

August 2015

## **Ph.D. in education, concentration in educational psychology Answers to Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Part-time vs. Full-time Attendance**

Students will be admitted for either full-time or part-time attendance. It is important for us to match students' interests with those of the faculty, and for all students to participate in research projects. Research team meetings are typically scheduled at a time that all students can attend; however, some research activities such as data collection in schools, may take place during the day.

### **Admissions Requirements**

To be competitive, students should have at least a combined total GRE verbal and quantitative score of 300 and a 4.0 on writing. Students' research interests should be a good fit with program faculty. Applicants who do not have a master's degree should have a strong GPA and research experience.

### **Balancing Work/Family with School**

Although it is different for everyone, it is possible to be married, to have children, or start a family and go to graduate school at the same time. Like most career aspirations, the pressures of graduate school can be difficult on relationships and families. Communication, patience and support are essential to students' success in the program.

While it is difficult to break down the hours you will devote to completing your degree, assume that, part-time, you will devote approximately 20 hours a week during the semester to your program. Many students spend much of semester breaks and the summer working on co-curricular activities, externship, or classes.

Graduate school — and a graduate degree — can be very rewarding, but this journey is often challenging for many students. It will involve sacrifice on the part of you and your family, and you may need to be a little more resourceful and creative with time management. VCU faculty members are supportive of students' overall well-being, so please feel comfortable discussing your challenges with your adviser or the concentration coordinator. We are here to help you to be successful.

### **Prerequisites**

Doctoral students may be admitted with only a bachelor's degree, though it is expected that students will have coursework related to educational psychology, research experience and academic writing experience. Regardless of whether the student has a master's degree or not, prerequisites will be determined by an analysis of the student's transcript. All students who are admitted need to show competence in research methods in education and introductory social statistics. Students without the competencies will take up to two prerequisite classes for credit either at VCU or another institution.

### **Course Meeting Times**

Most required doctoral courses meet in the evenings either from 4-6:40 p.m. or 7-9:40 p.m. Electives that are offered by other departments in the University may meet during the day.

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### **Major Program Courses**

Foundations courses: 6 credits required by the Ph.D. in education

Research courses: 12 credits required by the Ph.D. in education plus one research elective from outside the School of Education

Concentration courses: 24 credits

EDUS 620 Human Development in Education (offered fall semester of odd years)

EDUS 621 Motivation in Education (offered spring semester of odd years)

EDUS 662 Educational Measurement and Evaluation (offered fall semester, in even numbered years)

EDUS 720 Seminar in Cognition and School Learning (offered spring semester of even years)

EDUS 721 Seminar in Social Processes and Education (offered fall semester of even years)

EDUS 797 Directed Research: Educational Psychology (first 3 semesters required)

Two electives, one of which must be from outside the School of Education

It is unlikely that previous course work will be substituted for these classes. In any case, university rules prevent us from accepting more than six credit hours.

### **Co-Curricular Activities**

In addition to required course work, students are expected to complete a portfolio that demonstrates developing competence in research and teaching. A minimum of three activities will be chosen in consultation with the student's adviser. Recommendations include:

- IRB training (copy of certificate) (required)
- Attend a regional or national conference (required)
- Submit a proposal to a conference in years 2 and 3 (required)
- Serve as a TA for a course or teach a course
- Apprentice with a faculty member as a research assistant for 2 consecutive semesters, submit a review of work completed.
- Co-author an empirical journal article or participate in grant writing
- Attend 3 conferences or workshops (e.g. seminars or conferences at VCU, state, regional or national conferences. At least one should be a national conference.

### **Qualifying Exam**

Students must pass a qualifying exam, to be taken after completing 18 hours of doctoral level coursework that includes at least one concentration course in educational psychology and first year research and foundations courses. The exam will consist of questions that synthesize information from EDUS 608, EDUS 710, EDUS 702 and EDUS 703.

### **Comprehensive Exam**

The comprehensive exam will be taken after 36 hours of doctoral level study and before dissertation credits begin. In consultation with your adviser, you can choose either a literature review or a timed exam.

### **Annual Review of Student Progress**

Track faculty will review the progress of each student annually. This review will consider general progress in the program, performance on co-curricular activities, TA/GA performance, qualifying exam performance, etc. The program of study will also be reviewed.