Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Graduate Programs

The Ph.D. in educational leadership and policy at the University of Kansas is a research degree that prepares individuals for roles as researchers, policy analysts, educational leaders, and faculty members for policy, PK-12, and higher education settings. This degree distinguishes itself by its focus on preparing graduates to be researchers who are making original scholarly contributions to the knowledge base in the field.

Students typically take some courses in graduate programs in related fields such as sociology, public administration, and economics.

Graduate Admission to the School of Education and Human Sciences

Graduate programs in education are open to students with acceptable baccalaureate and graduate degrees whose academic records indicate that they can do successful work at the graduate level. Applicants must provide evidence of ability to work successfully at the graduate level, including experience in and commitment to the profession.

Each department in the School of Education and Human Sciences sets its own application deadlines and admission criteria. Prospective graduate students should contact the appropriate department for more information.

See Admission in the Graduate Studies (https://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies/) section of the online catalog for more information.

Ph.D. program application requirements:

Ph.D. applicants must have a bachelor’s and master’s degree from a regionally accredited institution, or an international university with substantially equivalent degree requirement. Applicants must have a minimum of a 3.00 undergraduate GPA, or an undergraduate GPA of less than 3.0 combined with a master’s or doctoral degree GPA of at least 3.0.

A bachelor’s degree followed by at least 30 hours of master’s level coursework that has not been applied toward another degree may be acceptable in some circumstances.

Applicants for the PHD program must submit the following materials:

1. Graduate application - check with the department regarding the application deadline
2. 1 official transcript from each post-secondary collegiate institution attended
3. Statement of purpose (5-8 pages maximum). Please describe your interests and commitment to the goals and curriculum of the ELPS Ph.D. program. It is recommended that you address your personal and academic background and your scholarly and related professional goals. You also could explain a specific research interest or a faculty member with whom you want to work. It is important that you thoroughly address your preferred area of specialization in the ELPS program and explain reasons why you would be a good fit (e.g., education policy, social and cultural studies in education, higher education administration, educational leadership) In addition, please address any life experiences that have shaped your decision to pursue a doctorate, along with personal experiences or achievements that would help you contribute to the ELPS program; to KU’s mission for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusiveness; and to your professional aspirations once you complete the degree.
4. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores are optional for doctoral candidates. The ELPS department relies on a holistic approach to evaluating applicants, involving a plurality of methods and information, rather than prioritizing standardized test scores such as GRE performance. While you are welcome to submit GRE scores as additional information, we do not have any cutoffs; and, not submitting your GRE score will not affect your application negatively.
5. Letters of recommendation from three individuals who can speak directly to the applicant’s academic skills and potential for rigorous, independent doctoral level work. Preferably the letters will be from current or former professors but can also include a letter from an immediate supervisor.
6. CV or resume. Please include at a minimum: post-high school education; relevant professional and/or scholarly experience; research experience and other pertinent experience; honors, other recognitions received; conference presentations, publications, reports.
7. A Writing sample. The writing sample should demonstrate the applicant’s ability to think critically and/or analytically about an issue or a task as demonstrated in an academic paper or published article. We are looking for documents of substantive quality and length, though, there is no official minimum or maximum page limit.
9. Phone or video conference interview. After initial screening, ELPS faculty may invite the applicant for an interview to address remaining questions about their objectives and fit for the program. The interview may also involve an interactive evaluation of their scholarly skills and potential.

The SOEHS requires 36 hours in the major area. For the ELPS PhD, the 36 hours are distributed as follows:

1. Departmental Core—12 hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUC 800</td>
<td>Education as a Field of Scholarship</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELPS 831</td>
<td>Sociology of Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELPS 949</td>
<td>Educational Policy and Politics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELPS 998</td>
<td>Seminar in: _____ (Educational Change/Innovation)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Concentration courses are determined in conjunction with advisor and advising committee—24 hours.

- 12-15 hours must be in ELPS. These are in addition to the courses in the departmental core. Typically, no more than two of the program courses may be taken as independent studies. More than two independent studies requires justification by student and advisor.
- 9-12 hours will be taken outside of ELPS
- One of the 8 total concentration courses must be a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion course.
3. Research -- Minimum of 15 hours (EPSY 715 or its equivalent does not count toward the PhD)
   - Basic quantitative research course, e.g., EPSY 710 and EPSY 711
   - Basic qualitative research, e.g., ELPS 871
   - 2 Intermediate or advanced qualitative or quantitative courses (or equivalent depth in historical or philosophical methods)
   - A research design course taken early in a student's program

Note: Students may seek to waive 6 hours of prior graduate statistics, qualitative, or methods courses upon approval of advisor/advising committee. For students seeking waivers, depending on career aspirations, it may be in their best interest to begin research courses at a higher level and take 12 hours of advanced research courses at KU.

The comprehensive exam consists of both a take-home, open book written exam followed by an oral exam. Students must pass both written and oral components of the comprehensive examination. Satisfactory performance on the written component must be attained before the oral component may be attempted.

To fail either component is to fail the examination. All 5 members of the student's comprehensive examination committee are involved in the evaluation process. The written comprehensive exam is determined by the student's committee and assesses students' knowledge as well as ability to critically apply that knowledge to research and to the field of education. To pass, the student must be evaluated as having responded satisfactorily to questions in the major areas. If a student fails any portion of the written comprehensive component, a failure of the examination is recorded. The examining committee determines if the entire written component of the examination, or only the failed portion(s), must be retaken. The entire written component lasts a minimum of 16 hours. If a student passes the written component but fails the oral, the examining committee determines if both components or only the oral must be repeated.

The grade on this examination is Honors, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory. An aspirant who receives a grade of Unsatisfactory may be allowed, upon the recommendation of the department, to repeat it, but it may not be taken more than 3 times. The aspirant may not repeat the oral examination until at least 90 days have elapsed since the last unsuccessful attempt or by petition.

**Dissertation:**

After successfully completing the comprehensive exam, Ph.D. students will engage in work for their culminating project – the dissertation – and must be continuously enrolled until the dissertation is defended.

The dissertation is done under the supervision of an advisor and dissertation committee and consists of two parts. First, the student works with an advisor to write a dissertation proposal that outlines the purpose scope and methods of the dissertation study. The dissertation proposal must be approved by a committee of at least three faculty members and the signed title page and electronic proposal filed with the department and SOEHS.

Upon approval of the proposal, the student may begin work on the dissertation research under the guidance of the advisor and dissertation committee (https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/oral-exam-committee-composition/) (typically consisting of the members of the proposal committee and one tenure-track faculty member from another department who represents Graduate Studies), determines the dissertation is ready for defense, a defense may be scheduled. Committee make up – etc.

The completed dissertation must be defended within time period (https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/engagement-enrollment-doctoral-programs/) established by the University and SOEHS for completion of doctoral degrees.

**Additional requirements**

To continue in the program, students must meet the University and SOEHS standards for being in good academic standing (https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/good-academic-standing/) as specified in the SOEHS graduate regulations tab.