

PhD in Higher Education

NOTE: This program is not admitting new students for the 2024-25 academic year.

For more information: (626) 815-5349

The Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education (<https://www.apu.edu/bas/programs/higher-education-phd/>) is a research degree program consisting of 62 units of coursework, inclusive of dissertation. It primarily develops scholars who are able to conduct original research and interpret and communicate the results of that research through their writing, teaching, and leadership. The dissertation for the PhD involves original research that extends the theoretical knowledge base of higher education policy and practice.

Schedule

Students are admitted to the program once a year, with coursework beginning in July of the admission year. The program requires students to complete their coursework on the Azusa campus during two-week visits in early January and again in July each year for four years, or until the dissertation is completed. In addition, all students are assigned to a research team when beginning the second year of the program. Students are expected to attend meetings required of their research team, which may be held in conjunction with a designated conference. In spring of the second year of the program, all students are expected to travel internationally as part of the required course HED 722 Global Policy Analysis in Higher Education. All in-country travel costs are included in tuition; students are responsible for purchasing their own round-trip international airfare.

Requirements

The PhD is a sequenced program of courses with 4 units of electives. Students with a master's degree in higher education or college student affairs may waive 2 units of electives. Because this program is designed in a cohort model, students take courses together in January and July in a specified sequence.

Code	Title	Units
Required Courses		
HED 701	Strengths-Oriented Leadership	4
HED 702	The Nature of Inquiry	4
HED 703	Critical Issues in Higher Education	4
HED 705	Student Access, Equity, and Success in College	4
HED 710	Research Design and Statistics	4
HED 711	Qualitative Research Methods	4
HED 721	Diversity and Social Justice in Higher Education	4
HED 722	Global Policy Analysis in Higher Education	4
HED 724	Teaching, Learning, and Assessment in Higher Education	4
HED 725	Administration in Higher Education	4
HED 730	Advanced Quantitative Methods	4
or HED 731	Advanced Qualitative Research	
HED 732	Leading Change in Higher Education	4
HED 760	Research Seminar (taken 4 times over 4 terms for a total of 4 units)	1
HED 796	Dissertation Proposal Seminar	3
HED 797	Dissertation Research	3
Elective Courses		
Select four units from the following:		4
HED 704	Ethical Issues in Higher Education	
HED 761	Strengths-Oriented Research and Programming	
HED 798	Special Topics	
HED 799	Readings in Higher Education	
Total Units		62

Admission

University graduate admission and program-specific requirements must be met before an application is complete (see Admission to the University (<http://catalog.apu.edu/admissions/>)). **Program-specific application requirements are available online (<https://www.apu.edu/graduateprofessional/apply/>).**

International students should contact Graduate and Professional Admissions (<https://www.apu.edu/graduateprofessional/apply/>) for application procedures.

Program of Study

The program requires 62 units beyond the master's degree, inclusive of dissertation. Some elective courses are offered in conjunction with travel to professional conferences. The required research seminars (HED 760) each term meet between sessions, often in conjunction with professional conferences. Read the complete course descriptions for more information.

Dissertation Courses

The dissertation proposal process begins after completion of the third year, as students take HED 796 (3 units) while they write the first three chapters of their dissertation. If students do not successfully defend their dissertation proposal during the term they first enroll in HED 796, they must retake that course until the proposal is passed. Once students successfully defend their dissertation proposal, they enroll in HED 797 (3 units) each semester until the dissertation has been successfully defended. Enrollment in these courses gives students access to faculty and university resources, including library databases and the services of the doctoral research librarian. Students are considered enrolled full time from the proposal (HED 796) through the completion of the dissertation (HED 797). Students are expected to come to campus for one week each term during the dissertation phase. Credit for dissertation courses is given for completion of the stated course objectives as outlined in the syllabus. Students who do not meet the designated course outcomes will not receive credit for the course and will be required to retake the course.

Code	Title	Units
HED 796	Dissertation Proposal Seminar	3
HED 797	Dissertation Research	3

Independent Study

Students may petition to take an independent study course (HED 799) to substitute for an elective course.

Comprehensive Examinations

All students enrolled in the program must pass all of their comprehensive examinations before defending their dissertation proposal and advancing to candidacy. The purpose of the comprehensive exam process is to ensure that all students graduating from APU with a PhD in Higher Education are able to articulate a thorough grasp of the critical issues and theories impacting the professional field. Accordingly, there are three key areas of the program's learning outcomes that are assessed via this process:

1. Social justice and diversity
2. Leadership and change
3. Student success

Students demonstrate each competency as follows:

- **Social justice and diversity:** Students produce a "TED Talk" type of video per instructions.
- **Leadership and change:** Students create an electronic leadership portfolio per instructions.
- **Student success:** Students produce a creative design project per instructions.

Projects submitted for demonstration of the above competencies are due either April 15 or October 15 each year. Complete instructions are provided to students upon arrival to campus. Students have two opportunities to earn a passing score on a particular competency; failure of the second opportunity results in potential dismissal from the program.

Program Learning Outcomes

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Students who successfully complete this program shall be able to:

1. Conduct and disseminate original research that extends the theoretical knowledge base of higher education policy and practice and answers meaningful questions.
2. Competently engage the critical issues and help shape the conversations that affect the future direction of higher education at the national and international levels.

3. Lead effectively, collaboratively, and with vision.
4. Articulate and evaluate an appreciative approach to teaching, learning, and leadership development.
5. Foster thriving in the students they serve, through effective pedagogy and institutional practices that are learning-centered.
6. Cultivate a critical self-awareness of faith, spirituality, and belief systems through engaging diverse ways of knowing in Christian dominant environments.
7. Effectively address personal, institutional, and systemic injustices through competent policy analysis, formulation, and revision, as well as individual actions.