, faculty will determine whether students will advance to the second year of the program. If there are concerns about continuance, faculty will meet with the student at least once during the Spring or Summer semesters to provide feedback and to construct with the student an action plan for improving student performance. All students will receive feedback in the form of a written First Year Evaluation and will meet with the cohort's mentor to discuss this feedback.

**Gate 4: Dissertation Proposal.** After passing the qualifying paper and attaining candidacy, students will finalize and complete a proposal for the dissertation. The dissertation proposal will be a concisely written, cogently argued, and tightly focused paper that defines and delineates the dissertation. Included in the proposal are research questions, rationale, thorough literature review, methods, data collection and analysis. The proposal must include the first three chapters of the dissertation: Introduction, Literature Review, and Methods.

Development of the Dissertation Proposal: During Dissertation Seminar I students develop a Preliminary Dissertation Action Plan (presented in class during the semester) including topic area, goals, research questions, target participants, design plan, scope of intervention, and preferences for Committee Chair and members. The preliminary action plan will be presented to the doctoral faculty during class for feedback and refinement. After presenting the Preliminary Action Plan students will revise their plan based on faculty feedback and submit the final Dissertation Action Plan by the end of the first semester. Their committee will provide them with additional feedback prior to or during the next semester. During Advanced Research Seminar and Dissertation Seminar II students will continue to develop their dissertation proposals in collaboration with their dissertation chair and committee members.

Proposal Defense: The dissertation proposal will be reviewed first by the chair, then by the committee. The Chair will decide when a proposal is ready for defense. During the defense the proposal will be presented to the student's committee, with the education faculty and Graduate Dean invited to attend and pose questions. Final passage of the proposal and necessary revisions is decided by the Committee. Immediately following the defense, the student is required to submit a Memo of Understanding. This is a memo in which the student documents the suggested revisions with respect to what is required, what is optional as well as the suggested timeline for revisions. The committee chair will review and approve the document.

**Gate 5: Dissertation.** Dissertations are intended to provide students with a meaningful academic research experience that contributes knowledge to the field of special education, contributes to improving special education practice in the field, and documents student mastery of chosen research methods. Dissertations will be evaluated on their innovation and contribution to the field of special education, organization, written expression, research methodology, and data analysis. Students will work on high quality applied research projects grounded in data from the field. Dissertations will be individually developed, written, and assessed according to such standards as would govern publication in a juried journal. Members of the student's dissertation committee will work closely with the student to develop and supervise the project.

Dissertations may span the continuum of special education influence from rigorous and comprehensive case studies or program evaluation to an original research project employing single subject design. Methodologies may include qualitative or quantitative data collection and analysis with a preference for mixed

methods. The written dissertation should incorporate the following standard sections: Chapter 1: Introduction/rationale/overview and Statement of the Problem; Chapter 2: Literature Review; Chapter 3: Methods; Chapter 4: Research Findings; Chapter 5: Conclusions.

**Gate 6: Dissertation Defense.** The dissertation defense will take place before the student's dissertation committee and is open to Arcadia University administrators and faculty members as well as the public. Final approval of the dissertation will require written consent of all members of the Dissertation Committee. Immediately following the defense, the student is required to submit a Memo of Understanding. This is a memo in which the student documents the suggested revisions with respect to what is required, what is optional as well as the suggested timeline for revisions. The committee chair will review and approve the document.

**Gate 7: Final Revisions and Submission to Graduate Office.** Following the defense the doctoral candidate will make all revisions recommended by his/her dissertation committee. A final draft after being submitted to and approved by the dissertation committee will be submitted to the Graduate Office along with all required paperwork. The Chair must send an email to the Graduate Office and the doctoral program secretary indicating that a student has completed all revisions and is ready to file the final dissertation document.

### Suggested Timeline for Completion of the Dissertation Process

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b><u>Spring 2<sup>nd</sup> Year</u></b><br/>           Begin developing dissertation proposal<br/>           Contact and meet with all committee members<br/>           Development &amp; pilot test all instruments</p> | <p><b><u>Summer 2<sup>nd</sup> Year</u></b><br/>           Continue to develop &amp; write proposal</p>  |
| <p><b><u>Fall 3<sup>rd</sup> Year</u></b><br/>           Dissertation proposal defense &amp; memo of understanding<br/>           Request &amp; receive IRB approval<br/>           Begin study</p>                          | <p><b><u>Spring 3<sup>rd</sup> Year</u></b><br/>           Conduct study<br/>           Collect and analyze data</p>   |
| <p><b><u>Fall 4<sup>th</sup> Year</u></b><br/>           Finish conducting study &amp; analyzing data<br/>           Write Chapters 4 &amp; 5<br/>           Dissertation Defense</p>  | <p><b><u>May 4<sup>th</sup> Year</u></b><br/>           Final revisions &amp; IRB final report<br/>           Complete all Arcadia forms &amp; documentation<br/>           Graduation<br/>           IRB Final Project Report</p> |

**Overview of Dissertation Process**  
**Arcadia University**  
**Doctoral Program in Special Education**

The dissertation process includes the following stages:

1. Proposal Defense
2. Approval of Dissertation Proposal
3. Approval from Arcadia's IRB Committee
4. Implementation of Study
5. Dissertation Defense
6. Dissertation Approval by Dissertation Committee
7. Completion of Revisions
8. Submit final report to IRB
9. Submission of final copy to Graduate Office along with ProQuest/UMI agreement and fees
10. Graduation

Students will be permitted to walk in the graduation ceremony and student names will be included in the graduation program if they have successfully completed their dissertation defense by April 15<sup>th</sup> of the current year and all current charges are paid to the University.

Final revisions for students who have participated in Graduation are due into the Graduate Office by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Diplomas will be issued to students upon handing in the final revisions and the ProQuest/UMI forms and appropriate fees.

### **Dissertation Committee Construction**

Students should select committee members based on faculty areas of expertise in both content and methodology. Due to the limited number of faculty in the program, the doctoral program professors will collaborate with each student to determine a committee that meets the needs of the student and the program. Limits to the number of committees that each faculty member can chair or be a member of are established by Arcadia University Policy.

Each committee must be comprised of three professional/faculty doctoral-level mentors. Each student must select a faculty chair, and two additional committee members. It is strongly recommended that students recruit one committee member from outside the Arcadia University community. Professionals from the field qualify to be committee members if they hold a doctorate degree, are current in their knowledge, and have experience with research. Outside members must be approved by the Program Faculty.

See Appendix D for Roles and Responsibilities of Doctoral Committee Chairs and Members.

## **Guidelines for Communication and Interaction with Dissertation Committee Chairs and Members**

This is one of the documents intended to help you navigate through the terrain of your dissertation process, from planning for and writing your dissertation proposal through the development and successful completion of your dissertation.

The following are important guidelines to consider as you embark on the process of developing, implementing, and writing your dissertation:

1. There is a significant difference between expectations for coursework/course assignments and the dissertation proposal/completed dissertation in terms of the level of sophistication, critical thinking and academic rigor. Additionally, while coursework is generally driven by the instructor, the dissertation is a more self-directed process requiring expertise, decision making, and extensive analysis on your part. You need to “go the extra mile” so to speak; to propel yourselves to turn in work that reflects critical thinking, rigorous writing and editing, and the meaningful, systematic integration of feedback given verbally and/or in writing by your chair and committee members.
2. Any drafts of your work must reflect a systematic integration of feedback given by your chair and committee members, both verbally and/or in writing. New drafts should not be handed in if they do not reflect earlier feedback and show *significant changes* in your thinking and work. You must also be clear about the specific changes that you make on each draft by marking these changes in visible ways so that your reader can clearly discern the changes that you have made. Do not submit your drafts until you are fully satisfied with them; handing in drafts that have not been edited or re-read slows the revision process. *Your committee members are not responsible for editing your work.* Expect to be asked to revise your work several times.

Students may require extra assistance with writing and/or editing must consider pursuing assistance from a professional editor. It is a common practice for doctoral students to use the services of editors to improve the quality of the writing of their work. Please ask your chair for names of available editors.

3. Self-editing and self-reflection can be accomplished by setting aside your draft for a day or two and rereading it. Reread it critically asking questions such as: What needs to be changed? Does this make sense to outside readers who do not know the subject? Does this piece of writing reflect what you know? All of these are good questions. Only after you have critically reexamined your own work should you ask your chair or committee members to read and give you feedback.

4. You need to take responsibility for your own progress. The pace of your dissertation process is your responsibility, not the responsibility of your chair or committee members. Your chair and members are there a resource for support, feedback, and guidance but do not have all the answers. They are not necessarily experts in your area. In fact, you will (and must) become the expert on the work done in your area. No one should know the research as well as you, consequently, you need to be able to clearly articulate to the members of your committee what work has been done in the field and how your work builds on that. Chairs are not expected to do extensive editing for you, nor to dictate your direction. So while they will give you feedback, they are not to be expected to write your work for you or figure out your direction for you.

5. The program policy is that there is a two-week turnaround for feedback on student work related to dissertations. This is a reasonable amount of time given the nature and volume of the work. You must plan your timeline around that two-week period, knowing what you want to do while waiting for feedback on specific chapters or sections. *It is not appropriate to ask your chair or committee members to read your work in less than two weeks.* Additionally, meeting once a month or every three weeks is probably reasonable, given the amount of thinking, reading, and processing you need to do in between. While you will meet with your chair most often, keeping your committee members abreast of your progress throughout the process either via periodic meetings or email updates is crucial.

6. Dissertation defenses, for proposals and dissertations as a whole, will be scheduled when your chair determines that you are ready, which is determined by the submission of a proposal or dissertation that is high quality with substantive content, excellent writing and structure, critical and important data analysis and demonstration that you have developed expertise in your content area. Defenses will not be driven by a specific date or deadline. While you may have a targeted date set in your mind, it is exactly that, a target. Hitting that target will require careful planning, respect for the time of your chair and committee members, and hours upon hours of substantive work by you. Remember, defending a proposal or dissertation is a milestone that is earned through the completion of quality work.

**Guidelines for Dissertation Proposal**  
**Arcadia University**  
**Ed.D. Program in Special Education**

The following are the sections required for your dissertation proposal. They are in the order in which they should be organized for the proposal. The proposal must follow APA guidelines and use people-first language.

**Chapter One: Introduction**

**Introduction to the Study and the Research Questions:**

The goal here is to introduce and contextualize your research questions as well as to give your reader an overarching sense of the meaning and purpose of the study. This section includes a brief, informative overview of the study, its focus, some brief background of where the idea or questions originated. The introduction will lead into the statement of your questions. Include the major and supporting questions that will guide your study.

**Background and Context of the Study:**

You will provide a sense of the overall context of the study in terms of institutional context(s), demographics, location, and other relevant background information. Mention briefly an overview of your Chapter Three discussion of participant selection (i.e., who will be invited to participate in the study and other pertinent information).

**Rationale and Significance of the Study:**

In this section you will introduce the 'why' and 'so what' of your study. Discuss which area(s) of theory, research and practice your dissertation will address and which fields it belongs to both in terms of academics and practice. As well, address the goals of the dissertation in terms of enhancing theory, research and practice in your field. The goal is to help the readers understand why the study is important and significant to the field, your institution and to furthering understanding in your substantive area as well as to provide a broad understanding of what has been previously researched about your topic.

**Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Include a comprehensive and integrated literature review in the content areas related to your questions and your overall study. This should be a minimum of 50 sources. The literature review is to be written in an objective, academic and scholarly voice. The goal of the literature review is not just to review literature per se, but to think and write critically about the major arguments in the fields/areas included and to show that you understand the various strands of thinking, their differences and similarities, and their unique contributions to research, theory

and/or practice. Go from the more general to the more specific, and, as you are writing the sections of your literature review, keep in mind how this connects to your research questions. Be sure to tell the reader what is missing from the literature that is pertinent to your topic.

### **Chapter Three: Research Design/Methodology**

#### **Introduction/Overview:**

Include a brief statement which includes a review of the context and setting. Discuss the scope of your intervention and assessments (if applicable). Discuss your study in terms of the research paradigm(s) into which it belongs: qualitative research, quantitative research, and/or mixed methods research and of course, action and practitioner research. Discuss how the goals and purposes of your study align with whichever paradigm you are choosing with respect to strategy, ideology and its ultimate aims. *Make sure to cite sources from either course readings or outside readings focusing on methodology and paradigm.*

#### **Participant Selection:**

This section should flow from the above section as they are connected and yet should have its own heading. This includes information such as: characteristics of participants who will be invited to participate in the study (e.g., what are the criteria by which you will choose participants? Will you have different criteria for different types of participants?), diversity of the potential participant pool, and other pertinent information. Remember that confidentiality is essential and that it must be explicitly noted. Only criteria by which potential participants will be selected should be included. You should not have specific information about specific participants, although you may have people in mind. [Note: Consent forms must be included in appendices]

#### **Data Collection:**

Discuss all methods of data collection that will be employed in the study (e.g., measures, instruments, assessment tools, etc.). Discuss the relationship between your multiple data sources (i.e, in terms of triangulation). You must discuss in a narrative *and* visually represent (in a table or graph) how your chosen methods map directly onto your research questions. Cite literature from the research course materials or outside sources to substantiate your choice of methods. Provide a clear rationale for your choice of methods. Be clear in this section how you will specifically obtain the consent of the participants, how you maintain confidentiality, and procedures for transcription (if included), etc.

#### **Data Analysis:**

Discuss methods for analysis of data, qualitative and quantitative. Include strategies to analyze data from all sources and provide references if needed.

**Role of the Researcher/ Issues of Validity:**

Include a section on reflexive research in terms of researcher roles and responsibilities with particular attention to working within a practitioner research paradigm. Be clear about what issues might pose threats to the validity of your study *and what you will systematically do throughout the data collection and analysis to account for and mitigate against these issues*. Be clear about citing the potential for “conflict of interest” and your role in both research and practice in the context in which you are doing your research (if applicable, that is, if you are conducting research in the site where you also work). Cite course materials and/or outside literature that addresses issues of researcher roles, validity, reliability and generalizability.

**Timeline**

Include a timeline for the study which accounts for each proposed stage of the study including the negotiation of entry into your site, literature review, the development of instruments and consent forms, IRB processes, data collection (all stages), data analysis (all stages), write up. Ideally, this will include both a narrative overview and visual representation (table or graph).

**References**

Make sure that you have followed APA guidelines. Most research referenced should be within the last 10 years.

**Appendices**

You should include: (1) all instruments (questionnaires, focus group and interview protocols); (2) IRB forms, consent & assent forms, and (3) anything else that supports the reader’s ability to engage critically in the reading of your proposal. Please see the APA format for appendices. Each appendix should be labeled and have a title at the top. They must be uniform.

**Guidelines for Dissertation**  
**Arcadia University**  
**Ed.D. Program in Special Education**  
**(Revised April, 2005)**

The following are the sections required for your dissertation. They are in the order in which they should be organized for the dissertation. The entire dissertation must follow APA guidelines and use people-first language.

**Chapter One: Introduction**

**Introduction to the Study and the Research Questions:**

The goal here is to introduce and contextualize your research questions as well as to give your reader an overarching sense of the meaning and purpose of the study. This section includes a brief, informative overview of the study, its focus, some brief background of where the idea or questions originated. The introduction will lead into the statement of your questions. Include the major and supporting questions that guide your study.

**Background and Context of the Study:**

You will provide a sense of the overall context of the research study in terms of institutional context(s), demographics, location, and other relevant background information. Mention briefly an overview of your Chapter Three discussion of participant selection (i.e., who will be invited to participate in the study and other pertinent information).

**Rationale and Significance of the Study:**

In this section you will introduce the 'why' and 'so what' of your study. Discuss which area(s) of theory, research and practice your dissertation addresses and which fields it belongs to both in terms of academics and practice. As well, address the goals of the dissertation in terms of enhancing theory, research and practice in your field. The goal is to help the readers understand why the study is important and significant to the field, your institution and to furthering understanding in your substantive area as well as to provide a broad understanding of what has been previously researched about your topic.

**Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Include a comprehensive and integrated literature review in the content areas related to your questions and your overall study. This should be a minimum of 50 sources. The literature review is to be written in an objective, academic and scholarly voice. The goal of the literature review is not just to review literature per se, but to think and write critically about the major arguments in the fields/areas included and to show that you understand the various strands of thinking, their differences and similarities, and their unique contributions to research, theory

and/or practice. Go from the more general to the more specific, and, as you are writing the sections of your literature review, keep in mind how this connects to your research questions. Be sure to tell the reader what is missing from the literature that is pertinent to your topic.

### **Chapter Three: Research Design/Methodology**

#### **Introduction/Overview:**

Include a brief statement which includes a review of the context and setting. Discuss the scope of your intervention and assessments (if applicable). Discuss your study in terms of the research paradigm(s) into which it belongs: qualitative research, quantitative research, and/or mixed methods research and of course, action and practitioner research. Discuss how the goals and purposes of your study align with whichever paradigm you are choosing with respect to strategy, ideology and its ultimate aims. *Make sure to cite sources from either course readings or outside readings focusing on methodology and paradigm.*

#### **Participant Selection:**

This section should flow from the above section as they are connected and yet should have its own heading. This includes information such as: characteristics of participants who will be invited to participate in the study and exclusion criteria (e.g., what are the criteria by which you will choose participants? Will you have different criteria for different types of participants?), diversity of the potential participant pool, and other pertinent information. Remember that confidentiality is essential and that it must be explicitly noted. Only criteria by which potential participants will be selected should be included. You should not have specific information about specific participants, although you may have people in mind. [Note: Consent forms must be included in appendices]

#### **Data Collection:**

Discuss all methods of data collection employed in the study (e.g., measures, instruments, assessment tools, etc.). Discuss the relationship between your multiple data sources (i.e, in terms of triangulation). You must discuss in a narrative *and* visually represent (in a table or graph) how your chosen methods map directly onto your research questions. Cite literature from the research course materials or outside sources to substantiate your choice of methods. Provide a clear rationale for your choice of methods. Discuss your selection of instruments/development of new instruments and the rationale for your choices. Be clear in this section how you will specifically obtain the consent of the participants, how you maintain confidentiality, and procedures for transcription (if included), etc.

#### **Data Analysis:**

Give a structured explanation of what methods of analysis you used (e.g., triangulation, specific processes of coding for themes, single subject design,

member checks, and/or any specific evaluative tools, etc.). Discuss your themes and categories (e.g., what emerged inductively through coding). Answer the question: What data sources were used and what did you learn from them? Be sure to discuss what you found that was new, surprising and/or that supports or counters your initial hypothesis and the literature that you reviewed. This is to be written in an introductory way that sets the stage for your findings chapter(s).

### **Role of the Researcher/ Issues of Validity:**

Include a section on reflexive research in terms of researcher roles and responsibilities with particular attention to working within a practitioner research paradigm. Be clear about what issues posed threats to the validity of your study *and what you systematically did throughout the data collection and analysis to account for and mitigate against these issues*. Be clear about citing the potential for “conflict of interest” and your role in both research and practice in the context in which you are doing your research (if applicable, that is, if you are conducting research in the site where you also work). Cite course materials and/or outside literature that addresses issues of researcher roles, validity, reliability and generalizability.

### **Chapter Four (or Four and Five): Findings/Results/Themes**

You will discuss your data in terms of patterns, themes, findings and results that emerge from your analysis of the data. This is to be written in a voice that inductively comes from and directly reflects and frames the data, *not* your opinions. For some of you, this may be two chapters rather than just one (therefore it would be Chapters Four and Five). This will be determined individually with your chair since it is directly connected to your specific data set and processes of analysis.

This is the section that, through rigorous data analysis, communicates the “so what?” of your study. What did you discover? What is there to learn from this research? What is new and interesting? You will organize this around 2-4 major findings that emerge inductively from your data and through your analysis. This is the place to include large amounts of data in the form of quotes from participants, field notes and research journal, vignettes, and/or case studies, etc. These data sources must be analyzed in meaningful, systematic ways. All quotes and data sources must be cited.

### **Chapter Five (or Six): Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations**

In this section you will discuss the relevance of your findings for the field (or multiple fields), your conclusions based on the data in relation to research in the field, the implications your findings hold for theory, research and practice. Include recommendations for practice that are tied to the action research aspect of the study. Discuss the implications of your study for: (1) future research; (2) future practice;

(3) further school-based inquiry. Discuss what you (and/or other researchers) might follow up on in a subsequent study. Discuss concrete recommendations for

teachers, administrators, policy makers and/or anyone else that could have influence in your area of study.

### **References**

Make sure that you have followed APA guidelines.

### **Appendices**

You should include: (1) all instruments (questionnaires, focus group and interview protocols); (2) sample consent forms; and anything else that supports the reader's ability to engage critically in the reading of your study. Please see the APA format for appendices. Each appendix should be labeled and have a title at the top. They must be uniform.

**Dissertation Committee Selection Process Form**  
**Arcadia University**  
**Ed.D. in Special Education**

This form is used for the selection of your dissertation chair and committee. You will be asked to submit this form on a specified date along with your cohort members so that committee selection can happen concurrently for all students in your cohort. You are to submit these forms to Dr. Christina Ager, Director.

In no more than one page, please include the following:

**1. Dissertation Chair Selection**

Write the names of your first and second choice for your dissertation chair. This can be someone from the entire education department (but not outside of it).

**2. Committee Member Selection**

Write the names of your first and second choice for one additional member (there will be an outside third person but that can wait until later in the process).

**3. Rationale**

For each of your selections, you must provide a rationale. This should be 2-5 sentences and must focus on three areas: (1) methodology; (2) content; and (3) work style.

A few things to keep in mind:

- You may not get your first choice for chair or committee member. This is because we match you based on several criteria including content, methodology and work style. We work hard to get you your top choices but it is not always possible.
- Your third committee member must be someone from outside of the Education Department with a doctorate. We encourage you to start networking so that you develop a relationship with someone willing to invest their time and expertise in this way.
- The program faculty will contact you within three weeks of this submission to let you know about your committee.

## **Appendix A: Leadership Certification**

### **Requirements for Supervisory Certificate in Special Education**

#### Prerequisites:

ED 580: Introduction to Special Education

ED 504: Human Relations in Education (or related course)

#### Required:

ED 636, Advanced Seminar in Supervision

ED 644, Dispute Resolution in Schools

ED 600, Practicum in Supervision (360 total hours required: 180 hours can be at current site of employment if special education related; 180 hours of work in second special education related site mandatory)

Doctoral students may use one 500 or 600 level required leadership course as their final semester elective.

### **Additional Requirements for Principal Certification**

Ed 631, Managing Organizations

ED 632, Managing Change

ED 638, School Finance

ED 641, Labor Relations and Negotiations

**Appendix B: Forms**

**Qualifying Project Candidacy Form- Pilot Study Approval**  
**Arcadia University**  
**Ed.D. Program in Special Education**

Form should be submitted with completed qualifying project to document attainment of candidacy.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
ID#: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester Started Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Abstract (200 word maximum):  
Include here or note to see attached abstract.

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Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Required Signatures of Approval:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Passed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dissertation Proposal Approval Form**

Arcadia University  
Ed.D. Program in Special Education

Form should accompany Dissertation Proposal to document approval of proposed project. If substance of proposal changes, a new form should be submitted.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
ID#: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester Started Program: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Qualifying Project Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Dissertation Title:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Proposal Abstract (200 word maximum):  
Include here or note to see attached abstract.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Proposal Defense: \_\_\_\_\_

Required Signatures of Approval:

Chair: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Members:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved       Approved Contingent Upon Revisions as Stated Below

Necessary Revisions Include:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Dissertation Defense Approval Form  
Arcadia University  
Ed.D. Program in Special Education**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
ID#: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Year Accepted into Program: \_\_\_\_\_  
Year Proposal Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposal Abstract (250 word maximum):  
Include here or note to see attached abstract.

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Dissertation Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Dissertation Defense: \_\_\_\_\_  
     Approved       Approved Contingent Upon Revisions as Stated Below

Necessary Revisions Include:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Required Signatures of Approval:

Chair:  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Members:  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Template for Dissertation Manuscript Cover Sheet**

“Dissertation Title”

Arcadia University  
Ed.D. Program in Special Education

Name

A DISSERTATION  
IN  
EDUCATION

Presented to the Faculties of Arcadia University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Year

---

Dissertation Chair

Approved and recommended for acceptance as a dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Doctor of Education.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Dissertation Committee Chair)

Accepted \_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

Special committee directing the doctoral work of  
Student name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Chair  
Title of Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Committee Member  
Title of Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Committee Member  
Title of Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

**Dissertation Defense Form**

Doctoral Candidate:

Dissertation Title:

Approved and recommended for acceptance as a dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Doctor of Education.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Dissertation Committee Chair)

Accepted \_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

Special committee directing the doctoral work of  
Student name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Chair  
Title of Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Committee Member  
Title of Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Committee Member  
Title of Committee Member

Decision:

\_\_\_\_ Pass, no revisions

\_\_\_\_ Pass with revisions

\_\_\_\_ Did not pass

---

## Appendix C

### OFFICE OF GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES DISSERTATION GUIDELINES

The following guidelines supplement those stated in your program handbook.

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Format:                 | Use the APA format for all citations.  |
| Spacing:                | Double space all body text, including abstract.  |
| Sides:                  | Print single-sided only.   |
| Margins:                | One and a half inch (1½") on the binding (left) side; one inch (1") margins should appear on all other sides, including footnotes (top, bottom, right).  |
| Fonts:                  | Any standard, 12-point serif font may be used.   |
| Page Numbers:           | Use Arabic numerals starting at 1 for the first page of text, through all appendices; use lower-case Roman numerals (i, ii,) for preliminary pages such as title, copyright page, approvals, abstract, table of contents, etc.   |
| Title Page:             | Follow the template given by the Department.   |
| Abstract:               | A <b>maximum</b> 350-word abstract. Place after title, copyright (if applicable) and approval pages. Be sure to include any keywords or names; the abstract may become part of a searchable database.  |
| Copies:                 | 1 printed on high quality plain paper, according to ProQuest guidelines to the graduate office<br><br>Make sure to keep 1 copy in a safe place for "insurance"<br><br>ProQuest will make the 2 bound copies needed (for the Library and Chair) for app. \$30 each; additional copies for yourself and others are available for a fee upon request (see Agreement Form) |
| ProQuest/UMI Agreement: | A signed ProQuest/UMI Agreement Form (available in Graduate Office) to microfilm and file your dissertation, plus a \$55 fee for so doing.   |
| Copyright (if desired): | One page behind the title page, containing copyright information (ProQuest/UMI can provide this service for \$45).   |

## Appendix D

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Dissertation Committee Chairs, Members & Students** **Arcadia University**

#### **Dissertation Committee Member**

Deciding your level of involvement: The Chair, in collaboration with the student, will contact you to discuss your desired level of involvement during the student's dissertation process. Some committee members will want to see all drafts of the student's work, others would prefer to be consulted only in areas of their expertise, and still others may want to see the dissertation proposal as it nears the end of completion. Once you have determined your preferred level of involvement you should communicate your desires to the student and the Chair.

Communicate expectations and turn-around-time: It is important for you as a committee member to be clear about your expectations for work quality and how you prefer to receive it (e.g. email attachments, hard copy, both). In addition, specifying "turn-around- time" - how long you need to review and comment on a submitted section - will help the student plan for due dates and will avoid you feeling rushed by a student. Specify whether it will take you one, two or three weeks to return feedback and communicate that clearly to the student.

Determining the type of involvement: Committee members are selected for any number of reasons, including content area knowledge, methodological expertise, and student support. Please be clear about the areas you would like to provide the most input on the dissertation process.

Communicate how to communicate: Discussing your preferred methods of communications can be helpful. Some people prefer the phone, some email, and some to meet in person. There may also be differences in terms of whether the communication is to set up a meeting or to give the student feedback. Finding out how the student works best will allow you to work together in the most beneficial and efficient way.

Attending the proposal and dissertation defenses: All committee members are expected to attend the proposal defense and the dissertation defense and to sign off on required documents.

Communicating major issues or concerns to the Chair: While we expect the majority of your communications will be directly with the student, please keep the Chair informed if you have major questions, concerns or issues with either the student's work or process. This will enable us to work as a team and be proactive in our support of the student.

Expectations of students: Abilities, life circumstances, personal motivation, limitations, and especially career plans will influence the type and level of dissertation work a student can or does do. It is also important to remember that different doctoral students need different levels of support and mentorship.

Honorarium: Committee members will receive a one-time honorarium of \$350.00 per committee upon the student's passing their dissertation defense.

Qualifications: Committee members must hold a doctorate degree in education, special education, or a related field and be familiar with research.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Dissertation Committee Chair**

Major responsibility: The committee chairperson is the person who, along with the student, is most responsible for the progress of the dissertation. The Chair should read all drafts first and then send them to the committee members (if they have requested to read them). The Chair is also responsible for managing the committee and the process.

Prior to the proposal defense: Prior to the proposal defense, the Chair should talk with each member of the committee to find out his or her primary concerns and questions. The Chair then meets with the student to discuss these issues as well as to determine what questions the student needs answered at the defense (e.g. methodology, data collection, etc.) and to help the student feel comfortable that the defense will be a time to get the useful input and expertise of the members.

Proposal defense: The Chair should specify the procedures of the proposal defense to the student, which are as follows:

1. A 10-minute presentation by the student to convey to the committee the research questions, literature review, methodology, data collection, and analysis, the importance of the study, and specific questions and issues they have concerning these sections.
2. The student asks for feedback and for help problem solving her/his questions or concerns, as well as other feedback from the committee.
3. The student may tape record the discussion and the Chair may want to take notes for the student, so the student can concentrate on the discussion.
4. The student (and anyone else not on the committee) leaves the room for approximately 10 minutes and the committee discusses changes to the literature review, methods, data collection, etc. This will allow the committee to discuss issues and prioritize needed changes.
5. The Chair asks the committee how they want to be involved in reading the drafts and providing feedback to the student (e.g. ongoing, at the end, for methods only, etc.).
6. The Chair meets with the student to convey the committee members' feedback.
7. The meeting should last for about an hour.

Memo of Understanding from the proposal defense: After the proposal defense ends, the chair asks the student to write a Memo of Understanding delineating the changes that need to be made to the proposal for it to "pass" into candidacy. After approval by the Chair, the candidate will make a copy of the Memo available to each committee member.

Meeting with the candidate: After the defense the Chair and the student should meet regularly to discuss the project's progress. At least 1 time a month in person is recommended.

Student writing or research groups: Writing and or research groups of students who share the same Chair can also provide additional support for the student and help to preserve the Chair's time by providing time for group advising. They should meet at least every 2 weeks with the advisor perhaps attending every other session. One student can be asked to present monthly which provides an opportunity for group brainstorming.

Drafts: Students should expect to write multiple drafts of their dissertation proposal and the completed dissertation prior to being ready to defend.

Student Handbook: The Special Education Doctoral Student Handbook should also be consulted for content and procedures.

Expectations of students: Abilities, life circumstances, personal motivation, limitations, and especially career plans will influence the type and level of dissertation work a student can or does do. Discussing career goals with students is critical so that their dissertation is a match for their professional and personal lives. It is also important to remember that different doctoral students need different levels of support and mentorship.

Publication of the dissertation: The Chair and the student should decide authorship of publications stemming from their dissertation. It is likely that the Chair, being a partner in the conception and development of the project will be second author. Other committee members may be invited to collaborate as well.

Honorarium: Committee Chairs will receive a one-time honorarium of \$1000.00 per committee upon the student's passing their dissertation defense.

Qualifications: Committee Chairs must hold a doctorate degree in education, special education, or a related field and be knowledgeable about research. Chairs must be employees of Arcadia University.

## Appendix E

### Dissertation Proposal Defense and Dissertation Defense Procedures

#### Steps for the Defense:

1. Chair welcomes the committee, guests, and congratulates the student on getting to this point in the process.
2. Student presents for between 10-20 minutes, summarizing their study and presenting major points. The Chair and the student should meet prior to this day to determine the format for and major points of the presentation. (ideas: powerpoints, graphic displays of data, 'new thinking', essential findings etc)
3. Each student must bring a 350 word abstract as well as a separate handout listing research questions and major findings.
4. A discussion and question and answer period will be next. Decorum should be positive and supportive even while asking hard critical questions. The Chair acts as the student's advocate during this process. Roles of the chair include: facilitator, advocate, keeping the process positive and respectful.
5. Expansions and revisions are discussed in general during the discussion.
6. The student, guests, and everyone but the committee leave.
7. The Chair and committee discuss and decide on 1) student pass or fail; 2) critical revisions required; 3) suggestions for revisions; and 4) suggestions for publication.
8. Forms are signed.
9. The student is welcomed back in and feedback is given.
10. Sometime after the defense the Chair and the student meet to make sure the student understands expectations for revisions.
11. Student submits a memo of understanding within 2 weeks of the defense.
12. Student completes revisions and distributes final copies.

## Appendix F

### Arcadia University Ed.D. Program in Special Education

#### Policies and Procedures for Changing Dissertation Chairs or Committee Members

Changing dissertation chairs or committee members is a serious step that should only be undertaken if numerous options for working together effectively have been attempted. The following is the process to be followed prior to this decision as well as the form to be completed if the decision is made to change committee chairs or members. The doctoral candidate or committee chair/member can be the initiator of these change. It is important to stress that this process should be undertaken with respect and adequate self-reflection on one's own performance.

#### Process for resolving chair or committee issues:

1. Meet with your chair or committee member to share your concerns. Discuss possible solutions and set up a timeline for trying them out as well as a date for reviewing the success of the plan. If the issue is with a committee member meet with your chair to discuss your concerns and brainstorm options for resolution.
2. If #1 does not resolve the issues, meet with the official mentor for your cohort and the chair or committee member you are having difficulty with to discuss the key issues, share concerns, and develop recommendations. Construct a written plan using the **Plan for Resolving Issues of Working Together** as a form of midcourse correction.
3. Meet on the date specified in the **Plan** to review progress on working together.
4. If #2 does not result in successful resolution then
  - a. Discuss options for replacing the committee chair or member with the current chair or member.
  - b. Meet with the requested new chair or member to discuss the possibility of working together.
  - c. Fill out the **Request to Change Dissertation Chair or Committee Member** form and obtain the required signatures. Remember, leadership requires the ability to resolve conflict and to deal face to face with difficult situations. It is imperative that the doctoral candidate and the committee chair/member review this form and sign to indicate that the discussion was held and that there is agreement as to the change.
  - d. Inform all the other members of the committee
5. File a copy of this form with your new chair/committee member and give a copy to the program secretary to place in your file. Keep a copy for yourself.

**Ed.D. in Special Education  
Plan for Resolving Issues of Working Together**

Doctoral candidate's name:

Mentor:

Dissertation chair:

Committee members:

Date of meeting:

1. Key issues and concerns:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Recommendations:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Timeline for implementation:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Date for review of progress:

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_  
                                  Doctoral candidate

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee chair/member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor

Review of progress notes:

**Ed.D. in Special Education  
Request to Change Dissertation Chair or Committee Member**

Doctoral candidate's name:

Mentor:

Dissertation chair:

Committee member:

Request:

Date of request:

Reason for request:

Required Signatures:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Doctoral candidate

\_\_\_\_\_  
Exiting committee chair/member

\_\_\_\_\_  
New committee chair/member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Doctoral Program

## **Appendix G** **Faculty Bios**

### **Special Education Faculty**

**Christina Ager, Ph.D.** is an Associate Professor of Special Education at Arcadia University in Glenside, PA, where she has taught for the past 15 years. She is also the Executive Director of the B<sup>2</sup>EST Program of Arcadia. The B<sup>2</sup>EST program provides classroom based programming for students in the School District of Philadelphia who require emotional support services as well as doing extensive consulting and training nationally centering on improving services for students with emotional and behavioral challenges. She has been in the field of special education since 1978, and has worked with people with special needs from infancy into adulthood. Dr. Ager began her career as an assistant in a public school “mixed category” classroom, leaving public school to work at Lehigh University’s Centennial School with students with severe behavioral challenges. After 8 years at Centennial, she took a job as a research scientist on a federal grant from the Office of Special Education to reintegrate students with challenging behaviors into regular schools. During this time she completed her doctorate at Lehigh University in Special Education. She has chaired the Task Force on Youth Violence for the School District of Philadelphia and been on a number of advisory boards for Positive Behavior Support. She has published articles on self-management, choice making, behavior and ethics, and developing programs to support positive behaviors.

**Kim Dean, Ph.D.** is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at Arcadia University. She received her Doctorate in School Psychology in 2000 from the University of South Florida in Tampa. She spent 8 years in private practice at the Child Development Center at Tampa Children’s Hospital where she conducted school consultation, social skills therapy groups, as well as individual and family therapy. Her dissertation research examined reciprocal imitation as a tool in increasing social interaction when working with children exhibiting autism spectrum and communication disorders. Her research interests continue to lie broadly in social skills development and social and academic interventions for children with developmental difficulties. She Joined the B<sup>2</sup>EST Program of Arcadia as a behavior consultant and trainer in 2002. Recently she served as the director of a teacher training grant targeting positive behavior support strategies in the Philadelphia School District. She joined the Special Education Faculty in the Fall of 2005 after teaching as an adjunct in the program for several years. Her publications include an article on Curriculum Based Assessment in Psychological Reports, and a chapter in “Environment and Behavior” (Westview Press, 1997) along with several “Tip Sheets” for parents and teachers published by the National Association of School Psychologists.

**Peggy Hickman, Ph.D.** is Assistant Professor of Education at Arcadia University. She completed her dissertation in Multicultural Special Education at the University of Texas, Austin in Spring 2004. Her dissertation is titled, *Socio-cultural Dimensions of White Principal Leadership in Multicultural Elementary Schools*. Her undergraduate studies were in early childhood education at the University of Vermont, Burlington. She has two master's degrees: an M.Ed. in Elementary/ Bilingual Education from Arizona State University and a second M.Ed. in Educational Administration from the University of Texas at Austin. While in Texas she coordinated local and national research projects on emergent reading in English and Spanish. Recently she has published articles in Learning Disabilities Quarterly, Exceptional Children, and The Reading Teacher. In addition, Professor Hickman taught school-aged students for 9 years including students in pre-kindergarten through second grade in monolingual English and bilingual inclusive settings.

**Sharon M. Ravitch, Ph.D.** is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania and has been an adjunct professor and an assistant professor of Education at Arcadia University, where she teaches courses on multicultural education in the Graduate Program in Education and research methods courses in the Ed.D. Program in Special Education. Ravitch earned two master's degrees from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, one in Human Development and Psychology and the other in Education. She earned her doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania in an interdisciplinary program that combined anthropology, sociology and education to study issues of culture and identity in the American Educational System. Ravitch was a Dean's Fellow and a Cantor-Fitzgerald Fellow at the University. Ravitch co-authored a book entitled "Matters of Interpretation: Reciprocal Transformation in Applied Development Contexts for Youth" (Jossey-Bass, 1998) and has published articles in the fields of education and research. Ravitch speaks nationally on the areas of action research, multicultural education and teacher education.

**Graciela Slesaransky-Poe, Ph.D.** is an Assistant Professor in Special Education in the Education Department at Arcadia University, where she coordinates the special education masters, five-year, and certification programs. Dr. Slesaransky-Poe received her Ph.D. in special education from Temple University. She has an extensive history of working with and advocating for enhancing the independence, productivity, inclusion and self-determination of people with disabilities, both here in the United States and in Argentina, her country of origin. Her areas of expertise and interest include inclusive education practices for students of diverse abilities, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, family-school collaboration, and assistive and instructional technologies. Dr. Graciela Slesaransky-Poe received two national awards for her research, has published and presented in over 30 national and international professional conferences. Her two most recent publications include the book chapters *Every student and every teacher: Crossing the boundaries of middle-level, TESOL, bilingual and special education*, in V. Anfara (Ed.), The handbook of research in

middle level education (2003, Greenwich, CT: Information Age, with Ellen Skilton-Sylvester) and *Effective use of technology in the classroom* in Hammill, D. & Bartel, N. (Eds.), Teaching students with learning and behavior problems (7th ed., 2004, Austin: Pro-ed). Her current scholarly work is centered around racial profiling in education. She is also writing in collaboration with Dr. Ravitch in the area of action research and special education. She is a consultant with various local school districts and an active member in several parent and professional organizations.

### **Additional Education Faculty**

**Steven P. Gulkus**, received a B.S. in Psychology from Pennsylvania State University, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from West Virginia University. His major areas of study were learning and developmental processes, applied behavior analysis and psychometrics and test development. He has an extensive background in evaluation and action research of school-based and community-based programs and ecological assessment in the workplace. He has been an evaluator/consultant for many state and national grants from NSF to NIE and has conducted action research and instrument design in both educational and workplace environments. His area of expertise is in designing program evaluation studies, questionnaire/instrument design and statistical analysis, and the application of technology in education. His research interests are in the areas of inclusion and predictors of success in the workplace, evaluation of training programs/curricula in industry and educational environments, and the impact of technology on school-aged learners. Dr. Gulkus has held offices in and acted as paper reviewer for many national and regional organizations including the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the Eastern Educational Research Association and he has acted as statistical consultant and paper reviewer for a variety of journals including the *Journal of Teacher Education* and the journal of the American Physical Therapy Association, *Physical Therapy*. Currently he is an Associate Professor and Chairman of the Education Department at Arcadia University, Glenside, Pennsylvania.