



Doctor of Philosophy in K-16 Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

Introduction

The K-16 Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS) doctoral program brings together education scholars who come from a variety of experiences and expertise. This K-16 doctoral program challenges the conventional wisdom that K-12 and postsecondary education are too different to be studied by similar approaches of practice, policy, or research. The program requires and promotes rigorous scholarship that spans the educational continuum and is ideal for students seeking to enter careers in research, institutional assessment, policy analysis, educational leadership, or the professoriate. Students admitted to the K-16 ELPS program should anticipate the academic rigor the university embraces as a “Texas Tier One University” and a “National Research University with Very High Research Activity.”

This program requires a minimum of 66 semester credit hours (SCHs), including 18 SCHs of core research methods courses, 18 SCHs of core content courses, 12 SCHs of elective courses, and 18 SCHs of the dissertation. More detailed information is presented below.

Core Research Methods Courses (18 SCHs)

EDAD 6304 Introduction to Educational Research
EDAD 6308 Introduction to Qualitative Research
EDAD 6310 Introduction to Statistics
EDAD 6315 Advanced Statistics
EDAD 6318 Advanced Qualitative Research
EDAD 6370 Research Literature Review & Methods

Core Content Courses (18 SCHs)

EDAD 6301 Introduction to Doctoral Studies
EDAD 6325 Educational Policy Analysis
EDAD 6330 Introduction to Education Policy
EDAD 6340 Organizational Leadership Theories
EDAD 6343 Contexts of Education
EDAD 6360 Educational Leadership Theories

Elective Courses (12 SCHs)

EDAD 6390/6392 Elective 4-Doctoral Research Courses
EDAD 6391 Independent Study

Dissertation (18 SCHs minimum; through a combination of the following dissertation courses)

EDAD 6399 Dissertation (3 credits)
EDAD 6699 Dissertation (6 credits)
EDAD 6999 Dissertation (9 credits)
EDAD 7399 Doctoral Degree Completion (3 credits; taken in the semester when the student plans to defend the final dissertation)

Application Deadlines

Candidates interested in joining this program can now submit admission materials for the next fall cohort. To do so, they should seek and receive admission into UTA Graduate School *and* the Department of Higher Education, Adult Learning, and Organizational Studies (HEALOS).

The admission deadline for Fall 2026 enrollment is **February 1st, 2026**, at 11:59 pm CST.

Application Materials

A complete application packet contains:

1. **Online Application.** Complete the online application to The University of Texas at Arlington Graduate School. The application is available at <https://www.uta.edu/admissions/apply/graduate>
2. **Application Fee.** Pay the requisite application fee by the admission deadline.
3. **Official Transcripts.** Request official transcripts from every four-year college or university you attended as an undergraduate and graduate student. Your transcript record must show that you have earned bachelor's and master's degrees, and received a minimum 3.5 GPA in your Master's degree coursework.

Have transcripts sent directly from the institutions to *UTA Graduate School Admissions, 333 Davis, Box 19167, Arlington, Texas, 76019.*

You may upload unofficial transcripts to help expedite the admission decision review period. However, official transcripts are still required to be submitted when admitted or once the institution(s) make them available. To submit unofficial transcripts, please visit <https://www.uta.edu/admissions/apply/graduate>.

4. **Resume/Curriculum Vita.** Submit a detailed resume or curriculum vita (no longer than four single-spaced pages) highlighting your educational background, professional experience, and/or leadership roles. *A minimum of three years of documented experience in a professional setting where the primary responsibility is education (e.g., teaching, administration, curriculum development, professional development, postsecondary education, or roles in government or private industry) is recommended.*
5. **Statement of Interest.** Submit a statement of interest that outlines their research interests, academic preparation, and motivation for pursuing the ELPS PhD program. This statement is an essential component of the application, as it allows the admissions committee to evaluate the applicant's motivation and preparation for their pursuit of the degree. The statement should be **500-600 words** in length and must address the following key areas:

A. Motivation for Pursuing the ELPS PhD Program

Describe your motivation for applying to the ELPS PhD program at UTA. What drives your passion for educational leadership and policy studies, and what specific aspects of this field do you hope to explore in greater depth? How will earning a PhD in ELPS contribute to your long-term academic, professional, and personal goals?

B. Personal, Educational, and Professional Experiences

Explain how your background has prepared you to pursue a PhD in ELPS. Highlight significant personal, educational, and professional experiences that have shaped your academic journey and interest in this field. How have these experiences equipped you with the skills, knowledge, and perspective necessary to succeed in the program? This might include coursework, relevant projects, leadership roles, teaching or administrative experience, community involvement, or other meaningful contributions to the field of education.

C. Research Interests

Identify a specific research topic or area of interest that you would like to explore during your PhD studies. What challenges, questions, or gaps in the field of educational leadership and policy studies do you aim to address? In this section,

applicants should also review the profiles of UTA ELPS faculty members and identify at least one potential mentor whose expertise aligns with their research interests.

6. **Three Recommendation Letters.** Provide contact information for three recommenders during the online application process. Once submitted, the recommenders will receive an email with a link to submit their letter of recommendation directly.
7. **English Language Test Scores.** Submit English language test scores if your native language is not English. UTA requires a minimum score of 79 on the internet-based TOEFL (TOEFL iBT) test, 6.5 on the IELTS, or 100 on the Duolingo English Test. To learn more about international admission requirements in our University Catalog, please visit <https://catalog.uta.edu/academicregulations/admissions/graduate/>

Application Decision

Candidates will receive admissions decisions in March. Admission decisions are based upon holistic reviews of all application materials by an ELPS graduate faculty review committee. The committee values a record of academic excellence, evidence of potential for success as an educational researcher and leader, strong academic records, and letters of recommendation. It also values clear and concise writing, coherent educational and professional goals, and a demonstrated understanding of the program's mission. The application process is selective and competitive.

All application materials should be sent to coedgrad@uta.edu unless directed otherwise. Only complete application packets will be eligible for review for admissions.