

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, PH.D.

The Educational Psychology Program offers a number of graduate programs leading to a master's (MA), Educational Specialist (EdS), and PhD degree. The mission of the program is to provide students with a thorough understanding of the theory and research related to the nature of the learner and to the processes of teaching and learning. All degree programs reflect this mission and prepare students for careers as faculty members, researchers, and school practitioners.

The PhD is an advanced research degree and is designed specifically for students interested in careers within academic and research settings. PhD students may develop areas of study in:

- learning
- motivation
- human development
- educational neuroscience (an established PhD concentration)

The PhD in Educational Psychology with a concentration in Educational Neuroscience is based on an emerging transdisciplinary field that incorporates findings, methods, and theoretical perspectives from various fields, including cognitive neuroscience, learning sciences, cognitive science, and educational psychology. The concentration is currently open only to educational psychology PhD students. However, graduate students from any program can enroll in the courses offered.

Admissions

In addition to the minimum Graduate School admission requirements, to be considered for regular admission an application must include:

- A curriculum vita
- Three reference letters
- A Statement of Purpose that indicates a preferred track (i.e., learning, motivation, development, or educational neuroscience)

The Educational Psychology Ph.D. Program does not require GRE scores for admission, and applications without GRE scores will be given a full review. However, applicants are encouraged to submit GRE scores, especially if they are applying without a master's degree, and/or if they do not have previous post-undergraduate research experience.

We will start reviewing all applications on December 15th for fall admission. Please contact the graduate program coordinator if you have any questions.

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

Curricular Requirements

A total of 66 credit hours (including 18 dissertation hours) is required to complete the coursework requirements for the Educational Psychology PhD Program.

Code and Title	Hours
Doctoral Required Core Courses (18 hours minimum)	
BEP 500 Adv Educational Psych	3
HD 500 Lifespan Human Development	3
BEP 501 Proseminar in Ed. Psychology (in the first year of PhD or MA studies)	3
BEP 541 Learning and Cognition	3
Choose TWO 3-hour Educational Psychology Core courses (typically 500-level BEP and HD courses; e.g., BEP 505, BEP 561, BEP 565, BEP 570).	6

Specialization or Concentration Courses (12 hours minimum)

Choose courses based on specialization. Educational Neuroscience Concentration students need to choose four of these courses: BEP 570, BEP 645, BEP 651, BEP 660, BEP 670, BEP 671, BEP 674, BEP 675, including but not limited to BEP, HD, PY, and BEF courses.	12
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Foundations Courses (6 hours minimum)

These courses should inform student research at a foundational level, especially covering philosophy, history, or broad epistemological/methodological topics. Such courses may include, but are not limited to BEF offerings.	
Qualitative Analysis	3
Foundations course (500-or 600-level)	3

Research Courses (12 hours minimum)

These should be courses that will help students conduct research and data analysis for their research, including but not limited to BER courses.	
Quantitative I (BER 540 is suggested.)	3
Quantitative II (BER 640 is suggested.)	3
Research course (600-level course is suggested.)	3
Research course (600-level course is suggested.)	3
Dissertation Research	18
Total Hours	66

Educational Neuroscience Concentration Concentration Courses

Students in the Educational Neuroscience concentration are expected to fulfill all requirements of the Educational Psychology PhD Program. In addition, they are expected to complete the concentration courses and/or other relevant courses offered by other departments (e.g., human development, psychology, anthropology, and computer science). For the concentration students, the recommended progression is BEP 570 Found. of Ed. Neuroscience and BEP 670 Methods & Trends in Ed. Neuro..

Students choose a combination of courses to meet the minimum credit requirement (15 credits) to complete the Educational Neuroscience concentration. Students will choose from the course list shown in the table below. This list is not exhaustive, and students are encouraged to work with their advisors to develop a suitable plan-of-study.

Educational Neuroscience Concentration Courses		Hours
BEP 570	Found. of Ed. Neuroscience	3
BEP 670	Methods & Trends in Ed. Neuro.	3
Select One of the following BEP Courses		3
BEP 641	Learning and Cognition	
BEP 645	Dev Cognitive Neuroscience	
BEP 651	Neuroscience of Morality	
BEP 656	Embod Situated Approaches Edu	
BEP 660	Reading, Language and Brain	
BEP 671	Introduction to fMRI	
BEP 674	Comp. Methods in Cog. Neuro.	
BEP 675	Cognitive Electrophysiology	
Other 600-Level BEP courses with advisor approval		

Select Two of the following courses or consult with your advisor for a course that will best prepare you for the dissertation topic.

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Other 600-Level BEP courses with advisor approval

PY 650 Cognition and Learning

PY 655 Seminar in Cognitive Psych

Courses selected with advisor consultation

Total Hours**15**

Transfer Credit

Students may transfer up to 24 credit hours of coursework from previous graduate studies, including a completed master's degree, contingent upon the relevance of the coursework and the approval of the advisor and the department chair.

Graduate School information on Transfer Credit.

Doctoral Plan of Study

All Ph.D. students entering the program will be allocated a major advisor who will represent the student's major area of study.

Doctoral students are required to file official program of study forms with the Graduate School at the beginning of graduate studies. These forms require each student and her or his advisor to list the specific course requirements necessary for the student's completion of the degree. Doctoral programs of study may not be completed until the student successfully completes doctoral screening. Although a master's degree is not required for initial admission into the doctoral program, the completion of a master's degree is required before any student may complete and file the official program of study form. Doctoral programs of study are approved by the program advisory committee, area head, and assistant/associate deans of the College of Education.

Graduate School information on the Doctoral Plan of Study can be found here.

Comprehensive Exam

All degree students in the Educational Psychology program are required to successfully complete written comprehensive examination before the degrees will be granted. To be eligible to take the comprehensive examination for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, a student must have completed the majority of their coursework, especially all required Educational Psychology Core Courses and all areas of specialization courses, and received approval from their advisor. The Educational Psychology program's comprehensive examination is designed to assess the development of the student's competencies and skills according to the following criteria:

- **Written:** Students review current and historic literature in two of the four major areas of educational psychology (learning, motivation, development, or neuroscience). Responses should highlight seminal papers and people. Each response should include 10-12 pages of text and approximately 40 references.
- **Oral:** Students review the existing literature and propose a novel study in their specialty area. Students should prepare a written document or "prospectus" and give an oral presentation. The document should include 20-25 pages of text and approximately 50 references. **Note that the prospectus is intended to serve as the basis for the dissertation proposal.**

Scoring of the Comprehensive Exam

- **Written:** Written exams are scored by faculty members. There are seven scoring categories: evidence of knowledge, accuracy,

adequacy, depth, organization and flow, grammar, and format (e.g., APA style). Each category is scored 1-5, but the first five categories are weighted two points while the other two are weighted one point. A student must average 3.0 or more on each response to pass the written exam.

- **Oral:** Oral exams are scored by prospective dissertation committees (see *Dissertation Proposal* subsection below for further details about the committee composition). Each committee member votes (pass/fail) at the end of the student's presentation. A student must receive a majority "pass" votes to pass the oral exam and be deemed to be capable of conducting independent research.

For further details about the timeline and deadlines, refer to the program website.

Graduate School information for Comprehensive Exams.

Admission to Candidacy Requirements

PhD students advance to PhD candidacy when they pass their comprehensive exam.

Graduate School information on Admission to Candidacy.

Continuous Doctoral Research Hours Registration

Graduate School Policy on Continuous Doctoral Research Hours Registration.

Dissertation Requirements

Dissertation Proposal

Upon preparation of a dissertation proposal, students should form their dissertation committee and the committee should be approved by the Graduate School. A dissertation committee, with the director of the dissertation as its chairperson, supervises the preparation of the dissertation. If the committee chair is not a faculty member of the Educational Psychology Program, then the co-chair of the committee should be a program faculty member. The committee shall have not fewer than five members, all of whom are appointed by the dean of the Graduate School. At least two committee members should be Educational Psychology faculty members. All members of a dissertation committee must hold Graduate Faculty status at UA and must represent at least two academic departments. The chair of the committee must be a full member of the Graduate Faculty. A majority of the Dissertation Committee members must be regular UA faculty.

The proposal involves writing the first three features of the dissertation – introduction, literature review, and methods. The proposal needs to be presented orally to the dissertation committee who will provide feedback and decide whether or not the student can progress to the next stage by becoming a PhD candidate. This is known as the proposal defense. Similar to the prospectus, the student will need to take account of the following:

1. The student will need to send the proposal to their dissertation committee to read 10 working days before they attend an oral presentation of it.
2. The student will need to book a room and check availability of their dissertation committee who all need to attend a presentation by the student of their proposal.
3. The student will need to present their proposal to the committee and receive their signatures from all members of the committee.

4. After successfully passing the proposal defense, the student will need to consult with their advisor about dissertation committee feedback, apply to the IRB if it is necessary, start to conduct their project, and write their dissertation.

Dissertation

The dissertation involves completing 5 features of the dissertation – introduction, literature review, methods, results, and discussion. The dissertation needs to be presented orally to the dissertation committee who will provide feedback and decide whether or not the dissertation of the student is accepted to get a PhD degree. This is known as the dissertation defense. Similar to the proposal, the student will need to take account of the following:

1. The student will need to send the dissertation committee to read 10 working days before they attend an oral presentation of it.
2. The student will need to book a room and check availability of their dissertation committee who all need to attend a presentation by the student of their dissertation.
3. The student will need to present their dissertation to the committee.

The student will need to consult with their advisor about dissertation committee feedback, make necessary corrections on their thesis, get signature from the committee on the presentation form to submit it to the graduate school, and submit their thesis to ProQuest.

The dissertation defense is the culminating experience in the doctoral program. The student and committee chair are responsible for setting a defense date that allows all committee members to participate and to have adequate time to read the dissertation, determine its suitability for a defense, and engage in scholarly dialogue about how to best improve the document.

To promote these priorities, the scheduling of the defense follows a series of steps. The first step is to schedule a tentative defense date. Guided by the dissertation chair, students may schedule a defense date before they submit their final document to their dissertation committee. The second step is for students to submit their dissertation to the dissertation committee so that the committee may read the document and determine its readiness for a defense. Students must submit their completed dissertation to the dissertation committee at least 30 days prior to their scheduled defense date. Students may proceed with this second step after they receive expressed written consent from their dissertation chair(s).

The third step is for dissertation committee members to read the completed document. Dissertation committee members have 10 working days from the date of receipt to determine the dissertation's readiness for a defense, with readiness defined as general consensus (i.e., at least 4 of 5 committee members) that the dissertation can be filed with the Graduate School with only minimal revisions (e.g., minor editorial changes, minor substantive enhancements, and formatting). When readiness is agreed upon by the committee (i.e., 4 out of 5 committee members consent to a defense), the fourth step is for the Dissertation Chair to notify the student of the committee's disposition that a defense may occur. Once notified by their Chair(s), student may proceed with filing a public announcement of the defense. At this point, the dissertation defense date is formally confirmed.

Committee members who believe that a dissertation is not suitable for a defense should inform the Dissertation Chair within 10 working days of receiving the dissertation. The detail of their concerns should be submitted to the committee chair within the next 5 working days (if not sooner) so that the student is aware of those concerns and can address them before or during the defense. In cases where disagreements persist

about student readiness to defend the dissertation, students and their dissertation chairs should consult with the Department Head as soon as possible. The Department Head will then work with the COE Dean's office and the Graduate School to determine an appropriate course of action.

All faculty members in the College of Education are to receive the announcement of the pending dissertation defense and may observe the dissertation defense. Following the student's presentation and committee examination, persons other than the committee members will be asked to leave the room before the committee conducts any discussion and subsequent voting. Positive votes by Committee members indicate that the dissertation can be filed with the Graduate School with minimal or no revisions.

Graduate School information on Dissertation Requirements.

Time Limit for Degree Completion

Graduate School information on Time Limits.

Student Progress Requirements

Annual Review

As a way to provide students with evaluation about their progress and appropriate feedback on the direction of their studies, the program faculty conduct a progress review for each student at the end of each academic year. Review materials, including a summary of achievements in domains of teaching, research, and/or service and an up-to-date CV should be submitted to the Educational Psychology program coordinator at the end of each academic year. A request for these materials and a submission deadline will be provided during the Spring semesters. Once the faculty have reviewed these materials, they will make recommendations regarding the student's continued progress in their Program of Study.

Additional Academic Requirements

1. Obtain a grade of A or B in all coursework
2. Produce one research or evaluation effort (e.g., presentation of a paper to a professional conference or have an article accepted for publication). Note that this is a minimal requirement—consult with your advisor to develop a more optimal plan
3. Pass First Year Review
4. Plan Ph.D. program with Program Chair and Program Committee
5. Pass written and oral comprehensive examinations
6. Pass defense of dissertation proposal to be admitted into Ph.D. candidacy
7. Complete dissertation
8. Successfully defend the dissertation

Doctoral students are required to participate in and conduct research, and faculty members work closely with doctoral students to help them complete their research requirements. Each doctoral student takes a number of research courses and seminars and is required to participate in ongoing research projects prior to dissertation.

Academic Misconduct Information

Graduate School information on Academic Misconduct.

Academic Grievances Information

Graduate School information on Academic Grievances.

Grades and Academic Standing

Graduate School information on Grades and Academic Standing.

Graduate School Deadlines

Information on Graduate School Deadlines.

Application for Graduation

Information on Application for Graduation.

Acquisition of Financial Support:

We offer various funding opportunities for students in our graduate programs.

Prospective students are encouraged to reach out to individual faculty members to express interest, determine if faculty are accepting new students, and express the need for funding. Once a student is accepted to the program to work with a specific advisor (or advisors), there are three available funding streams, all of which are selective and competitive:

1. **UA Graduate School Fellowships:** The University of Alabama's Graduate School designates fellowships for select outstanding new and advanced students. Designated faculty member(s) nominate identified nominees for fellowships and submit nominations on their behalf to the Graduate School. The Graduate School assesses all applications across divisions and awards fellowships directly.
2. **ESPRMC Department Allocation:** The department head allocates a limited number of funded Graduate Assistantship positions (GAShips) to our program, most teaching-focused and occasionally research-focused. The program faculty assesses all applications and submits select student nominations for these department-funded GAShips.
3. **Individual Faculty Grants:** Individual program faculty members may have grant funding allocated for GAShips specific to their lab/grant. Students whose research topics or skills fit the faculty grants can apply to work with the faculty in response to a specific call for applications. The program faculty assesses the quality of all applicants for these individual grant-driven assistantships as well.

Matters related to

GAShip allocations and fellowship nominations are subject to consideration by the whole program faculty. Final decisions on the recommendations made by the program faculty are rendered by the department head.

Maintenance of Student Funding:

Department funding is typically available for 4 years subject to satisfactory progression and the number of GAShips allocated from the department. In rare cases, students in their fifth year and beyond are also considered for funding opportunities. Recommendations for renewal and discontinuance are made at the program faculty meeting.

Graduate fellowships are generally for one year only, except for special cases (e.g., Capstone fellowships). See the graduate school website for further details.

Individual faculty grants are subject to the length of each individual grant-supported research project.

Students will be notified at least one semester in advance if their financial support is scheduled to end, except in the special cases noted under Conditions for Termination of Financial Support.

Conditions for Termination of Financial Support:

Students who meet one or more of the following criteria will be subject to termination of financial support pending the Educational Psychology Program review. Depending upon the severity of the infraction or the extent of non-compliance, the Department Head and Program Coordinator

—with input from the program faculty members—will recommend immediate termination of financial support at the end of the current semester, or termination of financial support (partial or full) at the end of the following semester.

- ***Dereliction of duty.*** Dereliction of duty includes but is not limited to: failure to comply with all UA safety and interpersonal conduct policies; absence from scheduled obligations without prior notification to the instructor of record or designee (for teaching assistants) or the research advisor (for research assistants); or failure to satisfactorily complete all activities associated with the funded position as defined by the instructor of record or designee (for teaching assistants) or by the research advisor (for research assistants) and the student's departmental memorandum of appointment.
- ***Resolved finding of Academic Misconduct.*** Penalties, including potential loss of financial support, will be determined with guidance from the UA Graduate School and/or the UA College of Education.
- ***Loss of good academic standing.*** Students not in good academic standing have one probationary academic semester after notification of their change in academic status to return to good academic standing—with the non-passing grade exception noted below. Financial support will be terminated if good academic standing is not restored by the end of the probationary academic semester. Students who earn more than two grades of 'C' or at least one grade of 'D' or 'F' in graduate courses will have a compulsory academic performance review by the program faculty members. This review will determine whether the student should continue to receive financial support and/or be dismissed from the program at the end of the semester in which the non-passing grade is earned or at the end of the following semester. A decision will be rendered prior to the end of the semester in which a third 'C' and/or a 'D' or 'F' grade is reported.

Graduate School information on Financial Assistance.