

Institutional Effectiveness 2022-2023

Program: Exceptional Learning PhD

College and Department: College of Education

Contact: Ashley B. Akenson

Mission:

The central focus of the Exceptional Learning Ph.D. (ELPhD) program is the study of diverse exceptional learner populations. Exceptional learners may be a member of one or more of the following groups: at-risk, vulnerable, underserved, underrepresented, and/or marginalized populations. Exceptional learners include, but are not limited to, those persons for whom social, economic, cultural, and physical characteristics may function as a barrier to learning. These exceptional populations may be neglected, oppressed, or disempowered by society; often excluded from equitable access to governmental, economic, educational, sociocultural, and community resources; and viewed as inherently different from the majority population. The ELPhD program offers an outstanding graduate education that prepares professionals for careers as leaders in their disciplines and to effect positive change in diverse populations through research, leadership, and service.

The ELPhD program has a primary mission of offering rigorous and robust academic preparation of professionals who serve their communities, public school systems, institutions of higher education, and nontraditional educational environments. Core courses prepare students to address issues related to exceptional learners in all disciplines, traditional and nontraditional learning environments, inclusion, equity, and diversity. The research course sequence provides students a thorough grounding in research methods. Core, research, and concentration courses deliver interdisciplinary perspectives, advanced methodological preparation, and fundamental theoretical knowledge—which work together to shape inspired, engaged, and innovative professionals. Specific programs of study are available in five concentrations: Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Literacy, Health Behaviors & Wellness Education (HBWE), Program Planning and Evaluation (PPE), and STEM Education. There are two tracks within ABA: Applied Behavior Analysis School Age and Adult Populations (ABAS) and Young Children and Families (YCF).

Instruction and research are major components of the academic mission of the program. A committed faculty serves the students through instruction, scholarly activity, and service to provide quality academic experiences. The objectives are broad enough to allow for the diversity of the concentrations, yet maintain the focus on exceptional learners. Faculty routinely monitor current practices in core, research, and concentration courses—through attending academic and professional conferences, examining theory, and reviewing evidence-based literature—and assess how they align with program goals and outcomes. These goals and outcomes have been identified through faculty collaboration, and they are consistent with a central purpose of any Ph.D. program: to prepare individuals for scholarly and professional success in their chosen field.

Attach Curriculum Map (Educational Programs Only): *See Appendix 1.

PG 1 - COURSE INSTRUCTION

Define Outcome:

Provide course instruction that models evidence-based practices in the respective program areas.

Strategic Plan Connections:

Core Principles: *Academic Excellence, Meaningful Innovation, Student Success, Value Creation*

Strategic Goals: *SG1–PA A, B, D, E; SG2–PA B & C; SG4–PA B*

Assessment Methods:

1. IDEA evaluations

Course evaluations for each faculty member are implemented and maintained through the IDEA evaluation system, and are used by faculty members to refine instructional practices and modify course content based on student feedback in support of program goals and student learning outcomes. The IDEA evaluation survey is nationally normed, standardized instrument. These evaluations allow for national comparisons against similar courses with student ratings of progress on relevant objectives and teacher and course effectiveness. IDEA evaluations are used at higher education institutions all over the US. The evaluations have the support of 45 years of research and include questions to account for variables such as class size, student motivation, and other student and course characteristics. Scores, on a five-point scale, are used to gauge curriculum and faculty efficacy with respect to program goals and SLOs. The IDEA evaluation reports incorporate resources to support instruction development and improvement. The Director of Graduate Programs tracks and reviews all ELPhD faculty IDEA scores each semester. Reported scores are aggregated for each semester and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure quality.

2. ELPhD Academic Achievement

A grade of B (80–89 out of 100) or better demonstrates sufficient content mastery for each course, whether that content is methods, practical application of professional skills, theory, or any combination of the three. Failure is considered a C or below. Students are allowed one C (70–79 out of 100) during their time in the ELPhD program. A second C is grounds for academic dismissal from the program. Attainment of an acceptable grade or higher in these courses aligns with progress toward and attainment

of SLOs & PGs. A particular programmatic focus is on the research sequences and the Program Planning & Proposal Development course (EDU 7040) as these incorporate multiple skills acquired and developed across program curriculum. The Director of Graduate Programs tracks and reviews all ELPhD student final course grades each semester. Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other specific direct assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth.

3. Research Course Sequence

The research course sequence is an integral part of the ELPhD program. Theoretical Foundations of Research (EDU 7010), Qualitative Inquiry in Education (EDU 7330), Data Analysis and Representation in Qualitative Inquiry (EDU 7340) make up the qualitative series. Quantitative Inquiry in Education I (EDU 7420), Quantitative Inquiry in Education II (EDU 7430), and Research Design (EDU 7300) comprise the quantitative series. Each 3-course series includes foundational theoretical concepts, methods of data collection and data analysis, creation of a research proposal, and an original study. The research courses build upon one another and are sequential in order, further facilitating theoretical understanding and methodological application. For example, statistical concepts learned in EDU 7420 form the base knowledge for assignments in EDU 7430. Assignments in EDU 7430 are deliberately designed to be further developed in EDU 7300, the culminating quantitative research course. Similarly, theoretical foundations are used to inform a research proposal in EDU 7010 that is then used to enact data collection (EDU 7330), analysis, and interpretation (EDU 7340). This succession allows students to develop the necessary research skills and emerge from the courses with original work that addresses gaps in the literature, investigates theory, uses sound and appropriate methodologies, and contributes knowledge to the discipline.

Students are 1) required to read extensively, including scholarly writings related to epistemologies and theories that influence and inform social science research, and exemplary studies; 2) expected to submit polished, scholarly papers that undergo intense review, with the expectation of publishing and presenting; and 3) undergo faculty and peer review during class presentations of work in preparation for presenting at discipline-specific conferences and other scholarly forums.

Additional concentration research classes are also required. These courses offer students the chance to gain crucial theoretical and methodological knowledge, which they then apply to required original research projects. This familiarizes them with the types of research available while preparing them to successfully meet the expected quality and scope of scholarship as they enter dissertation. Course instructors work closely with students to ensure their success. If an instructor becomes aware that a

student is not prepared to move onto the next course in the sequence, they are connected with peer tutors, additional study materials, and/or other resources to ensure success in the course and preparedness for the next level or, if more appropriate, encouraged to withdraw and re-take the class at a later date.

Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth.

At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, the assessments for this sequence will be culminating projects that demonstrate analytic skill and proficient synthesis of research design, methodologies, and methods.

4. Grant Proposal Proficiency

Grant proposals are crafted each Summer semester in Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040). EDU 7040 incorporates theoretical program planning perspectives; in-depth discussion of various program planning models; and effective program development, planning, and evaluation practices for a variety of educational settings. This class includes a focus on adult learners as exceptional learners, in and out of traditional educational environments, and their particular needs. These theories, skills, and practices are not typically addressed in undergraduate or graduate programs and are especially important in preparing professionals who can lead sustainable change for exceptional learners. This course requires students to prepare products that may have real-world impact.

One of two main project students undertaken in EDU 7040 is creation of a grant proposal for a state- or federally-funded program. After completing the proposal, students must defend their proposal in mock “board meeting” discussions, which prepares them for gaining stakeholder buy-in, identifying unintended outcomes, and assessing needs in professional environments. This also provides students a chance to further improve their proposal via incorporation of the feedback given. The course instructor, who has authored or co-authored multiple successful grants over the last decade, evaluates the grant proposals and provides further input. Students who choose to submit proposals to the funding agency are encouraged to do so and directed to the Office of Research for instruction in grant submission policy and procedures.

Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth. Number of grants produced and funded is tracked year-by-year, with a 5-year trend as well (ELPhD Scholarly Activity Table). Informal feedback about the grant proposal

process and collaboration (development of professional skills) is also used to ensure progress toward SLOs and PGs and to improve student success.

At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, the assessment for this course will be completion of culminating grant project that demonstrates analytic skill and proficient synthesis of required research, evaluation, and writing skills required to craft high-quality proposals. Number of proposals crafted and funded will continue to be used alongside the EDU 7040 proposal project to provide a clear picture of students' growth.

Criteria for Success (Thresholds for Assessment Methods):

IDEA Evaluation Thresholds:

Acceptability: 3.5 score

Expectation: 3.6–3.9 score

Exceptionality: ≥ 4.0 score

ELPhD Academic Achievement Thresholds:

Acceptability: 3.25 GPA (mainly Bs; 80–89 out of 100)

Expectation: 3.5 GPA (As & Bs; 85–100)

Exceptionality: ≥ 3.9 GPA (almost all As or all As; 90–100)

Research Sequence Thresholds:

Acceptability: successful completion of all research courses with a grade of B or better (research course GPA minimum: 3.0); submission of an original research project (via presentation or manuscript) to a regional, national, or international scholarly conference or publication.

Expectation: successful completion of all research courses with a grade of B or better, with at least two As (research course GPA minimum: 3.3); acceptance of an original research project (via presentation or manuscript) to a regional, national, or international scholarly conference or publication.

Exceptionality: successful completion of all research courses with mainly As (research course GPA minimum: 3.6); submission of original research projects (via presentation or manuscript) to two or more national or international scholarly conference or publication; acceptance to one or more national and/or international scholarly conferences or publications; collaboration on current research projects with ELPhD and/or other Tech faculty, staff, and/or students.

Please note: in the research courses, there are no attendance grades or other non-coursework related scores. Scores are based solely on final exams, research projects, project proposals, all of which require mastery of appropriate research content/theoretical knowledge and skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in research content knowledge and skill mastery.

Grant Proposal Proficiency Thresholds:

Acceptability: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B (≥80%) or better.

Expectation: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B+ (≥85%) or better.

Exceptionality: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B+ (≥85%) or better; grant proposal submission; collaboration with other Tech faculty and students on additional grant proposals.

Please note: in EDU 7040, there are no attendance grades or other non-coursework related scores. Scores are based solely on program planning and grant proposal projects that require mastery of appropriate research skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in program planning and grant proposal content knowledge and skill mastery.

Results and Analysis:

IDEA evaluations allow for comparison against similar courses on a national level. Scores indicate faculty and curricula are successful in achieving learning outcomes and objectives. Summer 2022 average score was 4.4, fall 2022 average was 4.9 on a 5-point scale, and spring 2023 average was 4.8. The academic year average was 4.7. This exceeds the *Threshold of Acceptability* (3.5); ELPhD students report that faculty are consistently performing at the *Threshold of Exceptionality* (≥4).

Table 3. Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Course IDEA Evaluations 2022–2023

Semester	Overall Ratings								Summary Evaluation	
	B. Progress on Relevant Objectives		D. Excellent Teacher		E. Excellent Course		C. Average of D & E		A. Average of B & C	
	Raw	Adj	Raw	Adj	Raw	Adj	Raw	Adj	Raw	Adj
Summer 2022	4.2	4.2	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.3

Fall 2022	4.7	4.7	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.8
Spring 2023	4.7	4.7	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.8

Use of Results to Improve Outcomes:

IDEA scores are monitored to ensure quality instruction. Reviewing a 5-year trend, aggregated scores did not drop lower than 4.1 on any item. The 4.6 and 4.7 scores were most frequent, indicating high student satisfaction with course instruction. The trend data will continue to be reviewed, along with semester by semester data, by the Director of Graduate Programs.

PG 2 - SCHOLARLY RESEARCH

Define Outcome:

Initiate and maintain scholarly research activities that enhance program development and contribute to the design and delivery of services and supports to exceptional populations through research dissemination in the field.

Strategic Plan Connections:

Core Principles: Academic Excellence, Community Engagement, Meaningful Innovation, Student Success, Supportive Environment, Value Creation

Strategic Goals: SG1–PA A, B, D, E; SG2–PA B & C; SG4–PA B

Assessment Methods:

1. ELPhD Academic Achievement

A grade of B (80–89 out of 100) or better demonstrates sufficient content mastery for each course, whether that content is methods, practical application of professional skills, theory, or any combination of the three. Failure is considered a C or below. Students are allowed one C (70–79 out of 100) during their time in the ELPhD program. A second C is grounds for academic dismissal from the program. Attainment of an acceptable grade or higher in these courses aligns with progress toward and attainment of SLOs & PGs. A particular programmatic focus is on the research sequences and the Program Planning & Proposal Development course (EDU 7040) as these incorporate multiple skills acquired and developed across program curriculum. The Director of Graduate Programs tracks and reviews all ELPhD student final course grades each semester. Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and

reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth.

2. ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report

The ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report captures scholarly activity for both students and faculty. Opportunities for collaboration, support, and skill development (e.g., calls for proposals for articles/chapters/conferences, workshops, seminars) in these areas are disseminated to all ELPhD students and faculty. Each faculty member submits a Faculty Activity report to Director of Graduate Programs addressing her or his efforts for the previous academic year. The report will address the following indicators: grant proposals, publications, presentations, other research endeavors, external consultants to public schools and agencies (including in-service and professional development). ELPhD students are asked annually to provide a current record of their scholarly activity (e.g., publication and presentations of original research or theoretical work, grant proposals, professional development activities).

The Director of Graduate Programs collects and reviews this data, then aggregates into the annual activity report. Scholarly activity 5-year trend is also tracked and reviewed to ensure application of appropriate scholarly and professional skills occur for students and that faculty maintain a strong scholarly presence. Trend data allows identification of change in scholarly productivity that may then be further examined as needed. Results are disseminated through faculty meetings, the College of Education Data and Assessment Forums, and institutional reports.

An overall summary of the program's progress will be included in this IE report as the format of the annual report no longer captures a complete picture of faculty activity.

3. Research Course Sequence

The research course sequence is an integral part of the ELPhD program. Theoretical Foundations of Research (EDU 7010), Qualitative Inquiry in Education (EDU 7330), Data Analysis and Representation in Qualitative Inquiry (EDU 7340) make up the qualitative series. Quantitative Inquiry in Education I (EDU 7420), Quantitative Inquiry in Education II (EDU 7430), and Research Design (EDU 7300) comprise the quantitative series. Each 3-course series includes foundational theoretical concepts, methods of data collection and data analysis, creation of a research proposal, and an original study. The research courses build upon one another and are sequential in order, further facilitating theoretical understanding and methodological application. For example, statistical concepts learned in EDU 7420 form the base knowledge for assignments in EDU 7430. Assignments in EDU 7430 are deliberately designed to be further developed in EDU 7300, the culminating quantitative research course. Similarly, theoretical foundations are used to inform a research proposal in EDU 7010 that is then used to enact data collection (EDU 7330), analysis, and interpretation (EDU 7340). This succession allows students to develop the necessary research skills and emerge from the courses with

original work that addresses gaps in the literature, investigates theory, uses sound and appropriate methodologies, and contributes knowledge to the discipline.

Students are 1) required to read extensively, including scholarly writings related to epistemologies and theories that influence and inform social science research, and exemplary studies; 2) expected to submit polished, scholarly papers that undergo intense review, with the expectation of publishing and presenting; and 3) undergo faculty and peer review during class presentations of work in preparation for presenting at discipline-specific conferences and other scholarly forums.

Additional concentration research classes are also required. These courses offer students the chance to gain crucial theoretical and methodological knowledge, which they then apply to required original research projects. This familiarizes them with the types of research available while preparing them to successfully meet the expected quality and scope of scholarship as they enter dissertation. Course instructors work closely with students to ensure their success. If an instructor becomes aware that a student is not prepared to move onto the next course in the sequence, they are connected with peer tutors, additional study materials, and/or other resources to ensure success in the course and preparedness for the next level or, if more appropriate, encouraged to withdraw and re-take the class at a later date.

Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth.

At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, the assessments for this sequence will be culminating projects that demonstrate analytic skill and proficient synthesis of research design, methodologies, and methods.

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students must defend their proposal in mock “board meeting” discussions, which prepares them for gaining stakeholder buy-in, identifying unintended outcomes, and assessing needs in professional environments. This also provides students a chance to further improve their proposal via incorporation of the feedback given. The course instructor, who has authored or co-authored multiple successful grants over the last decade, evaluates the grant proposals and provides further input. Students who choose to submit proposals to the funding agency are encouraged to do so and directed to the Office of Research for instruction in grant submission policy and procedures.

Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth. Number of grants produced and funded is tracked year-by-year, with a 5-year trend as well (ELPhD Scholarly Activity Table). Informal feedback about the grant proposal process and collaboration (development of professional skills) is also used to ensure progress toward SLOs and PGs and to improve student success.

At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, the assessment for this course will be completion of culminating grant project that demonstrates analytic skill and proficient synthesis of required research, evaluation, and writing skills required to craft high-quality proposals. Number of proposals crafted and funded will continue to be used alongside the EDU 7040 proposal project to provide a clear picture of students’ growth.

Criteria for Success (Thresholds for Assessment Methods):

ELPhD Academic Achievement Thresholds:

Acceptability: 3.25 GPA (mainly Bs; 80–89 out of 100)

Expectation: 3.5 GPA (As & Bs; 85–100)

Exceptionality: \geq 3.9 GPA (almost all As or all As; 90–100)

ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report Thresholds:

Acceptability: actively working on a presentation or publication manuscript; submitted at least one presentation proposal &/or publication; collaboration with ELPhD students and faculty.

Expectation: submitted two or more presentation proposals &/or publication manuscripts; acceptance continued work on conference proposals and manuscripts for submission; collaboration with ELPhD students, faculty, and staff.

Exceptionality: submitted multiple presentation proposals &/or publications; at least one acceptance; cross-disciplinary and/or interdepartmental collaboration with students and faculty.

Research Sequence Thresholds:

Acceptability: successful completion of all research courses with a grade of B ($\geq 80\%$) or better (research course GPA minimum: 3.0); submission of an original research project (via presentation or manuscript) to a regional, national, or international scholarly conference or publication.

Expectation: successful completion of all research courses with a grade of B ($\geq 80\%$) or better, with at least two As (research course GPA minimum: 3.3); acceptance of an original research project (via presentation or manuscript) to a regional, national, or international scholarly conference or publication.

Exceptionality: successful completion of all research courses with mainly As ($\geq 90\%$) (research course GPA minimum: 3.6); submission of original research projects (via presentation or manuscript) to two or more national or international scholarly conference or publication; acceptance to one or more national and/or international scholarly conferences or publications; collaboration on current research projects with ELPhD and/or other Tech faculty, staff, and/or students.

Please note: *in the research courses, there are no attendance grades or other non-coursework related scores. Scores are based solely on final exams, research projects, project proposals, all of which require mastery of appropriate research content/theoretical knowledge and skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in research content knowledge and skill mastery.*

Grant Proposal Proficiency Thresholds:

Acceptability: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B ($\geq 80\%$) or better.

Expectation: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B+ ($\geq 85\%$) or better.

Exceptionality: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B+ ($\geq 85\%$) or better; grant proposal submission; collaboration with other Tech faculty and students on additional grant proposals.

Please note: *in EDU 7040, there are no attendance grades or other non-coursework related scores. Scores are based solely on program planning and grant proposal projects*

that require mastery of appropriate research skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in program planning and grant proposal content knowledge and skill mastery.

Results and Analysis:

Results: Each faculty member provides the program director her or his annual faculty activity report (Program Goals 2 & 3). The reports provide the basis for much of the program's annual report submitted annually to the Dean of Education. The information from these comprises the Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Faculty Scholarly Activity report. In addition, the Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Student Scholarly Activity report demonstrates student involvement in and dissemination of scholarly research and development of associated professional skills. The tables below show a high degree of faculty activity for each indicator and respective guided student involvement.

Students consistently performed or above the *Threshold of Expectation*, with several attaining the *Threshold of Exceptionality*. A representative selection of faculty and student scholarly and professional activity is attached in the appendix.

Note: in Tables 4 and 5, publications and presentations in which multiple faculty or students took part are only counted once. For example, four students may have published a paper together; it is reported as one publication rather than four.

Table 4. 5-year Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Faculty Scholarly Activity

5-Year Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Faculty Activity							
	In-Service Workshops	Grant Proposals Funded	National Presentations	International Presentations	Books	Book Chapters	Peer-Reviewed Publications
2018–2019	8	20	29	10	1	3	34
2019–2020	21	16	28	15	2	6	57
2020–2021	11	21	20	18	3	16	30
2021–2022	0	11	7	5	0	1	10
2022–2023	14	21	8	10	1	13	17

Table 5. 5-year Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Student Scholarly Activity

5-year Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Student Activity							
	Grant Proposals Crafted	Regional Presentations	National Presentations	International Presentations	Book Chapters	Peer-Reviewed Publications	Pending Peer-Reviewed Publications
2018	5						
– 2019	(1 funded)	24	12	16	0	3	4
2019	14						
– 2020	(7 funded)	18	11	10	2	7	5
2020	17						
– 2021	(7 funded)	15	5	10	0	7	7
2021	12						
– 2022	(4 funded)	10	6	6	1	11	9
2022	17						
– 2023	(7 funded)	22	0	12	1	9	9

Use of Results to Improve Outcomes:

In response to qualitative data from annual semi-structured interviews with each student as well as informal feedback, the Director of Graduate Programs has highlighted opportunities to use high-quality coursework as ways for ELPhD students to collaborate across concentrations on projects as a pilot program. This began in Spring 2019. The Director 1) increased regular sharing of conference, seminar, and symposia calls for proposals (CFPs) and calls for publication submissions to increase student awareness of these opportunities, 2) workshops for conference proposal submissions to help students learn discipline-specific protocols and language in support of sharing original research done as part of ELPhD coursework, and 3) provided feedback on proposal and publication submission drafts on an ad hoc basis. The Director also directly encourages faculty to continue to include students in their research activities, and

encourages students to work together on submissions for presentations and publications. This also offers multiple opportunities to increase cross-disciplinary knowledge, collaborative skills, and dissemination of scholarship, as well as to heighten exposure to and support of diverse views and scholarship. In 2022–2023, more students mentioned being offered or taking part in opportunities to collaborate with peers and faculty. These projects do not yet translate to increased publications and presentations as they are in progress. Students report that these measures help them feel more confident in finding opportunities for collaboratively participating in and presenting/publishing research with peers and faculty: “opportunities you share with us for jobs, presentations, publications help me know what is there and what I might want to do. It is a lot, but it is encouraging.” Another student noted that “I have three presentations and two publications that I have been invited to participate in [by professors].” Students also discussed the value of collaborating with each other. Those that are not yet ready to present and publish have noted they keep a list of these regular opportunities (such as conferences) and journals so that they are “ready when my work is the best it can be. These measures will continue to maintain support for students seeking these opportunities and encourage others to participate. Both faculty and the Director actively share these.

PG 3 - LEADERSHIP PERSONNEL

Define Outcome:

Develop leadership personnel in the areas of teaching and research for service in the fields of public education and social services such as public schools, state agencies, and higher education.

Strategic Plan Connections:

Core Principles: *Academic Excellence, Community Engagement, Meaningful Innovation, Student Success, Supportive Environment, Value Creation*

Strategic Goals: *SG1–PA D; SG4–PA A, B, C, D*

Assessment Methods:

1. ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report

The ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report captures scholarly activity for both students and faculty. Opportunities for collaboration, support, and skill development (e.g., calls for proposals for articles/chapters/conferences, workshops, seminars) in these areas are disseminated to all ELPhD students and faculty. Each faculty member submits a Faculty Activity report to Director of Graduate Programs addressing her or his efforts for the previous academic year. The report will address the following indicators: grant proposals, publications, presentations, other research endeavors, external consultants to public schools and agencies (including in-service and professional development). ELPhD students are asked annually to provide a current record of their scholarly activity

(e.g., publication and presentations of original research or theoretical work, grant proposals, professional development activities).

The Director of Graduate Programs collects and reviews this data, then aggregates into the annual activity report. Scholarly activity 5-year trend is also tracked and reviewed to ensure application of appropriate scholarly and professional skills occur for students and that faculty maintain a strong scholarly presence. Trend data allows identification of change in scholarly productivity and professional skill development that may then be further examined as needed. Results are disseminated through faculty meetings, the College of Education Data and Assessment Forums, and institutional reports.

An overall summary of the program's progress will be included in this IE report as the format of the annual report no longer captures a complete picture of faculty activity.

2. Research Course Sequence

The research course sequence is an integral part of the ELPhD program. Theoretical Foundations of Research (EDU 7010), Qualitative Inquiry in Education (EDU 7330), Data Analysis and Representation in Qualitative Inquiry (EDU 7340) make up the qualitative series. Quantitative Inquiry in Education I (EDU 7420), Quantitative Inquiry in Education II (EDU 7430), and Research Design (EDU 7300) comprise the quantitative series. Each 3-course series includes foundational theoretical concepts, methods of data collection and data analysis, creation of a research proposal, and an original study. The research courses build upon one another and are sequential in order, further facilitating theoretical understanding and methodological application. For example, statistical concepts learned in EDU 7420 form the base knowledge for assignments in EDU 7430. Assignments in EDU 7430 are deliberately designed to be further developed in EDU 7300, the culminating quantitative research course. Similarly, theoretical foundations are used to inform a research proposal in EDU 7010 that is then used to enact data collection (EDU 7330), analysis, and interpretation (EDU 7340). This succession allows students to develop the necessary research skills and emerge from the courses with original work that addresses gaps in the literature, investigates theory, uses sound and appropriate methodologies, and contributes knowledge to the discipline. These are essential skills for scholars and leaders in the field.

Students are 1) required to read extensively, including scholarly writings related to epistemologies and theories that influence and inform social science research, and exemplary studies; 2) expected to submit polished, scholarly papers that undergo intense review, with the expectation of publishing and presenting; and 3) undergo faculty and peer review during class presentations of work in preparation for presenting at discipline-specific conferences and other scholarly forums.

Additional concentration research classes are also required. These courses offer students the chance to gain crucial theoretical and methodological knowledge, which they then apply to required original research projects. This familiarizes them with the

types of research available while preparing them to successfully meet the expected quality and scope of scholarship as they enter dissertation. Course instructors work closely with students to ensure their success. If an instructor becomes aware that a student is not prepared to move onto the next course in the sequence, they are connected with peer tutors, additional study materials, and/or other resources to ensure success in the course and preparedness for the next level or, if more appropriate, encouraged to withdraw and re-take the class at a later date.

Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth.

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3. Grant Proposal Proficiency

Grant proposals are crafted each Summer semester in Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040). EDU 7040 incorporates theoretical program planning perspectives; in-depth discussion of various program planning models; and effective program development, planning, and evaluation practices for a variety of educational settings. This class includes a focus on adult learners as exceptional learners, in and out of traditional educational environments, and their particular needs. These theories, skills, and practices are not typically addressed in undergraduate or graduate programs and are especially important in preparing professionals who can lead sustainable change for exceptional learners. This course requires students to prepare products that may have real-world impact.

One of two main project students undertaken in EDU 7040 is creation of a grant proposal for a state- or federally-funded program. After completing the proposal, students must defend their proposal in mock “board meeting” discussions, which prepares them for gaining stakeholder buy-in, identifying unintended outcomes, and assessing needs in professional environments. This also provides students a chance to further improve their proposal via incorporation of the feedback given. The course instructor, who has authored or co-authored multiple successful grants over the last decade, evaluates the grant proposals and provides further input. Students who choose to submit proposals to the funding agency are encouraged to do so and directed to the Office of Research for instruction in grant submission policy and procedures.

Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth.

Number of grants produced and funded is tracked year-by-year, with a 5-year trend as well (ELPhD Scholarly Activity Table). Informal feedback about the grant proposal process and collaboration (development of professional skills) is also used to ensure progress toward SLOs and PGs and to improve student success.

At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, the assessment for this course will be completion of culminating grant project that demonstrates analytic skill and proficient synthesis of required research, evaluation, and writing skills required to craft high-quality proposals. Number of proposals crafted and funded will continue to be used alongside the EDU 7040 proposal project to provide a clear picture of students' growth.

Criteria for Success (Thresholds for Assessment Methods):

ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report Thresholds:

Acceptability: actively working on a presentation or publication manuscript; submitted at least one presentation proposal &/or publication; collaboration with ELPhD students and faculty.

Expectation: submitted two or more presentation proposals &/or publication manuscripts; acceptance continued work on conference proposals and manuscripts for submission; collaboration with ELPhD students, faculty, and staff.

Exceptionality: submitted multiple presentation proposals &/or publications; at least one acceptance; cross-disciplinary and/or interdepartmental collaboration with students and faculty.

Research Sequence Thresholds:

Acceptability: successful completion of all research courses with a grade of B ($\geq 80\%$) or better (research course GPA minimum: 3.0); submission of an original research project (via presentation or manuscript) to a regional, national, or international scholarly conference or publication.

Expectation: successful completion of all research courses with a grade of B ($\geq 80\%$) or better, with at least two As (research course GPA minimum: 3.3); acceptance of an original research project (via presentation or manuscript) to a regional, national, or international scholarly conference or publication.

Exceptionality: successful completion of all research courses with mainly As ($\geq 90\%$) (research course GPA minimum: 3.6); submission of original research projects (via presentation or manuscript) to two or more national or international scholarly conference or publication; acceptance to one or more national and/or international

scholarly conferences or publications; collaboration on current research projects with ELPhD and/or other Tech faculty, staff, and/or students.

Please note: *in the research courses, there are no attendance grades or other non-coursework related scores. Scores are based solely on final exams, research projects, project proposals, all of which require mastery of appropriate research content/theoretical knowledge and skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in research content knowledge and skill mastery.*

Grant Proposal Proficiency Thresholds:

Acceptability: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B (≥80%) or better.

Expectation: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B+ (≥85%) or better.

Exceptionality: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B+ (≥85%) or better; grant proposal submission; collaboration with other Tech faculty and students on additional grant proposals.

Please note: *in EDU 7040, there are no attendance grades or other non-coursework related scores. Scores are based solely on program planning and grant proposal projects that require mastery of appropriate research skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in program planning and grant proposal content knowledge and skill mastery.*

Results and Analysis:

Results: Each faculty member provides the program director her or his annual faculty activity report (Program Goals 2 & 3). The reports provide the basis for much of the program's annual report submitted annually to the Dean of Education. The information from these comprises the Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Faculty Scholarly Activity report. In addition, the Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Student Scholarly Activity report demonstrates student involvement in and dissemination of scholarly research and development of associated professional skills. The tables below show a high degree of faculty activity for each indicator and respective guided student involvement.

Students consistently performed or above the *Threshold of Expectation*, with several attaining the *Threshold of Exceptionality*. A representative selection of faculty and student scholarly and professional activity is attached in the appendix.

Note: in Tables 4 and 5, publications and presentations in which multiple faculty or students took part are only counted once. For example, four students may have published a paper together; it is reported as one publication rather than four.

Table 4. 5-year Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Faculty Scholarly Activity

5-Year Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Faculty Activity							
	In-Service Workshops	Grant Proposals Funded	National Presentations	International Presentations	Books	Book Chapters	Peer-Reviewed Publications
2018–2019	8	20	29	10	1	3	34
2019–2020	21	16	28	15	2	6	57
2020–2021	11	21	20	18	3	16	30
2021–2022	0	11	7	5	0	1	10
2022–2023	14	21	8	10	1	13	17

Table 5. 5-year Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Student Scholarly Activity

5-year Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Student Activity							
	Grant Proposals Crafted	Regional Presentations	National Presentations	International Presentations	Book Chapters	Peer-Reviewed Publications	Pending Peer-Reviewed Publications
2018–2019	5 (1 funded)	24	12	16	0	3	4

2019	14						
–		18	11	10	2	7	5
2020	(7 <i>funded</i>)						
2020	17						
–		15	5	10	0	7	7
2021	(7 <i>funded</i>)						
2021	12						
–		10	6	6	1	11	9
2022	(4 <i>funded</i>)						
2022	17						
–		22	0	12	1	9	9
2023	(7 <i>funded</i>)						

Use of Results to Improve Outcomes:

In response to qualitative data from annual semi-structured interviews with each student as well as informal feedback, the Director of Graduate Programs has highlighted opportunities to use high-quality coursework as ways for ELPhD students to collaborate across concentrations on projects as a pilot program. This began in Spring 2019. The Director 1) increased regular sharing of conference, seminar, and symposia calls for proposals (CFPs) and calls for publication submissions to increase student awareness of these opportunities, 2) workshops for conference proposal submissions to help students learn discipline-specific protocols and language in support of sharing original research done as part of ELPhD coursework, and 3) provided feedback on proposal and publication submission drafts on an ad hoc basis. The Director also directly encourages faculty to continue to include students in their research activities, and encourages students to work together on submissions for presentations and publications. This also offers multiple opportunities to increase cross-disciplinary knowledge, collaborative skills, and dissemination of scholarship, as well as to heighten exposure to and support of diverse views and scholarship. In 2022–2023, more students mentioned being offered or taking part in opportunities to collaborate with peers and faculty. These projects do not yet translate to increased publications and presentations as they are in progress. Students report that these measures help them feel more confident in finding opportunities for collaboratively participating in and presenting/publishing research with peers and faculty: “opportunities you share with us for jobs, presentations, publications help me know what is there and what I might want to do. It is a lot, but it is encouraging.” Another student noted that “I have three presentations and two publications that I have been invited to participate in [by professors].” Students also discussed the value of collaborating with each other. Those that are not yet ready to present and publish have noted they keep a list of these regular opportunities (such as conferences) and journals so that they are “ready when my work is the best it can be. These

measures will continue to maintain support for students seeking these opportunities and encourage others to participate. Both faculty and the Director actively share these.

SLO 1 - CONTENT MASTERY & COURSE COMPETENCY

Define Outcome:

Upon successful completion of Exceptional Learning Ph.D. program, the graduate will demonstrate successful attainment of course competencies within the required program of study that results in the learner's mastery of program content.

Note: At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, SLOs and the associated assessments will be restructured to include more direct assessments at various points in the program.

Strategic Plan Connections:

Core Principles: *Academic Excellence, Community Engagement, Meaningful Innovation, Student Success, Supportive Environment, Value Creation*

Strategic Goals: *SG1–PA A, B, C, D, E; SG2–PA B & C; SG4–PA B & C*

Assessment Methods:

1. ELPhD Academic Achievement

A grade of B (80–89 out of 100) or better demonstrates sufficient content mastery for each course, whether that content is methods, practical application of professional skills, theory, or any combination of the three. Failure is considered a C or below. Students are allowed one C (70–79 out of 100) during their time in the ELPhD program. A second C is grounds for academic dismissal from the program. Attainment of an acceptable grade or higher in these courses aligns with progress toward and attainment of SLOs & PGs. A particular programmatic focus is on the research sequences and the Program Planning & Proposal Development course (EDU 7040) as these incorporate multiple skills acquired and developed across program curriculum. The Director of Graduate Programs tracks and reviews all ELPhD student final course grades each semester. Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other specific direct assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth.

2. ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report

The ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report captures scholarly activity for both students and faculty. Opportunities for collaboration, support, and skill development (e.g., calls for

proposals for articles/chapters/conferences, workshops, seminars) in these areas are disseminated to all ELPhD students and faculty. Each faculty member submits a Faculty Activity report to Director of Graduate Programs addressing her or his efforts for the previous academic year. The report will address the following indicators: grant proposals, publications, presentations, other research endeavors, external consultants to public schools and agencies (including in-service and professional development). ELPhD students are asked annually to provide a current record of their scholarly activity (e.g., publication and presentations of original research or theoretical work, grant proposals, professional development activities).

The Director of Graduate Programs collects and reviews this data, then aggregates into the annual activity report. Scholarly activity 5-year trend is also tracked and reviewed to ensure application of appropriate scholarly and professional skills occur for students and that faculty maintain a strong scholarly presence. Trend data allows identification of change in scholarly productivity and professional skill development that may then be further examined as needed. Results are disseminated through faculty meetings, the College of Education Data and Assessment Forums, and institutional reports.

An overall summary of the program's progress will be included in this IE report as the format of the annual report no longer captures a complete picture of faculty activity.

3. Research Course Sequence

The research course sequence is an integral part of the ELPhD program. Theoretical Foundations of Research (EDU 7010), Qualitative Inquiry in Education (EDU 7330), Data Analysis and Representation in Qualitative Inquiry (EDU 7340) make up the qualitative series. Quantitative Inquiry in Education I (EDU 7420), Quantitative Inquiry in Education II (EDU 7430), and Research Design (EDU 7300) comprise the quantitative series. Each 3-course series includes foundational theoretical concepts, methods of data collection and data analysis, creation of a research proposal, and an original study. The research courses build upon one another and are sequential in order, further facilitating theoretical understanding and methodological application. For example, statistical concepts learned in EDU 7420 form the base knowledge for assignments in EDU 7430. Assignments in EDU 7430 are deliberately designed to be further developed in EDU 7300, the culminating quantitative research course. Similarly, theoretical foundations are used to inform a research proposal in EDU 7010 that is then used to enact data collection (EDU 7330), analysis, and interpretation (EDU 7340). This succession allows students to develop the necessary research skills and emerge from the courses with original work that addresses gaps in the literature, investigates theory, uses sound and appropriate methodologies, and contributes knowledge to the discipline. These are essential skills for scholars and leaders in the field.

Students are 1) required to read extensively, including scholarly writings related to epistemologies and theories that influence and inform social science research, and

exemplary studies; 2) expected to submit polished, scholarly papers that undergo intense review, with the expectation of publishing and presenting; and 3) undergo faculty and peer review during class presentations of work in preparation for presenting at discipline-specific conferences and other scholarly forums.

Additional concentration research classes are also required. These courses offer students the chance to gain crucial theoretical and methodological knowledge, which they then apply to required original research projects. This familiarizes them with the types of research available while preparing them to successfully meet the expected quality and scope of scholarship as they enter dissertation. Course instructors work closely with students to ensure their success. If an instructor becomes aware that a student is not prepared to move onto the next course in the sequence, they are connected with peer tutors, additional study materials, and/or other resources to ensure success in the course and preparedness for the next level or, if more appropriate, encouraged to withdraw and re-take the class at a later date.

Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth.

At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, the assessments for this sequence will be culminating projects that demonstrate analytic skill and proficient synthesis of research design, methodologies, and methods.

4. Grant Proposal Proficiency

Grant proposals are crafted each Summer semester in Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040). EDU 7040 incorporates theoretical program planning perspectives; in-depth discussion of various program planning models; and effective program development, planning, and evaluation practices for a variety of educational settings. This class includes a focus on adult learners as exceptional learners, in and out of traditional educational environments, and their particular needs. These theories, skills, and practices are not typically addressed in undergraduate or graduate programs and are especially important in preparing professionals who can lead sustainable change for exceptional learners. This course requires students to prepare products that may have real-world impact.

One of two main project students undertaken in EDU 7040 is creation of a grant proposal for a state- or federally-funded program. After completing the proposal, students must defend their proposal in mock “board meeting” discussions, which prepares them for gaining stakeholder buy-in, identifying unintended outcomes, and assessing needs in professional environments. This also provides students a chance to further improve their proposal via incorporation of the feedback given. The course instructor, who has authored or co-authored multiple successful grants over the last

decade, evaluates the grant proposals and provides further input. Students who choose to submit proposals to the funding agency are encouraged to do so and directed to the Office of Research for instruction in grant submission policy and procedures.

Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth. Number of grants produced and funded is tracked year-by-year, with a 5-year trend as well (ELPhD Scholarly Activity Table). Informal feedback about the grant proposal process and collaboration (development of professional skills) is also used to ensure progress toward SLOs and PGs and to improve student success.

At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, the assessment for this course will be completion of culminating grant project that demonstrates analytic skill and proficient synthesis of required research, evaluation, and writing skills required to craft high-quality proposals. Number of proposals crafted and funded will continue to be used alongside the EDU 7040 proposal project to provide a clear picture of students' growth.

5. Comprehensive Exams

Comprehensive examinations are administered near the end of each semester as needed, typically in conjunction with Research Seminar in Education (EDU 7920), after all other coursework has been completed (SLOs 1 & 2). Rigorous comprehensive examinations provide an opportunity for ELPhD students to provide evidence of proficiency in and mastery of expected learning outcomes (SLOs 1 & 2). Students illustrate mastery of theory, research proficiency, professional skills, and concentration-specific content through their comprehensive exam responses. Students must pass their comprehensive exams in order to move on to Ph.D. candidacy and continue in the program.

At the beginning of Research Seminar in Education (EDU 7920), the student and his/her Chair will select a series of four consecutive days during which the comprehensive examination will take place. Each committee member submits an exam question or set of questions to the Chair. The student typically has 24 hours in which to craft a response to each member's question/set of questions. Committee members may elect to allow the use of resources or to prohibit them. Responses are written to one committee member's question at a time. A student should not work on multiple responses at once. The questions must be answered with appropriate detail, clarity, and insight, and display strong comprehension and integration of fundamental concepts.

Once complete, the student submits the response to the Chair. If the question being answer was the Chair's, the Chair will then grade the response. If the question was submitted by a committee member, the Chair shares the response with the appropriate

member. Responses on the qualifying exam are scored by their program chair and members of their graduate committee.

Scores (pass, low pass, fail) are based on pre-determined performance criteria devised by their committee and informed by evidence-based practices, discipline content knowledge, and professional skills introduced and reinforced in previous coursework taken by the student. Upon passing the comprehensive exam, students move into Ph.D. candidacy.

If an answer lacks the desired mastery, committee members have two options. If the response is reasonably close to the expected level of proficiency and fluency, the committee member may choose to ask for more detail and offer a student an opportunity to elaborate if necessary. Alternatively, the committee member may fail the student. Students who fail the comprehensive exam must wait a semester before retaking their exam. Students may only retake their comprehensive exam one time. A failure of any part of a student's retake examination warrants academic dismissal from the program.

Student pass rates are monitored every semester. Any signs of declining competence and response quality are reviewed as a means of maintaining and/or improving curricular efficacy as well as ensuring student success. Comp exam passing information is captured in the ELPhD Academic Achievement table.

6. Dissertation Prospectus Defense

The dissertation prospectus is presented each semester as needed, in conjunction with or immediately following Research Seminar in Education, EDU 7920 (successful written and oral prospectus defense to graduate advisory committee). Note: Ph.D. candidate is used in place of student as the individual will typically have passed comprehensive exams before presenting the prospectus.

Ph.D. candidates prepare their dissertation prospectus in Research Seminar in Education (EDU 7920). In this course, the Ph.D. candidate crafts the research design and write the prospectus for the proposed study. After receiving iterative feedback on the first three chapters of their research proposal from the course instructor and making revisions, the Ph.D. candidate presents a practice prospectus defense. The course instructor and candidate's Chair attend, though all committee members are welcome. Input from the course instructor and Chair is given at the end of the practice defense. The Ph.D. candidate then incorporates the feedback into the prospectus presentation and the dissertation prospectus.

After the practice prospectus defense, the Ph.D. candidate is directed to either schedule a formal prospectus defense with his/her dissertation advisory committee (after successful defense) or is directed to continue working on the prospectus and presentation with guidance from the Chair and committee members.

Once a formal prospectus presentation and defense date has been selected, the Ph.D. candidate is required to submit the dissertation prospectus to committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled prospectus date, though earlier is encouraged when possible.

At formal prospectus defense, the Ph.D. candidate presents the prospectus using PowerPoint, Prezi, or Keynote (other mediums may be acceptable) and provides handouts for the committee. The presentation is 25–35 minutes long. The Ph.D. candidate covers study background and context, problem description, study purpose, significance, theoretical lens, connections to relevant literature, and a detailed description of the proposed research methodology. Other pertinent information may also be included. After the presentation has concluded, committee members pose questions that the candidate must answer. The Ph.D. candidate is then dismissed from the room, while the committee members deliberate on whether or not the candidate should pursue the proposed research. Once a decision has been reached, the Ph.D. candidate is brought back and the decision is shared. The committee also provides additional feedback on the prospectus. If the prospectus defense was not successful, the committee will ask the Ph.D. candidate to revise the proposal and convene at a later date to present the revised prospectus. Ph.D. candidates who successfully defend the dissertation prospectus are given permission to proceed with their dissertation work.

Dissertation prospectus defense pass rates are monitored each semester. Data are looked at in semester, annual, and cohort levels, as well as 5-year trend data. This data is also reviewed in conjunction with other assessment data (e.g., research sequence, comprehensive exam, academic achievement, scholarly activity) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the student progress and program quality.

7. Dissertation Defense Pass Rate

The dissertation defense occurs each semester as needed. Graduates must successfully complete a written and oral dissertation defense, scored by their dissertation advisory committee (minimum four qualified members).

Building upon the prospectus work, the Ph.D. candidate works closely with committee members throughout the dissertation process in preparation for the dissertation defense. A Ph.D. candidate regularly submits dissertation chapters to each committee member for feedback (schedule determined by Ph.D. candidate and committee Chair). The Ph.D. candidate incorporates feedback from all members and continually seeks additional guidance on revisions and refinement. The full dissertation must be submitted to the dissertation advisory committee and Director of Graduate Programs at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense date, though earlier is encouraged when possible.

During the dissertation defense, the Ph.D. candidate has 20–40 minutes to review the information covered in the prospectus proposal (e.g., context, problem addressed,

significance, methodology) and present the original dissertation research findings, conclusions, and implications (defense time is determined by the Chair). The defense includes written materials and a formal presentation. After the presentation has concluded, the committee and any others present may pose questions to the Ph.D. candidate. Committee questions may focus on research methods, findings, connections to the literature, implications, and areas that have been the subject of substantial revision during the dissertation process. Once all questions have been answered satisfactorily, the Ph.D. candidate and any guests are dismissed from the room. The dissertation advisory committee then deliberates about whether the Ph.D. candidate's defense was successful. Once a decision has been reached, the Ph.D. candidate is brought back and the decision is shared.

If the dissertation defense was successful, the committee signs the Dissertation Defense form and submits it to the Director of Graduate Programs and Graduate Studies. If the defense was not successful, the committee also provides additional feedback and outlines revisions that need to be made before scheduling a second defense.

The dissertation defense serves as the final assessment of a Ph.D. candidate's content mastery, course competency, and professional skill development as well as their development as scholars and leaders. Students must have mastered and integrated the content and skills acquired throughout the ELPhD program in order to pass the dissertation defense.

Data are looked at semester, annual, and cohort levels, as well as 5-year trend and "whole program history" trend data. Historical data show that students are well-prepared and generally pass on the first attempt. This data is also reviewed in conjunction with other assessment data (e.g., research sequence, comprehensive exam, academic achievement, scholarly activity) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the student progress and program quality.

At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, ELPhD faculty will begin discussions about formalizing a rubric for the dissertation defense for added clarity in this culminating measure.

Criteria for Success (Thresholds for Assessment Methods):

ELPhD Academic Achievement Thresholds:

Acceptability: 3.25 GPA (mainly Bs; 80–89 out of 100)

Expectation: 3.5 GPA (As & Bs; 85–100)

Exceptionality: ≥ 3.9 GPA (almost all As or all As; 90–100)

ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report Thresholds:

Acceptability: actively working on a presentation or publication manuscript; submitted at least one presentation proposal &/or publication; collaboration with ELPhD students and faculty.

Expectation: submitted two or more presentation proposals &/or publication manuscripts; acceptance continued work on conference proposals and manuscripts for submission; collaboration with ELPhD students, faculty, and staff.

Exceptionality: submitted multiple presentation proposals &/or publications; at least one acceptance; cross-disciplinary and/or interdepartmental collaboration with students and faculty.

Research Sequence Thresholds:

Acceptability: successful completion of all research courses with a grade of B ($\geq 80\%$) or better (research course GPA minimum: 3.0); submission of an original research project (via presentation or manuscript) to a regional, national, or international scholarly conference or publication.

Expectation: successful completion of all research courses with a grade of B ($\geq 80\%$) or better, with at least two As (research course GPA minimum: 3.3); acceptance of an original research project (via presentation or manuscript) to a regional, national, or international scholarly conference or publication.

Exceptionality: successful completion of all research courses with mainly As ($\geq 90\%$) (research course GPA minimum: 3.6); submission of original research projects (via presentation or manuscript) to two or more national or international scholarly conference or publication; acceptance to one or more national and/or international scholarly conferences or publications; collaboration on current research projects with ELPhD and/or other Tech faculty, staff, and/or students.

Please note: *in the research courses, there are no attendance grades or other non-coursework related scores. Scores are based solely on final exams, research projects, project proposals, all of which require mastery of appropriate research content/theoretical knowledge and skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in research content knowledge and skill mastery.*

Grant Proposal Proficiency Thresholds:

Acceptability: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B ($\geq 80\%$) or better.

Expectation: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B+ ($\geq 85\%$) or better.

Exceptionality: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B+ ($\geq 85\%$) or better; grant proposal submission; collaboration with other Tech faculty and students on additional grant proposals.

Please note: in EDU 7040, there are no attendance grades or other non-coursework related scores. Scores are based solely on program planning and grant proposal projects that require mastery of appropriate research skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in program planning and grant proposal content knowledge and skill mastery.

Comprehensive Exam Threshold:

Acceptability: students pass the comprehensive exam in no more than two attempts.

Expectation: students pass the comprehensive exam on the first attempt with no more than one Low Pass score.

Exceptionality: students pass the comprehensive exam on the first attempt and receive Pass for all sections.

Dissertation Prospectus Defense Threshold:

Acceptability: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation prospectus defense in no more than two attempts; Ph.D. candidate answers defense questions, but answers may lack some of the desired complexity/depth; prospectus addresses all the required elements (study context, problem description, study purpose, significance, theoretical lens, connections to relevant literature, and research methodology), but may need additional information; major revisions may be required.

Expectation: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation prospectus defense on the first attempt; Ph.D. candidate adequately answers defense questions; prospectus is thorough and well-crafted, addressing all required elements in sufficient detail; revisions to the prospectus are required. After revisions, Ph.D. candidate will be ready to enter dissertation work.

Exceptionality: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation prospectus defense on the first attempt; Ph.D. candidate's answers to defense questions are exceptional and demonstrate deep understanding of the problem to be addressed and its relevance; prospectus displays thoughtful organization, relevant study purpose, clear significance, excellent methodology, and sophisticated insight; minimal revisions are required; Ph.D. candidate is clearly ready to enter dissertation work.

Dissertation Defense Pass Rate Threshold:

Acceptability: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation defense in no more than two attempts; candidate answers to defense questions, but answers may lack some of the desired complexity/depth; dissertation and defense presentation address all the required elements (study context, problem description, study purpose, significance, theoretical lens, connections to relevant literature, research methodology, findings, conclusions, and implications), but may need additional information; major revisions may be required before submitting to Graduate Studies and ProQuest.

Expectation: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation defense on the first attempt; Ph.D. candidate adequately answers defense questions; dissertation is thorough and well-crafted, addressing all required elements in sufficient detail; minor revisions required before submitting to Graduate Studies and ProQuest.

Exceptionality: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation defense on the first attempt; candidate's answers to defense questions are exceptional and demonstrate deep understanding of and connection to the work; defense presentation is engaging, informative, and shows Ph.D. candidate's expertise as a scholar and appropriate professional skills; dissertation displays thoughtful organization, relevant study purpose, clear significance, excellent methodology, clear findings, and insightful, nuanced conclusions and implications; minimal, if any, revisions are required before submitting to Graduate Studies and ProQuest.

Results and Analysis:

The majority of students maintain an A (3.5 or higher GPA equivalent out of 4.0) throughout the duration of the program (97% for current students; 99% since 2009). In 2022–2023, ELPhD students maintained an A average in the key courses listed in the table 6 below (overall score across all courses: 3.85 for current students; 3.78 since 2009). This is consistent with performance of the previous five years. At the PhD-level, course scores do not include attendance or other scores that are not a reflection of progress on appropriate learning outcomes, content knowledge, and skill mastery. Students are performing at or above the *Threshold of Expectation*. (See Table 6 below)

Grant proposals for an externally funding source are a required component of EDU 7040. Students are also encouraged to take part in grants with faculty and community members. Table 4 above shows the number of proposals written. In 2022–2023, 17 grant proposals (including collaborative grants written outside of EDU 7040) were crafted and submitted proposals; 7 of these were funded. Students consistently performed or above the *Threshold of Expectation*, with several attaining the *Threshold of Exceptionality*. [*reminder: EDU 7040 scores are based solely on program planning and grant proposal projects that require mastery of appropriate*

research skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in program planning and grant proposal content knowledge and skill mastery.]

During the 2022–2023 academic year, ELPhD students belonged to over 65 professional organizations and disseminated original work (either their own or part of an active research collaboration with faculty &/or peers) at 34 scholarly/professional conferences (22 regional presentations, 0 national presentations, 12 international presentations) (see Table 5 - ELPhD Student Scholarly activity). Students consistently performed or above the *Threshold of Expectation*, with several attaining the *Threshold of Exceptionality*.

Students enrolled in the ELPhD program during the 2022–2023 academic year submitted 19 manuscripts (article, book chapter, or other scholarly work), 10 of which are accepted, in press, or have been published (see Table 5 - ELPhD Student Scholarly activity). Students consistently performed or above the *Threshold of Expectation*, with several attaining the *Threshold of Exceptionality*.

Quantitative research course sequence data—EDU 7420, EDU 7430, EDU 7300—(SLOs 1 & 2) demonstrate students' acquisition and mastery of knowledge of quantitative methods, instruments, analysis, and research design. During the 2022–2023 academic year, the majority of students maintained scores ≥ 90 out of 100 / 4.0 GPA. In EDU 7420, 100% of the students earned an A/4.0. In EDU 7430, two students earned an A/4.0 and one earned a B/3.0. In EDU 7300, all students earned an A/4.0. No student earned $\leq 79/2.0$ GPA (see Tables 6 & 7 below). The overall program trend shows students earning 3.8 in EDU 7420, 3.6 in EDU 7430, and 3.9 in EDU 7300, the culminating course. Results across courses show consistency with each respective student. The higher number of scores in the 80–89 score/ 3.0 GPA range in EDU 7430 is expected considering the degree of difficulty with application of research analysis skills. Students are performing at or above the *Threshold of Expectation* (see Table 6 below). *[reminder: Research course scores and course grades are based solely on final exams, research projects, & project proposals, all of which require mastery of appropriate research skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in research content knowledge and skill mastery.]*

Qualitative research course sequence data—EDU 7010, EDU 7330, EDU 7340—(SLOs 1 & 2) demonstrate students' acquisition and mastery of knowledge of qualitative theory, study design, methods, and analysis (see Table 5). Results across courses show consistency with each respective student and the increased degree of rigor in EDU 7010 and EDU 7340 in comparison to EDU 7330 (where data collection occurs and emphasis is on practical application of research skills). This academic year, 100% of students maintained scores ≥ 90 out of 100 / 4.0 GPA. No student earned $\leq 79/2.0$ GPA. (see Tables 6 & 7 below). The overall program trend shows students earning 3.8 in EDU 7010, 3.9 in EDU 7330, and 3.7 in EDU 7340, the culminating course. Students are performing at or above the *Threshold of*

Expectation. [reminder: Research course scores and course grades are based solely on final exams, research projects, project proposals, all of which require mastery of appropriate research skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in research content knowledge and skill mastery.]

Students are well prepared for their comprehensive examinations. All students in the last academic year passed their comprehensive examination on the first attempt and entered Ph.D. candidacy successfully. None received a low pass. Students are performing at or above the *Threshold of Expectation*. Historical comprehensive examination data show successful responses on the first attempt for students taking exams in the past 5 years, while only 3 have required a retake since 2009 (see Table 6 below).

All Ph.D. candidates in the last academic year passed their dissertation prospectus defense on the first attempt. All students in 2022–2023 performed at or above the *Threshold of Expectation*. Dissertation prospectus data show successful completion of presentations on the first attempt for all ELPhD students (see Table 6 below).

All Ph.D. candidates in the 2022–2023 academic year successfully passed their dissertation defense on the first attempt, performing at or above the *Threshold of Expectation*. Historical dissertation defense data show successful completion of defense on the first attempt for all ELPhD candidates (see Table 6 below).

Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Academic Achievement (5–year)										
<i>Cohort</i>	<i>EDU 7010</i>	<i>EDU 7330</i>	<i>EDU 7340</i>	<i>EDU 7420</i>	<i>EDU 7430</i>	<i>EDU 7300</i>	<i>EDU 7040</i>	<i>Comps</i>	<i>Prospectus</i>	<i>Defense</i>
2018–2019	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.8	4.0	5/5 passed on 1 st attempt	5/5 passed on 1 st attempt	3/3 passed on 1 st attempt
2019–2020	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.8	3.7	4/4 passed on 1 st attempt	4/4 passed on 1 st attempt	3/3 passed on 1 st attempt
2020–2021	3.8	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.8	4.0	2/2 passed on 1 st attempt	2/2 passed on 1 st attempt	–
2021–2022	3.9	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.7	4.0	–	–	–

2022– 2023	4.0	–	–	4.0	3.8	4.0	–	–	–	–
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Use of Results to Improve Outcomes:

Though students generally do well in the research course sequence (see *ELPhD Academic Achievement table*), formative assessment done through discussions with students in those courses and in the annual semi-structured interviews revealed anxiety around course success and the need for additional support.

In the 2022–2023 academic year, students performed better than the previous academic year. Only one student earned a final score of 3.0 (B) over the three course sequence [in EDU 7340]. No student earned a 2.0 (C). The Director has received informal (via email or conversation) and formal feedback through the qualitative program evaluation interviews, students report that the study sessions and shared resources are “so helpful...not just the content but the confidence boost was amazing.”

SLO 2 - PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Define Outcome:

Upon successful completion of Exceptional Learning Ph.D. program, the graduate will demonstrate the development of professional skills in the areas of teaching, research, and service.

Note: At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, SLOs and the associated assessments will be restructured to include more direct assessments at various points in the program.

Strategic Plan Connections:

Core Principles: *Academic Excellence, Community Engagement, Meaningful Innovation, Student Success, Supportive Environment, Value Creation*

Strategic Goals: *SG1–PA A, B, C, D, E; SG2–PA B & C; SG4–PA A, B, C, D*

Assessment Methods:

1. ELPhD Academic Achievement

A grade of B (80–89 out of 100) or better demonstrates sufficient content mastery for each course, whether that content is methods, practical application of professional skills, theory, or any combination of the three. Failure is considered a C or below. Students are allowed one C (70–79 out of 100) during their time in the ELPhD program. A second C is grounds for academic dismissal from the program. Attainment of an acceptable grade or higher in these courses aligns with progress toward and attainment

of SLOs & PGs. A particular programmatic focus is on the research sequences and the Program Planning & Proposal Development course (EDU 7040) as these incorporate multiple skills acquired and developed across program curriculum. The Director of Graduate Programs tracks and reviews all ELPhD student final course grades each semester. Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other specific direct assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth.

2. **ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report**

The ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report captures scholarly activity for both students and faculty. Opportunities for collaboration, support, and skill development (e.g., calls for proposals for articles/chapters/conferences, workshops, seminars) in these areas are disseminated to all ELPhD students and faculty. Each faculty member submits a Faculty Activity report to Director of Graduate Programs addressing her or his efforts for the previous academic year. The report will address the following indicators: grant proposals, publications, presentations, other research endeavors, external consultants to public schools and agencies (including in-service and professional development). ELPhD students are asked annually to provide a current record of their scholarly activity (e.g., publication and presentations of original research or theoretical work, grant proposals, professional development activities).

The Director of Graduate Programs collects and reviews this data, then aggregates into the annual activity report. Scholarly activity 5-year trend is also tracked and reviewed to ensure application of appropriate scholarly and professional skills occur for students and that faculty maintain a strong scholarly presence. Trend data allows identification of change in scholarly productivity and professional skill development that may then be further examined as needed. Results are disseminated through faculty meetings, the College of Education Data and Assessment Forums, and institutional reports.

An overall summary of the program's progress will be included in this IE report as the format of the annual report no longer captures a complete picture of faculty activity.

3. **Research Course Sequence**

The research course sequence is an integral part of the ELPhD program. Theoretical Foundations of Research (EDU 7010), Qualitative Inquiry in Education (EDU 7330), Data Analysis and Representation in Qualitative Inquiry (EDU 7340) make up the qualitative series. Quantitative Inquiry in Education I (EDU 7420), Quantitative Inquiry in Education II (EDU 7430), and Research Design (EDU 7300) comprise the quantitative series. Each 3-course series includes foundational theoretical concepts, methods of data collection and

data analysis, creation of a research proposal, and an original study. The research courses build upon one another and are sequential in order, further facilitating theoretical understanding and methodological application. For example, statistical concepts learned in EDU 7420 form the base knowledge for assignments in EDU 7430. Assignments in EDU 7430 are deliberately designed to be further developed in EDU 7300, the culminating quantitative research course. Similarly, theoretical foundations are used to inform a research proposal in EDU 7010 that is then used to enact data collection (EDU 7330), analysis, and interpretation (EDU 7340). This succession allows students to develop the necessary research skills and emerge from the courses with original work that addresses gaps in the literature, investigates theory, uses sound and appropriate methodologies, and contributes knowledge to the discipline. These are essential skills for scholars and leaders in the field.

Students are 1) required to read extensively, including scholarly writings related to epistemologies and theories that influence and inform social science research, and exemplary studies; 2) expected to submit polished, scholarly papers that undergo intense review, with the expectation of publishing and presenting; and 3) undergo faculty and peer review during class presentations of work in preparation for presenting at discipline-specific conferences and other scholarly forums.

Additional concentration research classes are also required. These courses offer students the chance to gain crucial theoretical and methodological knowledge, which they then apply to required original research projects. This familiarizes them with the types of research available while preparing them to successfully meet the expected quality and scope of scholarship as they enter dissertation. Course instructors work closely with students to ensure their success. If an instructor becomes aware that a student is not prepared to move onto the next course in the sequence, they are connected with peer tutors, additional study materials, and/or other resources to ensure success in the course and preparedness for the next level or, if more appropriate, encouraged to withdraw and re-take the class at a later date.

Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth.

At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, the assessments for this sequence will be culminating projects that demonstrate analytic skill and proficient synthesis of research design, methodologies, and methods.

4. **Grant Proposal Proficiency**

Grant proposals are crafted each Summer semester in Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040). EDU 7040 incorporates theoretical program planning perspectives; in-depth discussion of various program planning models; and effective

program development, planning, and evaluation practices for a variety of educational settings. This class includes a focus on adult learners as exceptional learners, in and out of traditional educational environments, and their particular needs. These theories, skills, and practices are not typically addressed in undergraduate or graduate programs and are especially important in preparing professionals who can lead sustainable change for exceptional learners. This course requires students to prepare products that may have real-world impact.

One of two main project students undertaken in EDU 7040 is creation of a grant proposal for a state- or federally-funded program. After completing the proposal, students must defend their proposal in mock “board meeting” discussions, which prepares them for gaining stakeholder buy-in, identifying unintended outcomes, and assessing needs in professional environments. This also provides students a chance to further improve their proposal via incorporation of the feedback given. The course instructor, who has authored or co-authored multiple successful grants over the last decade, evaluates the grant proposals and provides further input. Students who choose to submit proposals to the funding agency are encouraged to do so and directed to the Office of Research for instruction in grant submission policy and procedures.

Scores are aggregated for each year and cohort and compared against program-set quality benchmarks (thresholds). Trend data (5-year) is also tracked and reviewed to ensure program quality and identify any emerging needs. This data is paired with other assessment data to provide a robust picture of student academic progress and growth. Number of grants produced and funded is tracked year-by-year, with a 5-year trend as well (ELPhD Scholarly Activity Table). Informal feedback about the grant proposal process and collaboration (development of professional skills) is also used to ensure progress toward SLOs and PGs and to improve student success.

At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, the assessment for this course will be completion of culminating grant project that demonstrates analytic skill and proficient synthesis of required research, evaluation, and writing skills required to craft high-quality proposals. Number of proposals crafted and funded will continue to be used alongside the EDU 7040 proposal project to provide a clear picture of students’ growth.

5. **Comprehensive Exams**

Comprehensive examinations are administered near the end of each semester as needed, typically in conjunction with Research Seminar in Education (EDU 7920), after all other coursework has been completed (SLOs 1 & 2). Rigorous comprehensive examinations provide an opportunity for ELPhD students to provide evidence of proficiency in and mastery of expected learning outcomes (SLOs 1 & 2). Students illustrate mastery of theory, research proficiency, professional skills, and concentration-specific content through their comprehensive exam responses. Students must pass their

comprehensive exams in order to move on to Ph.D. candidacy and continue in the program.

At the beginning of Research Seminar in Education (EDU 7920), the student and his/her Chair will select a series of four consecutive days during which the comprehensive examination will take place. Each committee member submits an exam question or set of questions to the Chair. The student typically has 24 hours in which to craft a response to each member's question/set of questions. Committee members may elect to allow the use of resources or to prohibit them. Responses are written to one committee member's question at a time. A student should not work on multiple responses at once. The questions must be answered with appropriate detail, clarity, and insight, and display strong comprehension and integration of fundamental concepts.

Once complete, the student submits the response to the Chair. If the question being answer was the Chair's, the Chair will then grade the response. If the question was submitted by a committee member, the Chair shares the response with the appropriate member. Responses on the qualifying exam are scored by their program chair and members of their graduate committee.

Scores (pass, low pass, fail) are based on pre-determined performance criteria devised by their committee and informed by evidence-based practices, discipline content knowledge, and professional skills introduced and reinforced in previous coursework taken by the student. Upon passing the comprehensive exam, students move into Ph.D. candidacy.

If an answer lacks the desired mastery, committee members have two options. If the response is reasonably close to the expected level of proficiency and fluency, the committee member may choose to ask for more detail and offer a student an opportunity to elaborate if necessary. Alternatively, the committee member may fail the student. Students who fail the comprehensive exam must wait a semester before retaking their exam. Students may only retake their comprehensive exam one time. A failure of any part of a student's retake examination warrants academic dismissal from the program.

Student pass rates are monitored every semester. Any signs of declining competence and response quality are reviewed as a means of maintaining and/or improving curricular efficacy as well as ensuring student success. Comp exam passing information is captured in the ELPhD Academic Achievement table.

6. **Dissertation Prospectus Defense**

The dissertation prospectus is presented each semester as needed, in conjunction with or immediately following Research Seminar in Education, EDU 7920 (successful written and oral prospectus defense to graduate advisory committee). Note: Ph.D. candidate is

used in place of student as the individual will typically have passed comprehensive exams before presenting the prospectus.

Ph.D. candidates prepare their dissertation prospectus in Research Seminar in Education (EDU 7920). In this course, the Ph.D. candidate crafts the research design and write the prospectus for the proposed study. After receiving iterative feedback on the first three chapters of their research proposal from the course instructor and making revisions, the Ph.D. candidate presents a practice prospectus defense. The course instructor and candidate's Chair attend, though all committee members are welcome. Input from the course instructor and Chair is given at the end of the practice defense. The Ph.D. candidate then incorporates the feedback into the prospectus presentation and the dissertation prospectus.

After the practice prospectus defense, the Ph.D. candidate is directed to either schedule a formal prospectus defense with his/her dissertation advisory committee (after successful defense) or is directed to continue working on the prospectus and presentation with guidance from the Chair and committee members.

Once a formal prospectus presentation and defense date has been selected, the Ph.D. candidate is required to submit the dissertation prospectus to committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled prospectus date, though earlier is encouraged when possible.

At formal prospectus defense, the Ph.D. candidate presents the prospectus using PowerPoint, Prezi, or Keynote (other mediums may be acceptable) and provides handouts for the committee. The presentation is 25–35 minutes long. The Ph.D. candidate covers study background and context, problem description, study purpose, significance, theoretical lens, connections to relevant literature, and a detailed description of the proposed research methodology. Other pertinent information may also be included. After the presentation has concluded, committee members pose questions that the candidate must answer. The Ph.D. candidate is then dismissed from the room, while the committee members deliberate on whether or not the candidate should pursue the proposed research. Once a decision has been reached, the Ph.D. candidate is brought back and the decision is shared. The committee also provides additional feedback on the prospectus. If the prospectus defense was not successful, the committee will ask the Ph.D. candidate to revise the proposal and convene at a later date to present the revised prospectus. Ph.D. candidates who successfully defend the dissertation prospectus are given permission to proceed with their dissertation work.

Dissertation prospectus defense pass rates are monitored each semester. Data are looked at in semester, annual, and cohort levels, as well as 5-year trend data. This data is also reviewed in conjunction with other assessment data (e.g., research sequence, comprehensive exam, academic achievement, scholarly activity) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the student progress and program quality.

7. Dissertation Defense Pass Rate

The dissertation defense occurs each semester as needed. Graduates must successfully complete a written and oral dissertation defense, scored by their dissertation advisory committee (minimum four qualified members).

Building upon the prospectus work, the Ph.D. candidate works closely with committee members throughout the dissertation process in preparation for the dissertation defense. A Ph.D. candidate regularly submits dissertation chapters to each committee member for feedback (schedule determined by Ph.D. candidate and committee Chair). The Ph.D. candidate incorporates feedback from all members and continually seeks additional guidance on revisions and refinement. The full dissertation must be submitted to the dissertation advisory committee and Director of Graduate Programs at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense date, though earlier is encouraged when possible.

During the dissertation defense, the Ph.D. candidate has 20–40 minutes to review the information covered in the prospectus proposal (e.g., context, problem addressed, significance, methodology) and present the original dissertation research findings, conclusions, and implications (defense time is determined by the Chair). The defense includes written materials and a formal presentation. After the presentation has concluded, the committee and any others present may pose questions to the Ph.D. candidate. Committee questions may focus on research methods, findings, connections to the literature, implications, and areas that have been the subject of substantial revision during the dissertation process. Once all questions have been answered satisfactorily, the Ph.D. candidate and any guests are dismissed from the room. The dissertation advisory committee then deliberates about whether the Ph.D. candidate's defense was successful. Once a decision has been reached, the Ph.D. candidate is brought back and the decision is shared.

If the dissertation defense was successful, the committee signs the Dissertation Defense form and submits it to the Director of Graduate Programs and Graduate Studies. If the defense was not successful, the committee also provides additional feedback and outlines revisions that need to be made before scheduling a second defense.

The dissertation defense serves as the final assessment of a Ph.D. candidate's content mastery, course competency, and professional skill development as well as their development as scholars and leaders. Students' must have mastered and integrated the content and skills acquired throughout the ELPhD program in order to pass the dissertation defense.

Data are looked at semester, annual, and cohort levels, as well as 5-year trend and "whole program history" trend data. Historical data show that students are well-prepared and generally pass on the first attempt. This data is also reviewed in conjunction with other assessment data (e.g., research sequence, comprehensive exam,

academic achievement, scholarly activity) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the student progress and program quality.

At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, ELPhD faculty will begin discussions about formalizing a rubric for the dissertation defense for added clarity in this culminating measure.

Criteria for Success (Thresholds for Assessment Methods):

ELPhD Academic Achievement Thresholds:

Acceptability: 3.25 GPA (mainly Bs; 80–89 out of 100)

Expectation: 3.5 GPA (As & Bs; 85–100)

Exceptionality: \geq 3.9 GPA (almost all As or all As; 90–100)

ELPhD Scholarly Activity Report Thresholds:

Acceptability: actively working on a presentation or publication manuscript; submitted at least one presentation proposal &/or publication; collaboration with ELPhD students and faculty.

Expectation: submitted two or more presentation proposals &/or publication manuscripts; acceptance continued work on conference proposals and manuscripts for submission; collaboration with ELPhD students, faculty, and staff.

Exceptionality: submitted multiple presentation proposals &/or publications; at least one acceptance; cross-disciplinary and/or interdepartmental collaboration with students and faculty.

Research Sequence Thresholds:

Acceptability: successful completion of all research courses with a grade of B (\geq 80%) or better (research course GPA minimum: 3.0); submission of an original research project (via presentation or manuscript) to a regional, national, or international scholarly conference or publication.

Expectation: successful completion of all research courses with a grade of B (\geq 80%) or better, with at least two As (research course GPA minimum: 3.3); acceptance of an original research project (via presentation or manuscript) to a regional, national, or international scholarly conference or publication.

Exceptionality: successful completion of all research courses with mainly As ($\geq 90\%$) (research course GPA minimum: 3.6); submission of original research projects (via presentation or manuscript) to two or more national or international scholarly conference or publication; acceptance to one or more national and/or international scholarly conferences or publications; collaboration on current research projects with ELPhD and/or other Tech faculty, staff, and/or students.

Please note: in the research courses, there are no attendance grades or other non-coursework related scores. Scores are based solely on final exams, research projects, project proposals, all of which require mastery of appropriate research content/theoretical knowledge and skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in research content knowledge and skill mastery.

Grant Proposal Proficiency Thresholds:

Acceptability: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B ($\geq 80\%$) or better.

Expectation: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B+ ($\geq 85\%$) or better.

Exceptionality: successful completion of a grant proposal as part of Program Planning and Proposal Development (EDU 7040) with a grade of B+ ($\geq 85\%$) or better; grant proposal submission; collaboration with other Tech faculty and students on additional grant proposals.

Please note: in EDU 7040, there are no attendance grades or other non-coursework related scores. Scores are based solely on program planning and grant proposal projects that require mastery of appropriate research skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in program planning and grant proposal content knowledge and skill mastery.

Comprehensive Exam Threshold:

Acceptability: students pass the comprehensive exam in no more than two attempts.

Expectation: students pass the comprehensive exam on the first attempt with no more than one Low Pass score.

Exceptionality: students pass the comprehensive exam on the first attempt and receive Pass for all sections.

Dissertation Prospectus Defense Threshold:

Acceptability: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation prospectus defense in no more than two attempts; Ph.D. candidate answers defense questions, but answers may lack some of the desired complexity/depth; prospectus addresses all the required elements (study context, problem description, study purpose, significance, theoretical lens, connections to relevant literature, and research methodology), but may need additional information; major revisions may be required.

Expectation: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation prospectus defense on the first attempt; Ph.D. candidate adequately answers defense questions; prospectus is thorough and well-crafted, addressing all required elements in sufficient detail; revisions to the prospectus are required. After revisions, Ph.D. candidate will be ready to enter dissertation work.

Exceptionality: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation prospectus defense on the first attempt; Ph.D. candidate's answers to defense questions are exceptional and demonstrate deep understanding of the problem to be addressed and its relevance; prospectus displays thoughtful organization, relevant study purpose, clear significance, excellent methodology, and sophisticated insight; minimal revisions are required; Ph.D. candidate is clearly ready to enter dissertation work.

Dissertation Defense Pass Rate Threshold:

Acceptability: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation defense in no more than two attempts; candidate answers to defense questions, but answers may lack some of the desired complexity/depth; dissertation and defense presentation address all the required elements (study context, problem description, study purpose, significance, theoretical lens, connections to relevant literature, research methodology, findings, conclusions, and implications), but may need additional information; major revisions may be required before submitting to Graduate Studies and ProQuest.

Expectation: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation defense on the first attempt; Ph.D. candidate adequately answers defense questions; dissertation is thorough and well-crafted, addressing all required elements in sufficient detail; minor revisions required before submitting to Graduate Studies and ProQuest.

Exceptionality: Ph.D. candidate passes the dissertation defense on the first attempt; candidate's answers to defense questions are exceptional and demonstrate deep understanding of and connection to the work; defense presentation is engaging, informative, and shows Ph.D. candidate's expertise as a scholar and appropriate professional skills; dissertation displays thoughtful organization, relevant study purpose, clear significance, excellent methodology, clear findings, and insightful, nuanced

conclusions and implications; minimal, if any, revisions are required before submitting to Graduate Studies and ProQuest.

Results and Analysis:

The majority of students maintain an A (3.5 or higher GPA equivalent out of 4.0) throughout the duration of the program (97% for current students; 99% since 2009). In 2022–2023, ELPhD students maintained an A average in the key courses listed in the table 6 below (overall score across all courses: 3.85 for current students; 3.78 since 2009). This is consistent with performance of the previous five years. At the PhD-level, course scores *do not* include attendance or other scores that are not a reflection of progress on appropriate learning outcomes, content knowledge, and skill mastery. Students are performing at or above the *Threshold of Expectation*. (See Table 6 below)

Grant proposals for an externally funding source are a required component of EDU 7040. Students are also encouraged to take part in grants with faculty and community members. Table 4 above shows the number of proposals written. In 2022–2023, 17 grant proposals (including collaborative grants written outside of EDU 7040) were crafted and submitted proposals; 7 of these were funded. Students consistently performed or above the *Threshold of Expectation*, with several attaining the *Threshold of Exceptionality*. [*reminder: EDU 7040 scores are based solely on program planning and grant proposal projects that require mastery of appropriate research skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in program planning and grant proposal content knowledge and skill mastery.*]

During the 2022–2023 academic year, ELPhD students belonged to over 65 professional organizations and disseminated original work (either their own or part of an active research collaboration with faculty &/or peers) at 34 scholarly/professional conferences (22 regional presentations, 0 national presentations, 12 international presentations) (see Table 5 - ELPhD Student Scholarly activity). Students consistently performed or above the *Threshold of Expectation*, with several attaining the *Threshold of Exceptionality*.

Students enrolled in the ELPhD program during the 2022–2023 academic year submitted 19 manuscripts (article, book chapter, or other scholarly work), 10 of which are accepted, in press, or have been published (see Table 5 - ELPhD Student Scholarly activity). Students consistently performed or above the *Threshold of Expectation*, with several attaining the *Threshold of Exceptionality*.

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The overall program trend shows students earning 3.8 in EDU 7420, 3.6 in EDU 7430, and 3.9 in EDU 7300, the culminating course. Results across courses show consistency with each respective student. The higher number of scores in the 80–89 score/ 3.0 GPA range in EDU 7430 is expected considering the degree of difficulty with application of research analysis skills. Students are performing at or above the *Threshold of Expectation* (see Table 6 below).

[reminder: Research course scores and course grades are based solely on final exams, research projects, & project proposals, all of which require mastery of appropriate research skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in research content knowledge and skill mastery.]

Qualitative research course sequence data—EDU 7010, EDU 7330, EDU 7340— (SLOs 1 & 2) demonstrate students' acquisition and mastery of knowledge of qualitative theory, study design, methods, and analysis (see Table 5). Results across courses show consistency with each respective student and the increased degree of rigor in EDU 7010 and EDU 7340 in comparison to EDU 7330 (where data collection occurs and emphasis is on practical application of research skills). This academic year, 100% of students maintained scores ≥ 90 out of 100 / 4.0 GPA. No student earned $\leq 79/2.0$ GPA. (see Tables 6 & 7 below). The overall program trend shows students earning 3.8 in EDU 7010, 3.9 in EDU 7330, and 3.7 in EDU 7340, the culminating course. Students are performing at or above the *Threshold of Expectation*. *[reminder: Research course scores and course grades are based solely on final exams, research projects, project proposals, all of which require mastery of appropriate research skills. Course grades solely reflect students' progress in research content knowledge and skill mastery.]*

Students are well prepared for their comprehensive examinations. All students in the last academic year passed their comprehensive examination on the first attempt and entered Ph.D. candidacy successfully. None received a low pass. Students are performing at or above the *Threshold of Expectation*. Historical comprehensive examination data show successful responses on the first attempt for students taking exams in the past 5 years, while only 3 have required a retake since 2009 (see Table 6 below).

All Ph.D. candidates in the last academic year passed their dissertation prospectus defense on the first attempt. All students in 2022–2023 performed at or above the *Threshold of Expectation*. Dissertation prospectus data show successful completion of presentations on the first attempt for all ELPhD students (see Table 6 below).

All Ph.D. candidates in the 2022–2023 academic year successfully passed their dissertation defense on the first attempt, performing at or above the *Threshold of Expectation*. Historical dissertation defense data show successful completion of defense on the first attempt for all ELPhD candidates (see Table 6 below).

Exceptional Learning Ph.D. Academic Achievement (5-year)										
<i>Cohort</i>	<i>EDU 7010</i>	<i>EDU 7330</i>	<i>EDU 7340</i>	<i>EDU 7420</i>	<i>EDU 7430</i>	<i>EDU 7300</i>	<i>EDU 7040</i>	<i>Comps</i>	<i>Prospectus</i>	<i>Defense</i>
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2020– 2021	3.8	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.8	4.0	2/2 passed on 1 st attempt	2/2 passed on 1 st attempt	–
2021– 2022	3.9	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.7	4.0	–	–	–
2022– 2023	4.0	–	–	4.0	3.8	4.0	–	–	–	–

Use of Results to Improve Outcomes:

To increase the number of students who obtain their Ph.D., the faculty and Director have recently implemented a noncompletion identification and intervention procedure to improve student success and identify risk factors to better support students throughout their academic journey in the program. Faculty alert the Director when students are in danger of earning a C, display a marked change in classroom behavior (e.g., a shift from engaged and outspoken to withdrawn), failure to submit multiple assignments, consistent underperformance, and/or knowledge of major life changes that could undermine or threaten academic success. The Director then schedules an interview with each student whom faculty have identified as at-risk for noncompletion if/as appropriate. After the interview, the student, faculty, and Director decide on a course of action that best accommodates the student’s needs and provides supports and process to assist (e.g., tutoring, weekly meetings with faculty members, peer mentors). In other cases, the Director and faculty member work together to identify support options for the student and the faculty member works directly with the student to implement them.

Summative Evaluation:

Overall, ELPhD students are performing at or exceeding expectations. Further refinements to assessments will occur at the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle. This may help get an even clearer picture of areas of strengths and weaknesses.

Assessment Plan Changes:

The ELPhD program is preparing for a 5-year program review. At the conclusion of the current Program Review cycle, SLOs and the associated assessments will be restructured to include more direct assessments at various points in the program.

Appendix 1: Curriculum Map, Exceptional Learning PhD

ELPhD Core & Research Curriculum Map

I = introduced R = reinforced M = mastery A = assessment

Core Course Alignment with Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

<i>Course</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Content Mastery (SLO 1)</i>	<i>Scholarly Research Activities (PG 2)</i>	<i>Professional Skill Development (PG 3, SLO 2)</i>	<i>Evidence- based Practices (PG1)</i>
EDU 7000	Trans-Concentration Seminar	I	I	I	I
EDU 7010	Theoretical Foundations of Research	I	I, A	I	R
EDU 7020	At-Risk Populations: Research, Service, & Delivery	R, A	R	R, A	R, A
EDU 7040	Program Planning and Proposal Development	I, R	I, R, A	R, M, A	R
CUED 7430	Specialized Applications of Technology to Education	I	I	R, A	R

Appendix 1: Curriculum Map, Exceptional Learning PhD, cont.

Research Course Alignment with Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes					
Course	Title	Content Mastery (SLO 1)	Scholarly Research Activities (PG 2)	Professional Skill Development (PG 3, SLO 2)	Evidence-based Practices (PG1)
EDU 7010	Theoretical Foundations of Research	I	I, A	I	R
EDU 7330	Qualitative Inquiry in Education	R	R	R	R
EDU 7340	Data Analysis and Representation in Qualitative Inquiry	R, M, A	M, A	M, A	M, A
EDU 7420	Quantitative Inquiry in Education I	I	I	I	I
EDU 7430	Quantitative Inquiry in Education II	R, M	R, M	R	R
Course	Title	Content Mastery (SLO 1)	Scholarly Research Activities (PG 2)	Professional Skill Development (PG 3, SLO 2)	Evidence-based Practices (PG1)
EDU 7300	Research Design	M, A	M, A	M, A	M, A
EDU 7320	Single Subject Design	I, R	R, M, A	R, M, A	R, M
EDU 7350	Advanced Regression Analysis	R, M	R, M, A	R, M	R, M
EDUL 7700	Theory, Methodology, & Trends in Literacy Research	R, M	M, A	M	M
EDUS 7350	STEM Education Research	R, M	M, A	M, A	M
ABAP 7920	Topics, Issues, & Research in Early Childhood Special Education	I, R	R, M	M, A	R