

What you Learn

The Educational Specialist in Educational Leadership (ESEL) at Gardner-Webb University is a fully accredited, 36- credit hour graduate program designed for experienced educators seeking advanced preparation for leadership in today's dynamic educational environments. Candidates progress through the ESEL curriculum in a cohort model, completing coursework as a learning community and developing professional relationships that support shared leadership, reflective practice, and sustained organizational improvement. Through the application of continuous improvement principles, candidates are prepared to maximize human, social, and spiritual potential within educational organizations. This practice-focused program provides a rigorous pathway to leadership without the requirement of a dissertation or capstone. Each course integrates authentic, performance-based assessments that reflect real leadership responsibilities in educational settings.

How you Learn

This program is delivered in a hybrid, cohort-based format designed to support working professionals. Each semester students will take one course, consisting of six or 9 integrated semester hours.

Low Residency Blended Format: Candidates complete the program in a blended format that includes both face-to-face and online learning. During fall, spring, and summer semesters, candidates attend three face-to-face weekends. In addition to the in-person sessions, coursework is completed online through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

Career Outcomes

Upon successful completion of all program coursework and required assessments, candidates may be recommended for S-level North Carolina licensure in Educational Leadership. In South Carolina, candidates who already hold a master's degree may apply credit hours from this program toward Master's plus 30 (MA+30) certification.

Prerequisites

Applicants to the Education Specialist in Educational Leadership program must hold a Master's of School Administration degree from a regionally accredited institution and have earned a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.50.

Degree Requirements

EDLS 730	Strategic Leadership	6
EDLS 732	Instructional Leadership	9
EDLS 734	Human Resource Leadership	9
EDLS 738	Cultural and Ethical Leadership	6
EDLS 740	Managerial Leadership	6
Total Credit Hours		36

Pathway to Doctoral Study

Graduates may also pursue a seamless pathway into doctoral study through Gardner-Webb University's Ed.D. program. The 36-credit hour Educational Specialist (ESEL) coursework in Educational Leadership and Curriculum & Instruction (ESCI) may serve as advanced standing toward the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership or Curriculum & Instruction only in cases where the candidate elects not to graduate with the Educational Specialist degree. This option is designed to support candidates who initially enroll in the Educational Specialist track at Gardner-Webb University but later determine that their academic and professional goals are best served through direct progression to doctoral study. Candidates must formally declare intent prior to graduation to pursue this option.

What you Learn

The Educational Specialist in Curriculum & Instruction (ESCI) at Gardner-Webb University is a fully accredited, 36- credit hour graduate program designed for advanced candidates pursuing leadership roles that support high-impact learning. The program emphasizes empowering individuals and communities through facilitated collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement. Candidates progress through ESCI coursework in a cohort model, completing courses together and developing professional relationships that support collaborative leadership and sustained improvement.

How you Learn

This program is delivered in a hybrid, cohort-based format designed to support working professionals. Each semester students will take one course, consisting of six or 12 integrated semester hours.

Low Residency Blended Format: Candidates complete the program in a blended format that includes both face-to-face and online learning. During fall, spring, and summer semesters, candidates attend three face-to-face weekends. In addition to the in-person sessions, coursework is completed online through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

Career Outcomes

Upon successful completion of all program coursework, required evidences, and the Praxis Educational Leadership: Administration and Supervision (5411) assessment, candidates may be recommended for S-level North Carolina licensure as a Curriculum & Instructional Specialist. In South Carolina, candidates who already hold a master's degree may apply credit hours from this program toward Master's plus 30 (MA+30) certification.

Prerequisites

Applicants must hold a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. A minimum of three years of professional experience is preferred. A valid teaching license is required. Applicants without a teaching license must submit a letter verifying equivalent teaching experience as part of the application.

Degree Requirements

EDCI 730	Organizational Theory Needs Assessment	6
EDCI 732	Issues and Models in Curriculum	6
EDCI 734	Reform and Change Theory	6
EDCI 738	Curriculum Assessment and Evaluation	6
EDCI 740	Instructional Leadership	12
Total Credit Hours		36

Pathway to Doctoral Study

Graduates may also pursue a seamless pathway into doctoral study through Gardner-Webb University's Ed.D. program. The 36-credit hour Educational Specialist (ESL) coursework in Educational Leadership and Curriculum & Instruction (ESCI) may serve as advanced standing toward the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership or Curriculum & Instruction only in cases where the candidate elects not to graduate with the Educational Specialist degree. This option is designed to support candidates who initially enroll in the Educational Specialist track at Gardner-Webb University but later determine that their academic and professional goals are best served through direct progression to doctoral study. Candidates must formally declare intent prior to graduation to pursue this option.

For

Potential and practicing educational leaders who aspire to develop and refine their leadership skills in complex organizations especially at the district office level.

What you Learn

The Doctor of Education Degree (Ed.D.) at Gardner-Webb University in Educational Leadership is a 60-semester-hour program designed for potential and practicing educational leaders who wish to develop and refine their leadership skills in complex organizations. Schools are dynamic institutions whose practice is shaped by powerful and influential interests. As a result, the economic, political, social, and technological environment of schools is always changing. The Doctor of Education Degree program is designed to equip candidates with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and beliefs that will enable them to function effectively in leadership roles in this fluctuating environment.

How you Learn

An Ed.D. program with an integrated curriculum will be offered. Students will take modules consisting of 6, 9, and 12 credit hours. Students will also be enrolled in a 1-credit- hour seminar each semester focused on their clinical internship /clinical experience and their dissertation. Once these modules are complete, two semesters (3 hours each) of dissertation conclude the program. The electronic portfolio, a requirement for the degree, will be created and stored online in a product called TaskStream.

Online: The program is offered in a fully online format. Courses are delivered through a virtual learning platform and include a combination of asynchronous and synchronous sessions. There is a required in-person orientation session for first-semester candidates held at the beginning of the program at the Main or Charlotte Campus from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. There is also required attendance at the Dissertation/Research Summit held on Gardner-Webb University's main campus in Boiling Springs, NC.

Low Residency Blended Format: Candidates complete the program in a blended format that includes both face-to-face and online learning. During fall, spring, and summer semesters, candidates attend three face-to-face weekends. In addition to the in-person sessions, coursework is completed online through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

Career Outcomes

Upon completion of this program, students will have earned a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership and will be subject to state licensure requirements in order to receive North Carolina state licensure as a Superintendent. At the writing of this document, the licensure requirement is the satisfactory completion of an electronic portfolio.

Prerequisites

Applicants must hold a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. A minimum of three years of experience in administration or teacher leadership is required. A current School Administration – Principal license is also required for admission

Degree Requirements

EDLS 730	Strategic Leadership and School Reform	6
EDLS 731	Seminar/Internship	1
EDLS 732	Instructional Leadership	9
EDLS 733	Seminar/Internship	1
EDLS 734	Human Resource Leadership	9
EDLS 735	Seminar/Internship	1
EDDS 760	Qualitative Methods	6
EDDS 762	Quantitative and Mixed Methods	6
EDLS 737	Seminar/Internship	1
EDLS 738	Cultural and Ethical Leadership	6
EDLS 739	Seminar/Internship	1
EDLS 740	Managerial Leadership	6
EDLS 741	Seminar/Internship	1
EDLS 742	Dissertation Module 1	3
EDLS 743	Dissertation Module 2	3
EDLS 744	Dissertation Module 3 (<i>as needed</i>)	
Total Credit Hours		60

Note: Students will be enrolled in EDLS 744 Dissertation Continuation for 3 credit hours until dissertation is complete.



For

Potential and practicing educational leaders who aspire to develop and refine their instructional leadership skills at the site or district level.

What you Learn

The Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction will prepare learners to become instructional leaders, who will create and strategically manage processes related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Students will deepen their knowledge and understanding of educational practices and acquire tools needed to provide professional leadership in curriculum, teacher education, program evaluation, family and community engagement, and professional learning in the schools.

How you Learn

An Ed.D. program with an integrated curriculum will be offered. Each semester (fall, spring, and summer) students will take one course consisting of six or twelve credit hours and a 1-credit-hour seminar focused on their dissertation. Once these courses are complete, two semesters (3 hours each) of dissertation conclude the program. All degree evidences are evaluated and stored in an electronic portfolio.

Online: The program is offered in a fully online format. Courses are delivered through a virtual learning platform and include a combination of asynchronous and synchronous sessions. There is a required in-person orientation session for first-semester candidates held at the beginning of the program at the Main or Charlotte Campus from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. There is also required attendance at the Dissertation/Research Summit held on Gardner-Webb University's main campus in Boiling Springs, NC.

Low Residency Blended Format: Candidates complete the program in a blended format that includes both face-to-face and online learning. During fall, spring, and summer semesters, candidates attend three face-to-face weekends. In addition to the in-person sessions, coursework is completed online through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

Career Outcomes

Upon completion of this program, students will have earned a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Curriculum & Instruction. They will be eligible for D level licensure as an Instructional Specialist after attaining a passing score on the appropriate PRAXIS exam. Students completing the program typically work as Curriculum or Instructional Leaders within classrooms or districts, as mentors/coaches for colleagues, and/or as instructors at the collegiate level.

Gardner-Webb University offers an EdS degree program for candidates who complete all EDCI coursework, and wish to graduate from Gardner-Webb without completing a dissertation. This degree may support candidates who have determined the dissertation is no longer a necessary step in pursuing their professional goals and allows for recognition of the advanced coursework completed in the program.

Prerequisites

Applicants must hold a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. A minimum of three years of professional experience is preferred. A valid teaching license is required. Applicants without a teaching license must submit a letter verifying equivalent teaching experience as part of the application.

Degree Requirements

First Semester	EDCI 730	Theory Development	6
	EDDS 731	Executive Leadership Internship	1
Second Semester	EDCI 732	Issues and Models in Curriculum	6
	EDDS 733	Dissertation Seminar	1
Third Semester	EDCI 734	Reform and Change	6
	EDDS 735	Dissertation Seminar	1
Fourth Semester	EDDS 760	Qualitative Methods	6
	EDDS 762	Quantitative and Mixed Methods	6
	EDDS 737	Dissertation Seminar	1
Fifth Semester	EDCI 738	Curriculum Assessment and Evaluation	6
	EDDS 739	Dissertation Seminar	1
Sixth Semester	EDCI 740	Instructional Leadership	12
	EDDS 741	Dissertation Seminar	1
Seventh Semester	EDDS 742	Dissertation	3
Eighth Semester	EDDS 743	Dissertation (until complete)	3
Total Credit Hours:			60

Note: Students will be enrolled in EDUC 743 Dissertation Module Continuing for 3 credit hours until dissertation is complete.