



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

# Learning Sciences

Division of Learning Sciences  
Graduate Student Handbook  
PhD Programs  
2022-2023

*Texas A&M University  
Department of Educational Psychology*

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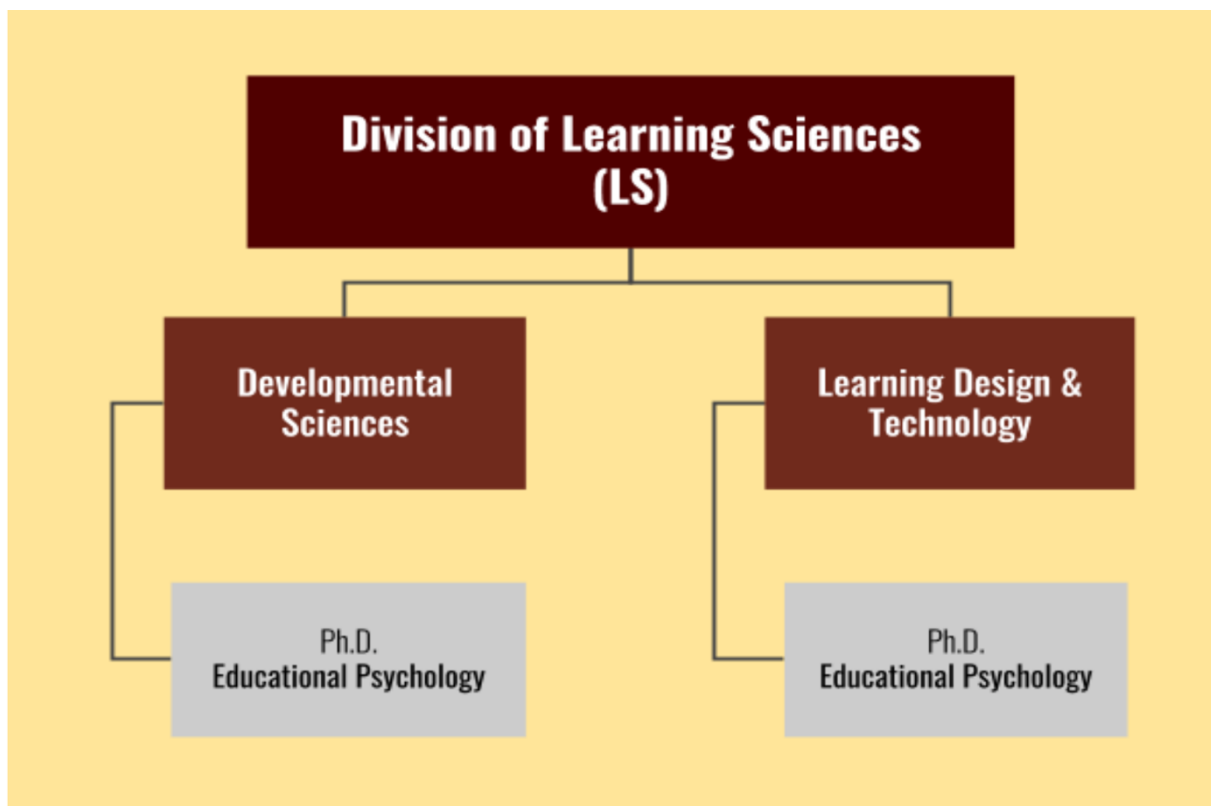
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## Welcome to the Division of Learning Sciences

The Learning Sciences Division (LS) operates within the Department of Educational Psychology (EPSY) and the School of Education and Human Development (SEHD) 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

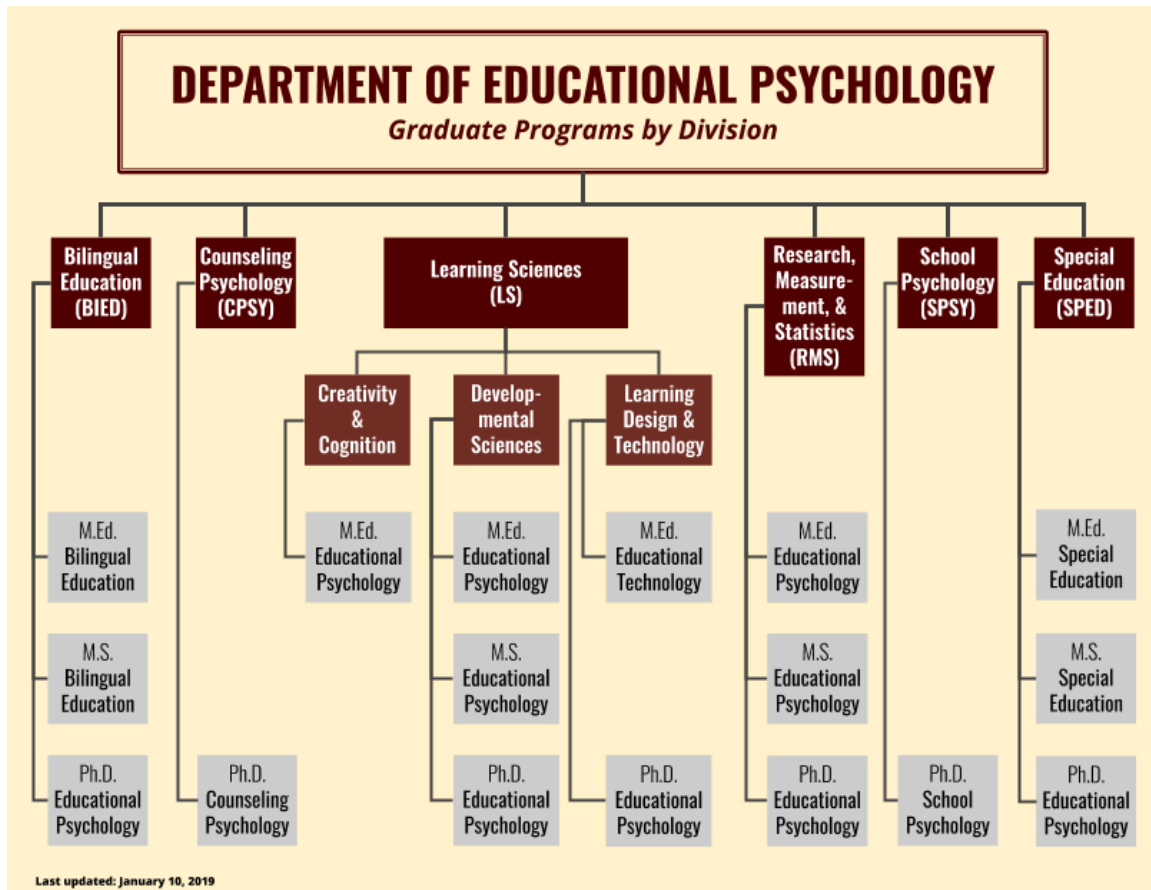
This handbook is meant to acclimate you to the policies and procedures specific to the program in which you are enrolled, and we will begin with an overview of the Department in which the Learning Sciences division is housed. This handbook contains information for newly admitted students regarding the Ph.D. programs, as well as information required by legal statute or the policies of Texas A&M University. Graduate students in the School are subject to the administrative control of the Graduate and Professional School. More information about the Graduate and Professional School 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 School of Education and Human Development (SEHD). At the graduate level, the Department of Educational Psychology offers the Master of Education (online and traditional), 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 SEHD is subject to the administrative control of the Graduate and Professional School.

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*
- Noelle Wall Sweany, PhD | The University of Texas at Austin (1999)  
*Online Teaching & Learning, Emerging Technologies, Mobile Learning, Instructional Design*
- Zhe Wang, PhD | Virginia Tech (2013)  
*Development and Individual Differences in Cognitive Abilities, Gene-Environment Interaction, Math Anxiety*
- 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 Advisor**

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 if 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

Peggy Brigman  
Academic Advisor III  
[brigman@tamu.edu](mailto:brigman@tamu.edu)

Christina Presley  
Academic Advisor IV  
[cmpresley@tamu.edu](mailto:cmpresley@tamu.edu)

### 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 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 Texas A&M Graduate Faculty. Recognized scholars who are not Faculty of Texas A&M may serve as Adjunct Members of the Graduate Faculty following nomination and approval by Graduate and Professional School (see 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 based on 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 Texas A&M <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 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 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 \(DPSS\)](#).

**Educational Psychology Ph.D.  
Course Requirements for**

**Developmental Sciences Specialization**

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

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

At least one of the following courses:

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 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 one of the following courses:

EPSY 671	Interpersonal Relationships (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 689	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)**

EPSY 622	Measurement and Evaluation (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 635	Educational Statistics (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 636	Techniques of Research (3 credit hrs.)
EPSY 625	Advance 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.)

**DESIRTATION RESEARCH (minimum 12 credit hours)**

EPSY 691	Dissertation Research Hours (variable credits)
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**ADDITIONAL ELECTIVE COURSEWORK (15 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.

- The Developmental Sciences specialization requires. Minimum of 64 credits beyond a Master’s degree to earn a Ph.D. (the minimum is 96 credits without a Master’s degree).
- Course requirements may be waived for students who have successfully comparable graduate coursework and/or demonstrate requisite knowledge and skill.

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

### FOUNDATION COURSES (*12 credit hours*)

EPSY 602	Educational Psychology ( <i>3 credit hrs.</i> )
EPSY 673	Learning Theories ( <i>3 credits</i> )
EPSY 602	Educational Psychology ( <i>3 credit hrs.</i> )
LDTG 654	Instructional Design ( <i>3 credit hrs.</i> )

### SPECIALIZED COURSES (*minimum 15 credit hours*)

At least two of the following courses:

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

At least two of the following courses:

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

### RESEARCH COURSES (*minimum 21 credit hours*)

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

### DISSERTATION RESEARCH (*minimum 12 credit hours*)

EPSY 691	Dissertation Research Hours ( <i>variable credits</i> )
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### ADDITIONAL ELECTIVE 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.

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- *The Learning Design and Technology specialization requires. Minimum of 64 credits beyond a Master's degree to earn a Ph.D. (the minimum is 96 credits without a Master's degree).*
  - *Course requirements may be waived for students who have successfully comparable graduate coursework and/or demonstrate requisite knowledge and skill.*

- **Additional Information**

## Research and Teaching Experiences

Students should always consult with their entering or Ph.D. faculty advisors 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/advisor when the student is working on any research, writing project/publication, or teaching experiences which do not involve their entering or Ph.D. advisor.

## 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](#).

## 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 Texas A&M 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.

**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 and synthesis of subject matter across courses, experiences, 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 (except for 684 and 691 credit hours). The [Texas A&M 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 a 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 Texas A&M library offers resources and consultation on [how to conduct a systematic review](#).

#### **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 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 steps to Fulfill Preliminary Exam [Requirements and the Pre-Details in the Graduate Catalog](#).

#### **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 timeframe 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 timeframe and feedback within 10 working days of the exam that was not passed.”

### **7. After Completing Preliminary Examination (Texas A&M 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 on the [Thesis and dissertation services website](#).

## **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](#).

**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 several 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.

## 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 the Professional School (GPS), 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 Texas A&M](#) and the standards of the Graduate and Professional School at Texas A&M. Further, students in EPSY programs are expected to maintain high levels of performance in the following areas:

- **Scholastic requirements.** Students in graduate degree programs and non-degree students (G6 classification) must maintain a 3.00 cumulative GPR (computed as specified in Student Rules Section 10.4.3). After a degree plan is filed, degree-seeking students must maintain a cumulative 3.0 ratio for courses listed within the degree plan. Departments and colleges may establish higher GPR requirements for their students in graduate degree programs and for non-degree students (G6 classification). If either a student's cumulative GPR or the GPR for courses listed on the degree plan within the graduate degree programs and non-degree students (G6 classification) falls below the minimum of 3.0, he or she will be considered scholastically deficient. If the minimum GPR is not attained in any two semesters, the student will be dismissed from the EPSY graduate program.

A graduate student may not receive grades other than satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U) in graduate courses bearing the numbers 681, 684, 693, 695, 697, and 791. These officially designated S/U courses may be listed on the degree plan, along with other courses approved and noted as S/U in the graduate catalog. Grades of A, B, C, and S are acceptable for graduate credit. For graduate students, grades of D, F or Unsatisfactory (U)

for courses on the degree plan must be absolved by repeating the courses at Texas A&M University and achieving grades of C or above or Satisfactory (S). Students who are enrolled in either 691s or 692s courses will receive a grade of Satisfactory (S), Unsatisfactory (U), or Incomplete (I). It is the practice of the EPSY faculty to assign a grade of 'I' when the work is in progress prior to the final defense. Upon successful defense and submission of all required paperwork, Incompletes (I) convert to Satisfactory (S).

A course in that the final grade is C may be repeated for a higher grade. If the second grade is higher, the original grade will remain on the student's permanent record, and the most recent grade will be used in computing the cumulative and degree plan GPRs. A student repeating a course in that a grade of B or better has been earned will not receive grade points for the repeated course, unless the catalog states the course may be repeated for credit.

The cumulative GPR (please refer to Student Rule 10.4.3) for a graduate student is computed by using all graded graduate (600- and 700-level) and advanced undergraduate (300- and 400-level) coursework completed at Texas A&M University and eligible to be applied toward a graduate degree. Those involving grades of W-drop (W), Satisfactory (S), Unsatisfactory (U), and Q-drop (Q) shall be excluded. Any eligible coursework not applied toward a prior graduate degree, and not exceeding time limits, will be included in the student's GPR for the subsequent degree program.

Students are required to read through and agree to all elements of Student Rule 12.5: <https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule12/>.

- **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 [Texas A&M Honor Code policies](#).  
"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do." Academic integrity is an essential force in the academic life of a university. It enhances the quality of education and celebrates the genuine achievements of others. It is, without reservation, a responsibility of all members of the Texas A&M University Community to actively promote academic integrity. Apathy or acquiescence in the presence of academic dishonesty is not a neutral act -- failure to confront and deter it will reinforce, perpetuate, and enlarge the scope of such misconduct. Failure to comply with the honor code in any way can lead to dismissal from program. See section on Academic policies for further information.

The decision to be removed from the program is made at the departmental level. Review section on Academic Policies for further rules and information. For a list of university wide graduate policies, see: <http://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate/university-policies/university-policies.pdf>.

## **Academic Probation & Dismissal**

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 GPR for every semester. If a GPR is below 3.0, the student is scholastically deficient. The student must earn at least a 3.0 in the next semester and take at least 6 hours of coursework that will be listed on the degree plan. Students who are scholastically deficient for any two semesters will be removed from the EPSY program. The procedures for dismissal are explained in the Texas A&M University Student Rules (refer to the website [studentrules.tamu.edu](http://studentrules.tamu.edu)).

Students with a semester GPR below a 3.0 will be blocked from registering for future semesters until they have met with their faculty advisor prior to the start of the next semester of enrollment. A written and signed remediation plan will be submitted to the faculty advisor and to the Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies. Failure to meet and submit a signed remediation plan is a violation of probation rules and will result in dismissal from the program at the end of the semester. Students who raise their GPR to a 3.00 within the guidelines above will be removed from academic probation; however, students cannot be removed from academic probation with any I or X grades outstanding. Any course work not applied towards a prior graduate degree, and not exceeding time limits, will be included in the student's GPR for the subsequent degree program.

Students must comply with all University, Graduate and Professional School, and departmental policies. In particular, degree plan requirements must be met, or the student may be removed from the program by the department of EPSY. It is the student's responsibility to secure committee chair and members, as well as all other aspects of the degree plan.

Students have three attempts to complete each course required on the degree plan. After the third and final attempt, the student may be dismissed from the program by the department.

## **Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty is paramount to the success of all students within the department to ensure the integrity of our programs and degrees offered. All students within the Educational Psychology Department must comply with the Honor System Rules with regard to all aspects of community responsibility and academic misconduct. Students identified as violating academic honesty will be reported to the Aggie Honor Code office. Any academic misconduct confirmed by the Honor Council will result in dismissal from the EPSY program.

## **Student Grievance Process**

In the course of their professional training, students may experience conflicts with other students, staff, faculty, or site-supervisors. Some may be misunderstandings that can be resolved through discussion. On occasion an unresolved conflict may constitute a grievance or complaint. The TAMU Student Rules Part III delineate student grievance procedures <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/studentgrievanceprocedures> and specific

instances in which a grievance can be filed. Consistent with university procedures, the Department of Educational Psychology follows a process applicable to student-staff, student-faculty, and student-site supervisor conflicts.

**First Step:** As an initial step in the resolution process, students should meet with the individual staff member, faculty member, or site supervisor of concern. If efforts to communicate directly with the individual(s) do not resolve the issue, or the student is uncomfortable approaching the individual(s), students also have access to other intermediate options.

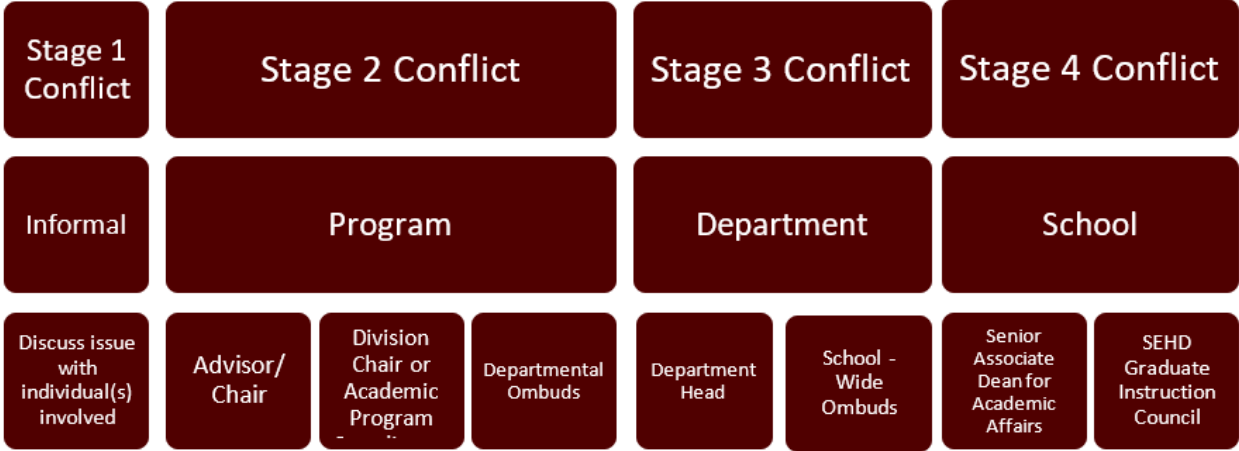
**Intermediate Options:** When conflicts/situations remain unresolved, students may seek guidance from their advisor/chair, an ombudsperson, or the faculty member who coordinates their academic program. The Department of Educational Psychology has an appointed Ombudsperson, Dr. Krystal Simmons ([ktcook@tamu.edu](mailto:ktcook@tamu.edu)). Ombudspersons are also available at the school level and in the Graduate and Professional School ([ombuds@tamu.edu](mailto:ombuds@tamu.edu)). Depending on the situation and context, a student may opt to approach their advisor/chair or the coordinator of their academic program. Student(s) may share their concerns with any of these intermediate resources to seek guidance for resolving a conflict and clearing up any misunderstandings. If after accessing intermediate options the situation remains unresolved, the student's next option for recourse is to meet with the department head.

**Department Head:** A student can request to meet with the Department Head to discuss previous attempts to resolve a conflict and to seek guidance or resolution. At this point, a determination is made as to whether the student will present the conflict/issue as a formal complaint/grievance. The Department Head will then make a determination as to appropriate action needed. The department head will also maintain a record of the student's complaint and subsequent outcomes. The number and nature of student complaints will be shared with Division Chairs annually, or when a pattern of complaints/grievances becomes evident. If a complaint or issue involves an individual outside of the department or university, the Department Head will determine an appropriate course of action and consult with the school and outside entities as appropriate. Information regarding conflicts/situations with off campus supervisors will be considered when deliberating future placements with that individual/practicum site.

**School:** Once the Department Head renders a decision/action, if the student is unsatisfied they may elect to advance the grievance to the school level for further consideration. In most cases, the school's Associate Dean for Academic Affairs will communicate with the student and determine whether any further action is needed.

It is important to note that whenever there is discussion regarding a particular faculty-student, supervisor- student, or staff-student concern, maintaining anonymity of the student may not be possible; however, confidentiality of information will always be maintained to the extent possible as allowed by law. Similarly, all activities will be consistent with the requirements and limits set under FERPA with regard to student records.

# Graduate Student Grievance and Conflict Process



**Stage 1:** Grievance, issue, or conflict arises (student-faculty, student-staff, student-supervisor) and is handled informally.  
**Stage 2:** Unresolved Stage 1 grievance or conflict will involve advisor/chair, division chair, academic program coordinator, or departmental Ombuds.  
**Stage 3:** Unresolved Stage 2 grievance or conflict will involve the department head.  
**Stage 4:** Unresolved Stage 3 grievance or conflict will involve Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and SEHD Graduate Instruction Council (GIC). Student may always seek assistance from the Graduate and Professional School (GPS) Ombuds.