Doctor of Philosophy in Education, Adult & Higher Education

Program Objectives
The PhD in Education with the Adult & Higher Education specialization educates individuals who wish to become faculty members and/or who wish to conduct research to inform post-secondary policy and practice. Students will work with their advisor on designing a program of study that meets their educational and professional objectives.

Coursework is divided into two categories: required and electives, and research and statistics. Doctoral students must conduct research and write an original theory-based dissertation. Courses are generally offered on evenings and weekends.

Program Flow
After acceptance, students are assigned a temporary advisor and should then meet with their assigned advisor. During the first semester, students complete the Doctoral Seminar (EDU 600). Coursework is based on the student’s previous academic work and advisor/committee approval. By the third semester of enrollment, students identify a graduate committee chair and committee members, establish and submit their program of study to the Graduate School, and clarify plans for the comprehensive examination.

Near the end of completing course requirements, the student will write the comprehensive exam and will later meet with the committee for the oral defense of the comprehensive exam. If deemed necessary by the committee, the student may be required to take additional coursework to make up identified deficiencies. Toward the end of the program, the student will take 3 hours of a Dissertation Seminar (EDU 650) to begin preparation of the proposal. During the proposal preparation, students work closely with their chair and the readers of the committee with progress being made each semester. Students then present/defend their proposal, which includes the study introduction, literature review, and research methodology. The student conducts the research and writes the dissertation with progress being made each semester towards completion. When the chair determines the student is ready, the student defends the dissertation.

Residency Requirement
The PhD requires one year of on-campus full-time residency. The residency requirement consists of two consecutive semesters of full-time enrollment (6-9 credits per semester) in PhD coursework.

Committees
Each student’s doctoral committee must consist of at least four approved members. The chair and one other approved member must be from the Adult & Higher Education faculty. Two other approved members will be selected based upon their ability to contribute to the student’s studies leading up to and through the dissertation research. These two committee members must have academic credentials in the area of the student’s program of study and be approved by the Head of the Department of Education and Dean of The Graduate School.

Chairs
Students should carefully select their graduate committee chair after thorough conversations with those Adult & Higher Education faculty members who have expertise in the dissertation topic and can support the student to completion. The chair will give leadership and approval regarding the balance of the committee’s potential membership. The committee, as a whole, is subject to the approval of the Head of the Department of Education. The chair will facilitate program approval, comprehensive exam planning and clarification, proposal hearing, and dissertation defense. Chairs and members of a student’s committee are subject to change. Revision to the program of study can be made during the course of study with the chair’s approval.

Comprehensive Examinations
Comprehensive examinations are required for completion of all graduate degrees at Montana State University. Students are expected to demonstrate mastery of the program of study and the ability to interact with the research
The comprehensive exam must be completed by the posted Graduate School deadlines. Near the end of completing coursework and before the dissertation proposal defense, PhD students complete a written and oral comprehensive exam. The exam is completed in writing and then orally defended in front of the entire Graduate Committee.

Through the comprehensive exam, students are expected to demonstrate:

- a competency in the breadth of knowledge covered in their coursework
- the ability to integrate concepts from courses into a holistic viewpoint
- the ability to apply material to anticipated real life situations based on the theoretical principles and concepts covered in classes
- the ability to critically read, analyze, and critique research
- a readiness to move forward to create their own research

Generally, there are three primary question areas:

1. Specialization area
2. Foundation of Higher Education
3. Research
   - Design a project - will be expected to demonstrate a mastery of aspects of both qualitative and quantitative projects (such as sampling, validity, reliability, and data analysis).
   - These areas may be revised according to individual programs.

**Mode of Course Delivery**

All education courses are offered in a variety of modalities including face-to-face in-person courses, synchronous and asynchronous online learning, and a combination of both.

**Additional Requirements**

The Doctor of Education degree must meet the minimum requirements in the For Doctoral Students section of the Graduate School’s website. Additional requirements for the PhD degree beyond these minimums are available through the Department of Education. All PhD degree candidates are expected to be familiar with both the Graduate School’s degree requirements listed here: [http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_general.html](http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_general.html) and the Department of Education degree requirements listed on the department website.

**Application Process for the PhD in Education, Adult & Higher Education**

Applicants are required to complete the online application and submit the following documentation via the Graduate School Online Application System ([http://www.montana.edu/wwwdg/apply.html](http://www.montana.edu/wwwdg/apply.html)).

1. **Completed Graduate School Application**

2. **Academic Transcripts:** Applicants must provide official transcripts verifying all Bachelor degree and Master degree coursework (as well as confirmation of bachelor’s and master’s degree earned) from the applicant’s certifying university. Unofficial transcripts may be uploaded during the application process. Official electronic transcripts may be emailed directly from the Institution to edgrad@montana.edu or mailed to the Department of Education Graduate Programs Office, 215 Reid Hall, PO Box 172880, Montana State University, 59717. Transcripts from a degree awarded through MSU do not need to be provided. **NOTE:** We require an undergraduate and graduate GPA of at least 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale). Transcripts will be evaluated for rigor and academic fit.

3. **Documentation of verbal and quantitative skills needed for the degree:** The general test of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is required. Official scores can be sent to Montana State University (code 4488). There is no minimum score requirement. Applications are reviewed holistically and take into account all elements.

4. **Personal Essay:** Suggested length is 2-3 typed, double-spaced pages. The applicant should briefly describe the following
   - Education and other educational professional experiences
   - Research interests and experience including alignment with faculty interests and expertise and an example of research experiences using educational theory, research methods, and application.
   - Professional goals

5. **Research and Data Analysis Skills Summary:** You will be asked to upload a separate document (less than one page) addressing the following
   - Describe your research experience skills.
   - Summarize your experiences using different research methods.
   - List scholarly products such as peer-reviewed conference publications and peer-reviewed publications.
   - Describe data analysis skills and experience using different data analysis software (i.e., SPSS, ENVIVO, SAS).

6. **Resume/Curriculum Vitae**

7. **Three (3) Professional References:** The letters should be from individuals qualified to assess the following
   - Knowledge in chosen field
   - Motivation and perseverance toward goals
   - Ability to work independently
   - Ability to express thoughts in speech and writing
   - Ability/potential for college teaching
   - Ability to plan and conduct research

8. **For International Applicants ONLY:** Please visit the Graduate School International Application Process ([https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/admissions_intl.html](https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/admissions_intl.html)) website for application submission information. In addition to the above, International applicants will be required to submit the following application material.
• Evidence of English Language Proficiency (http://www.montana.edu/international/admissions/englishproficiencygraduate.htm) - MSU requires applicants from countries where English is a second language to present evidence of proficiency in the use of the English language. Typical tests and scores are as follows: TOEFL (http://www.toefl.org/): 80-internet-based [iBT] or 550-PBT; IELTS (http://www.ielts.org/): 6.5, or PTE Academic (http://www.vue.com/pte/): 54.

• Copy of applicant’s passport

• Degree certificates as well as an English translation for all non-English academic transcripts and credentials. Photocopies can be used to initiate the application process; however, official transcripts/credentials are still required upon admission.

• Students will need to submit the International Student Financial Certificate found on the OIP Forms Page (http://www.montana.edu/international/admissions/forms.html), and proof of funds when offered admission to MSU.

*Note: Applicants may be contacted for an interview by the program specific applicant review committee.

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**Application Deadlines**

Below is the deadline by which all of the application materials for the PhD in Education must be submitted via the online application system. Students matriculate into the PhD program in the fall semester only. Applications to the PhD programs are reviewed once per year at the April 1st deadline. Applications received after the deadline may be reviewed for acceptance on a case-by-case basis.

- Fall Semester: April 1st

*An early review deadline of February 1st has been set for those applicants wanting to be considered for Graduate Assistantships. Graduate Assistantships require students to work on campus 19 hours per week. Applications must be complete for an early review.

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**Admission Process**

Complete applications will be reviewed by members of the Graduate Admissions Committee who then convene to make final admission decisions. Once a decision has been made the application will be forwarded to The Graduate School for final administrative processing. Please note that the application review process will begin on the application deadline date and not before.

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**Contact Information**

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