



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

# Learning Sciences

Division of Learning Sciences

Graduate Student Handbook

PhD Programs

2021–2022

*Texas A&M University  
Department of Educational Psychology*

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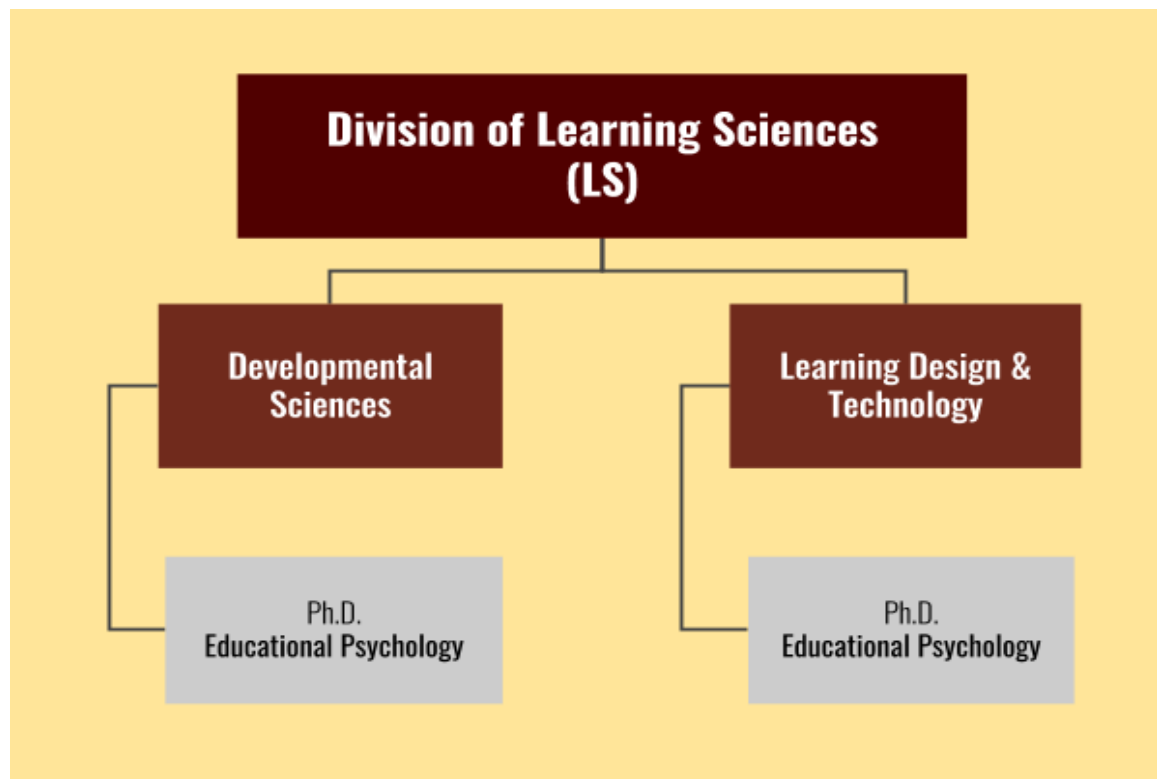
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## Welcome to the Division of Learning Sciences

The Learning Sciences Division (LS) operates within the Department of Educational Psychology (EPSY) and the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) at Texas A&M University. We are excited that you have chosen to enroll in one of our programs and look forward to seeing you grow as a scholar as you begin the next phase of your professional preparation! We feature specialized PhD programs with emphasis areas in:

- Developmental Sciences
- Learning Design & Technology

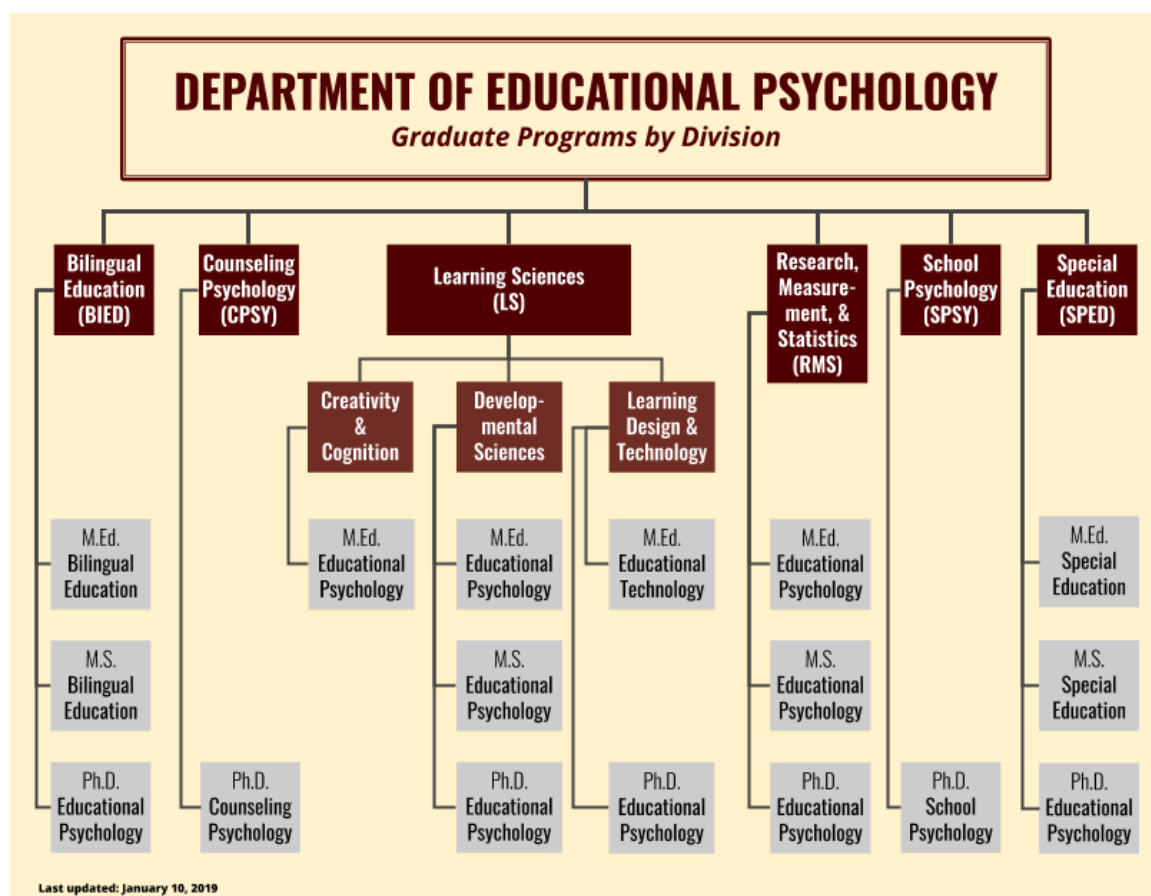
This handbook is meant to acclimate you to the policies and procedures specific to the program in which you are enrolled, and we will begin with an overview of the Department in which the Learning Sciences division is housed. This handbook contains information for newly admitted students regarding the Ph.D. programs, as well as information required by legal statute or the policies of Texas A&M University. Graduate students in the College are subject to the administrative control of the Graduate and Professional School (also referred to as the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies - OGAPS). More information about the Graduate and Professional School (OGAPS) can be found at <https://grad.tamu.edu/>.



## The Department of Educational Psychology

As a student in the Learning Sciences division, you will be a part of the Department of Educational Psychology (EPSY). EPSY is one of four departments in the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD). At the graduate level, the Department of Educational Psychology offers the Master of Education, Master of Science, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. Graduate programs are offered in Bilingual Education, Counseling Psychology, Learning Sciences, Research Measurement and Statistics, School Counseling, School Psychology, and Special Education. In addition to department and program requirements, graduate study in the CEHD is subject to the administrative control of the Graduate and Professional School (OGAPS).

In addition to its graduate programs, the department offers undergraduate courses designed to assist prospective educators and other students understand creativity, bilingual education, human learning and development, special education, and statistics. These courses are taken by students who are majoring in various fields of study other than educational psychology, students who are minoring in Creativity Studies, students who are majoring in Childhood Professional Services, or who require these courses for teacher certification with the Texas Education Agency or similar agencies in other states.



## Division of Learning Sciences: Philosophy, Mission, and Vision

The Division of Learning Sciences adheres to the belief that psychological theory and empirical research can inform and improve education by increasing our understanding of how people learn, develop, think, and solve problems; and how instruction and technology influence these processes. Development and application of measurement and statistical methods to facilitate empirical research on these issues are thus crucial.

***Our Mission.*** Our mission is to promote human learning and development. To do so, we develop theory, study new approaches made possible by emerging technologies, and use quantitative and qualitative methods to conduct research, all with the goal of developing innovative real-world applications.

***Our Vision.*** The 21st century brings unique challenges and opportunities for the science of learning and human development. Advances in data analysis techniques, information technology, and biometric technology have considerable implications for the design of learning environments, the goals we set for students, and the tools we use to reach those goals. Building on a robust tradition of interweaving theory, teaching, and research methods, we are an interdisciplinary group of learning and developmental scientists who aim to train and mentor the next-generation of leaders with specializations in Developmental Sciences and in Learning Design and Technology. This specialization will link 21st century technologies with established research on human cognition, learning, and development.

***Apprentice Scholar Model.*** Doctoral study in Learning Sciences is based on the apprentice scholar model in which students become immersed not only in knowledge which is known, but also in the process of exploring what is yet to be learned. Under the mentorship of program faculty, Learning Sciences students actively participate in research designed to advance our understanding of human learning, cognition, and development, and the environmental factors that shape them.

## Active Division of Learning Sciences Faculty

Idean Ettekal, PhD | Arizona State University (2016)

*Child and Adolescent Development, Social and Emotional Development, Peer Relationships, Bullying and Peer Victimization, Interpersonal Relationships, Developmental Psychopathology*

Connie Barroso Garcia, PhD | Florida State University (2020)

*Child and Adolescent Development, STEM Motivation, Math Achievement*

Jeffrey R. Gagne, PhD | Boston University (2007)

*Temperament Development, Self-control and Executive Functioning, Multi-method Assessment, Bio-behavioral Approaches*

Joyce Juntune, PhD | Texas A&M University (1997)

*Intelligence and Creativity, Gifted and Talented Education, Classroom Instruction*

Jeffrey Liew, PhD | Arizona State University (2005)

*Child and Adolescent Development, Emotion and Self-Regulation, Motivation and Learning*

Sarah McCorkle, PhD | Ohio University (2020)

*Online Teaching and Learning, Technology Leadership, Faculty Development*

Susan Pedersen, PhD | University of Texas-Austin (2000)

*Educational Games, Immersive Learning Environments*

Hector Ramos, PhD | Texas A&M University (2015)

*Intelligence and Creativity, Cognitive Fixation, Gifted and Talented Education*

Suzanna J. Ramos, PhD | Texas A&M University (2015)

*Intelligence and Creativity, Gifted and Talented Education, Classroom Instruction, Qualitative Methodologies*

Laura M. Stough, PhD | The University of Texas at Austin (1993)

*Disasters and Disabilities, Developmental Disabilities, Qualitative Methodologies*

Noelle Wall Sweany, PhD | The University of Texas at Austin (1999)

*Online Teaching & Learning, Emerging Technologies, Mobile Learning, Instructional Design*

Robert S. (Jay) Woodward, PhD | Texas A&M University (2000)

*Creativity, Gifted and Talented Education, Positive Youth Development Outcomes, Global Education*

Steven Woltering, PhD | University of Toronto (2012)

*Self-regulation, Psychopathology, Neuroscience, Development*

## Faculty Advisors

Faculty advisors assist students with a multitude of academic aspects associated with their degree program. The differentiation of faculty advisors along with their respective roles is listed below:

### Faculty Entering Advisor

Upon acceptance to the program, you will be assigned a Faculty Entering Advisor. This Educational Psychology faculty member will assist you with:

- Selection of courses for your first year. (You should meet and consult with your Faculty Entering Advisor prior to registering for the first semester of classes.)
- Identifying research projects and other academic opportunities in the department.

After beginning the first semester, it is the responsibility of the student to schedule a meeting with their Faculty Entering Advisor each semester. These meetings should take place prior to registration for Spring (typically around the second week of October) and Fall classes (typically around the second week of March).

Mentoring and advising relationships do evolve over time and research interests of students and faculty may change. Therefore, students are always welcome to change their Faculty Entering Advisors as long as there is another faculty who is qualified, willing and available to serve as a new advisor. If there is not a new advisor available, students will continue working with their Faculty Entering Advisor as assigned when the student entered the program. Faculty are aware that their advisement roles are “temporary” until graduate students select a Chair for their Advisory Committee. Students are fully empowered to choose a Faculty Advisor that they believe will best support their graduate career. Thus, students should directly notify their Faculty Entering Advisor if they decide to be advised or chaired by another faculty member. Note that, faculty members have the authority to accept or decline invitations from students to serve as the advisor/chair depending on their ongoing advising and professional commitments.

## Academic Program Advisors

**Sally Kallina**

PhD Students

Office: 704i Harrington Tower

Email: [skallina@tamu.edu](mailto:skallina@tamu.edu)

Phone: (979) 845-1831

**Fran Thielman**

Masters Students

Office: Harrington Tower

Email: [thielman@tamu.edu](mailto:thielman@tamu.edu)

Phone: TBD

## Academic Advisors can provide you help with the following:

- Applications and advising for EPSY programs.
- Registration.
  - Information and assistance
  - Drop/Add forms
  - Q-drop
  - In-absentia registration and information
- Deadlines, information, and forms.
  - Written and oral preliminary examinations
  - Dissertations and theses
  - Graduation
- Procurement of rooms for student Graduate Advisory Committee meetings.
- Grade sheets for teaching assistants and faculty.
- Maintenance of student records.
- Grade changes (through instructors).
- Variable credit course enrollment (e.g., EPSY 485, 683, 685).
- Student Information Management System (SIMS): Current tracking of courses, enrollment, and student status.
- PhD qualifying exam information.
- Record of addresses and phone numbers of current graduate students.
- Applications for professional organizations.
- Campus maps and community information.
- Information about regulations and services for international students.



## Chair and Graduate Advisory Committee

The Chair or one of the Co-Chairs of your Graduate Advisory Committee must be a member of the EPSY department faculty. Graduate Advisory Committee Chairs typically conduct research within the student's area of specialization (either Developmental Sciences or Learning Design and Technology). Graduate Advisory Committees for PhD students require at least four members, one of whom is from outside of the department. The committee must be selected from members of the TAMU Graduate Faculty. Recognized scholars who are not Faculty of TAMU may serve as Adjunct Members of the Graduate Faculty following nomination and approval by Graduate and Professional School (see [OGAPS Graduate Faculty Guidelines](#) for membership qualifications). When a student initially approaches a faculty member about serving as Chair or Co-Chair of the Graduate Advisory Committee, they start a dialogue to determine if this academic relationship is a good match based on mutual research interests and other factors.

Once the Chair or Co-Chair has been selected, the Student and the Chair or Co-Chairs determine together which faculty should be invited to serve as the other members of the Graduate Advisory Committee. Graduate Advisory Committee members are typically chosen on the basis of their expertise, although other factors may be considered. The student then typically meets with the identified faculty members to discuss their willingness to serve on the Committee. Once the membership of the Graduate Advisory Committee has been determined, potential changes of the Chairs or members, resulting from changes in the students' research topic or the availability of committee members, should be approached in a direct and respectful manner. In all such discussions, the best interests of the student are the primary consideration, and there should be no fear of reprisal by faculty members. Changes in the Chair or to members of the Advisory Committee require petitions to the Office of Graduate Studies.

The student's Graduate Advisory Committee Chair (or Co-Chairs) also has the primary responsibility for guiding and directing the academic program of the student. The Graduate Advisory Committee Chair (or Co-Chairs) provides primary supervision of the student's preliminary examination and dissertation and schedules meetings of the Graduate Advisory Committee. The duties of the Graduate Advisory Committee include responsibility for the degree program, dissertation proposal, preliminary examinations (written and oral), and final examination. In addition, the Graduate Advisory Committee is responsible for counseling the student on academic matters, and, in the case of academic deficiency, making recommendations. Additional information about the role and responsibilities of the Advisor/Chair can be found in the Expectations for Graduate Studies at TAMU <https://grad.tamu.edu/>.

## **Degree Requirements**

### **Required Course Credit Hours**

The Division of Learning Sciences offers two specialization areas:

- Developmental Sciences
- Learning Design & Technology

The two share degree requirements, although specialization coursework differs. Both emphasis areas have the same minimum course credit hours for graduation. Students who enter the Ph.D. program without a Master's degree are required to complete a minimum of 96 course credits. Students who enter the Ph.D. program with a Master's degree in a similar field (e.g., education, child and family studies, or psychology) are required to complete a minimum of 64 course credits.

### **Request for Consideration of Course Waivers**

Students who enter the Ph.D. program having completed comparable courses as those found in the core requirements (see details provided in the tables for core requirements below), may waive select courses. The student should discuss possible course waivers with their Graduate Faculty Adviser. Review and approval by the instructor for the course(s) is required before the course may be waived. This process ensures the courses are comparable and the student demonstrate requisite knowledge and skills for the required course(s).

### **Student Degree Plans/Program of Study**

Students should always consult with their Graduate Faculty Advisor and the Departmental Advisor regarding coursework and their program of study or degree plans. Please see course requirements (see details provided in the tables for core requirements below) for details on coursework required for graduation.

### **Filing a Degree Plan**

Each graduate student must submit an official degree plan to the Graduate and Professional School (OGAPS) for approval. The degree plan formally declares the student's degree objective, the membership of the student's advisory committee and the specific courses that the student will be required to complete as part of his/her degree program. The student should develop the proposed degree plan in consultation with his/her advisory committee. Please file your program of studies with the Graduate and Professional School (OGAPS) during the semester you complete 18 hours of coursework by submitting the proposed degree plan for review and approval through the online Document Processing Submission System (DPSS) <https://ogsdps.tamu.edu>.

## Educational Psychology Ph.D. Course Requirements for Developmental Sciences Specialization

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### FOUNDATION COURSES (9-12 credit hours)

- EPSY 602 Educational Psychology (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 673 Learning Theories (3 credit hrs.)

At least one of the following:

- EPSY 646 Issues in Child and Adolescent Development (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 647 Life Span Development (3 credit hrs.)

### SPECIALIZED COURSES (12-18 credit hours)

At least two of the following learning sciences courses:

- EPSY 606 Motivation and Learning (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 634 Educational Neuroscience (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 648 Intelligence and Creativity (3 credit hrs.)

At least two of the following developmental sciences courses:

- EPSY 671 Interpersonal Relationships (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 632 Social and Emotional Development and Interventions (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 689 Temperament, Behavior Problems, and Psychopathology (3 credit hrs.)

### RESEARCH COURSES (minimum 21 credit hours-advanced courses may be substituted)

- EPYS 622 Measurement and Evaluation in Education (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 635 Educational Statistics (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 636 Techniques of Research (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 625 Advanced Psychometric Theory (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 640 Experimental Design in Education I (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 641 Experimental Design in Education II (3 credit hrs.)  
EPSY 633 Qualitative Research Design and Data Collection (3 credit hrs.)

### DISSERTATION RESEARCH (minimum 12 credit hours)

- EPSY 691 Dissertation Research Hours (variable credits)

### ADDITIONAL ELECTIVE COURSEWORK (1 or more credit hours)

Courses both within and outside of EPSY (including additional courses in educational psychology or research may count toward elective coursework. Students should consult with their advisor or program committee to identify appropriate electives.

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- The Developmental Sciences Specialization requires a minimum of 64 credits beyond a master's degree to earn a Ph.D. (The minimum is 96 credits for those without a Master's degree.)
  - Core course requirements may be waived for students who have successfully comparable graduate coursework and/or demonstrate requisite knowledge and skills.

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## Ph.D. Educational Psychology Learning Design and Technology Specialization Course Requirements

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### FOUNDATION COURSES (15 credit hours)

EPSY 602	Educational Psychology (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 673	Learning Theories (3 credit hrs.)
EDTC 602	Educational Technology: Field, Theory, Profession (3 credit hrs.)
EDTC 654	Instructional Design: Techniques in Educational Technology (3 credit hrs.)

### SPECIALIZATION COURSES (minimum 12 credit hours)

At least two of the following learning design and technology courses:

EDTC 608	Online Course Design (3 credit hrs.)
EDTC 641	Educational Game Design (3 credit hrs.)
EDTC 642	Designing for Mobile Learning (3 credit hrs.)
EDTC 651	E-Learning Design and Development (3 credit hrs.)
EDTC 655	Instructional Design II (3 credit hrs.)

At least two of the following learning sciences courses:

EPSY 606	Motivation and Learning (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 634	Educational Neuroscience (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 646	Issues in Child and Adolescent Development (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 647	Life Span Development (3 credit hrs.)

### CORE RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY COURSES (minimum 21 credit hours)

EPYS 622	Measurement and Evaluation in Education (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 635	Educational Statistics (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 636	Techniques of Research (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 625	Advanced Psychometric Theory (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 640	Experimental Design in Education I (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 641	Experimental Design in Education II (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 633	Qualitative Research Design and Data Collection (3 credit hrs.)

### ADDITIONAL ELECTIVE/SPECIALIZATION COURSEWORK (4 or more credit hours)

Courses both within and outside of EPSY (including additional courses in educational psychology or research) may count toward elective coursework. Students should consult with their advisor or program committee to identify appropriate electives.

### DISSERTATION RESEARCH (minimum 12 credit hours)

EPSY 691	Dissertation Research Hours (variable credits)
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- The Learning Design and Technology specialization requires a minimum of 64 credits beyond a master's degree to earn a Ph.D. (The minimum is 96 credits for those without a Master's degree.)

- Select courses may be waived for students who have successfully completed comparable graduate coursework and/or are able to demonstrate requisite knowledge and skills.

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## Research and Teaching Experiences

Students should always consult with their entering or Ph.D. faculty advisers regarding research and teaching opportunities offered both within and outside of the Department of Educational Psychology. It is appropriate for students to meet and discuss with their entering or Ph.D. chair/adviser when the student is working on any research, writing project/publication, or teaching experiences which do not involve their entering or Ph.D. adviser.

## Teaching Opportunities

The LS Teaching Portal provides a gateway for Learning Sciences students to gain teaching experience. In consultation with the doctoral advisor/chair, it is highly encouraged that all Ph.D. students involve themselves in one of our instructional opportunities that include:

- **Teaching Assistant** - Assist a faculty member with aspects of a course.
- **Teaching Apprentice** - Teach a course together with a faculty member  
*Note, this is done via enrolling in a 3-hr EPSY 684 "Professional Internship" Course*
- **Instructor of Record** - Teach an undergraduate course on your own  
*Note, this option is only available to students who have completed "Teaching Apprenticeship"*

To apply for one of those three positions, visit our Teaching Portal:

<https://sites.google.com/tamu.edu/ls-teaching-portal>

## Teaching Requirements

Students with teaching responsibilities are required by the University to earn a certificate of completion from the Teaching Assistant Institute (TAI) offered through the TAMU Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE). All incoming PHD students are now required to attend a one-day face-to-face course with additional online modules designed to prepare graduate students for college classroom teaching.

<http://cte.tamu.edu/Graduate-Student-Support/Teaching-Assistant-Institute>

**To receive the TAI Certificate of Completion, students are required to**

- Complete online TAI training Course
- Attend one TAI face-to-face session
- Demonstrate English Language Proficiency (for international students)

## Major Requirements and Milestones for Ph.D. Students

The following milestones are explained in greater detail below:

- Completion of course requirements for specialization area (DS or LDT)
- Selecting a Graduate Advisory Chair (or Co-Chairs) and Committee Members
- Preliminary/Comprehensive Exam and Advance to Doctoral Candidacy
- Completion of Dissertation Proposal and Proposal Meeting with Dissertation Committee
- Passing of Dissertation Defense with Dissertation Committee

## Preliminary Examination

Every doctoral student in the program is required to pass a preliminary examination before achieving status as a doctoral candidate and presenting a dissertation proposal for review and approval by the student's dissertation committee. The preliminary exam demonstrates mastery of students and synthesis subject matter across courses, experiences, foundational knowledge of the concepts, principles, and theories in the Learning Sciences disciplines. The preliminary examination in the Learning Science Division consists of both a written examination and an oral examination that are administered by all members of the student's dissertation committee. All committee members are expected to follow the guidelines below concerning the preliminary examination.

### 1. Scheduling of the Examination

It is the responsibility of the student to work with their committee chair, committee members, and the advising office to schedule the examination. Preliminary examinations are scheduled during the fall and spring semesters and typically not during summer as faculty do not hold university appointments during the summer months. Therefore, examinations during the summer are only allowed in special circumstances and when all committee members agree to do so. All written portions of the preliminary examination must be taken within a 4-week period. Students should work closely with their doctoral advisor(s) and dissertation committee members to adhere to this requirement.

Prior to scheduling a preliminary examination, the student should review the [Steps to Fulfill the Preliminary Exam Requirements of the Graduate & Professional Studies](#). The student should meet with his or her chair to complete the [Preliminary Examination Checklist](#) to ensure that the student has met all eligibility criteria for the examination.

The preliminary examination is administered no earlier than the semester in which the student is within six credit hours of completion of formal coursework (excepting 684 and 691 credit hours). The [TAMU Graduate Catalog](#) contains more information about the purpose and format of the preliminary exam.

## 2. Content of the Examination

Examination content should reflect the student's ability to utilize verbal, visual, and written communication skills to effectively articulate the essential elements, core concepts, foundational theories, and practical applications of program curriculum and content.

### Preliminary Examination Format (TAMU Graduate Catalog)

The objective of preliminary examination is to evaluate whether the student has demonstrated the following qualifications:

- a. a mastery of the subject matter of all fields in the program;
- b. an adequate knowledge of the literature in these fields and an ability to carry out bibliographical research;
- c. an understanding of the research problem and the appropriate methodological approaches.

## 3. Format of the Written Preliminary Examination

The student's chair and committee will determine the format of the preliminary examination. The process entails written products followed by an oral examination by the student's chair and committee. After conferring with the committee chair(s), the student should contact each committee members to prepare for the content area each committee member will cover in their questions. The Chair will confirm each committee member's requirements for the written part of the examination. Although the written exam format may vary, most LS students either complete a set of written responses to questions assigned by members of the committee and/or conduct a systematic literature review of research related to their dissertation topic.

The preliminary examination may include both proctored and take-home written examination formats as follows:

- Proctored written examination format – Candidates will be required to provide a written response within a 4-hour block of time. Candidates will need to arrange with academic advising office and the committee member posing the question(s) for the written exam to be on campus on the day of the examination.



- Take-home examination format – For take-home questions, committee members will e-mail their questions to the chair 6 weeks prior to the oral examination. After receiving all questions and determining suitability, the chair will then distribute the questions to the student 5 weeks before the oral exam date. This scheduling allows the student 4 weeks to write the exam and committee members 1 week to read the answers before the oral examination. Students are expected to follow the committee member's instructions for each question.
- Systematic literature review – take-home examination format-Conduct a systematic literature review of research related to their dissertation topic, together with take-home questions from some committee members. The TAMU library offers resources and consultation on how to conduct a systematic review: <http://tamu.libguides.com/systematicreviews>.

#### 4. Submission of Written Examinations and Feedback

For the proctored written examination, the answers are due at the end of the 4 hours and submitted both to the committee member and the Chair.

For take-home examination questions, answers are due 1 week prior to the oral examination date. The file name for each response should be clearly labeled with the name of committee member who asked the question. The student should send an electronic version of **all** of the written responses to the chair who will distribute the responses to the committee members. If the committee member requests a hard copy of the response to his or her question, a hard copy of the response to that committee member should be provided. All committee members have up to one week to read the answers to *their* question(s); the responses to the other committee members' questions are for information purposes only.

For systematic reviews, students should work with their chairs ongoingly to plan and receive feedback. Students and their chairs must agree that the systematic review is ready for submission to the other committee members before it can be sent to them. The student should send the final version of the review to the chair along with their answers to any take-home examination questions. The chair will then distribute it electronically to all committee members.

#### 5. Oral Examination

The oral examination is scheduled for two hours. During the oral exam committee members will ask questions aimed at probing students' understanding of domain-relevant information and research methods, including demonstration of mastery of content related to the core curriculum in the Division of Learning Sciences. Additionally, they will ask questions that address questions or concepts from the written exam.



Regardless of exam format, a student will receive an overall preliminary exam result of pass or fail. The department (or interdisciplinary degree program, if applicable) will determine how the overall pass or fail result is determined based on the exam structure and internal department procedures. If the exam is administered by the advisory committee, each advisory committee member will provide a pass or fail evaluation decision.

Only one advisory committee substitution is allowed to provide an evaluation decision for a student's preliminary exam, and it cannot be the committee chair. According to the Graduate and Professional School (OGAPS) the candidate is considered to have passed the examination if either all committee members present vote yes or if there is only one negative vote. If the candidate receives two or more negative votes, he/she will be required to retake the oral examination. Details regarding the Texas A&M Graduate and Professional School (OGAPS) steps to Fulfill Preliminary Exam Requirements and the Pre Details in the Graduate Catalog can be found here: <https://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate/academic-expectations-general-degree-requirements/degree-requirements/> - Prelim

## **6. Retaking of Preliminary Examination (TAMU Graduate Catalog)**

Upon approval of the student's examination committee, with no more than one member dissenting, and approval of the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, a student who has failed the preliminary examination may be given one re-examination. Adequate time must be given to permit the student to address the inadequacies emerging from the first preliminary examination. The examination committee must agree upon and communicate in writing to the student, an adequate time-frame from the first examination (normally six months) to retest, as well as a detailed explanation of the inadequacies emerging from the examination. The student and the committee should jointly negotiate a mutually acceptable date for this retest. When providing feedback on inadequacies, the committee should clearly document expected improvements that the student must be able to exhibit in order to retake the exam. The examination committee will document and communicate the time-frame and feedback within 10 working days of the exam that was not passed."

## **7. After Completing Preliminary Examination (TAMU Graduate Catalog)**

After passing the required preliminary examination for the doctoral degree, the student must complete the final examination for the degree within four calendar years. Otherwise, the student will be required to repeat the preliminary examination.

## Dissertation Proposal

Every student must complete a dissertation that demonstrates the knowledge and skills required to conceive, develop, conduct, analyze, interpret, and report research at the level expected of a scholar with a PhD degree. As students begin to formulate ideas for their dissertation research, they should communicate with their advisor to discuss the appropriateness and feasibility of the topic/scope of research, available resources to complete the research, constitution of the Dissertation Committee, and proposal development. Students are encouraged to use the Journal Article and Dissertation pdf which is intended to encourage and expedite publications reporting their findings.

The student then prepares the written proposal. The chair (and co-chair when appropriate) will review and provide feedback to initial drafts of the student's proposal and indicate when it is suitable for dissemination to the Dissertation Committee. At this point, the student should schedule the proposal meeting with the entire Dissertation Committee. A written copy of the completed dissertation proposal should be provided to the Dissertation Committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled proposal meeting. It is the student's responsibility to consult with committee members to identify and discuss issues that may need to be resolved prior to the proposal meeting. At the proposal meeting, members can offer suggestions and request changes to the proposal; the student is expected to complete these changes before filing the proposal with the Office of Graduate Studies or the IRB.

After receiving approval of the dissertation proposal from the chair and Dissertation Committee and before beginning his/her research, the student must file an IRB. Only after obtaining IRB approval may the student collect data.

## Dissertation Defense

After the student has collected and analyzed the data, he or she writes the dissertation. The student should work with the chair(s), who will provide input and feedback throughout the process. The student may also seek input from the Dissertation Committee members. Once the chair indicates that the dissertation is ready for dissemination to committee members the student can schedule the dissertation defense. This is a meeting of the entire Dissertation Committee. The student must provide the entire dissertation to all members of the Dissertation Committee at least four weeks before the scheduled defense meeting. In addition, the student must complete the dissertation defense within four calendar years of the passing of the preliminary exam, or the student must retake the preliminary exam.

At the dissertation defense, the student must present, explain, and justify the dissertation and answer any additional questions to the satisfaction of the Advisory Committee. If the student is unable to do so, the committee may cancel the defense and

provide the student with a list of requirements/suggestions for a later defense date. Upon successful completion of the defense, the student makes any additional changes required by the committee.

The dissertation defense involves a public seminar on your doctoral research, immediately followed by a formal dissertation defense with only your advisory committee. The final written form of the dissertation must be submitted to and approved by the University Thesis Office. Additional information regarding this process can be found at: <http://ogaps.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students/Thesis-and-Dissertation-Services>

## **Annual Evaluation of Student Performance**

Students' entering advisors/Ph.D. chair or faculty advisor and Learning Sciences faculty evaluate students' academic progress annually. Typically, the students are reviewed and evaluated based on their satisfactory progress in their classes, research, and possible teaching experiences. To facilitate this review, doctoral students are required to provide and update the requested information each year by March 1 using the online student evaluation system at: <https://myrecord.cehd.tamu.edu/portal/docreview/>.

**Students who do not update their records will be blocked from registering for classes in the summer or fall semesters.**

The student's Entering Advisor/Ph.D. chair or faculty advisor or Advisory Committee is responsible for evaluating the student's progress toward a degree notifying the student of any concerns. Division faculty will conduct an annual evaluation of all doctoral students each spring semester. When progress is deemed unsatisfactory or in need of improvement, division faculty may recommend a number of steps to remedy the situation. These steps will be put in writing. The Entering Advisor/Ph.D. chair or faculty advisor or Advisory Committee can also recommend that the student be placed on probation or dismissed from the program. If such actions are taken, the student will be informed in writing by the Division Chair of the reason for the action, and in the case of probation, of the conditions that must be met to resolve the identified deficiency. Students who do not fulfill the conditions of their probation may be dropped from the program.

## Additional Information

### Prior Graduate Course Work and Waivers

Waiving a course requires the consent of the faculty advisor and review by the course instructor for the course that the student is attempting to waive. Transfer credits are limited to no more than 6 semester hours.

### Online Course Restrictions (4 course max)

For Doctoral students currently enrolled in any degree program, **no more than four courses may be taken by distance education** (online, electronic to group, or off-campus face-to-face) without prior approval of the Department and Graduate and Professional School (OGAPS), including non-research credit hours required for the program.

### TAMU Email

Upon admission into the University, students will receive a Texas A&M official email address in the format of **NetID@email.tamu.edu**; official correspondence from the University and the Department will be sent to this email addresses. Failure to monitor the official Texas A&M email is not an acceptable excuse for missed deadlines or requirements, and resulting holds or fees will not be lifted for this reason alone.

### Expectations of Students

Students are held to the standards of the Student Rules at TAMU (available at [student-rules.tamu.edu](http://student-rules.tamu.edu)) and the standards of the Graduate and Professional School (OGAPS) at TAMU.

Further, students in EPSY programs are expected to maintain high levels of performance in the following areas:

- **Academic performance.** The expectation for academic performance is that the student maintains a grade point average and continuous enrollment to meet the requirements set for good academic standing (3.0; Student Rules 10.4.3 and as stated in the Graduate Catalog). Although not required in all courses to the same extent, it is expected that students will demonstrate the ability to communicate their knowledge through papers, articles, reports, and other forms of written expression.
- **Autonomy.** Graduate students are expected to complete tasks with minimal assistance or support although faculty members are available for mentoring and

guidance. The University procedures will be followed in cases where students are placed on probation due to GPAs below 3.0. (Student Rules 12.3 and 12.5).

- **Ethical behavior.** Students will behave in accordance with professional ethical standards. They are also expected to adhere to the Aggie Honor Code, as promulgated by Texas A&M University. Students are required to be familiar with the TAMU Honor Code policies, which are found at [aggiehonor.tamu.edu](http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu).

## Academic Probation

Students who fail to maintain a 3.0 GPA will be placed on academic probation. The student will be notified of the program's concerns in writing. A plan for remediation of the problem that is agreed to by the student and the faculty may be implemented.

## Student Grievance Process

In addition to the grievance procedures established by the University, the Department of Educational Psychology has developed a process known as the Student Advocate. This process (described below) is available for students who disagree with and wish to challenge a faculty member's actions related to the student's participation in EPSY programs.

An EPSY faculty member selected by the Department Head assumes the Student Advocate position. Contact the EPSY office, or the graduate advisor ([epsyadvisor@tamu.edu](mailto:epsyadvisor@tamu.edu)) for the name of the current Student Advocate/Ombudsperson. In the event of a conflict of interest between a student and the current Ombudsperson, an alternate faculty member may fill this role. There is also an Ombudsperson at the College level, as well as one at the Graduate and Professional School (OGAPS) <https://grad.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students/Grievances,-Appeals,-and-Ombudsperson>. The following policies were derived by the Student Advocate in consultation with EPSY faculty, students, and the department head. A Graduate Grievance Advisory Committee has been established. The committee is made up of one faculty member and two students. The purpose of this committee is threefold:

1. To advise the Student Advocate concerning policy and issues related to faculty/student relations in EPSY,
2. To forward possible student concerns to the Student Advocate, and
3. To aid in the resolution of student concerns when requested by the Student Advocate.

### Pre-condition to Student's Initiation of the Grievance Process:

- Students are encouraged to meet with and attempt to resolve problems with the faculty member. If students have met with the faculty member and the problem has not been resolved, they should contact the Student Advocate or a member of the Grievance Advisory Committee; *or*,

- If students do not choose to meet with the faculty due to the nature of the problem or the faculty member, they also may directly contact the Student Advocate or a member of the Grievance Advisory Committee and initiate the grievance process.

*Overview of Grievance Process:*

A student who has a faculty-student concern and who has addressed the preconditions for initiation of the grievance process is encouraged to meet with the Student Advocate or Department Ombudsperson. However, a student may choose to meet first with other EPSY faculty member(s). The name and contact information for the current Student Advocate and Department Ombudsperson may be obtained via the Graduate Advisor or by calling the EPSY office at 979-845-1831.

Depending upon the nature of the student's concern, the Student Advocate or Ombudsperson may consult with the identified faculty member, the program coordinator or the department head. At the discretion of the department head, the student's concern may be communicated to the CEHD Dean's office. When there is a discussion of a particular faculty-student concern, maintaining anonymity of the student may not be possible.

*Resolution of a Student's Concern May Occur as a Result of the Following:*

1. Student's dialogue with the faculty member, a Grievance Advisory Committee member, the Department Ombudsperson, or the Student Advocate.
2. Student Advocate or Ombudsperson's consultation with the Grievance Advisory Committee and/or discussions with the faculty member.
3. Student Advocate or Ombudsperson's discussion of the student's concern with the program coordinator or the department head. As a result of these discussions, the Student Advocate and/or the department head may confer with the faculty member.
4. Pending the outcome of the above-mentioned #3, or the nature of the student's concern, the department head and/or student may enter into discussion with the CEHD Dean's office and appropriate University committees and administrators.