LITERACY STUDIES PH.D. PROGRAM
Student Handbook

2024-2025

**College of Education
College of Behavioral and Health Sciences
College of Liberal Arts**

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

The program handbook is designed to serve as a user-friendly, comprehensive guide to the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program at Middle Tennessee State University. Every effort will be made to update the handbook periodically. Students and faculty should be aware, however, that the university's *Graduate Catalog* is the final authority concerning graduate school policies, programs, and curricula.

For more information about the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program, students may consult our website or any of the program faculty or staff:

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Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program website: www.mtsu.edu/literacy   literacy@mtsu.edu

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Mission

The mission of the doctoral program in Literacy Studies is to broaden the understanding of literacy to include an appreciation of the contributions of biology, language, society, and culture as well as instruction on the acquisition and use of literacy skills. The program endeavors to support the application of this broader construct for the advancement of literacy learning through various elements of the education enterprise.

Objectives

The *Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program at Middle Tennessee State University* is designed to address one of education's most pressing needs – the shortage of scholars, practitioners, administrators, and policymakers equipped to bridge the gap between the rapidly expanding body of scientific research on the development of literacy and educational practice, policy, and professional preparation. Drawing on the faculty from the College of Education, the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences and the College of Liberal Arts, this interdisciplinary program offers a flexible framework of courses, field experiences, teaching, and research opportunities designed to provide professionals in various spheres of influence with the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively address the literacy crisis in the United States and beyond.

Historically, Middle Tennessee State University is a recognized leader in the preparation of professional educators. It employs nationally recognized scholars in education, neuroscience, linguistics, cognition, research design,

psychometrics, and statistics who strive to integrate aspects of these various disciplines into education research and training.

The Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program draws on these various disciplines and, in turn, strengthens them by connecting their resources and potential. The result is constructive changes within the various spheres of study and practice.

Program Design

The program is structured to provide coursework involving experienced faculty in three colleges, the College of Education, the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences, and the College of Liberal Arts. The coursework is designed to establish the foundation for a comprehensive and interdisciplinary understanding of literacy within biological, psychological, linguistic, and social contexts of human development. As illustrated in the figure below, this program broadens the scope of investigations of literacy development by applying the analytic strengths from each of the independent academic disciplines. The program's interdisciplinary nature is reflected in all three aspects of its design: program structure, coursework, and doctoral research.
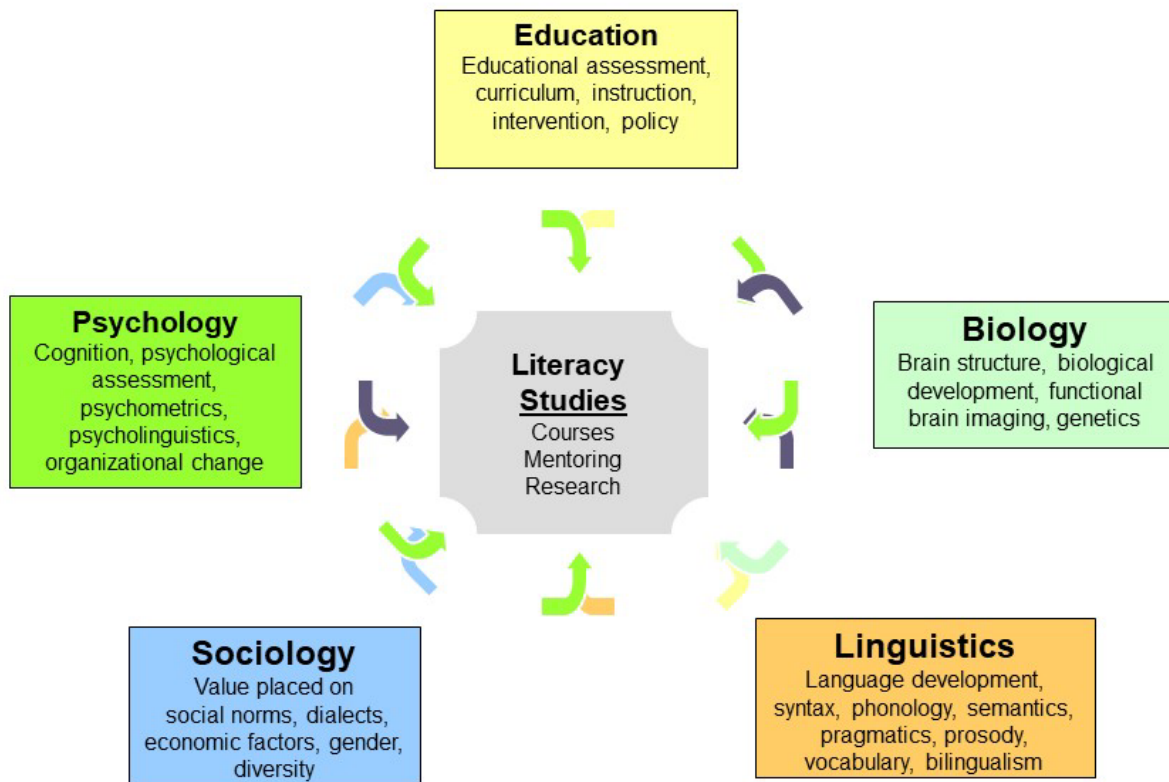
CURRICULUM

The doctoral program requires completion of 75-87 semester credit hours distributed as follows:

Curriculum Component		Hours Required
Literacy Studies Core		36
Foundations of Literacy	*09*	
Language & Literacy	*09*	
Pedagogy	*06*	
Research Design & Data Analysis	*09*	
Practicum	*03*	
Concentrations		12
Electives		15
Dissertation		12-24
TOTAL:		**75-87**

ESTIMATED TIME FOR COMPLETION

Full-time: approximately 3-5 years
Part-time: approximately 5-6 years

Maximum time: There is a time limit of ten (10) years to complete all Ph.D. degree requirements. That is, all doctoral coursework as well as the dissertation must be completed within ten (10) years of the first semester of enrollment.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Overview
A common set of **core courses** provides a comprehensive understanding of literacy within biological, psychological, linguistic, and social contributions to human development, learning, and motivation. Students in this program will develop an understanding of how changing social and political perspectives and evolving scientific knowledge affect how literacy is defined, taught, assessed, and acquired. Core courses will assist students to build upon prior education and experience. They will inform students about designs and methodologies typically employed to research the process of literacy learning and the outcomes of teaching. The program incorporates several components including coursework specific to the core of the program, courses selected to deepen knowledge in an area of concentration chosen by the student, and service-learning requirements tied to specific courses and a practicum.

Program Structure

Core Courses Required of All Students (36 credit hours):

Course Number	Course Title	Hours
Foundations (9 hours)		
LITS 7130	Literacy in Socio-Cultural Contexts	3
LITS 7100	Historical Issues, Trends & Methodologies	3
LITS 7120	Professional Seminar in Graduate Studies	3
Language & Literacy (9 hours)		
LITS 7010	Literacy Development and Language Learning	3
LITS 7011	Neurobiology of Language and Literacy	3
LITS 7400	Reading Comprehension: Theoretical Models and Research Methodologies	3
Pedagogy (6 hours)		
LITS 7110	Models of Literacy Assessment	3
LITS 7210	Evidence Based Methods for Literacy Development	3
Research Design & Data Analysis (9 hours)		
LITS 7140	Research Design and Methodology in Literacy	3
PSY 7280	Psychological Statistics: Regression	3
PSY 7290	Psychological Statistics: ANOVA	3
Practicum (3 hours)		
LITS 7200	Practicum	3

The core courses marked as interdisciplinary in the core are hybrids that draw content from many disciplines and integrate this knowledge through application to the topic of literacy. These courses have been developed by faculty with expertise in a primary discipline (e.g., neurobiology) in consultation with the interdisciplinary Program Coordination Committee, which ensures that the content specific to the discipline is explicitly related to issues in literacy.

Table of Interdisciplinary Course Content

		Biology	Education	Linguistics	Psychology	Statistics / Measurement	Sociology	Speech - Lang Path
LITS 7010	Literacy Development and Language Learning		●	●	●		●	●
LITS 7100	Historical Issues, Trends & Methodologies		●				●	
LITS 7110	Models of Literacy Assessment	●	●	●	●	●	◉	●
LITS 7130	Literacy in Socio-Cultural Contexts	◉	●	●	●		●	◉
LITS 7140	Research Design and Methodology in Literacy	◉	●	◉	●	●	◉	◉
LITS 7210	Evidence Based Methods for Literacy Develop.	●	●	◉	●	●	◉	◉
LITS 7011	Neurobiology of Language and Literacy	●	●	◉	●		◉	◉
PSY 7280	Psychological Statistics: Regression				●	●		
PSY 7290	Psychological Statistics: ANOVA				●	●		
LITS 7120	Professional Seminar in Graduate Studies		●			◉		
LITS 7400	Reading Comprehension: Theoretical Models and Research Methodologies		●		◉			◉

Key	
Major emphasis in course	●
Minor emphasis in course	◉

Core Course Replacements
It is required that all students complete 36 hours in the Core, distributed as detailed above. However, it is possible that some students will have taken one or two of the above listed courses as part of a previous graduate program. When a student documents that a specific course listed in the core has been satisfactorily completed, within five (5) years preceding admission, the advisor and student will jointly identify a replacement course that satisfies the interdisciplinary goals of the program as well as the career goals of the student. For instance, if a student entering with a master's has already taken graduate classes equivalent to a core course, such as Literacy Development and Language Learning, the core requirement for that specific course would be waived, but the student would take an additional three hours of coursework, specific to the literacy framework of this degree, to bring the total hours to 75. This request must be made within two (2) years of admission to the program.

No more than two courses in the core will be considered for replacements. Requests must be made within two (2) years of admission to the program. Students requesting such course replacements will be required to provide adequate documentation of the content of the course, such as a copy of the course syllabus, to be approved. This will permit evaluation of its similarity to the related course in the Ph.D. program. Only courses in which a grade of A- or better was earned will be considered for replacement.

Course-Based Service-Learning Experiences
Students in this program will complete two field-based service-learning experiences through which they will gain practical knowledge in work settings. The field-based experiences are embedded in LITS 7110 Models of Literacy Assessment and LITS 7210 Evidenced-Based Methods of Literacy Development. Typically, the service-learning experiences will require 15-20 clock hours in the field. Field experiences provide opportunities for students to work in a variety of environments where they are exposed to current issues in literacy research and practice. For the most part, these field experiences will provide a service to the sponsoring organization. These experiences are in line with the university's stated interests in encouraging service-learning experiences.

Service-Learning Form

Practicum Experience
Students may register for a practicum experience no earlier than their second year in the program, having completed a minimum of 21 credit hours of coursework within the core and at least 6 credit hours in a concentration. Typically, the practicum experience will require 80 total clock hours in the field.

Practicum experiences are designed to provide students with appropriate experiences related to their areas of concentration. For example, a student concentrating in *Literacy Instruction and Staff Development* might work with a district curriculum supervisor and gain hands-on experience in the evaluation of curriculum materials and/or providing support and in-service training to teachers. A student concentrating in *Reading Disabilities/Dyslexia* might be placed in a Title-I or Special Education program to gain hands-on experience diagnosing reading disabilities and providing support and in-service training to the teachers who provide remedial instruction. A student concentrating in *Literacy Measurement and Analysis* might work with the Tennessee Department of Education or any data-producing agents.

Approval of Practicum Sites and Supervisors. Sites for practicum will be screened to ensure the quality of the site, the supervisor, and the nature of the work to be done. Clearly defined expectations for practicum will be established through contractual agreements between students, on-site supervisors, and the practicum coordinator. The contract will detail the activities to be engaged in and the work product(s) expected, as well as the nature of practicum. The contract will be reviewed and approved by the practicum coordinator.

Rubric/Number	Course Title	Credit Hours
**LITS 7200	Practicum	3

** Practicum work is graded according to the College of Graduate Studies grading scale (see *Grades and Academic Standing* section of this handbook)

    Practicum Course Guidelines
    Practicum Course Contract
    Practicum Experience Evaluation Form

Concentrations (12 hours)
Students must choose one of the following concentrations:
- o Literacy Instruction and Staff Development
- o Reading Disabilities/Dyslexia
- o Literacy Measurement and Analysis

Please note: Courses listed here, within each concentration, are examples of those deemed appropriate. However, this list is not exhaustive. Substitutions may be arranged with the permission of a student's program advisor.

Independent Study Courses - LITS 7330 (Special Topics in Literacy), LITS 7340 (Literature Review and Readings) and LITS 7350 (Research Seminar in Literacy) can be offered each semester and may be applied as either electives or concentration courses.

1. LITERACY INSTRUCTION AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

This concentration is intended primarily for individuals who already hold licensure or certification in a profession (e.g., school psychology, speech-language pathology) or are credentialed in specialized areas of education (e.g., reading education, special education, and educational administration). The doctorate prepares these individuals for a career in pre-service teacher education and in-service staff development. Instruction and staff development specialists are needed to oversee the changes in literacy education inspired by new research and mandated in new policies. There is a growing need for professionals who can help implement changes, such as RTI, by training new teachers and updating the skills of in-service teachers. This concentration provides additional coursework to enhance graduates' capacity to address important problems within their areas of competence.

Rubric/Number	Course Title	Credit Hours
CDIS 6000	Speech, Language, and Literacy Development	3
ESL 6800	Curriculum Design & Instruction for ELs	3
LITS 7021	Cognitive Neuropsychology of Literacy	3
READ 6000	Foundations of Literacy	3
READ 6710	Adolescent Literacy	3
READ 6730	Curriculum and Supervision of Literacy Instruction	3
READ 6750	Research in Literacy	3
READ 6760	Early Literacy	3
SPSE 6140	Teacher Leadership for School Improvement	3
SPSE 6900	Online Learning and Instructional Design	3
PSY 6530/7530	The Psychology of Reading and Reading Development	3

2. READING DISABILITIES / DYSLEXIA

This concentration includes added coursework in dyslexic studies, learning disabilities, and communication disorders in order to prepare master's level professionals (e.g., special education mild/moderate, school psychologists, speech pathologists) who have specific training and experience diagnosing and teaching children with reading disabilities for a variety of second careers. These careers include college faculty, developing curriculum materials or assessment tools for publishers, or serving as professional consultants to schools, school systems, and State Departments of Education.

Rubric/Number	Course Title	Credit Hours
DYST 7000	Introduction to Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties	3
DYST 7010	Identifying Students with Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties	3
DYST 7011	Interventions for Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties	3
CDIS 6000	Language, Speech, and Literacy	3
LITS 7021	Cognitive Neuropsychology	3
LITS 7150	Multilingualism and Literacy	3
PSY 6530/7530	The Psychology of Reading and Reading Development	3
PSY 6750	Psychology & Assessment of Learning Disabilities	3
PSY 6190	Advanced Cognitive Psychology	3
READ 6750	Research Seminar in Reading	3

3. LITERACY MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS

This concentration is intended for those who may be interested in a career related to work in the development of assessment tools and curriculum materials under the umbrella of a publishing house, for careers in consulting with school systems on the application of measurement tools, or with a career in state or national governmental agencies that use measurement to draft, direct, and enforce literacy policies. Preparation in this concentration will

enhance skills related to data analysis and test construction as well as adding to background knowledge related to the utilization of assessment in K-12 education.

Rubric/Number	Course Title	Credit Hours
PSY 7210	Advanced Psychometrics	3
PSY 7550	Structural Equation Modeling	3
PSY 7580	Multivariate Data Analysis	3
PSY 7585	Test Construction and Validation	3
PSY 6560	Computer-Based Statistical Packages	3
HHP 7030	Research Seminar in Human Performance	3
LITS 7150	Multilingualism and Literacy	3

Electives: 15 hours
All students will include fifteen (15) credit hours of electives for their coursework. These electives may serve to extend credit hours in the concentration area or add to the knowledge base in another area of interest. Electives will be chosen in consultation with an Academic Advisor.

Course Credit Transfers
In cases where an applicant has taken some post-bachelor courses leading to a master's degree or a post-master's degree, and one or more courses in that program are directly related to this doctoral program, the applicant may request that previous credits be applied to this degree if the courses were completed within five (5) years preceding admission to this Ph.D. program. The applicant may submit up to fifteen (15) hours for consideration from a master's program. Twelve (12) hours may be submitted for consideration from a post-master's program. Requests must be made within two (2) years of admission to the program. The recommendation to accept these credits must come from the graduate program director after she or he has made an analysis of the courses requested for transfer. Final approval must be given by the dean of the College of Graduate Studies. Coursework accepted for credit toward a graduate degree at MTSU must represent graduate coursework relevant to the degree, with course content and the level of instruction resulting in student competencies at least equivalent to those of students enrolled in the institution's own graduate degree programs.

Dissertation: 12 hours-24
Candidates will design and conduct a research project culminating in the presentation and oral defense of a dissertation.

Rubric/Number	Course Title	Credit Hours
LITS 7640	Dissertation Research	12-24

The dissertation is a work of original, advanced research written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. A dissertation is a lengthy, unified, coherent work, usually exceeding 100 pages, that makes an original contribution to scholarship in the field. This is the document that secures the candidate's right to enter into the academic profession and provides proof of professional competence. (Refer to page 11 for details.)

Please see the *Graduate Catalog* for further information on dissertations and all other mentioned academic regulations and procedures.

RETENTION AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

The Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program is designed to be completed in four years of full-time study. Coursework and the preliminary examination could be completed in six semesters. Dissertation research and preparation of the document could be completed over two to three additional semesters. This time frame is consistent with guidelines that traditionally have been associated with availability of assistantships and fellowships for doctoral study. Throughout the program, students will be engaged in raising viable research questions, designing studies, analyzing data sets, and professional writing. Collectively, these experiences will prepare students to undertake the dissertation research project.

Annual Evaluation

Upon admission to the Ph.D. program, each candidate will be assigned an academic advisor. Advisors are members of the program faculty. Guided by the mentorship model, this advisor, in consultation with other faculty in the program, will advise the student on an appropriate program of study, will provide any other required academic advisement, and will conduct a written annual review of student progress toward the degree. Students must submit a self-evaluation annually.

Literacy Research Conference

Faculty and students will participate in presenting research at the one-day conference. All students are required to attend. A keynote speaker will be invited. Conference information can be found on the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program website each year as it becomes available.

Course Program Progress

It is advised that students check DegreeWorks for coursework progress. Please discuss with your advisor or program director and use the Graduate Revision Form if you need to request changes.

Research Tools, Techniques, and Methodology Requirements

The Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program requires students to demonstrate proficiency in the application of research skills. Statistical methods and tools will be acquired in two required courses in advanced statistics. Students with professional interests in statistics and measurement may take additional courses as part of the specialization in literacy measurement & analysis.

Ethical Development

Issues of professional ethics as well as obligations of researchers to ensure confidentiality of research subjects, and to protect data collected from the dangers of misuse, will be addressed directly in coursework, the practica experiences, and in research mentorship. Students will assist in preparing requests for IRB approval for any studies in which they participate. They are required to successfully complete the CITI training course prior to approval of the dissertation proposal and will prepare a request for IRB approval to conduct the dissertation research project.

Residency

To ensure that students in the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program will have the opportunity to be fully immersed in the intellectual and research climate that will characterize the program, a period of residency is required. The Residency Form should be completed and signed before beginning the residency. To fulfill residency requirements, Ph.D. students must be enrolled in full-time study with at least one content area course for a minimum of two consecutive Academic Year semesters or two summer semesters. During the residency semesters, students are expected to assist faculty members with their teaching and research responsibilities. This time should also be dedicated to other enrichment endeavors, which include but are not limited to: research dissemination (e.g. submission of one paper for publication, submission to regional or above conference, providing research-to-practice workshops, etc.), engagement in service-learning, or participation in professional development (service-learning or professional development that is part of a student's job does not count towards the residency requirement). Prior to any research dissemination or submission, faculty advisors must approve student work to ensure the activity students engage in meets minimum quality standards with empirically validated outcomes or practices. In addition, submissions must include at least one faculty member as a supervisor/co-author and be approved prior to submission. Residency requirements must be satisfied no later than the semester during which a student takes the preliminary examination. Students entering the program on a part-time basis must plan for ways to meet this

requirement. For example, part-time students may have extended time to complete the requirements, but the requirements for dissemination, service-learning, or professional development will remain the same. The typical expected hours to complete this residency is 120 hours.

Preliminary Examinations
When all core and required concentration coursework is completed, the student will be required to pass a preliminary examination (Preliminary Exam Procedure). Upon receiving approval from the academic advisor, the research advisor and the second reader, the student will submit the Preliminary Exam Registration Form to the program director for approval.

Advancement to Candidacy
Once the student has successfully completed all coursework, residency, and the preliminary examination, the program director will file the Graduate Test Results Form with the College of Graduate Studies in order for the student to be admitted to candidacy and to enroll in dissertation credits. No more than seven [7] credit hours of C grade will count towards the requirement of a Ph.D. degree. Grades of D and F will not count towards degree requirements but will be computed in determining the GPA. The student must have a GPA of at least 3.25 in the program of studies to advance to candidacy status.

Dissertation Committee and Proposal
Candidates for the Ph.D. in Literacy Studies will be required to conceptualize, formally propose, and independently carry out an original research project, which will add to the knowledge base in an area of inquiry that is integral to Literacy Studies. Following advancement to candidacy, the student must formally establish his/her dissertation committee. The committee should include a minimum of three graduate faculty with current status as full members; the chair and at least one member must be from the program committee and one or more may be from outside the program. The chair of the committee must be a current member of Middle Tennessee State University's graduate faculty and must be recommended by the Program Director. The dissertation committee should consist of faculty from different disciplines in order to reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the program. Once the committee is established, the student may then draft the research proposal. **The proposal may take either the traditional dissertation format or the article format. The dissertation proposal should propose an original research study developed by the student. Data collected prior to dissertation proposal is subject to approval by the dissertation committee and may not be sufficient for meeting dissertation requirements.** *After the proposal conference, the student must follow through and address all issues and suggestions raised by each member of the committee and redistribute the revised proposal within three weeks of the proposal conference.* Upon successful defense of the proposal before a committee, which will be comprised of the dissertation advisors and other experts in the field of interest (e.g., speech/language, learning, teaching), the final proposal must be approved by the Program Director. Then, the student will be allowed to initiate the IRB application. Once MTSU IRB approval is obtained, the student may conduct the research study. Finally, consultation and advice will be provided by the dissertation committee as the student develops and prepares to defend the document as well as during the post-defense revision process.

Graduate Studies Dissertation Guidelines

Dissertation Advisory Committee Form

Dissertation Proposal Approval Form

Defense of Dissertation
Upon submission of the completed dissertation, the doctoral candidate who has successfully completed all requirements for the degree will be scheduled by the chair of her/his dissertation committee, in consultation with other advisory members, to defend the dissertation. The College of Graduate Studies will publish the dissertation title, date, time, and location of the defense at least two weeks prior to the defense. The defense is open to all members of the university community who wish to attend. The dissertation defense is administered by the advisory/dissertation committee according to program guidelines. Successful defense of the dissertation must be attested to in writing on the Dissertation Approval Dynamic Form by all members of the advisory/dissertation committee, the Program Director, and the Associate Dean of the College of Graduate Studies.

Intent to Graduate
The [Intent to Graduate Form](#), available on the College of Graduate studies website must be filed NO LATER than the second week of the semester in which a student plans to graduate.

GRADUATE COURSES

Graduate students take courses at the 6000 (M.A.) or 7000 (Ph.D.) level. No more than one-third of the minimum 75 credit hours in the Ph.D. in Literacy Studies may be at the 6000-level.

Descriptions for all graduate courses appear in the *Graduate Catalog.*

Course offerings for each semester appear in a class schedule, which is available online usually in the month before the end of the current term. Once students know which courses they would like to take in a given semester, they can register for these courses online during their assigned registration period.

Course Load
Students should become familiar with the following information concerning status in regard to graduate loads to avoid problems with registration, financial aid, or academic status:

> **Full-time** status is 9-12 graduate hours.
> **Three-quarter time** is 7-8 graduate hours.
> **Half-time** is 5-6 graduate hours.

Graduate students are limited to a maximum of 12 graduate hours per semester. If an exception is requested, overload forms must be signed by the director of graduate studies and the dean of the College of Graduate Studies. Full-time status for students holding graduate assistantships is six (6) graduate semester hours.

GRADES AND ACADEMIC STANDING

Grades are assigned by professors based on the following notations, mandated by the College of Graduate Studies. Individual professors provide the grading scale for the courses they teach, using some or all of the assigned notations:

Grade	Grade Points
A	4.00
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.00
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.00
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.00
D-	0.67
F	0.00
I (Incomplete)	Not calculated
W (withdrawal)	Not calculated
P	Pass
F	Fail
S	Satisfactory
U	Unsatisfactory

Incompletes
Incompletes (designated by an I on the transcript) indicate that the student has not completed all course requirements due to illness or other uncontrollable circumstances, especially those that occur towards the close of the term. Mere failure to make up work or turn in assignments on time will not result in an incomplete unless documented extenuating circumstances are acceptable to the professor, who finally determines acceptable criteria for assigning an I.

Accessing Grades
Grades can be accessed online through PipelineMT. Outstanding financial balances prevent release of grades. There is an option that allows online payment by credit card or check card (VISA or MasterCard) to view grades.

Grade Appeals
The grade appeals process is available to any student who wants to contest a course grade. In general, grade appeals are adjudicated on the basis of policies and procedures outlined in the individual course guidelines and syllabus. The College of Graduate Studies provides policies and procedures, which constitute a two-level appeals process that the student initiates. Policy 313 Student Grade Appeals

Academic Standing
Students should acquaint themselves with the "Academic Policies and Procedures" section from the Graduate Catalog:
1. No more than seven [7] hours of C grade may count toward a Ph.D.
2. No course with a grade lower than a C- may be applied toward any graduate degree requirement.

Doctoral students in the Literacy Studies Program must maintain a minimum GPA of **3.25**.

Academic Probation
A graduate student failing to meet the applicable minimum cumulative graduate GPA retention standard will be placed on **academic probation** for the subsequent term.

STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS
The Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program assumes important responsibilities in preparing students for professional work in teaching and research. The faculty seeks to prepare students by providing courses, field experience, seminars, speakers, research experience, and other activities and resources relevant to students' studies and preparation. Graduate students in turn assume a responsibility to understand and meet all program requirements. Students should be aware of their progress towards meeting program requirements (see DegreeWorks) and communicate their plans regarding dates for completion of coursework, residency, preliminary exam, dissertation proposal, and dissertation defense with their advisor and Program Director. Any changes to plans should be discussed as soon as possible with advisors, the Program Director, and (when appropriate) Graduate Studies.

Students are expected to arrange their schedules to accommodate class meeting times and the office hours of professors.

While faculty will address individual needs whenever feasible, they are also obligated to apply all university, College of Graduate Studies, and Literacy Studies Graduate Program policies and procedures impartially to all students. Students who have special needs related to disability should work through the Disability and Access Center (615-898-2783; Keathley University Center, Room 107).

Statement of Community Standards of Civil Behavior
The Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program fully endorses the statement regarding valuing diversity issued by the MTSU Office of Student Conduct. Further, the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program supports the statement of community standards and expectations issued by the MTSU Student Handbook:

Statement of Community Standards and Expectations

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to developing and nurturing a community devoted to learning, growth, and service. Each person who joins or affiliates with the community does so freely and accepts and practices the following core values and expectations:

1. Honesty and Integrity. The notions of personal and academic honesty and integrity are central to the existence of the MTSU community. All members of the community will strive to achieve and maintain the highest standards of academic achievement in the classroom and personal and social responsibility on and off campus.

2. Respect for Diversity. The MTSU community is composed of individuals representing different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, cultures, and ways of thinking. We respect individual differences and unique perspectives and acknowledge our commonalities.

3. Engagement in the Community. All members of the community are encouraged to participate in educationally purposeful activities that support and enhance the MTSU experience. Active involvement and personal investment in the classroom and throughout the community are hallmarks of an engaged citizen.

4. Commitment to Nonviolence. MTSU is committed to the principles of nonviolence and peaceful conflict resolution. Community members will freely express their ideas and resolve differences using reason and persuasion.

These expectations for community standards would apply to all areas of graduate study—actual and virtual classrooms, writing labs, library, group meetings, presentations, all communication venues, and any other forum.

*The program faculty **strongly encourages** that **all students** become familiar with the MTSU Student Handbook.*

Scholarly Integrity

One aspect of professionalism involves integrity. Faculty members assume that students understand, subscribe to, and practice high personal and professional standards, and they hold students accountable to them. This includes the responsibility of doing one's own work and for complying with professional standards and procedures for attributing the sources of information, images, and other forms of media.

Academic Misconduct Defined (per MTSU Policy 312)

Academic Misconduct may consist of acts of plagiarism, cheating or fabrication.

1. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one's own without proper attribution. This includes self-plagiarism, which occurs when an author submits material or research from a previous academic exercise to satisfy the requirements of another exercise and uses it without proper citation of its reuse.

2. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or aids in any academic exercise or test/examination. Cheating includes unapproved collaboration, which occurs when a student works with others on an individual academic exercise without the express permission of the faculty member.

3. Fabrication includes, but is not limited to, unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

Please refer to MTSU Policy 312 Academic Misconduct and Academic Integrity for complete information regarding Academic Misconduct.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

Applicants wishing to be considered for a graduate assistantship, in addition to supplying the materials for general application (including a general application form), must fill out an Application for Graduate Assistantship. These applications will be reviewed by the program coordinating committee and will be awarded competitively.

Merit Based Awards

Applications will be awarded by merit. The merit of applications will be judged based on students' grades, GRE scores, letters of reference, availability of students during daytime on campus and skills that students have developed in prior graduate study and professional experience.

Availability of Graduate Assistants During Daytime (9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) on Campus

All graduate assistants should be available during daytime for faculty research and teaching. A 20-hour graduate assistant should be available during daytime for at least 10 hours per week, and a 10-hour graduate assistant should be available during daytime at least 5 hours per week. Exceptions can be made by the Program Committee.

Term of Assistantships

Full-time students entering the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program may apply for up to four years of support through an assistantship. The four-year limit is an appropriate amount of time for full-time students to complete a 75-hour degree program. Students who have been taking courses on a part-time basis may apply for support that is proportional to the number of credits remaining to be completed. For instance, a student who has completed 21 of 75 credits may apply for no more than two years of full-time support. Applications must be resubmitted for review each year: Program GA Application Form.

Responsibilities of Assistantships

Specific duties may vary from department to department and by advisor.

Full-time graduate assistants will work twenty (20) clock hours per week in supervised activities in the department or office of their employment or a combination of contact hours in a classroom or laboratory environment. Full-time graduate assistantships at MTSU pay tuition costs and a stipend of $14,500.00 a year.

Part-time graduate assistants will work ten (10) clock hours per week in supervised activities in the department or office of their employment or a combination of contact hours in a classroom or laboratory environment. Part-time graduate assistantships at MTSU pay half of tuition costs and a stipend of $7,250.00 a year.

Termination of Assistantships

Students who are awarded an assistantship will typically receive all four years of support, unless their academic performance or performance of duties within the assistantship warrants termination. The MTSU College of Graduate Studies specifies that retaining support is dependent on maintaining a 3.25 cumulative GPA in graduate courses.

Graduate assistants found responsible for academic misconduct will have their assistantship terminated.

For more information about Graduate Assistantships, please refer to Graduate Assistantship Information on the College of Graduate Studies website.

Appointment of Graduate Assistants - University Policy

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH AND SERVICE-LEARNING RESOURCES

A vital part of the preparation envisioned for graduate students is field experience relevant to their selected specialization within the broad field of literacy. Though many students will enter the doctoral program with significant experience as classroom teachers, school administrators, or other educational specialists, we believe it is important to build on those experiences by offering a variety of opportunities for service learning in settings relevant to their selected areas of specialization within the Ph.D. degree program.

Campus-Based Research and Field Placement

The Middle Tennessee State University campus offers graduate students in Literacy Studies many opportunities to participate in and conduct literacy-related research and to participate in service-learning activities. Examples include:

1. *Tennessee Center for the Study and Treatment of Dyslexia*. The primary mission of the Tennessee Center for Dyslexia is to provide services and support to children with dyslexia, their families and their schools across the state. These services include assessment for dyslexia, recommendations for intervention and progress monitoring. The Center also makes its archives of case data available for research. Both research opportunities and practicum placements in reading assessment and intervention would be available to Literacy Studies graduate students.

2. *Psychology Department*. The research resources of the Psychology Department, including its extensive experimental research facility and centrally coordinated subject pool, are available to graduate students in Literacy Studies.

3. *University Writing Center*. The University Writing Center offers assistance in college-level writing to MTSU students both in their on-campus center and online. Service-learning placements with the Writing Center offers students opportunities for interacting with college students with difficulties in writing and with the Writing Center's staff and tutors in, for example, the development of training that would improve the capacity to understand the range of factors affecting students' oral and written language proficiency.

External Collaborations

Partnerships with area organizations of various kinds add significantly to the richness of the experiences the Literacy Studies program offers its graduate students. Collaborations have been established with a variety of educational, clinical, service, research and policy organizations in order to provide graduate students with opportunities to experience the real-world application of their classroom and literacy-based learning and to support a variety of research opportunities for class-based and dissertation research. We provide an overview of the range of collaborations that the program has developed, along with a representative listing of the kinds of organizations with which we have formed partnerships.

Types of Organizations Providing Collaborations

1. Schools and School Systems. Schools and school districts are one source for field experiences for doctoral students. The doctoral program is well positioned to continue to develop partnerships with schools, school districts, and individual educators locally and within the region through its links to teacher preparation programs at MTSU and the Tennessee Center for the Study and Treatment of Dyslexia. The College of Education has strong links to schools and school systems through its involvement in the regional P-16 council as well as its student teaching collaborations. The Center for Dyslexia has established many associations and collaborations with local, state, and national leaders in the civic, educational, and political fields related to dyslexia and reading education. These connections will be of great value in cultivating and sustaining partnerships for the doctoral program.

2. State and Local Education Agencies. There are many government agencies that will serve as excellent field placements for students with interests in education policy, legislation, and regulations. These include county boards of education, legislative committees of the Tennessee State Legislature (both Senate and House of Representatives), the Tennessee Board of Education, and governmental commissions with education-related mandates and units of the Tennessee Department of Education. The program will make

use of existing associations with these offices and individuals to develop field placement opportunities for doctoral students.

3. <u>Local, Regional, and National Educational Service, Advocacy, and Policy Organizations</u>. Many non-governmental agencies are engaged in important work intended to improve literacy outcomes for children and adults. These organizations will provide effective field experiences for students whose interests overlap with the missions and projects of these organizations. Examples include:

   a. *Private Foundations*. Many private foundations are significantly involved in supporting literacy-related programs and projects in the Middle Tennessee area. These include the Memorial Foundation, Dollar General Literacy Foundation, and the Dell Foundation Literate Community Grants program. Doctoral students will gain valuable experience through working with these foundations in their grant-making activities or working with the organizations that are funded by these (and other) foundations. Faculty representatives of the doctoral program will cultivate contacts with these organizations and discuss the roles that the students might play in their operations.

   b. *Advocacy, Outreach, and Public Education Groups*. Advocacy groups that engage in efforts to influence public policy at the state and federal level and engage in a variety of advocacy activities (*e.g.*, Tennessee Branch, International Dyslexia Association; Tennessee Bar Association). These organizations will offer graduate students excellent opportunities to gain experience in a variety of activities relating to literacy education. At the same time, the knowledge and skills our students possess could be very valuable to these organizations and their missions. Representatives of the program are developing contacts with these and similar organizations to discuss the possibility of mutually advantageous partnerships that would lead to field experience opportunities for our graduates.

   c. *Professional Associations*. A number of professional associations for educators, psychologists, and other professionals in the broad field of education are engaged in advocacy, research, and policy formulation. These groups provide another potential source for field placements that could suit the interests and needs of our doctoral students. Examples include the Tennessee Education Association, Tennessee Association of School Psychologists, and the Tennessee Chapter of the American Speech and Hearing Association. We plan to explore possible partnership agreements with these organizations.

4. <u>Clinical Service Collaborations</u>. One of the major areas that we anticipate our students will find of great interest is the opportunity to participate in diagnostic and intervention services. Many of these services are provided through the public schools, but there are a number of other institutions and organizations that also offer these services to the public. They represent another potential source of both institutional partnerships and field placement opportunities. A brief summary of these services is provided below.

   a. *Diagnostic and Intervention Services*. Students with interest in diagnostic and/or intervention practices may wish to arrange field placements with clinicians or diagnosticians who work with specific populations (early childhood acquired neurocognitive disorders in children), or who are skilled in conducting particular types of diagnostic assessments that differ from those typically administered in schools (e.g., psychoeducational or neuropsychological evaluations; assessments for developmental language or communication disorders). Some of these clinics are located on the campus of the Middle Tennessee State University and would make excellent field placements for students (e.g., the Communication Disorders clinic). Other nearby sites include hospital-based psychology assessment centers (e.g., Alvin C. York Veterans Administration Hospital) and private clinical practices. These potential partners will be approached by representatives of the program and invited to initiate discussions regarding the development of mutually beneficial academic partnerships.

b. *Research Partnerships*. While students will have many different research opportunities through the program faculty, we have also developed a variety of additional opportunities that will allow them to gain further research experience that would supplement the facilities available on the campus of the Middle Tennessee State University. This is achieved through existing and future research collaborations in areas such as neuroimaging, genetics, academic interventions, diagnostic research, and experiences through research-based internships in settings such as the Tennessee Department of Education, county school systems, and non-profit education institutions.

Information in the Literacy Studies Graduate Student Handbook, based on information in the College of Graduate Studies *Graduate Catalog* or university department and program documents, is superseded by more recently communicated updated policies and procedures from the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program office. The handbook is available on the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program's website. It is the student's responsibility to ask the Program Director of the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program about any apparent inconsistencies that may come to the student's attention. Students should keep in mind that they are generally governed by the policies and procedures stated in the graduate catalog in place when they enter the program unless they elect to be governed by newer policies and procedures when the option is available.