Education PhD
Program Mission Statement

Mission Statement (Full Description):

Our distinctive vision is to respond to the need for educational leaders who provide data-based recommendations for educational policy, and innovative new teaching and assessment practices. The doctoral program in education prepares students to understand, evaluate and conduct research in education that will contribute to the improvement of student learning, teaching practices, services to special populations, and ultimately to improvement of education at all levels.

Does your program offer courses at an off-campus instructional site (not at SMU Dallas campus)?:
No

Does your program offer courses through distance education technology (e.g., asynchronous, synchronous, or both)?:
No

During which academic year were students first enrolled in this program?:
Prior to AY2022-2023

Progress:

PLO 1: Demonstrate skills in critiquing high-quality empirical research
Step 1A: SLO Number:
1

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):
PLO 1: Demonstrate skills in critiquing high-quality empirical research
Students learn how to critique published research and empirical studies in their fields in their coursework. The culminating demonstration of competency for critiquing research using high-quality criteria is through a written paper within the first two years of the program (15-30 pages) that is assessed using a rubric (see attached PLO_1_Rubric.pdf for Qualifying Exam 1).

Step 2A: Measure:
Performance on the grading rubric for the Qualifying Exam 1: Literature Critique.
The paper is graded by 2 independent raters from the Simmons PhD faculty using a rubric (PLO1_Rubric.pdf).

Attached Files
PLO1_Rubric_Qual_1.pdf

Commented [SS1]: Suggestions for Improvement
1.**Add Specific Examples**: To strengthen the mission statement, include examples of the types of careers or roles graduates might pursue, such as educational policy analysts, school administrators, or higher education faculty. This will make the outcomes more tangible and relatable for prospective students.
2.**Clarify Alignment with Institutional Goals**: Articulate how the program's objectives align with the broader mission of the university, such as contributing to educational equity or advancing research that impacts local and global communities.
3.**Increase Specificity in Outcomes**: Specify what graduates will be able to achieve or contribute in their professional fields, emphasizing the skills or competencies they will develop through the program.
Suggested Template
Our distinctive vision is to respond to the need for educational leaders who provide data-driven recommendations for educational policy and introduce innovative teaching and assessment practices. The doctoral program in education prepares students to understand, evaluate, and conduct impactful research that contributes to the improvement of student learning, effective teaching methods, and services for diverse and special populations. This program aligns with SMU's mission to expand knowledge through research and prepare students for leadership roles that promote academic excellence, equity, and community engagement. Graduates will be equipped for influential roles such as [educational policy advisors, district leaders, or academic researchers], advancing the field of education in ways that embody SMU's commitment to ethical leadership and societal impact.

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):
Qualifying exam,Rubric,Written paper/project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:
Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:
100% of students will score a passing rating ("pass" or "pass with distinction") on the Qualifying Exam 1.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:
Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:
Six students completed their Qual 1 product in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024. Two faculty members rated each student's product. The evaluators gave all six students a "pass" rating. The spreadsheet (PLO1_Rating_Qual_1.xlsx) indicates the passing rate for 2020-21 submissions.

Attached Files
  PLO1_Ratings_Qual_1.xlsx

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:
All six submitted Qual 1 products were in high quality. A sample of student's product (PLO1_Student_Sample_Qual_1.pdf) is attached.

Attached Files
  PLO1_Student Sample Qual 1.pdf

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):
Although it is not an absolute requirement, students are expected to complete their Qual 1 product by the end of their 2nd year in the program. In AY 2023-24, three students out of five Year 2 students (60%) completed their Qual 1. This has been an issue for many years that students did not complete their Qual 1 until after Year 2. In the future years, the program will aim to improve the proportion of students who complete their Qual 1 by the end of Year 2 in the program. Also, the program is in discussion to replace this requirement with an alternative product to achieve the same Student Learning Outcome.

Step 5B: Type of Action:
Additional emphasis or time on content,Redesign of activities or assignments,Faculty involvement

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):
Committee,Faculty

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:
In spring 2024, a subcommittee on curriculum change was formed. The subcommittee consists of five program faculty members.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):
In progress

Progress:
Complete

PLO 2: Demonstrate competence with designing a research study.
Step 1A: SLO Number:
2

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):
PLO 2: Demonstrate competence with designing a research study.
Students will demonstrate competence in their ability to design a scientific research study in education contexts through Qualifying Exam 2 (Qual 2). Students will provide an oral presentation of their products with a set of presentation slides. The quality of the product is evaluated on criterial as outlined in PLO2_Rubric_Qual_2.pdf.

Step 2A: Measure:
Performance on the grading rubric for the Qualifying Exam 2: Research Design
The product is graded by 2 independent raters from the PhD faculty using a rubric (PLO2_Rubric Qual 2.pdf).

Attached Files
  PLO2_Rubric Qual 2.pdf

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):
Presentation ,Qualifying exam,Rubric

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:
Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:
100% of students will score a passing rating ("pass" or "pass with distinction") on their Qualifying Exam 2.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:
Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:
Five students completed their Qual 2 product in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024. Two faculty members rated each student's product. The evaluators gave all six students a "pass" rating. The spreadsheet (PLO2_Ratings Qual 2.xlsx) indicates the passing rate for 2022-23 submissions.

Attached Files
  PLO2_Ratings Qual 2.xlsx

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:
All six submitted Qual 2 products were in high quality. A student sample (PLO2_Student Sample Qual 2.pdf) is attached.

Attached Files
  PLO2_Student Sample Qual 2.pdf

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):
Although it is not an absolute requirement, students are expected to complete their Qual 1 product by the end of their 3rd year in the program. At the end of the AY 2023-24, three students out of five Year 2 students (60%) completed their Qual 2. In the future years, the program will aim to improve the proportion of students who complete their Qual 2 by the end of Year 3 in the program. Also, the program is in discussion to replace this requirement with an alternative product to achieve the same Student Learning Outcome.

Step 5B: Type of Action:
Additional emphasis or time on content,Redesign of activities or assignments,Faculty involvement

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):
Committee,Faculty

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

In spring 2024, a subcommittee on curriculum change was formed. The subcommittee consists of five program faculty members.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):
In progress

Progress:
Complete

PLO 3: Content Area Expertise
Step 1A: SLO Number:
3

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):
Content area expertise is developed through coursework, independent study, and research activities outside of coursework. It is assessed as a culminating Major Area Paper (MAP) or a written product (30-50 pages) that is submitted prior to advancement to candidacy.

Step 2A: Measure:
Program Milestone: Major Area Paper (MAP)
Program milestones are major accomplishments indicating mastery of content area and relevant writing skills that meet the criteria of academic writing as laid out in the rubric (see attachment PLO3_Rubric_MAP.pdf) that is graded by 3-4 raters.

Attached Files
  PLO3_Rubric_MAP.pdf

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):
Presentation ,Rubric,Written paper/project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:
Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:
100% of students who submit a MAP receive a passing score.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:
No Students Enrolled

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:
No students submitted MAP in this evaluation period.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

Step 5B: Type of Action:

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

Progress:
Complete

PLO 4: Demonstrate oral presentation skills
Step 1A: SLO Number:
4

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):
Career identity and success depend on scholarship, specifically publication, conference presentation, and external research funding. By the end of the third year, students will have presented at least once at a research conference.

Step 2A: Measure:
Students will provide the evidence that they have presented their research at least once at a national research conference as a lead author or co-author by the end of the third year in the program.

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):
Presentation ,Survey

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:
Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:
85% of students will have presented their research at least once at a national research conference
as a lead author or co-author by the end of the third year in the program.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:
Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:
Five out of five Year 3 students have presented at least one paper as a lead or co-author at a
national or international conference.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:
Students in the program are active in presenting their research at major national conferences,
such as American Educational Research Association. Also, some Year 1 and Year 2 students also
presented their research at conferences. Six students presented at more than one national or
international conference during AY 2024-25.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):
We discovered that six students presented their research at more than one conference in Ay
2023-24. The program aims to increase the number of students who present their research at
more than one conference. We aim to secure travel funding for our students to achieve this
improvement.

Step 5B: Type of Action:
Additional emphasis or time on content,Faculty involvement

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):
Committee,Faculty

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

Progress:
Complete

PO 1: Increase the selectivity of PhD student admissions
Step 1A: PG Number:
1

Step 1C: PG Statement (Full Description):
We will increase the number of applications to the PhD program through increased recruiting and advertising and through on-campus visits. We will measure success through greater selectivity as demonstrated by a lower acceptance rate.

Step 2A: Measure:
The acceptance rate is operationalized as the percentage of students who are admitted to the program divided by the total complete application submissions. The program has one admission point per year.

Step 2B: Is Measure direct or indirect?:
Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:
Lowering the acceptance rate is an indicator of greater selectivity. Our target is an acceptance rate of 25% or lower.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:
Not Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:
For Fall 2024 admissions, the acceptance rate was 50%. The program had 45 applicants who started the applications. Among them, 16 applicants completed their applications for our review. Among the 16 applicants we reviewed, we accepted 8 applicants. Details of the numbers and historical data are attached (PO1_Acceptance Rate.xlsx).

Attached Files
 PO1_Acceptance Rate.xlsx

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:
The acceptance rate was 50%, which was not lower than the last 3 years. We had about the same number of applicants who started their applications as the previous years. However, the number of applicants who completed their applications was quite lower than in previous years.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):
We will need to increase the number of applicants who complete their applications. Although it was suspected that our requirement for GRE scores may have contributed to the decline of the complete applications, we will need to follow up with applicants who started their applications proactively. The program has formed a subcommittee on recruitment. This committee aims to recruit more top applicants and increase the number of initiated applications and complete applications. Also, the GRE score requirement has been removed starting Fall 2025 admissions.

Step 5B: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):
Committee,Faculty,Staff

Step 5C: Evidence of Dialogue:

Step 5D: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):
Enhanced recruitment effort

Step 5E: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

Progress:
Complete