

**Georgia State University**  
**Assessment Data by Section**  
**2014-2015 Early Childhood Education PhD**  
*As of: 3/18/2016 02:00 PM EST*

### Mission / Purpose

The Ph.D. major in Early Childhood and Elementary Education (ECEE) prepares scholars who serve as researchers and educators in a variety of roles including basic and applied research, curriculum development, and teacher education. As most of our graduates become educational researchers and teacher educators in universities and colleges, we strive to create thoughtful scholars who have deep theoretical understanding of their fields and strong knowledge about how to conduct research in educational and learning contexts.

### Goals

#### **G 1: Writers and speakers**

Candidates are thoughtful writers and speakers.

#### **G 2: Active seekers of knoweldge**

Candidates are active seekers of knowledge.

#### **G 3: Ethical researchers**

Candidates are ethical researchers.

#### **G 4: Knowledgeable teachers**

Candidates are knowledgeable teachers.

### Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

#### **SLO 1: Thoughtful writers and speakers (M: 1, 3)**

Candidates write and speak clearly. They demonstrate appropriate genre and audience awareness in their scholarly work. They are able to write and speak about research-related topics in ways that are accessible yet demonstrate deep knowledge about the field of early childhood and elementary education.

Relevant Associations: NAEYC graduate standards

#### **SLO 2: Active seeker of knowledge (M: 1, 2, 3, 4)**

Candidates demonstrate active seeking of knowledge and remain current on theory and research. They are able to critique, synthesize and implement these ideas in their practice.

Relevant Associations: NAEYC graduate standards

#### **SLO 3: Ethical researcher (M: 1, 3)**

Candidates will conduct quality, valid, and socially responsible inquiry related to early childhood and/or elementary education.

Relevant Associations: NAEYC graduate standards

#### **SLO 4: Knowledgeable teachers (M: 2)**

Candidates will be knowledgeable teachers who are capable of challenging their students' thinking and constructing knowledge relative to early childhood and elementary education.

Relevant Associations: NAEYC graduate standards

### Measures, Targets, and Findings

#### **M 1: Comprehensive examination (O: 1, 2, 3)**

Comprehensive Exams The comprehensive exam is used to evaluate PhD candidates progression to becoming thoughtful writers and speakers. Comprehensive exams involve three main parts: Part A: Written essays (2-3) that provide opportunity for the synthesis of theory and research about early childhood and elementary education. Part B: Written analysis of a research article OR comprehensive course syllabus planning document. Part C: Oral defense of parts A and B. Comprehensive

examinations are evaluated using a rubric based on the following dimensions: (1) thoroughness of research synthesis; (2) demonstration of “fit” (i.e., validity, credibility) of research methods to the nature of the problem or research question (3) clarity of writing and speaking; (4) convergence of theoretical and methodological approaches; and (5) social responsibility and/or critique. The rubric uses four levels of achievement ranging from “surpassed” to “not met”. Based upon the ratings of the comprehensive exam committee, each of the five items combine to provide a holistic evaluation of the comprehensive examinations and result in a pass/fail decision. Students must meet expectations in all areas of the rubric to pass comprehensive exams. In other words, a student who writes clearly but does not fulfill the other areas will fail the exams. The rubric is completed by the major adviser and the students PhD advisory committee at the end of her/his comprehensive exams. Table 1. PhD Candidates Comprehensive Examination Evaluation Rubric Goal 1: Candidates are thoughtful writers and speakers. Measure: Comprehensive exams

Surpassed	Met	Partially met	Not met
Demonstrates thoroughness of research synthesis for the defined topic	Demonstrates “fit” (e.g., validity, credibility, etc.) of research methods to the nature of the problem and/or research questions	Effectively communicates developing understandings in written and spoken form	Demonstrates appropriate convergence/consistency/fit among theories and methodological approaches
Demonstrates social responsibility/critique of existing research			

COMMENTS  
Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

### Target for O1: Thoughtful writers and speakers

80% will pass their comprehensive exams (Parts A, B, and C) on the first attempt; all will pass by the second attempt. Outcomes are based upon data from previous student performance.

#### Findings 2014-2015 - Target: Met

Three PhD candidates were evaluated on the objective “Candidates are Thoughtful Writers and Speakers” as part of their Comprehensive Exams during the 2014-2015 academic years. Although average ratings across indicators within this objective demonstrate some variability, PhD students, on average ‘met’ program expectations. According to faculty ratings of these students, two students ‘surpassed’ on most indicators, while one student ‘met’ all indicators. The two indicators that students performed the lowest on, but still in the passing range, were the indicators: “Demonstrates a thoroughness of research synthesis for the defined topic” and “Demonstrates “fit” (e.g., validity, credibility) of research methods to the nature of the problem and/or research questions.” Although the 100% pass rate is encouraging, faculty have recently revised the program to address these two aims and it appears that although students are meeting expectations, they may require additional support with regard to the strength of their literature reviews and research designs.

### Target for O2: Active seeker of knowledge

80% of eligible students will pass comprehensive exams (Parts A, B, and C) in first attempt; all within second attempt.

#### Findings 2014-2015 - Target: Met

Three PhD candidates were evaluated on the objective “Candidates are Active Seekers of Knowledge” as part of their residency experiences in the 2014-2015 academic year. All four of these students ‘met’ the objective, with examination of individual criteria demonstrating some variability in scores. Two students were rated as ‘surpassing’ on the indicators “Attends and presents scholarly work at a research conference” and “Submission of manuscripts to a peer reviewed journals”, while one student ‘met’ the first indicator and ‘partially met’ the indicator regarding submitting a manuscript for review (67% pass rate). On the indicator designed to assess PhD students “Service to Department, University or Profession,” all three students ‘met’ the criteria (100% pass rate). Finally, for the last dimension, “Participates in identifying and applying for a grant, scholarship or fellowship”, two students were rated as having “surpassed” and one student was rated as having ‘met’ the indicator (100% pass rate). Overall, these data suggest that students were, generally, performing well on metrics used to determine whether students were active seekers of knowledge. An examination of which students were performing better on the indicators demonstrates that full time doctoral students (i.e., those who were attending school full time and had research assistantships) were performing better than students who were working full time in schools and attending the program as part-time students. Faculty have sought to address ways to support students who are part-timers in order to assist them in participating in research (writing) and service activities that will help them become productive scholars.

### Target for O3: Ethical researcher

80% of eligible students will pass comprehensive exams (Parts A, B, and C) in first attempt; all within second attempt.

#### Findings 2014-2015 - Target: Met

Three students completed their dissertations during the 2014-2015 academic years. Evaluations of these PhD candidates' performance on their dissertation presentations, as determined by their faculty advisors and dissertation committee, reveal that all students ‘met’ expectations as ethical researchers. A closer examination of individual indicators reveals that one PhD student was rated as having ‘surpassed’ the criteria on the following indicators: (a) “Demonstrates a thorough reading and/or synthesis of the literature in a way that frames the philosophical/ theoretical paradigm or research field in which the study is situated. Is able to articulate clear alignments between the study and his/her paradigm or field.”, (b) “Demonstrates clear understanding of research methods appropriate to the current study.”, (c) “Demonstrates thoughtful analysis and is able to craft a textual discussion that links analysis to knowledge production

(i.e., findings)", and (d) "Creates a final dissertation product that effectively communicates study results and is able to verbally defend the work," while the other two students 'met' each of these indicators. All three students were rated as having 'met' indicators assessing their understanding of ethical research practices and in working with the diverse and vulnerable populations and in "Demonstrates academic honest through original scholarship." Findings from the 2014-215 year reveal that the ECEE PhD program is preparing students who are ethical researchers with 100% pass rate. Faculty work closely with students to ensure that they produce high quality dissertations that contribute both meaningfully and empirically to the field of early childhood and elementary education.

## **M 2: Teaching apprenticeship (O: 2, 4)**

Residency Teaching Experiences PhD students residency teaching experience is designed to assist them in becoming knowledgeable teachers. PhD residency teaching experiences generally involved the students in the following activities: 1. Prepare a comprehensive course syllabus including objectives, schedule of class topics, reading list, and evaluative procedures, 2. Have responsibility for actual teaching, which will include the development of subject matter, content, and method of presentation (specific guidelines for this requirement must be developed with the faculty supervisor in order to provide a consistent experience for students in the course), 3. Establish methods for evaluating him or herself (e.g., teaching portfolio, journals, student surveys, and faculty evaluation) and the course, 4. Use and interpret data gathered from all course evaluations. PhD residency teaching experiences are evaluated by the major advisor, with input from the PhD candidates' committee during his/her completion of comprehensive exams. Residency Teaching experiences are evaluated with a rubric that assess the following 5 domains on a 4 point scale (e.g., surpassed, met, partially met, and not met). 1. 1. Demonstrates thorough knowledge of content that is relevant, up-to-date, and comprehensive. Syllabus is organized for planning and instruction. Readings and assignments are relevant to the course topics. 2. 2. Demonstrates engaging instruction through enthusiasm and by supporting caring teacher/student and peer relationships. Promotes respect for different and diverse perspectives. Promotes collaboration. 3. 3. Adapts instruction for learners by being responsive, offering timely feedback, and presenting materials in different ways, and encouraging various means for students to express what they have learned. Offers content that is relevant to students' contexts and needs. 4. 4. Uses a variety of high-quality formative and summative assessments to inform teaching. Grades fairly. 5. 5. Course evaluations demonstrate that course goals are met. Instructor is responsive to feedback from students and peers.

Source of Evidence: Field work, internship, or teaching evaluation

### **Target for O2: Active seeker of knowledge**

All eligible students will successfully complete a university teaching apprenticeship.

#### **Findings 2014-2015 - Target: Met**

A total of four (N=4) students were evaluated on the quality of their teaching experiences during the 2014-2015 academic year as part of their residency requirement. According to faculty evaluations of their teaching skills, all students met the overarching goal of being "knowledgeable teachers." A close examination of ratings on each indicator under this goal/objectives demonstrated that two students were rated as surpassing on the criteria: "Demonstrates thorough knowledge of content that is relevant, up-to-date, and comprehensive. Syllabus is organized for planning and instruction. Readings and assignments are relevant to the course topics." and "Demonstrates engaging instruction through enthusiasm and by supporting caring teacher/student and peer relationships. Promotes respect for different and diverse perspectives. Promotes collaboration." Faculty evaluations of student progress on the third indicator on the rubric, "Adapts instruction for learners by being responsive, offering timely feedback, and presenting materials in different ways, and encouraging various means for students to express what they have learned. Offers content that is relevant to students' contexts and needs," demonstrates that three PhD candidates "surpassed", while a fourth student "met" the indicator. A similar finding was evident in faculty evaluations of students' progress toward the item, "Uses a variety of high-quality formative and summative assessments to inform teaching. Grades fairly. Criteria", with three students 'surpassing' and one student 'meeting' the indicator. On the final indicator, "Course evaluations demonstrate that course goals are met. Instructor is responsive to feedback from students and peers," three of the PhD students 'surpassed' while a fourth 'met' the criteria. A summary of student progress on this indicator suggests that PhD candidates are making good progress during their program on becoming knowledgeable teachers, with a pass rate of 100% for 2014-2015 as evidenced by the average score of students across indicators. This high level of performance is consistent with student performance on this objective last year and likely reflects a strength in our PhD program. ECEE program faculty highly value and prioritize quality instructional practices and formally mentor and apprentice students into the work of teaching courses before they teach courses independently. These data suggest that this model is working.

### **Target for O4: Knowledgeable teachers**

All eligible students will successfully complete a university teaching apprenticeship.

#### **Findings 2014-2015 - Target: Met**

A total of four (N=4) students were evaluated on the quality of their teaching experiences during the 2014-2015 academic year as part of their residency requirement. According to faculty evaluations of their teaching skills, all students met the overarching goal of being "knowledgeable teachers." A close examination of ratings on each indicator under this goal/objectives demonstrated that two students were rated as surpassing on the criteria: "Demonstrates thorough knowledge of content that is relevant, up-to-date, and comprehensive. Syllabus is organized for planning and instruction.

Readings and assignments are relevant to the course topics.” and “Demonstrates engaging instruction through enthusiasm and by supporting caring teacher/student and peer relationships. Promotes respect for different and diverse perspectives. Promotes collaboration.” Faculty evaluations of student progress on the third indicator on the rubric, “Adapts instruction for learners by being responsive, offering timely feedback, and presenting materials in different ways, and encouraging various means for students to express what they have learned. Offers content that is relevant to students’ contexts and needs,” demonstrates that three PhD candidates “surpassed”, while a fourth student “met” the indicator. A similar finding was evident in faculty evaluations of students’ progress toward the item, “Uses a variety of high-quality formative and summative assessments to inform teaching. Grades fairly. Criteria”, with three students ‘surpassing’ and one student ‘meeting’ the indicator. On the final indicator, “Course evaluations demonstrate that course goals are met. Instructor is responsive to feedback from students and peers,” three of the PhD students ‘surpassed’ while a fourth ‘met’ the criteria. A summary of student progress on this indicator suggests that PhD candidates are making good progress during their program on becoming knowledgeable teachers, with a pass rate of 100% for 2014-2015 as evidenced by the average score of students across indicators. This high level of performance is consistent with student performance on this objective last year and likely reflects a strength in our PhD program. ECEE program faculty highly value and prioritize quality instructional practices and formally mentor and apprentice students into the work of teaching courses before they teach courses independently. These data suggest that this model is working.

### **M 3: Dissertation presentation (O: 1, 2, 3)**

**Dissertation Presentation** The dissertation presentation is used to evaluate the degree to which PhD candidates are ethical researchers. During the dissertation presentation, PhD candidates present a research project including reviewing the literature, analyzing data, and writing a final report for publication. The rigor of the research presentation is evaluated based on dimensions that evaluate the rigor of the research. The following indicators are evaluated on a 4 point scale ranging from “Surpassed” to “Not Met”: 1. Demonstrates a thorough reading and/or synthesis of the literature in a way that frames the philosophical/ theoretical paradigm or research field in which the study is situated. Is able to articulate clear alignments between the study and his/her paradigm or field. 2. Demonstrates clear understanding of research methods appropriate to the current study. 3. Demonstrates thoughtful analysis and is able to craft a textual discussion that links analysis to knowledge production (i.e., findings). 4. Creates a final dissertation product that effectively communicates study results and is able to verbally defend the work. The way in which the PhD candidate conducts the research study with regards to ethical and moral responsibility is evaluated on the following dimensions from “Met” to “Not Met”. 1. Demonstrates an understanding that scholarship sometimes entails conflicts of commitment, conscience, and interest that must be negotiated according to university protocols and professional standards (when applicable). 2. Demonstrates sensitivity to vulnerable populations and principle of “do no harm”. 3. Complies with human subjects protocols including adherence to confidentiality and informed consent (when applicable). 4. Demonstrates academic honesty through original scholarship.

Source of Evidence: Senior thesis or culminating major project

#### **Target for O1: Thoughtful writers and speakers**

We want 100% of our eligible PHD students to have rigorous dissertations.

#### **Findings 2014-2015 - Target: Met**

Three students completed their dissertations during the 2014-2015 academic years. Evaluations of these PhD candidates’ performance on their dissertation presentations, as determined by their faculty advisors and dissertation committee, reveal that all students ‘met’ expectations as ethical researchers and as thoughtful writers and speakers. A closer examination of individual indicators reveals that one PhD student was rated as having ‘surpassed’ the criteria on the following indicators: (a) “Demonstrates a thorough reading and/or synthesis of the literature in a way that frames the philosophical/ theoretical paradigm or research field in which the study is situated. Is able to articulate clear alignments between the study and his/her paradigm or field.”, (b) “Demonstrates clear understanding of research methods appropriate to the current study.”, (c) “Demonstrates thoughtful analysis and is able to craft a textual discussion that links analysis to knowledge production (i.e., findings)”, and (d) “Creates a final dissertation product that effectively communicates study results and is able to verbally defend the work,” while the other two students ‘met’ each of these indicators. All three students were rated as having ‘met’ indicators assessing their understanding of ethical research practices and in working with the diverse and vulnerable populations and in “Demonstrates academic honest through original scholarship.” Findings from the 2014-215 year reveal that the ECEE PhD program is preparing students who are ethical researchers with 100% pass rate. Faculty work closely with students to ensure that they produce high quality dissertations that contribute both meaningfully and empirically to the field of early childhood and elementary education. Further, strong performance on the indicators “Demonstrates a thoroughness of research synthesis for the defined topic” and “Demonstrates clear understanding of research methods appropriate to the current study” suggest that students are developing as emerging scholars in their respective fields.

#### **Target for O2: Active seeker of knowledge**

One (out of 1) or 100% of our eligible PHD students successfully defended a rigorous dissertation.

#### **Findings 2014-2015 - Target: Met**

Three students successfully defended their dissertations.

### Target for O3: Ethical researcher

One (out of 1) or 100% of our eligible PHD students successfully defended a rigorous dissertation.

### M 4: Residency Research and Service Requirement (O: 2)

PhD students' residency experiences are designed to assess the degree to which they become and demonstrate that they are active seekers of knowledge. There are multiple residency experiences that are used to determine this indicator. These indicators are completed by the PhD students' comprehensive exam committee before comprehensive exams are completed. The following scholarship and professional service focused indicators are evaluated. 1. Presents scholarly work at a research conference. 2. Submits manuscript to a peer reviewed journal. 3. Provides service to the department, university, and/or profession. 4. Participates in identifying and applying for a grant, scholarship, or fellowship. A rubric is used to evaluate students' achievement on these four indicators. The student is evaluated by his/her comprehensive exam committee on the degree to which he/she "surpassed", "met", "partially met", or "not met" the criteria. Based upon the ratings of the comprehensive exam committee, each of the five items combine to provide a holistic evaluation of the comprehensive examinations and result in a pass/fail decision. In order to "meet" the residency requirement, students' scores across the 4 indicators must average to a "meets" level of proficiency. In other words, if a study scores "partially met" on one dimension of the rubric (such as participates in identifying and applying for a grant, scholarship, or fellowship), he or she must score a "surpassed" in another area (such as submits manuscript to a peer reviewed journal) in order to offset this score.

Source of Evidence: Benchmarking

### Target for O2: Active seeker of knowledge

90% of PhD candidates will demonstrate that they are active seekers of knowledge through pursuit of scholarly writing, presentation and service activities.

#### Findings 2014-2015 - Target: Met

Three PhD candidates were evaluated on the objective "Candidates are Thoughtful Writers and Speakers" as part of their Comprehensive Exams during the 2014-2015 academic years. Although average ratings across indicators within this objective demonstrate some variability, PhD students, on average 'met' program expectations. According to faculty ratings of these students, two students 'surpassed' on most indicators, while one student 'met' all indicators. The two indicators that students performed the lowest on, but still in the passing range, were the indicators: "Demonstrates a thoroughness of research synthesis for the defined topic" and "Demonstrates 'fit' (e.g., validity, credibility) of research methods to the nature of the problem and/or research questions." Although the 100% pass rate is encouraging, faculty have recently revised the program to address these two aims and it appears that although students are meeting expectations, they may require additional support with regard to the strength of their literature reviews and research designs.

## Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

**2. Analysis of Assessment Findings: Where appropriate, discuss the significance of the findings in light of (1) the desired results, (2) findings from previous years, (3) recent changes in the educational program or the assessment process, etc. What did you learn from the assessment? In particular: (1) What strengths and weaknesses do the findings reveal about the program and/or the assessment process? (2) What impact have recent program changes had on student learning (indicate those program changes that resulted from previous assessment findings)? (3) What impact have recent changes in the assessment process had on the quality of the findings?**

Findings from the 2014-2015 academic year suggest in all but one case, students met all indicators on all major assessments. In other words, ECEE PhD students are meeting program requirements with many of them surpassing expectations on key indicators. This is the third year that we have used detailed rubrics to evaluate our students experiences toward their doctoral degrees and we find the information provided from these analyses useful. The goal of the PhD in Early Childhood and Elementary Education (ECEE) is to prepare scholars to function as researchers and teacher educators in a variety of roles including basic and applied research, curriculum development, and teacher education. To accomplish this goal, we provide students with a strong foundation in educational theory, research methodology and a specialized program of study of their choosing to participate in empirical and systematic research that examines educational principles, strategies, and practices related to educational processes and outcomes for children in a variety of Birth to 5th grade settings. We believe that data from the 2014-2015 school year reveal that we are being successful in obtaining our goals. The one area in which a student did not meet our expectations with 100% accuracy relate to the indicator "Candidates are active seekers of knowledge" related research residency requirements. Although students met our criteria on the total indicator, one student only partially met the indicator in relation to the criteria "Submission of manuscripts to a peer reviewed journals" Given that this student is a full time teacher and attends school part-time, it is understandable that the candidate was unable to take a leadership role on a research publication as part of her program. However, we as a faculty believe that conducting and presenting research is an essential skill for all PhD students. To this end we have established stronger research apprenticeship (formal research mentoring) experiences and processes to make sure that students get exposure to research early in their PhD program.

**3. Sharing and Discussion of Assessment Findings (optional in 2014-15): Describe how assessment findings are shared and discussed among program faculty and other stakeholders. In particular, make clear the process that is**

**used to analyze assessment findings and to use them to make improvements in the educational program and/or the assessment process.**

ECEE PhD program faculty meet regularly as a full committee and as a PhD advisory board (subcommittee) to discuss, plan, and make changes to the program. All research faculty participate in either the larger committee or in subcommittee work (i.e., we have a very engaged PhD level faculty). We have recently changed our program to ensure that students are better prepared as researchers by changing ECEE 9800 to focus on scholarly reading. This allows students more opportunity to read and discuss research in relation to becoming a scholar/researcher.

**4. Use of Assessment Findings for Program Improvement: Describe any changes in (1) the educational program and/or (2) the assessment process that are planned or being implemented in response to this year's assessment findings. Be as specific as possible with regard to the nature and timing of the changes to be made as well as their linkages to the assessment findings. Also, briefly summarize the status of previous years' action plans.**

As part of our PhD program faculty and PhD advisory committee meetings, PhD faculty in the Department of Early Childhood Education have spent considerable effort during the past academic year analyzing areas of weakness in our program and providing students with support aimed at ameliorating areas of weakness from the previous year. Compared to the 2013-2014 school year, PhD students performed at a slightly higher level of performance on all indicators. One particular area of improvement is in the area of grant writing, a sub-indicator on the dimension "Candidates are active seekers of knowledge." Only 83% of students in 2013-2014 were meeting this indicator, while 100% met this indicator this year. PhD faculty made a concerted effort to ensure opportunities this past academic year to expose PhD candidates to grant writing opportunities and many wrote for and obtained internal funding for their dissertation research. In addition, we are pairing faculty up earlier with PhD students to ensure strong scholarly writing opportunities that lead to research presentations at national/international conferences and publications before they sit for comprehensive exams. Based upon both student feedback and faculty discussion, we recently changed our ECEE 9800 course from a Doctoral Seminar to Scholarly Reading course. This change was in response to a perceived need for students to be better prepared for the rigors of graduate life in reading and critiquing research. We continue to build our PhD student community (a hall mark of the former Doctoral Seminar) by having special seminars for our PhD students focused on topics they select. These evening seminars occur once a month and are focused on building community among PhD students and a shared understanding of scholarship as they develop as researchers. Findings from 2013-2014 provided data for us addressing weakness in our program around research experiences and grant writing. In order to assist our PhD students in these two areas, we also instituted a more stringent and defined annual review process for students in 2014-2015. This annual review process more clearly articulates our expectations for students completion of key research experiences as they achieve residency requirements. In addition to a more formal and clearly articulated annual review process, we have encouraged our students to take a course in becoming scholarly writers as well as the newly developed (ECEE 9800) that is designed to develop students as scholarly readers. These two courses focus on students development as emerging scholars. In each course PhD students receive considerable, formal mentoring from faculty instructors. We believe that these recent changes to our program have assisted us in meeting our students' needs in ways that are demonstrated on our annual assessments of student progress.