

COMPLETING YOUR EdD

This book is an ideal text for anyone considering or undertaking an EdD. It covers all aspects of the EdD from writing an initial research proposal, to considering what next steps may lie beyond achieving an EdD, and everything else in between. The book provides helpful and practical guidance on issues to consider when planning and writing the main chapters of an EdD thesis, with reflective questions to encourage the reader to critically reflect on their ideas and understandings in relation to their own work. The accessible writing style of each chapter makes this book a valuable resource for EdD students.

*Carol Robinson, Professor of Children's Rights,
University of Strathclyde.
'Inspiring, Comprehensive, and Practical'*

I wholeheartedly endorse *Completing Your EdD: The Essential Guide to the Doctor of Education*. This invaluable resource significantly enhanced my journey through the EdD program at the University of Liverpool. The book offers practical insights, strategies and encouragement that helped me navigate the challenges of my studies. Its clear guidance and supportive tone made the daunting process of completing an EdD feel manageable and achievable. I am grateful for the wisdom shared in this book, which has truly shaped my academic experience and personal growth. I highly recommend it to any aspiring EdD candidate seeking clarity and inspiration on their educational journey.

*Duyen Can, EdD, Lecturer of English,
University of Languages and International Studies,
Vietnam National University*

I started my EdD journey with great enthusiasm, completed my modules and then the stress and anxiety kicked in with the thesis. I found it difficult to write my literature review chapter and I really struggled with the theoretical framework section. The chapter on developing a theoretical framework provided some great insights into how to approach this. Coming towards the end of my doctoral journey I began to question whether my thesis was at a standard worthy of submission. The 'Getting over the Finish Line' chapter

provided valuable advice in relation to first impressions and first impression do count! My examiners provided positive remarks on my presentation of my thesis. While I was looking forward to ending my doctoral journey, I found the thoughts of having to undertake a viva to be very daunting. I read and re-read the chapter around the examination process and the viva a number of times. Within this chapter, there was fantastic advice especially the examples of typical questions that would be asked for every chapter of the thesis. I practised answering these questions right up to the morning of my viva! I now recommend this book to my own students as I feel that this text will provide students with the necessary insights to help them achieve their doctoral qualification.

Dr Valerie McGrath, Lecturer, Munster Technological University, Co. Kerry, Ireland

Having completed the EdD myself, I know how tough yet fulfilling the process can be. *Completing Your EdD* is the kind of resource I wish I'd had. It covers every stage of the doctorate journey (from the taught modules to carrying out your research) in a way that's both workable and easy to follow. What makes it stand out is the way it blends practical guidance with examples from actual EdD students. It offers straightforward advice on everything from academic writing to handling supervisor relationships, making the process feel much more manageable. The contributions from EdD tutors and other practitioners are also a highlight. They provide insights that make you feel understood and supported. If you're starting or are in the middle of your EdD, this book will give you the confidence to push forward. It's not just a guide – it's a supportive companion for anyone undertaking the Professional Doctorate in Education or like me, working in the education sector.

*Dr Tina Sode (She/Her)
Head of Special Educational Needs Children's
Services Directorate, London*

This is a book you will keep referring to at all stages of your doctoral study. This is my 'go to' EdD book whether I have used it for more guidance on a specific area of EdD or a reminder of

key information and reflection questions. Mine is overflowing with post-it notes and prompts. I have read it several times now and each time it is a recap of how to go about each chapter and what to include in your writing, especially those chapters that are quite challenging. Each chapter provides useful information and advice on key elements of the doctoral process from those who have been through the process themselves or involved in doctoral delivery. This helps you relate to the chapters on a more personal level from those who have faced similar hurdles to you and which is key to success in your doctoral study.

*Holly Kirkpatrick, Senior Lecturer in Physical Education,
Faculty of Education, The University of Buckingham*

COMPLETING YOUR EdD

The Essential Guide to the
Doctor of Education
Second Edition

EDITED BY

JODI ROFFEY-BARENTSEN

AND

IONA BURNELL REILLY



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street,
Leeds LS1 4DL.

First edition 2025

Editorial matter and selection © 2025 Jodi Roffey-Barentsen and Iona
Burnell Reilly.

Individual chapters © 2025 The authors.

Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: www.copyright.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written
permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying
issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA
by The Copyright Clearance Center. No responsibility is accepted
for the accuracy of information contained in the text, illustrations
or advertisements. The opinions expressed in these chapters are not
necessarily those of the Author or the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83608-817-2 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83608-814-1 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83608-816-5 (Epub)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	ix
<i>Gina Wisker</i>	
1 The Structure of a Professional Doctorate in Education: Why Choose It?	1
<i>Jane Creaton</i>	
2 The Research Proposal	27
<i>Bethany Kelly</i>	
3 Ethics in Educational Research	55
<i>Paula Nadine Zwozdiak-Myers</i>	
4 Writing the Literature Review	85
Part A: <i>Leena Helavaara Robertson</i> ; Part B: <i>Win Pang</i>	
5 Developing a Theoretical Framework	119
<i>Mike Watts</i>	
6 Researcher Positionality, Power and Doctoral Research	145
<i>Gerry Czerniawski and Michelle Thomason</i>	
7 Research Design and Methodological Approaches	173
<i>Kate Hoskins</i>	
8 Researching Digital Spaces: Methods and Ethics	203
<i>Nic Crowe and Kate Hoskins</i>	
9 Analysing and Interpreting Data	225
<i>Jim Crawley</i>	

10	Getting Over the Finishing Line <i>Iona Burnell Reilly and Gerry Czerniawski</i>	253
11	The Examination Process and Your Viva <i>Jodi Roffey-Barentsen and Richard Malthouse</i>	279
12	Your Relationship with Your Supervisor <i>Susan Taylor</i>	303
13	Post Qualification – Now You're a Doctor, What Next? <i>Jodi Roffey-Barentsen</i>	331
	<i>About the Editors</i>	353
	<i>About the Contributors</i>	355
	<i>Index</i>	359

FOREWORD

Many books and articles guide us with the doctorate. However, few offer insights on the doctorate based on professional practice. One of the strengths of this book on Education doctorates, as professional doctorates, is its accessibility of structure and direct address. Another is its insider knowledge, which is turned in each chapter to clarify the shape, expectations and practice of the EdD, demystifying its structures and taking readers step by step through the expectations and the ways of working with the literature review, theories, ethics, research design, data analysis and writing for completion and the examination. It also tackles the practices of working effectively with your supervisor and directions after the doctorate, a contribution Sue Taylor notes, of the supervision relationship, that 'As mature professionals in demanding professional roles, you need particular support and guidance along your EdD journey'. In this new edition, the editors and contributors have each updated the chapters to reflect and respond to gaps, changing issues, developments and needs. They have also produced three new topical and essential chapters. 'How to come up with a proposal' steers us to produce a doable proposal which will offer evidence and guidance to improve practice. 'Researcher positionality' is the focus of the second new chapter, which has developed as an important issue in research practices. The lively, honest chapter considers tensions, dilemmas and the importance of recognising and acknowledging your positionality and power especially in research interactions with others. The third 'digital spaces' responds to and leads to suggestions for good practice in digital research, considering the challenges and affordances, practicalities and ethics of digital research and such as 'data scraping'. The differences between digital and FTF research are explored where location might offer enriching extra clues to help analyse data and editing out of digitally produced interviews what feels like irrelevancies, noises in the system

might lose important inputs. The time pressures and demands, the relationship between that professional practice and the demands of researching it, often as insiders, to make effective research-based change, all of this lies behind the book as a whole. The new work is an important addition to an accessible, well considered, well structured, essential insider guide.

Professor Gina Wisker
University of Bath

THE STRUCTURE OF A PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION: WHY CHOOSE IT?

Jane Creaton

INTRODUCTION

All doctoral-level qualifications in the UK ‘require the main focus of the candidate’s work to demonstrate an original contribution to knowledge in their subject, field or profession, through original research or the original application of existing knowledge or understanding’ ([Quality Assurance Agency, 2015](#)). However, doctorates are delivered through a range of different models. The three main categories are: subject specialist doctorates (PhD/DPhil), doctorates by publication, and professional and/or practitioner doctorates. The latter category is distinguished by its application to professional practice and so tends to be structured differently from the other forms of doctorate. The aim of this chapter is to review and analyse the structure of professional doctorate in education (EdD) programmes. There are three key purposes: to enable you to understand the distinctive nature of a professional doctorate; to compare the professional doctorate with other options for doctoral-level study; and to assist you in choosing an EdD programme which best meets your requirements.

The chapter begins with a general overview of the structure of professional doctorate programmes, including level, credits, modules, delivery, and assessment. It will then identify the key features of a professional doctorate and how these differ from other doctoral pathways. The final section will review some of the different ways that EdD programmes are structured and delivered and consider the advantages and disadvantages of the various approaches. The rationale is to enable you to choose a programme which is best suited to your aims and objectives, your style of working, and your personal and professional circumstances.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify the key characteristics of a professional doctorate.
- Understand the potential advantages and disadvantages of different EdD structures.
- Make an informed choice about which programme would best suit your needs.

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE?

The UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) defines a professional doctorate as: ‘A programme of advanced study and research which...is designed to meet the specific needs of a professional group external to the university, and which develops the capability of individuals to work within a professional context’ (UK Council for Graduate Education, 2002, p. 62). The origins of professional doctorates can be traced back to the 13th century to the subject-based doctorates such as Doctor of Law and Doctor of Theology that were offered by European universities (UK Council for Graduate Education, 2002). The earliest modern professional doctorates in the UK were launched in 1992: a Doctorate of Education (EdD) at the University of Bristol and a Doctorate in Engineering (EngD) at the University of Warwick, the University

of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST)/University of Manchester, and the University of Wales (Bourner et al., 2001). The UK frameworks for higher education qualifications do not differentiate between types of doctorate, requiring that all doctoral degrees are awarded for ‘the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication’ (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008, p. 23).

There are, however, significant differences in how doctoral programmes are designed, structured, and delivered (Ellis & Lee, 2005; Neumann, 2005; Pearson, 1999) which reflect the history and ethos of the different models. The link between professional practice and practitioner knowledge is fundamental, and Ellis and Lee (2005), for example, argue that ‘application to practice is at the philosophical core of the professional doctorate’ (p. 2). In contrast to the traditional PhD, which is generally conceptualised as an apprenticeship for aspiring academics, professional doctorates tend to be aimed at mid-career practitioners and hence is often described as being for ‘researching professionals’ rather than ‘professional researchers’ (Bourner et al., 2001, p. 71). Most programmes require participants to be employed or engaged in a professional capacity in the relevant sector, although there are some examples of professional doctorates (e.g. the Professional Doctorate in Forensic Psychology) which have been established as entry qualifications into a profession.

A report commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) into the provision of the professional doctorate in English higher education institutions identified 72 professional doctorate in education programmes offered by 54 different institutions (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016). The EdD is one of the most well-established professional doctorate programmes, being offered by nearly half of the 123 English HE institutions surveyed by the report’s authors. The number of EdD programmes had nearly doubled from the previous survey of provision in 2009, which identified 38 programmes and education continued to be one of the dominant areas of professional doctorate provision (the others being business, health and social care, and psychology).

The growth of EdD programmes has also included an increase in specialisation, with the emergence of programmes focussing specifically on higher education, educational psychology, and education leadership.

In the early years of professional doctorate provision, there were some concerns about the parity of quality and standards between PhD and professional doctorates, linked to differences in the time requirements for completion, entry qualifications, and the length of the final thesis (Ellis & Lee, 2005; Neumann, 2005; Pearson, 1999). These debates over the equivalence between the PhD and the professional doctorate can be seen as part of a wider scepticism within some elements of the academy about the status and value of professional knowledge. Although professional doctorate students are undoubtedly engaged in the creation of new knowledge, this is often informal, situated and contingent knowledge generated through professional practice (Eraut, 1994, 2000) rather than the more formal disciplinary-based knowledge associated with PhD study. These disciplinary boundaries, have however, come under considerable challenge from ‘Mode 2 knowledge’, which is produced outside the academy in the context of application, and characterised by trans-disciplinarity and heterogeneity (Gibbons et al., 1994).

As understanding of the different structures and approaches of professional doctorates has grown, a considerable body of academic literature has explored the characteristics, outcomes, and impacts of professional doctorate programmes. This research identified several positive impacts of the doctorate on candidates’ career trajectories and professional identities (Costley, 2013; Hawkes & Yerrabati, 2018; Lindsay et al., 2017; Wildy et al., 2015). The personal impacts include: increased self-confidence and self-efficacy, enhanced communication and dissemination skills, and ability to assimilate and evaluate information (Creaton & Anderson, 2021). Interviews with professional doctorate candidates and alumni have also identified the development of ‘more reflective practice and evidence-based professionalism valued by some employers’ (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016, p. vi).

In relation to an EdD programme, Wellington and Sikes (2006) concluded that ‘...the doctorate is seen as being largely of benefit to the individual rather than the professional as a whole’ (p. 733), but

other research has also identified examples where doctoral projects has a direct impact on policy and practice within their own organisation (Costley, 2010, 2013). It is certainly the case that doctoral research projects which are strongly aligned with the employers' current strategic goals or with an existing organisational imperative are more likely to have a direct impact on the workplace, as are those which receive continued sponsorship and support from senior managers after completion (Creaton, 2021). Many students also make a contribution beyond their workplace through publication in journals and dissemination at conferences or through practitioner networks and/or professional bodies.

Reflective Question

What personal, professional and other benefits do you hope you might get from the pro-fessional doctorate in education?

THE STRUCTURE OF DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES

Another striking difference between doctorates lies in how programmes are structured. The traditional doctorate in humanities and social sciences requires a three-year full-time period of research supported by a supervision team. A more usual model for a professional doctorate programme is a two-year taught programme delivered part-time on a cohort basis, followed by a research stage taking between two and five years. The content of the taught element varies across the programmes but will typically include sessions on research methodology and methods, publication and dissemination, professional reflection and practice, and some subject-specific content. This is delivered and assessed through a series of modules credited at masters' or doctoral level. Assessments undertaken for the taught element of the programme often involve an element of work-based learning, professional reflection or action research. Although students write an amount over the course of the programme that is broadly equivalent to the total words required for a PhD thesis, the professional doctorate thesis is often shorter. The final research project undertaken for the thesis

is also undertaken in the context of the student's professional practice. This focus on the individual's professional practice means that professional doctorates are also characterised by a greater degree of reflection and reflexivity than may be the case in a PhD.

It has been argued that the structure of professional doctorates is becoming less distinctive because of the changing nature of doctoral education (Bao et al., 2016; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Loxley & Kearns, 2018; Park, 2005). This includes the increasing expectations that PhD students engage in formal research methods and researcher development training, the growth of specialist Doctoral Colleges or Doctoral Schools to support the doctoral research community, and the establishment of cohort-based approaches through doctoral training partnerships and structured PhD programmes. However, notwithstanding these developments, the experience of students on a professional doctorate programme is likely to differ quite significantly from a student on a PhD programme, at least in the taught phase of the programme. Furthermore, the experiences of professional doctorate students may also vary considerably by programme and by institution. Within the broad framework outlined above, there are significant variations in EdD programme structures, which can produce quite different learning experiences for participants at different institutions. Applicants for programmes should consider carefully the various elements before making a decision and the purpose of this chapter is to provide more information about these structures, including size, length, volume and content, in order to guide you to make the best choice of programme for you.

HOW ARE PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES IN EDUCATION STRUCTURED?

Although academic credit has not traditionally been assigned to PhDs, professional doctorates do sit within the relevant UK Frameworks of Higher Education Qualifications. The framework for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland specifies 540 credits, at least 360 of which must be at level 8 and the Scottish framework specifies a minimum of 420 at level 12. Levels 8 and 12 are doctoral level and the QAA's Characteristics Statement for Doctoral Degrees

complements and contextualises these frameworks by elaborating on the distinctive features of the doctoral degree. The majority of EdD programmes are offered part-time, on the basis that practitioners will be juggling their studies with a full-time job. However, a growing number of programmes now offer a full-time pathway, to accommodate those who have more flexible working patterns. This is reflected in the minimum and maximum lengths of registration which can vary from 3–4 years full-time or from 6–8 years part-time, although some students may take longer to complete where they suspend their studies or have extenuating circumstances. It is worth asking course teams about the actual completion rates of people who have been through the course to get a realistic assessment of how much time and resource you will may need to budget for, even if your own circumstances will vary.

Choosing a Professional Doctorate: Some Questions to Consider

When would you like to finish? How long have you got?

Do you have restrictions on travel (how far can you travel) or when (weekends/evenings)?

Would you prefer to study face to face or online?

How important is the cohort effect to you?

Would it be helpful for you to have subject knowledge input in the taught element (do you have a master's in education?)

Do you already know what you would like to do you thesis on?

Have you already published in professional or academic journals?

What are the professional backgrounds of people on most recent cohorts?

Even where a programme is being undertaken on a full-time basis, most programmes will require students to maintain an ongoing connection with professional practice. The nature and extent of this connection varies, but must be sufficient to enable course participants to meet any module and course learning outcomes which

require engagement with practice within the education sector. Some institutions also specify the length of experience within the sector and/or expectations about levels of seniority. Most programmes require a master's degree in education or a related discipline, but some will allow recognition of prior learning on the basis of equivalent knowledge, skills, and experience. Others have some level of master's level study incorporated into the programme. A final element to consider in relation to entry requirements is whether or not a research proposal is required as part of the application process. Some programmes do require a proposal to be submitted on application, partly to demonstrate suitability for study at this level and partly to ensure that there is the supervisory capacity and/or expertise. If you have a clear idea of what your research proposal will look like and what you want your project to be about, then you may want to choose a programme which asks for this to be submitted and proceeds on the assumption that you have a specific research project in mind. If, however, you are unsure about your proposed research project, are considering one or more alternatives and/or need more input in terms of research methodology or substantive content, then you should consider a programme which does not require a full research proposal in advance. These programmes may ask you to indicate what your area of interest is, so that they can ensure that they have the supervisory capacity, but the expectation is that your proposal will be developed over the taught phase of the project. It will be open to you to use the taught phase for exploring different ideas and approaches, but you will need to have a firm proposal by the end of the second year.

Reflective Question

*Do you have a specific research proposal already in mind?
What are some possible topics?*

A note for HE staff: There are many people who work in universities either as academics or professional staff who are interested in doing a professional doctorate. In the case of academics, there are a number of staff who are recruited to teach