

THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF RHODE ISLAND  
FEINSTEIN COLLEGE  
OF EDUCATION

PHD IN EDUCATION PROGRAM  
HANDBOOK

Welcome from the Program Director

Dear Candidate,

Welcome to the Ph.D. in Education program at the University of Rhode Island. We are glad you are here!

You are joining a community of scholars committed to thoughtful inquiry, rigorous research, and meaningful impact. This program is designed for individuals who care deeply about education and who are prepared to engage seriously with the ideas, methods, and challenges that shape it.

During your time here, you will develop expertise in your area of focus while building the skills needed to ask important questions, design and conduct research, and contribute to conversations that matter. You will work closely with faculty and peers who will challenge and support you as you grow as a scholar.

We value curiosity, integrity, and a shared commitment to improving educational opportunities for all. We also recognize that scholarship is a collective endeavor, and we expect you to contribute to this community as much as you learn from it.

We look forward to the work you will do here and to the ways you will shape the field of education.

Sincerely,  
M. Shane Tutwiler  
Program Director - PhD in Education

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## Introduction

All graduate students and faculty follow university-wide policies set forth by the [URI Graduate School](#) as detailed in the [URI Graduate School Manual](#) and [URI Student Handbook](#). All required forms for graduate programs are available via the <https://web.uri.edu/graduate-school/forms/>.

## College Ethos

In the spirit of partnership, we strive to create a community where collegiality and collaboration thrive. We believe in being supportive and respectful, engaging in meaningful conversations that uplift and empower. We value the acquisition and sharing of knowledge through equitable educational practices that cultivate advocacy, justice, and joy.

## Executive Leadership Team

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**Governance of the PhD Program**

The Ph.D. in Education is overseen through a shared-governance model that reflects the collaborative values of the College of Education and the URI Graduate School. Governance responsibilities are carried out by the Program Director, the Ph.D. Program Committee, and the Graduate Coordinator, each of whom plays a distinct role in ensuring high-quality advising, academic integrity, and effective program administration.

**A. Program Director**

The Ph.D. Program Director provides academic and administrative leadership for all aspects of the degree. The Director:

- Serves as the *de facto* Chair of the Ph.D. Program Committee.
- Oversees program operations, including orientation, admissions, curricular planning, annual reviews, and assessment.
- Serves as the primary liaison to the College of Education Dean, the Graduate School, and University governance bodies on matters related to graduate policy, accreditation, reporting, and program development.

The Director ensures that program policies and procedures align with those in the [URI Graduate School Manual](#).

**B. Graduate Coordinator**

The Graduate Coordinator works in tandem with the Director to support the day-to-day administration of the program. The Coordinator:

- Facilitates communication among faculty, students, and the Graduate School.
- Assists with course scheduling, planning of Ph.D.-related offerings, and coordination of teaching assignments.

- Serves as an intermediary with the Graduate School on matters related to forms, deadlines, and compliance.
- Maintains student records and assists in tracking progress toward milestones and the submission of required documentation.

The Graduate Coordinator ensures continuity of program operations and provides essential support to both students and faculty.

### **C. Ph.D. Program Committee**

#### **1. Composition**

The Ph.D. Program Committee is an open standing committee within the College of Education. Membership includes faculty who:

- Teach courses required for the Ph.D. program;
- Advise or mentor Ph.D. students;
- Participate in admissions, program evaluation, or policy development;
- Contribute to ongoing assessment and improvement of the program.

Committee membership may vary yearly depending on teaching assignments, advising loads, and research participation.

#### **2. Responsibilities**

The Program Committee is responsible for:

- Oversight of curriculum, including review and revision of required courses;
- Participation in doctoral admissions and cohort selection;
- Review of student progress and program operations;
- Advising the Director on program quality, equity considerations, and resource needs;
- Supporting a cohesive and intellectually vibrant doctoral community.

### **D. Relationship to the Graduate School**

The governance of the Ph.D. program operates within the policies of the URI Graduate School as described in the Graduate School Manual. All committee appointments, Program of Study approvals, Graduate Faculty status determinations, and advancement-to-candidacy actions fall under the authority of the Graduate School.

The Director and Graduate Coordinator maintain regular communication with the Graduate School to ensure alignment with institutional policy and accreditation expectations.

## PhD Program Overview

The Ph.D. in Education is structured to guide students through a clear sequence of academic and research milestones. While individual pathways may vary, all students progress through four broad phases: coursework, comprehensive examinations, dissertation proposal, and dissertation research. Requirements for each stage align with the policies and procedures outlined in the URI Graduate School Manual (see Section 8).

The Program Director and the student’s Major Professor work together to ensure that students maintain steady progress throughout all phases of the degree.

### A. Phases and Timeline

Doctoral study proceeds through four sequential phases:

- **Course-Taking Phase**  
Students complete the required core, research methods, and focus-area coursework.

**Full-time students** (typically enrolled in *three courses per semester*) generally complete coursework in **2 to 2.5 years**.

**Full Time Student Plan - Table 1**

	Fall	Spring	**Summer
YEAR 1	EDP 600 EDP 610 EDP 611	EDP 609 EDP 613 EDP 612	Optional Focused Courses or Advanced Methods
YEAR 2	EDC 624 EDC 684 *Focused Course	EDP 623 ***Advanced Methods *Focused Course	Optional Focused Courses or Advanced Methods
YEAR 3	EDC 625 EDP 641 ***Advanced Methods *Focused Course	***Advanced Methods *Focused Course EDP 699 Comps Dissertation Proposal	Optional Focused Courses or Advanced Methods

YEAR 4	EDP 699 dissertation	EDP 699 dissertation	
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\*5 focused (specialization) courses can be taken at any time

\*\*Summer courses are optional. If students opt not to enroll in summer courses, they will need to fit them in during academic years 1-3 or extend their time to graduation

\*\*\*1 advanced methods course will be taken any time after completion of EDC 624 & 684

**Part-time students** (typically enrolled in *two courses per semester*) generally complete coursework in **2.5 to 3 years**.

**Part Time Student Plan - Table 2**

	Fall	Spring	Summer (recommended)
YEAR 1	EDP 600 EDP 610	EDP 612 and 613	Optional Focused Courses or Advanced Methods
YEAR 2	EDP 624 and 684	Advanced Methods EDP 623	Optional Focused Courses or Advanced Methods
YEAR 3	EDP 611 EDP 625	EDP 609 EDP 625	Optional Focused Courses or Advanced Methods
YEAR 4	EDP 641 EDP 625	EDP 699 Comps Dissertation Proposal	Optional Focused Courses or Advanced Methods
YEAR 5	EDP 699 dissertation	EDP 699 dissertation	
YEAR 6	EDP 699 dissertation	EDP 699 dissertation	

Further details for coursework are given in Section III.

- **Comprehensive Examination Phase**  
Comprehensive examinations are taken **near the end of coursework** (excluding EDC 625, EDP 641, and EDP 699).

Students must have an approved Program of Study on file before sitting for the exam.

- **Dissertation Proposal Phase**

After successful completion of the comprehensive exams, students develop and defend a formal dissertation proposal before their Doctoral Committee.

- **Dissertation Research and Writing Phase**

Following proposal approval and admission to candidacy, students engage in dissertation research, data collection, analysis, writing, and the final oral defense.

Students meet regularly with their initial advisor and, once selected, their Major Professor to ensure they are meeting expected timelines and progression benchmarks.

### **B. Benchmarks for Progress**

Progress benchmarks align with Graduate School expectations and internal program practices. Key benchmarks include:

- **Initial Advising**

Students meet with their Major Professor upon entry and are encouraged to identify a Committee by the end of the third full-time or fourth part-time semester.

- **Program of Study Submission**

A Program of Study—detailing completed and planned coursework—is due:

- **By the end of the 3rd semester** (full-time)

- **By the end of the 4th semester** (part-time)

Transfer credit petitions must also be submitted at this time.

- **Coursework Completion**

Students should complete all formal coursework before scheduling comprehensive exams.

- **Comprehensive Examinations**

Typically taken near the end of coursework; must be completed before proposal development.

- **Proposal Defense and Admission to Candidacy**

Students advance to candidacy upon successful defense of the proposal.

- **Dissertation Research and Annual Review**

Students engage in research and writing while maintaining continuous enrollment. Annual reviews conducted by the Major Professor and Program Director assess academic progress, research engagement, and professional development.

All benchmarks and timelines follow the policies set forth in the Graduate School Manual ([Section 8](#)).

### **C. Progress Memo**

Throughout their time in the program, students are expected to demonstrate consistent and timely progress toward the Ph.D. The Program Director and Major Professor document progression through:

- Annual reviews
- Notes from advising meetings
- Committee recommendations
- Formal Graduate School forms and approvals

A **Progress Memo** may be issued to summarize accomplishments, identify areas requiring attention, or clarify expectations moving forward. These memos are intended to support student success and ensure alignment with Graduate School policies regarding time-to-degree, continuous enrollment, and satisfactory academic standing.

## **PhD Coursework: Requirements & Recommendations**

The Ph.D. in Education is a **60-credit doctoral program** designed to provide a strong foundation in educational theory, rigorous methodological preparation, and specialized expertise tailored to each student's scholarly and professional goals. Coursework is organized into three major categories: **Core Courses**, **Research Methods**, and **Focus Courses**.

Students are encouraged to work closely with the Program Director (initially) and subsequently with their Major Professor to design a coherent and rigorous plan of study aligned with their proposed research area and long-term career objectives.

### **A. Research Methods Coursework (21 credits)**

The program provides comprehensive methodological training across qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods traditions. Students complete:

#### **Required Research Methods Courses (18 credits)**

- **EDP 623 – Research Design (3 cr)**  
Introduces major research paradigms, design logic, causal inference, and alignment between theory, questions, and methods.
- **EDP 612 – Qualitative Research Methods in Education (3 cr)**  
Covers interpretive, ethnographic, case study, and interview-based methodologies, including data collection and analysis.

- **EDC 684 – Analysis of Data: A Hands-On Qualitative Approach (3 cr)**  
Provides applied training in coding, thematic analysis, analytic memoing, and validity strategies in qualitative inquiry.
- **EDP 613 – Introduction to Quantitative Research (3 cr)**  
Introduces measurement, sampling, descriptive and inferential statistics, and applied quantitative analysis in education.
- **EDC 624 – Applied Educational Quantitative Data Analysis (3 cr)**  
Focuses on regression, GLMs, multilevel modeling, and applied statistical modeling in real educational datasets.
- **EDC 625 – Engaged Research Apprenticeship in Education (3 cr)**  
Provides mentored research experience, often tied to faculty projects, community partnerships, or methodological skill development.

### **Advanced Methods Requirement (3 credits)**

Students must complete **one additional advanced methods course**, selected in consultation with their Major Professor. Options include (but are not limited to):

- **EDC 614 – Mixed Methods Research (3 cr)**
- **EDC 682 – Discourse Analysis in Education Research (3 cr)**
- Any other advanced methods course at URI approved by the Major Professor and Program Director.

### **Recommendation:**

Students aiming for research-intensive careers (e.g., faculty roles, policy analysis) are strongly encouraged to take **additional methods courses** beyond the minimum requirement to strengthen their methodological toolkit.

### **B. Core / Foundational Courses (12 credits)**

These courses provide the intellectual grounding necessary for advanced scholarly inquiry in education. All students complete the following:

- **EDP 600 – Academic Reading & Writing for Doctoral Studies (3 cr)**  
Develops scholarly writing skills, academic reading strategies, literature synthesis, and argumentation.
- **EDP 609 – Critical Paradigms and Justice in Education (3 cr)**  
Examines the philosophical, sociocultural, and historical foundations of education with a focus on equity, justice, and critical inquiry.

- **EDP 610 – Contemporary Issues in Educational Inquiry (3 cr)**  
Explores major debates, contemporary challenges, and conceptual frameworks shaping the field of education.
- **EDP 611 – Issues and Problems in Educational Inquiry (3 cr)**  
Engages students in identifying and problematizing key issues in their research interests and situating them within broader scholarly conversations.

**Recommendation:**

Students will take **EDP 600** during their first semester and complete the remaining foundational courses within their first two (full time) to three (part time) years.

**C. Focus Area Coursework (15 credits)**

Students design a **personalized area of scholarly expertise** consisting of a minimum of **15 credits**. These courses deepen disciplinary knowledge, expand methodological skill, or bridge multiple fields of study. Focus areas must be approved by the Major Professor and Program Director and should form a coherent intellectual pathway.

**1. Disciplinary Focus (within existing programs)**

Students may concentrate coursework in a single area such as:

- Elementary or Secondary Education
- TESOL/Bilingual Dual Language
- Reading & Literacy
- Health and Physical Education
- Higher Education / College Student Personnel
- Adult Education

This pathway is ideal for students preparing for disciplinary research or advanced roles within specific educational fields.

**2. Interdisciplinary or Cross-Field Inquiry**

Students may also design interdisciplinary clusters of courses to engage complex educational problems. Examples include:

- **Language, Literacy, and Culture**  
Combining TESOL, bilingual education, literacy studies, arts-based literacies, digital literacies, dyslexia studies, etc.

- **Postsecondary Education Leadership and Policy**  
Combining education policy, college student personnel, and adult learning.
- **Learning, Development, and Technology**  
Integrating human development, technology integration, and cognition-related courses.

This pathway serves students whose research spans multiple fields or involves system-level or applied topics.

### **3. Individually Designed Specialty**

Students may craft a customized focus area with guidance from one or more faculty experts. Examples include:

- STEM Education
- Social Justice Education
- Learning Analytics
- Community-Based Educational Research
- Cognitive and Motivational Processes in Learning

Independent studies may be used to build depth in specialized areas when appropriate.

#### **Recommendation:**

Focus-area courses should be selected early, typically by the time the [Program of Study](#) is submitted (end of 3rd FT / 4th PT semester), to ensure alignment with the dissertation trajectory.

## **Major Professor & Committee**

See university information about major professors and committees in [Section 8 Graduate School Manual](#). See also the URI list of [graduate faculty](#) who are eligible to serve on committees.

A strong advising relationship is essential to a successful doctoral experience. This section provides practical guidance for selecting a Major Professor, communicating effectively, navigating changes if needed, and forming a doctoral committee in accordance with Graduate School policies (see URI Graduate School Manual [8.34–8.43](#)).

## **A. Major Professor**

Your Major Professor becomes your primary academic mentor and will chair your Doctoral Committee, supervise your research, guide your dissertation development, and ensure your overall progress through coursework, comprehensive exams, proposal, and dissertation.

### **How to Select a Major Professor**

#### **1. Reflect on Your Research Interests**

Identify the topics, populations, contexts, and methods that motivate your scholarly trajectory. Review faculty research profiles to understand who aligns with your goals.

#### **2. Take Courses With Potential Advisors**

Coursework is often the best way to observe advising styles, intellectual fit, expectations, and communication patterns.

#### **3. Meet with Several Faculty Members**

Schedule conversations to discuss your developing interests. Ask about:

- Their current research projects
- Expectations for doctoral students
- Advising style and availability
- Opportunities for collaboration

#### **4. Consider Fit—Intellectual and Interpersonal**

Strong advising relationships require alignment in topic, methodology, work style, and expectations.

#### **5. Confirm Graduate Faculty Status**

All Major Professors must hold Graduate Faculty status in accordance with the Graduate School Manual.

Once you and the professor reach mutual agreement, notify the Program Director so the official appointment can be processed.

## **B. Communicating with Your Major Professor**

Doctoral advising is a collaborative partnership that benefits from clarity, transparency, and consistent communication. Your Major Professor is responsible for supervising your progress (Graduate Manual [8.34.3](#)), but you play an active role in maintaining the relationship.

### **Best Practices for Communication**

#### **● Establish Expectations Early**

Discuss preferred communication modes (email, meetings, shared documents), response time expectations, and feedback processes.

- **Initiate Regular Check-Ins**

Most students meet with their Major Professor 2–4 times per semester, or more often during proposal and dissertation writing.

- **Prepare for Meetings**

Bring a written agenda, drafts, questions, and a clear sense of what you need from the conversation.

- **Be Transparent About Challenges**

Coursework difficulties, personal circumstances, and research delays are normal. Your advisor can help only if they know what’s happening.\

- **Follow Through on Agreed-Upon Tasks**

Professionalism and reliability support strong mentoring relationships.

### **Documentation**

Keeping brief notes or summaries after each meeting helps track decisions, deliverables, and expectations. These may inform your **annual progress review**, required under Graduate School Manual [8.43.2](#).

### **C. Changing Major Professors**

Changes in advising relationships sometimes occur due to evolving research interests, shifts in faculty workload, leaves of absence, or mismatched advising styles. URI policy permits changes, and they are **not punitive** for students or faculty.

#### **When You Might Consider a Change**

- Your dissertation topic moves in a direction better aligned with another faculty member.
- Your advising needs shift (e.g., methodologist needed, content expertise needed).
- Persistent communication or availability issues arise.
- A faculty member leaves or becomes unavailable for an extended period.

#### **How to Change Advisors**

1. **Reflect and, if comfortable, discuss concerns** with your current Major Professor.
2. **Consult the Program Director** for confidential guidance.
3. **Explore options** by meeting with potential new advisors.
4. Once a new advisor agrees, the Program Director assists with processing the **official committee change form** required by the Graduate School.
5. Your Doctoral Committee may need revision to reflect the change.

No explanation beyond basic reasons is required in the change form, and students should feel supported in selecting the advisor who best meets their needs.

## **D. Composing a Committee (Timeline & Membership)**

Your Doctoral Committee is responsible for evaluating your Program of Study, administering comprehensive exams, approving your proposal, guiding your dissertation, and conducting your final defense (Graduate Manual [8.43](#)).

### **Committee Composition Requirements**

Per URI Graduate School policies:

- **Minimum three Graduate Faculty members**
  - **Major Professor**
  - **At least two additional Graduate Faculty members**
  - **One member must represent a perspective outside the student's primary area (i.e., outside of the College of Education), unless approved otherwise.**
  - Additional members (content, methodological, or external experts) may be added as appropriate.
  - For the purposes of the comprehensive examination and dissertation defense, an additional person (outside/examining chair) is required

### **Timeline for Forming Your Committee**

- **By the time you submit your Program of Study:**

You should identify your Major Professor and at least the initial members of your committee.
- **Before comprehensive exams:**

Your full committee must be appointed and approved by the Graduate School, since they design and assess both the written and oral exams.
- **Before proposal defense:**

Any needed adjustments to committee membership must be filed before the proposal meeting.

### **Selecting Committee Members**

Consider including faculty who:

- Offer essential methodological expertise
- Bring complementary disciplinary perspectives
- Have relevant practitioner or policy experience
- Provide mentorship aligned with your professional goals
- Are available and responsive during the period you anticipate conducting research. (Note: faculty are not on contract in the summer. So, plan accordingly).

## Approval Process

1. You and your Major Professor identify potential members.
2. The Program Director reviews for balance, Graduate Faculty status, and policy compliance.
3. The Graduate School Committee Appointment Form is submitted for approval by the Dean.
4. Any future changes require the Graduate School **Committee Change Form**.

## Comprehensive Exams

The Comprehensive Examination is a major academic milestone that marks a student's transition from coursework to independent scholarly research. Its purpose is to assess the student's mastery of theory, literature, and methodology, and to determine readiness to undertake dissertation research. Comprehensive Exams follow all policies in the URI Graduate School Manual regarding examinations, candidacy, timelines, and committee responsibilities.

### A. Purpose and Rationale

The comprehensive examination evaluates a student's ability to:

- synthesize and critique theoretical and empirical literature,
- demonstrate command of methodological approaches relevant to their research,
- articulate connections among theory, methodology, and inquiry, and
- show readiness to pursue independent, advanced research at the doctoral level.
- This process confirms that the student possesses the conceptual, methodological, and analytical skills necessary for successful dissertation work.

### B. Eligibility and Timing

Students complete the comprehensive examination **at or near the end of formal coursework** and no later than **twelve months afterward**, in accordance with Graduate School timelines.

Students must:

- have an approved **Program of Study** on file with the Graduate School,
- have an officially appointed **Doctoral Committee**, and
- have completed all required coursework **except**:
  - EDC 625 (Research Apprenticeship)
  - EDP 641 (Dissertation Research Seminar)
  - EDP 699 (Doctoral Dissertation Research)

Full-time and part-time students follow the same eligibility criteria, with flexibility in scheduling based on committee availability and Graduate School deadlines.

## C. Structure and Administration

The Comprehensive Examination has two components:

1. **Written Examination**
2. **Oral Examination**

A student must pass both components with a **unanimous decision** from the Doctoral Committee.

### **Written Examination**

The written examination consists of **two questions**, typically:

- **One conceptual or literature-based question**, and
- **One methodological question**

Questions are:

- **co-constructed** by the student and Major Professor (using model as a base—see E),
- **approved** by the full Doctoral Committee,
- distributed to the student **in advance**, and
- designed to require **at least eight hours** of examinable work.

### **Timeline:**

Students have **one month** from the date questions are distributed to submit their written responses.

### **Evaluation:**

A **unanimous pass** from the Doctoral Committee is required.

- If the student does not pass, **one re-examination** is permitted.
  - Re-exam may occur **no sooner than two weeks** after results are shared.
  - Must occur **within one year** of the first attempt.
  - Successful written exam results remain valid for **five years**.

### **Oral Examination**

The Oral Examination takes place **within four weeks** of passing the written exam.

The oral exam:

- is up to **two hours** (excluding committee deliberation),
- includes all members of the Doctoral Committee plus an additional Graduate Faculty member from outside the program area (as required by Graduate School policy),

- focuses on:
  - clarifying, synthesizing, and expanding on ideas from the written exam,
  - probing conceptual, theoretical, and methodological understanding, and
  - evaluating readiness for dissertation proposal work.

A **unanimous pass** is required for successful completion.

#### **D. Academic Integrity**

All work submitted for the comprehensive examination must be the student's own. Students are responsible for understanding and following all University academic-integrity policies. Violations may result in exam failure or other disciplinary action as defined by University policy.

#### **E. Model Comprehensive Examination Questions**

Below are examples of the types of questions students may encounter. These examples illustrate the depth, scope, and integrative nature of comprehensive exam expectations.

##### **1. Conceptual / Literature Review Questions**

- **How has/have X been theorized, and how have these conceptualizations been operationalized in field-based research?**
- **Conduct an empirical review of X population and X in X contexts** that responds to the following question:

*What does research reveal about the factors that promote or constrain X among age within classrooms and in afterschool settings?*

- **Articulate a theory for X that integrates Y**, responding to the question:

*What are the components of a theoretically designed X theoretical framework?*

For this question, students should divide the response into at least two parts:

- 1. Review of studies – X**
- 2. Theoretical Framework – X integrated to articulate Y**

In the response, be sure also to address topics such as:

- Example
- Example
- Example

##### **2. Methodological Questions**

1. **Identify and discuss three methodological approaches** (and associated tools) for investigating X. Drawing on existing studies, discuss affordances and constraints of each approach. Include analysis of how theory, research questions, and methods align.
2. In applied research, the issue of **bringing educational research to scale** introduces increasing complexity.
3. Consider the challenges of moving from controlled, micro-level research contexts to macro-level field settings.

Respond to the following:

- What central factors must be considered as the focus moves from the individual (micro) to the system (macro), and what challenges occur at each level?
  - What research challenges arise when scaling from students/classrooms to schools/districts?
  - What is the “value added” argument for scaling research upward?
  - How can researchers ensure that macro-level studies meet standards for **archival-quality** work?
4. **Identify a current issue, problem, or question in your area of specialization.**
    - Define the research problem and key questions, using examples from scholars in that area.
    - Describe methodological approaches researchers have used to study the problem. For each approach, explain what it offers and how it addresses key questions.
    - Compare across methodological approaches to analyze how each contributes differently to advancing scholarly understanding and how they collectively move the field forward.

## **Dissertation**

### **A. Overview**

The doctoral dissertation is the culminating scholarly requirement of the PhD in Education program. The dissertation must represent an **original, independent contribution to knowledge** and demonstrate the student’s ability to design, conduct, analyze, and communicate rigorous educational research. All dissertations must comply with the policies and procedures of the **University of Rhode Island Graduate School**. URI Graduate School Requirements The specific requirements for the dissertation proposal are listed in the Graduate School document titled, “[Thesis/Dissertation: From](#)

[Proposal to Defense](#)". All proposals are limited in length to the signature coversheet plus 15 or fewer double-spaced, numbered pages in a font size no smaller than 12 point. Proposals longer than this will not be accepted, however, appendices and references are not included in the 15-page limit, and must be numbered separately, using lower-case Roman numerals. The dissertation proposal is considered a piece of scholarly work and should be well-written, meticulously edited for grammar and syntax, and should adhere to APA format 7th edition.

Students may complete the dissertation using **one of two approved formats**, subject to doctoral committee approval.

## **B. Dissertation Format Options**

### **1. Traditional Five-Chapter Dissertation (Standard Format)**

The traditional dissertation follows the standard structure recognized by the URI Graduate School and outlined in Chapter 11 of the Graduate School Manual.

#### **Structure**

The traditional format typically includes five chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction and Statement of the Problem
- Chapter 2: Review of the Literature
- Chapter 3: Methodology
- Chapter 4: Results / Findings
- Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

## **C. Purpose and Scope**

This format presents a **single, coherent empirical investigation** addressing a clearly defined research problem. The study may employ qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches and must demonstrate mastery of relevant theory, research design, data analysis, and scholarly writing.

## **D. Appropriate Use**

The traditional five-chapter format is well suited for students pursuing a **single integrated study** culminating in one unified scholarly product.

### **2. Three-Paper Dissertation (Manuscript Format)**

The Three-Paper Dissertation, also referred to as the **Manuscript Format**, is an approved alternative consistent with URI Graduate School policy.

#### **Structure**

The Three-Paper Dissertation consists of:

- An **integrative introductory chapter** that frames the overarching research agenda and situates the work within the literature
- **Three stand-alone manuscript chapters**, each written in journal-article style
- A **concluding synthesis chapter** integrating findings across the three papers and discussing implications for research, policy, or practice

#### **Requirements**

- The three papers must be **thematically and conceptually linked**.
- Each paper must be of **publishable quality**, though publication is not required for degree completion.
- Collectively, the papers must demonstrate a **coherent and substantive contribution** to the field.

#### **Approval and Suitability**

Use of the Three-Paper Dissertation format must be **explicitly approved at the proposal stage** by the student's doctoral committee. The committee will determine whether this format is appropriate given the student's research questions, methods, and professional goals.

#### **Proposal, Defense, and Graduate School Requirements**

#### **Common Requirements for All Dissertation Formats**

Regardless of format, all dissertations require:

## **Proposal Defense**

Students must successfully defend a written dissertation proposal approved by the doctoral committee prior to initiating dissertation research.

## **Research Compliance**

All research must comply with applicable **IRB and research ethics requirements** before data collection begins.

## **Final Oral Defense**

Students must successfully complete a formal **oral defense of the dissertation** before the doctoral committee.

## **Submission and Formatting**

Final dissertations must meet all **URI Graduate School formatting, review, and electronic submission requirements**. The Graduate School Manual, [Sections 11.10 – 11.29](#) outline the requirements for doctoral dissertations. Specific dissertation requirements are listed in the Graduate School document titled, “[Thesis/Dissertation: From Proposal to Defense](#)”.

## **Advising and Format Selection**

Students are strongly encouraged to consult early and regularly with their **major professor and doctoral committee** when selecting a dissertation format. The chosen format should align with the student’s research agenda, methodological approach, timeline, and professional preparation.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Graduate Program Forms Forms for the URI Graduate School are powered by Adobe. A user guide and links to all forms can be accessed using this link:

<https://web.uri.edu/graduate-school/forms/>

Other helpful student manuals and resources include:

- [URI Student Manual](#)
- [URI Graduate School Manual](#)
- [URI Graduate School Resources](#)

