

Research Methods Experiences for Ed.D. Students

The development of research skills is a critical component of any doctoral program. Research methods knowledge and skills can be acquired most effectively in a combination of coursework and apprenticeship experiences. Therefore, it is important that each doctoral student carefully plans this component of his/her studies in consultation with his/her advisor.

Research Methods Courses

The research methods courses offered at the Warner School have been designed taking into consideration the diverse interests and specializations of our doctoral students, as well as their increasing level of skills and sophistication as they progress in their program. Therefore, there are a number of choices available to you as well as an order in which you are required to take specific research methods courses - as described below.

A common foundation: The course ED 506 Concepts and Issues in Social Science Research (formerly titled Doctoral Research Methods) has been revised to provide a foundation to all doctoral level research methods courses. This course is a required prerequisite to any other research methods course. It is strongly recommended that students take this course during their first year.

Introductory research methods courses: There are a number of complementary methodologies that are relevant to research in education and the social sciences. The following courses have been designed to provide you with an introduction to each of the most commonly used methodologies in the educating fields

- ED 504 Quantitative Research Methods (this course requires you to have taken ED 528 Using Quantitative Data Analysis Software or be able to otherwise demonstrate familiarity with SPSS or other quantitative research software)
- ED 507 Qualitative Research Methods
- ED 520 Program Evaluation

Warner Ed.D. students are required to take at least two of these courses after they have completed ED 506 Concepts and Issues in Social Science Research. Students are urged to take these courses early in their program.

Mini courses to learn specific research strategies: While working on their dissertation or other specific research projects, doctoral students often discover the need to learn more about specific research strategies or techniques to use in research. The following 1 credit Research Strategies Mini Courses have been created to meet this need. Additional courses will be added to the list as new needs are identified:

- ED 528 Using Quantitative Data Analysis Software
- ED 529 Using Qualitative Analysis Software
- ED 524 Survey Design

- ED 525 Interview and Focus Groups Techniques
- ED 531 Case Study Design

While none of these mini courses are required (with the exception of ED 529 Using Qualitative Research Software as a prerequisite for ED 504 Quantitative Research Methods), students finalizing their dissertation topic are strongly encouraged to discuss with their advisor the benefits of taking these courses.

Advanced research methods courses: Oftentimes students find that one course in a particular research methodology is not sufficient to provide the level of sophistication needed to conduct a dissertation. For this reason, Warner has developed more advanced and specialized research methods courses in the following areas:

- ED 505 Advanced Quantitative Research Methods (*prerequisites: ED 506 and ED 504 Quantitative Research Methods*)
- ED 527 Advanced Qualitative Research Methods (*prerequisites: ED 506 and ED 507 Qualitative Research Methods*)
- ED 523 Mixed Research Methods (*prerequisites: ED 506 and ED 504: Quantitative Research Methods and ED 507 Qualitative Research Methods*)
- ED 522: Historical Research Methods (*prerequisites: ED 506*)

Students may also elect to take independent study or field study credits to learn about other research methods (ex: law, philosophy, etc.). While none of these advanced research methods courses are required for Ed.D. students, it is strongly recommend that students consider choosing one or more of these courses as part of their electives, once they have identified the type of research methodology that is likely to be used during their dissertation. Given their specialized nature, these courses will only be offered every other year.

Apprenticeship Experiences

Research skills cannot be learned from coursework alone--and this is an important reason why a dissertation has traditionally been the capstone experience of any doctoral program. The dissertation, however, should not be the first and only apprenticeship experience during a student's doctoral program.

Research Apprenticeship: Even if not required of Ed.D. students, it is often desirable to "scaffold" the dissertation experience by gaining firsthand experience within an already established research project. Students interested in this kind of research apprenticeship should discuss their options with a Warner faculty working in their area of interest. Students may register for ED 596 Research Apprenticeship for a variable number of credits (up to 6).

Dissertation: A student's capstone experience in the doctoral program is the dissertation, which requires students to carry out a research project of their own design independently (although benefiting from faculty supervision and support). This experience is intended to provide students with a major opportunity not only to apply, but also to continue to

develop their research skills, as they put into practice and refine what they have learned up to that point in the program.