

SPECIAL EDUCATION, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D.)

The Ph.D. in Special Education degree prepares the next generation of faculty members in the field of special education, with knowledge and skills in teaching, research and policy advocacy. The program provides instruction for preparing special education professionals to meet the diverse and complex needs of students with disabilities and their families, as well as strategies for developing programs that meet state licensure and accreditation requirements. The curriculum also provides students with a deep understanding of a range of different research methodologies and scholarly endeavors – including single case design, meta-analysis and grant proposal development – that are frequently expected of faculty in special education. Lastly, the program develops students' policy advocacy skills to create future special education faculty who understand national, state and local policies that impact the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families; design research that addresses questions that policymakers have about best practices in special education; and share research findings with policymakers to improve policies designed to improve education and services for children and youth with disabilities. Students who graduate from the program will be prepared to develop and provide high-quality training to the next generation of special education teachers, conduct and disseminate rigorous research to inform the field, and advocate locally, nationally and internationally for the diverse and complex needs of students and individuals with disabilities and their families.

Student learning outcomes

1. Apply skills in external setting (internship component): Students will demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a professional placement in a school, agency or corporate setting in the areas of research, service, policy and teaching. The faculty adviser and the internship site supervisor work together to evaluate the student.
2. Develop research knowledge and skills (research component): Students will acquire the prerequisite skills essential to designing, conducting and interpreting various research designs. Students will demonstrate this knowledge and skill set on a qualifying examination, which is independently evaluated by at least two faculty members. To address inter-rater reliability, if the two faculty members disagree on the student's level of knowledge, a third faculty member is called in to evaluate the student's responses on the qualifying examination. This exam is also graded "blindly," meaning that the evaluator does not know which student he or she is evaluating.
3. Develop in-depth knowledge in one area of study (concentration component): Students will demonstrate in-depth knowledge and skills in an area of study that is congruent with their current or projected career goals. Content will differ according to chosen concentration.
4. Complete an original research study (dissertation component): Student will design, implement, analyze and defend an original research study. Once a student passes the prospectus hearing, he or she will collect and analyze the data and finish writing the last two chapters of their dissertation. Students have a committee of a minimum of four faculty members. Typically, this consists of a chair, a methodologist, a subject-matter expert and an expert outside of the School of Education. Each committee member independently reviews the student's work. Once the dissertation defense has occurred, the committee discusses their thoughts on the quality of the student work. Once members agree, the student is granted a Ph.D.

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the **Graduate School website** and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students.

Degree candidacy requirements

A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master's or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student's graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student's faculty regarding the student's academic achievements and the student's readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements.

Graduation requirements

As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements.

Apply online today. (<https://www.vcu.edu/admissions/apply/graduate/>)

Admission requirements

Degree:	Semester(s) of entry:	Deadline dates:	Test requirements:
Ph.D.	Summer or fall	Jan 15	GRE optional

In addition to the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate->

study/admission-requirements/), the following represent the minimum requirements for admission:

1. Master's degree in an appropriate discipline
2. Three letters of recommendation addressing the student's potential for graduate study in education
3. Statement of intent
4. Transcripts of all previous college work
5. A personal interview and writing sample (may be requested)
6. Professional vitae/resume

For students who choose to submit a GRE score, it will be considered holistically with other application materials. For those who choose not to submit a GRE score, that decision will have no impact on the application review.

Please see doctoral admissions information on the School of Education website (<https://soe.vcu.edu/academics/doctoral-programs/>) for details.

Degree requirements

In addition to the VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/>), students are required to complete course work in core and elective courses.

1. Credit hour requirements: Students are required to complete a minimum of 59 credit hours.
2. Grade requirements: Receipt of a grade of C or below in three courses constitutes automatic dismissal from the program. Courses with a grade below C cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.
3. Externship requirement: Students must complete an approved externship.
4. Examination requirements: Students must pass both a qualifying examination early in the program and a comprehensive examination near the end of the program.
5. Dissertation requirements: Students must complete and defend a research dissertation.

Curriculum requirements

Course	Title	Hours
Core courses		
SEDP 651	Topics in Education	3
SEDP 705	Seminar on Disability Policy	3
SEDP 706	Personnel Development in Special Education	3
SEDP 707	Critical Issues in Special Education	3
SEDP 708	Grant Writing in Special Education and Other Social Sciences	3
SEDP 709	Literature Reviews in Special Education and Other Social Sciences	3
Research courses		
EDUS 608	Educational Statistics	3
EDUS 710	Quantitative Research Design	3
EDUS 711	Qualitative Methods and Analysis	3
SEDP 711	Doctoral Seminar in Single Subject Design	3
Internship		
SEDP 771	Research Internship	3

SEDP 772	Teaching Internship	3
SEDP 773	Service/Policy Internship	2

Cognate

Students will choose a cognate area outside of special education that provides a theoretical foundation for their dissertation study. Cognate course work must be approved by the adviser.	6
--	---

Research elective

Students will pick a higher education research elective that matches the methodology of their dissertation study. Elective course work must be approved by the adviser.	6
---	---

Dissertation research

SEDP 899	Dissertation	9
----------	--------------	---

Total Hours		59
--------------------	--	-----------

The minimum total of graduate credit hours required for this degree is 59.

Contact

Office of Strategic Recruitment
soeinfo@vcu.edu
(804) 827-6847

Additional contact

Yaoying Xu, Ph.D.
Professor and graduate program director
yxu2@vcu.edu
(804) 828-1332

Program website: soe.vcu.edu/academics/doctoral-programs (<https://soe.vcu.edu/academics/doctoral-programs/>)