

# STUDENT HANDBOOK

for the

M.S. in Experiential and Outdoor Education

at

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

January, 2022 Edition



M.S. in Experiential and  
Outdoor Education

**CONNECT**

**EXPLORE**

**LEAD**

The WCU Experiential and Outdoor Education (EOE) faculty welcome you to this innovative program! We hope you enjoy your time in the EOE Program and benefit greatly from it. We also look forward to getting to know you better and learning alongside you.

The purpose of this student Handbook is to provide you with a written guide as you progress through your program. It will be updated as necessary. We ask you to consult it frequently. Among other things, this Handbook contains a description of your program and its expectations and requirements. The Handbook also refers you to other valuable sources of information such as the WCU Graduate School, University and professional websites, and the Experiential and Outdoor Education Program website.

EOE faculty and students will consult the Handbook as needed throughout students' training in the Program. Students are encouraged to use this Handbook as a supplement to the personal feedback and guidance of faculty, staff, and student colleagues in the Program. In general, students are held accountable for completing the requirements as stated in the Handbook in effect at the time of Program entry. However, the Handbook should be considered "a living document." Changes may be made in "real time" to content in the Handbook. These changes may supersede Handbook material. Such changes will be communicated clearly to students affected by said changes. EOE faculty reserve the right to make alterations to the program requirements. These changes may alter program requirements not only for new students, but also for students enrolled in the Program. In the event of any major change in the program requirements, students will be provided with the opportunity for input into the proposed change and will be given formal notification through established communication channels.

We hope that you find this Handbook useful. So that we can continue to improve the quality of the Handbook in the future, we invite you to share with us in writing your ideas, suggestions, and observations regarding its contents. The EOE Student Handbook is available online at: [eoe.wcu.edu](http://eoe.wcu.edu)

The EOE Handbook does not replace policies and procedures that appear in the WCU Graduate School Catalog. The Handbook specifies, where appropriate, instances where the WCU Graduate School procedures reference program-specific requirements that may differ from the Graduate School, such as program admissions and student dismissal procedures. Graduate students are expected to be familiar with the information in WCU's Graduate Catalog, particularly the section on Academic Regulations which include Graduate School policies regarding: registration; course and grade policies; program completion and graduation; enrollment status; thesis requirements; and student rights and regulations, among others. Students should view the online version at: <http://catalog.wcu.edu> (note: please select current catalog year from upper center drop down box).

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## **EOE PROGRAM OFFICES**

EOE faculty offices are on the Cullowhee, NC campus in Reid 122.

Staff serving the EOE Program, as well as other programs, include: Rena McKay, the Department of Human Services administrative support associate in Killian 208, and Denise Royer, the department's student services specialist in Killian 206. They and graduate assistants (GAs) respond to routine calls and handle the day-to-day office needs of the faculty. The departmental office in Cullowhee is usually open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday; telephone number is (828) 227-7310.

At WCU-Biltmore Park, staff include: Dr. Kevan Frazier, Executive Director of WCU Programs at Biltmore Park (WCU-BP). WCU-BP, located at 28 Schenck Parkway, is open Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and Friday and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; the telephone number is (828) 654-6498.

## **FACULTY AND STAFF**

### EOE Faculty

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## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The EOE Program exists within the Department of Human Services, which exists within the College of Education and Allied Professions.

Western Carolina University (Chancellor, Dr. Kelli Brown) is divided into six Colleges: College of Arts and Sciences; College of Business; College of Education and Allied Professions; College of Engineering and Technology; College of Fine and Performing Arts; and College of Health and Human Sciences.

The College of Education and Allied Professions (Dean, Dr. Kim Winter) is divided into 3 Units: Department of Human Services; Department of Psychology; and School of Teaching and Learning.

The Department of Human Services (Department Head, Dr. Lisen Roberts) is divided into nine Programs: Birth-Kindergarten (Director, Dr. Cathy Grist); Counseling (Director, Dr. Melodie Frick); Educational Leadership (Director, Dr. Jess Weiler); Experiential and Outdoor Education (Director, Dr. Andrew Bobilya); Higher Education Student Affairs (Director, Dr. April Perry); Human Resources (Director, Dr. John Sherlock); Parks and Recreation Management (Director, Dr. Callie Schultz); and School Administration (Director, Dr. Heidi Von Dohlen); and service unit Project Discovery (Director, JennieV Sorrells).

## **UNIVERSITY, GRADUATE SCHOOL, COLLEGE, AND DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW**

### **Western Carolina University**

As the westernmost institution in the University of North Carolina system, WCU provides comprehensive educational opportunities to residents in the state's western region and attracts students from around the globe to explore the region's vast natural diversity. Founded in 1889 as a teaching college, WCU now provides an education to more than 10,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs.

Western Carolina University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award baccalaureate, masters, and doctorate degrees. Western Carolina University has been accredited by SACSCOC since 1946; the last accreditation review took place in 2017.

Western Carolina University is a public regional institution of higher education whose mission is to create learning opportunities that incorporate teaching, research, service, and engagement through on-campus, off-campus, on-line, and international experiences. The university focused its undergraduate, master's and three doctoral programs, which include educational outreach, research, and creative and cultural activities, to sustain and improve individual lives and enhance economic and community development in Western Carolina and beyond.

The story of WCU is one deeply connected to the people of our region; we are rooted in our service to the people of Southern Appalachia and beyond. WCU belongs not just to our students and our faculty and staff, but to the whole community, for we are integrally connected to this region as its educational, economic, and cultural center. Our vision is to be a national model for

student learning and engagement that embraces its responsibilities as a regionally engaged university.

Western Carolina University is committed to excellence in teaching and learning, collaboration with a respect for our communities, free and open interchange of ideas, responsible stewardship, organizational and environmental sustainability, and cultural diversity and equal opportunity. These are the values that guide our approach to education and service daily.

## **The WCU Graduate School**

### Graduate School Vision

To serve as a model unit of support, service, and stewardship of excellence in graduate education to meet the intellectual, academic, and vocational needs of students in the region and beyond.

### Graduate School Core Values

- Support and uphold academic and research excellence
- Assure and support consistent integrity and best practices in all graduate programs, graduate student experiences, and Graduate School policies
- Collaborate with all university academic and support units
- Advocate for the value of high-quality graduate education to the university and region
- Maintain a strong customer-service ethic with all faculty, staff, and prospective, current, and former students
- Maintain efficient and responsive business operations

### Graduate School Mission

To provide leadership, resources, and support for academically rigorous graduate study.

### Graduate School Web Page

The Graduate School web site ([grad.wcu.edu](http://grad.wcu.edu)) contains information of importance to graduate students. The site includes information about graduate programs, Admissions (Application and Supplemental Materials), the Graduate Student Association, the Graduate Catalog, the Graduate Council, Current News and Events, Financial Aid and Expenses, Scholarships, Fellowships, and Housing.

## **The College of Education and Allied Professions ([ceap.wcu.edu](http://ceap.wcu.edu))**

The College of Education and Allied Professions (CEAP) is home to WCU's leading programs in teacher education as well as numerous programs in Human Services such as Counseling, Parks and Recreation Management, Human Resources, Experiential and Outdoor Education, and Educational Leadership. In addition, programs in Psychology, which is one of WCU's Top 5 undergraduate majors, are housed in the college. No matter what program you choose, the College of Education and Allied Professions will provide extensive opportunities for hands-on learning through field experiences, outreach projects, research, and professional mentorship.

The primary role of the College is to prepare educators, counselors, psychologists, speech-language pathologists, recreation personnel, and other human service specialists at both entry and advanced levels. These professionals will staff public elementary, secondary, and postsecondary

schools, sport and recreation agencies, and other human service organizations in North Carolina and the region beyond.

The College fulfills its mission by developing and maintaining a community of scholars that promotes and recognizes good teaching, service, and research. Of these three scholarly activities, providing optimal learning environments for students is most important, followed by service and research. CEAP provides undergraduate and graduate programs, including both traditional and online instruction.

The mission of the professional education programs at WCU is to prepare highly effective and ethical graduates that are inspired to be lifelong learners, engaged in the community, and empowered to become leaders who strive to transform the future. Professional education programs at WCU include preparation programs for teachers, administrators, counselors, school psychologists, and child and family development professionals at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels.

The College strives to provide leadership and technical assistance for the improvement of teacher preparation and elementary and secondary schooling in North Carolina, the nation, and developing countries. The College is strongly committed to partnering with the public schools to educate pre-service teachers to teach all children to high standards, to assist beginning professional educators to be successful and remain in the profession, and to provide quality staff development for career professional educators. Additional fundamental roles of the College are to serve the liberal studies program of the University and to offer programs and special clinical services that relate closely to the mission of the College and that are needed by its constituencies.

The College fulfills its mission by creating and nourishing a community of learners guided by knowledge, values, and experiences. The guiding principles of the community of learners include: (a) the belief that the best educational decisions are made after adequate reflection and with careful consideration of the interests, experiences, and welfare of the persons affected by those decisions; (b) an appreciation of and respect for diversity; and (c) a commitment to fostering the responsible use of technology.

### **Department of Human Services**

The Human Services (HS) Department offers a wide range of undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate degrees in fields intended to meet a variety of human needs. Careers in human services focus on improving quality of life for individuals and communities, and preventing and remediating problems.

Students enrolled in the Department of Human Services can take advantage of many opportunities for real-world experience. Our students get hands-on experience through internships, field experience, and hands-on teaching.

The Department of Human Services within the College of Education and Allied Professions offers programs of study at the baccalaureate through doctoral levels. These programs prepare candidates for rewarding professions in early childhood education, experiential and outdoor education, parks and recreation management, community and educational leadership, human

resources, professional school and clinical mental health counseling, and higher education student affairs. The Department includes Project Discovery, which works directly with youth in Western North Carolina public schools to encourage attendance and completion of post-secondary education. Our mission is to create collaborative educational environments that support our students' professional development. We prepare students to be professionals engaged in lifelong learning who embrace diversity and inclusion, design and implement evidence-based initiatives, and promote social justice. Our programs are guided by ethical, professional standards for best practice, which includes community service and internship experiences. In addition to preparing students, we serve communities through leadership, scholarship, and service.

### **EXPERIENTIAL AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAM (EOE)**

The M.S. in Experiential and Outdoor Education degree began in August 2020 and utilizes the philosophy of experiential education combined with the modality of outdoor education to provide students with necessary training to serve in a variety of educational contexts.

The EOE Program enhances the alignment between the current undergraduate degree program in Parks and Recreation Management along with other kindred WCU graduate programs (e.g., Counseling) and the academic mission of the institution as a regional comprehensive university. The mission of WCU is to “create learning opportunities that incorporate teaching, research, service, and engagement through on-campus, off-campus, on-line, and international experiences.” The programs at WCU are focused on educational outreach, research, and creative and cultural activities to sustain and improve individual lives and enhance economic and community development in Western Carolina and beyond.

The EOE Program is a natural fit for the western NC region with its abundance of outdoor recreation, education, and therapeutic employment and internship opportunities that meet the professional and personal interests of potential students. Moreover, the EOE Program directly supports the growing outdoor related economic and community development in Western Carolina and beyond. The EOE Program builds on the expertise of the Parks and Recreation Management (PRM) undergraduate program and other kindred programs at WCU.

Western Carolina University and the EOE Program are committed to broadening our students' sensitivity, knowledge, and competence in working with individuals from different backgrounds. In the classroom, faculty work to foster open dialogue and provoke discussions about multicultural issues related to the various applications of EOE. Students are encouraged to seek practical experiences and elective coursework that will foster the further development of multicultural competencies. Students are expected to engage with individuals who hold beliefs, values, life experiences, or attributes that may be different from their own. Additionally, students are expected to understand the impact of their own personal biases, effectively limit the impact of those biases on their work and understand important historical contexts and social structures that play a role in the lives of diverse individuals. Finally, students are expected to demonstrate a commitment to social justice work and multiculturalism by serving as advocates for social change in the face of unhealthy and oppressive societal structures when these serve as obstacles for their diverse program participants and students.



### **EOE Program Diversity Statement**

*Diversity* involves the affirmation, understanding, and professional application of the richness of human differences, ideas, practices, and beliefs that result from, but are not limited to, age, race, color, disability/health, ethnicity, gender identity, language, national origin, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, rural or urban status, as well as the intersectionality of these multiple identities. *Professional practice that is responsive to diversity* includes culturally appropriate communication skills; understanding power differentials and dynamics; and attending to the social and cultural values which influence the multiple areas of practice represented in EOE.

### **EOE Program Commitment to Social Justice**

A commitment to social justice serves as a guiding principle of the EOE Program and reflects our belief in the values and goals of a socially just society. Socially just societies are dependent upon the optimal functioning, health, and well-being of *all persons in that society*. Optimal functioning, health, and well-being of persons are contingent upon access to healthy environments that support healthy development and functioning. Our Program is centered on a social justice approach by helping students to examine power structures resulting in social injustices and to adopt an advocacy role in working with marginalized and underserved populations. Our goal is to foster the development of professional advocates who work to change societal structures, practices, values, and policies which have long served to perpetuate unhealthy environments for these populations. By working to effect change at the individual, institutional and systemic level, our students assist in promoting greater access to economic, social, political, and cultural resources.

## **EOE PROGRAM RECRUITMENT, APPLICATION, AND ADMISSION**

### **Recruitment**

The Program engages in various student recruitment efforts. The EOE Program Director and department staff work with the WCU Graduate School and WCU Communications and Marketing to publicize the Program. Program faculty participate in WCU Graduate School's Open House initiative to meet personally with students interested in the EOE degree. Collaboration between the EOE Program and the WCU Communications and Marketing department ensures comprehensive advertising through search engines, print media, and departmental website presence. Program faculty also regularly attend local, regional, national and international conferences and promote the EOE Program (e.g., Adventure Education Conference; Association for Experiential Education Annual International Conference).

### Recruitment of Diverse Students:

Through appropriate university offices, particularly WCU's Graduate School, program faculty has begun to network with community colleges and sister four-year institutions (including North Carolina's historically Black colleges and universities [HBCUs]) to identify potential scholars from underrepresented groups. Recruitment efforts also extend to regional colleges and universities (e.g., Brevard College; Montreat College; Warren Wilson College; Lees-McRae College; Young Harris College) to recruit students from rural Appalachian communities to increase the diversity of the student body.

## Application Procedures

### Application Requirements:

- Undergraduate GPA of 3.0 minimum (or conditional admission with otherwise exceptional application)
- Bachelor's degree from accredited institution (or conditional admission pending conferral of degree)
- Strong recommendations from academic and/or professional sources
- Strong writing skills
- Relevant professional experience and/or goals

### Documents to be Submitted for Admission:

1. Graduate School Application and Fee
2. Three References
3. Essay Responses (See essay questions in online application)
4. Academic Transcripts
5. Work History Resume

**Deadline:** Applications to the EOE Program are typically due February 1<sup>st</sup> for Priority Consideration and remain open until June 1<sup>st</sup> for any remaining spaces available for the upcoming August start. **Only completed applications received by the deadline will be considered. See Table 1 for typical timeline.**

## Application Review, Candidate Selection, and Timeline

**Application review:** Admission into the EOE Program is selective and providing a complete application does not guarantee admission to the Program. An admissions committee including EOE faculty members associated with the Program will review all completed applications and offer program acceptance for up to 20 students for each cohort. The application review process involves holistic evaluation, including fit with mission of the Program as well as academic preparation and promise.

**Table 1. Typical Application and Admission Timeline.**

Event	Date
Application due for Priority Deadline	February 1 <sup>st</sup>
Notification of Acceptance	February 15 <sup>th</sup>
Enrollment Decision	April 1 <sup>st</sup>
Final Application Deadline	June 1 <sup>st</sup>
Notification of Acceptance for Remaining Spaces	June 15 <sup>th</sup>
Enrollment Decision	July 1 <sup>st</sup>
Coursework Begins with 5-day Intensive (EOE 500)	Monday – Friday (all day) During 1 <sup>st</sup> Week of Classes in August

## **GRADUATE SCHOOL ADMISSION AND MONITORING**

### **Admissions Categories**

Persons applying for admission to the Graduate School, if accepted, may be admitted in one of several categories as described below:

#### Regular Admission

Students with a complete application file, who meet the established requirements for admission to the Graduate School and their degree programs, are granted Regular Admission. To qualify for Regular Admission, a student must have earned an overall grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale for the last 60 hours of undergraduate work, or a 2.85 on a 4.0 scale cumulatively. An applicant with a graduate degree does not have to meet the undergraduate grade point average requirement. The following are required:

- Complete Application File
- Meets all requirements

#### Non-Degree Admission

The EOE Program does not allow non-degree seeking admission. Students outside of the EOE Program and who are enrolled at WCU in another graduate program are encouraged to consider taking one or more EOE elective course(s) as space permits. Priority is given to currently enrolled EOE students in EOE elective courses.

#### Monitoring Conditionally Admitted Students

Students who do not meet provisions outlined in their conditional admittance will be dismissed from the Graduate School. A Graduate School hold will be placed on the record of students who do not meet conditions.

### **Residency Requirements and Change of Residency**

Initial residency determinations are made based upon information the student provides at the time of application. To qualify for in-state residency, a student must be a legal resident of North Carolina (i.e., must have maintained a permanent place of residence in the state at least one year prior to the submission of the application for admission). Students who are active military or dependents of active military personnel stationed in North Carolina are given special consideration for in-state residency. North Carolina residents who do not yet meet the 12-month residency requirement but who are full-time North Carolina public school teachers or full-time UNC system employees may qualify for a waiver of nonresident tuition. Any student who has been classified as an out-of-state student for tuition purposes can petition for in-state residency by completing a Residency application and providing the appropriate documentation. Residency applications may be obtained at (<https://ncresidency.cfnc.org/residencyInfo/>). Residency determinations are governed by the [Residency Determination Service \(RDS\) Guidebook](#).

### **Degree Time Limits**

Work to be applied toward any master, specialist, or doctoral degree must be completed within six years immediately preceding the completion of requirements for the degree. Graduate credits to be accepted in transfer must have been earned within the six-year period. Extension of time limits will only be granted based on compelling reasons or circumstances. Extensions must have the approval of the student's advisor, the head of the department of the student's program, and

the Dean of Graduate School and Research. Requests must be submitted in writing detailing the reasons for and circumstances surrounding the request. The request must also detail any remaining degree requirements and a timeline for completion. The Dean of Graduate School and Research may establish conditions for any approved extension.

### **Continuous Registration**

Students who will continue to use university resources in completing their degrees must enroll in and pay tuition and fees for at least one hour of continuous enrollment. This course will be charged at the rate consistent with the student's residency status. These hours will not count toward the degree and will carry a different course number than those thesis courses that are included within the hours designated for the degree. Students who will not use university resources should apply to the Graduate School for a "Leave of Absence." Students choosing this option must file a formal petition for a "Leave of Absence" that states that they will not use university resources during the leave period. Students must be registered for at least one class in the semester preceding their graduation. One hour of continuous enrollment will satisfy this requirement if all other required coursework, thesis, non-thesis comprehensive examination, etc. are already completed.

### **Course Loads**

The maximum full-time course load for graduate students is 15 hours per semester. The minimum full-time load per semester is nine hours. The maximum load for graduate assistants is 12 hours per semester. Load limitation during summer school is 12 hours.

### **Stop Out/Leave of Absence**

Circumstances may cause students to miss one or more semesters during their course of study. When this occurs, students should contact both their advisor and the Program Director to discuss options for future continuation in the Program.

Any student who has not yet registered for a given term, and who needs to take time off from school without losing catalog rights or registration eligibility, can either take a "Stop Out" (for one to two terms of leave) or a "Leave of Absence" (for three terms of leave). Students may take one or two terms of leave called a "Stop Out" without declaring a "Leave of Absence" with the Office of the Registrar. Students are eligible to register the following semester. A "Leave of Absence" may be granted upon request to those who are eligible to register for a term but have not yet done so. They can be taken for up to one full year (three terms). Note that students requesting a "Leave of Absence" will be required to reapply online and pay the fees to be reinstated. Students should consult with the EOE Program Director to understand what conditions they will face for readmission.

The university requires a full and complete application for re-entry into the Program after three consecutive (including summer) non-enrollment semesters. See Table 2 below to determine when you would have to reapply to the university and program. Please note that there is no guarantee of readmission. All time limits apply for course work taken, and the student is subject to the catalog term in effect at the time of readmission unless a catalog change is approved by the Program Director and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Table 2. Reapplication Schedule.

<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Fall</b>
<b>Enrolled</b>	Not Enrolled	Not Enrolled	Not Enrolled	<b>Reapply</b>		
	<b>Enrolled</b>	Not Enrolled	Not Enrolled	Not Enrolled	<b>Reapply</b>	
		<b>Enrolled</b>	Not Enrolled	Not Enrolled	Not Enrolled	<b>Reapply</b>

### **Deferment**

The Graduate School allows deferral, conditional on program approval, of an application/admission for up to one year past the original start term. Deferral requests must be submitted in writing to the Graduate School. Many considerations are involved, so applicants considering deferral are encouraged to contact the Graduate School as soon as possible and discuss this with the EOE Program Director.

### **Withdrawals During Term**

A student may find it necessary or advisable to withdraw from one or more courses during a term. In some cases, they may find it necessary to withdraw from the university.

#### Course Withdrawal:

After consultation with the academic adviser and the instructor of the course, a student may withdraw from any course prior to the expiration of one-half of the term and receive a “W.” Students withdraw from a course through myWCU.wcu.edu. Course withdrawals do not count toward the credit hours required for full-time enrollment. After one-half of a term, but prior to the fourteenth week of the semester (or before the last two class days of summer sessions), a “W” will be assigned only for written verifiable mental health, medical, legal, or administrative reasons. In order to obtain a “W”, the student must first consult with the course instructor, who may elect to support or withhold support for the student’s request. If the instructor supports in writing the student’s request, the student must receive written verifiable support from Western Carolina University Health Services’ staff, Counseling and Psychological Services’ staff, an official court of law, or a college Dean, as appropriate. Approvals by the course instructor, the head of the department offering the course, and the student’s adviser, must be obtained no later than the last day of the thirteenth week of the semester. No “W”s will be assigned after the last day of the thirteenth week of a semester, or during the last two class days of a summer session. In extenuating circumstances, or if the student’s request is not approved by any university party involved, the student can appeal through the Academic Appeal Procedure within thirty-five days after the end of final exams.

#### University Withdrawal:

See policies and procedures outlined in the Graduate Student Handbook.

**Incomplete**

At the discretion of the instructor, a student may be given a grade of incomplete when the work in the course has not been completed, provided this is for reasons beyond the control of the student. All incomplete grades must be removed prior to the last day of classes (NOT the last day of finals week) of the next regular semester (fall/spring).

**EOE PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The M.S. in Experiential and Outdoor Education degree utilizes the philosophy of experiential education combined with the modality of outdoor education to provide students with necessary training to serve in a variety of educational contexts.

**Educational Objectives**

Students will:

1. Develop a theoretical and philosophical foundation for experiential and outdoor education.
2. Understand research methods as they apply to experiential and outdoor education scholarship.
3. Design learning experiences for diverse populations that integrate theory into practice.
4. Identify a need in the literature, and then propose and complete a graduate level thesis or project to meet that need.

**Coursework Overview**

The M.S. in Experiential and Outdoor Education is a two-year, residential hybrid degree program. Students will be admitted in a cohort model beginning in August. In the first year, face-to-face coursework will include a one-week intensive course on campus at the start of the term followed by four weekends (Fridays and Saturdays) each in the fall and spring semesters (April weekend is Thursday, Friday and Saturday). Students will be engaged in online coursework throughout the semester(s) (See Degree Requirements table on following page). During the second year, students will complete additional required and elective coursework (individual choice of face-to-face, online and/or hybrid course formats) including a thesis or project. This format allows for students to remain employed full-time and/or pursue field-based coursework (e.g., internships) at regional agencies (See <https://www.wcu.edu/learn/> for weekend face-to-face session locations).

**Credits**

36 total credits

27 required core credits from courses within the Program

Nine elective credits may come from within the Program, other WCU graduate programs or graduate courses (up to 6 credits from outside WCU)

**Table 3. Degree Requirements (27 Hours).**

Year 1 Fall Semester		Delivery Method
EOE 500	Foundations of EOE (3)	F2F: Meets face-to-face (F2F) for 1 week (Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm)
EOE 501	Philosophy & Theory of Experiential and Outdoor Education (3)	Hybrid: Online and meets 1 weekend/month F2F (4 weekends total with EOE 501, 502 & 503 being held over 2 days)
EOE 502	Diversity and Social Justice (3)	Hybrid: Online and meets 1 weekend/month F2F (4 weekends total with EOE 501, 502 & 503 being held over 2 days)
EOE 503	Research Methods in Experiential and Outdoor Education (3)	Hybrid: Online and meets 1 weekend/month F2F (4 weekends total with EOE 501, 502 & 503 being held over 2 days)
Year 1 Spring Semester		Delivery Method
EOE 600	Advanced Research Methods and Evaluation Techniques (3)	Hybrid: Online and meets 1 weekend/month F2F (4 weekends total with EOE 600, 601 & 602 being held over 2 days)
EOE 601	Current Trends and Issues in Experiential and Outdoor Education (3)	Hybrid: Online and meets 1 weekend/month F2F (4 weekends total with EOE 600, 601 & 602 being held over 2 days)
EOE 602	Group Facilitation and Teaching Methods in EOE (3)	Hybrid: Online and meets 1 weekend/month F2F (4 weekends total with EOE 600, 601 & 602 being held over 2 days)
	Summer Session Between Years 1 and 2 ( <b>optional</b> )	Delivery Method
EOE 627	Wilderness Education (3-6)	Face-to-Face, Immersive Travel Course
EOE 637	Experiential and Outdoor Education Expedition (3-6)	Face-to-Face, Immersive Travel Course
EOE 635	Sites, Facilities and Programs in EOE (3)	Face-to-Face, Focus Varies
EOE 680	Independent Study in EOE (3)	Varies
EOE 683	Internship in EOE (3)	Onsite with online supervision
	<i>Other electives may be offered</i>	
Year 2 Fall Semester		Delivery Method
EOE 679	Thesis I/Project I (3)	Online
	Elective #1 (3)	Varies
	Elective #2 (3)	Varies
Year 2 Spring Semester		Delivery Method
EOE 699	Thesis II/Project II (3)	Online
	Elective #3 (3)	Varies (if student completed one or more electives in summer session this is optional)
	Elective #4 (3) (optional)	Varies

**Electives (9 hours)**

Elective credits may come from within the Program, other WCU graduate programs, or graduate courses (up to 6 credits from outside WCU). Below is a list of the electives from within the EOE Program followed by a **sample** of electives from outside the Program. Following is a list of electives that an advisor may recommend for a student with an interest in wilderness therapy. See your advisor for guidance regarding EOE and non-EOE electives.

**Table 4. EOE Program Electives.**

Electives from within the EOE Program		
**Each elective may not be offered every academic year AND new electives may be offered under the EOE 693 Topics course (e.g., EOE 693: Field Natural History of WNC)		
EOE 621	Interpretation and Environmental Education (3)	Face-to-Face, One day per week in Cullowhee and Field Sites
EOE 623	Youth Development (3)	Online
EOE 624	Social Media, Technology and EOE (3)	Online
EOE 627	Wilderness Education (3-6)	Face-to-Face, Immersive Travel Course
EOE 635	Sites, Facilities and Programs in EOE (3)	Face-to-Face or Travel Course, Focus Varies
EOE 637	Experiential and Outdoor Education Expedition (3-6)	Face-to-Face, Immersive Travel Course
EOE 680	Independent Study in EOE (3, R6)	Online
EOE 683	Internship in EOE (3, R6)	Onsite with online supervision
EOE 693	Topics in EOE (3)	Face-to-Face/Hybrid/Online
EOE 779	Continuing Research, Non-Thesis (1)	Online
EOE 799	Continuing Research, Thesis (1)	Online
Sample Electives from other WCU Graduate Programs for Wilderness Therapy Focus		
**Each elective may not be offered every academic year		
COUN 600	Individual and Group Helping Skills (3)	Face-to-Face
COUN 612	Sexuality Counseling (3)	Face-to-Face
COUN 619	Nature as a Metaphor (3)	Face-to-Face
COUN 620	Counseling Children and Adolescents (3)	Face-to-Face
COUN 637	Creative and Expressive Arts in Counseling (3)	Hybrid
COUN 672	Positive Psychotherapy in Integrated Care (3)	Online
COUN 677	Spirituality in Counseling (3)	Hybrid



### **Transfer Credit**

Transfer credit refers to any credit transferred to WCU from another institution.

Policies regarding transfer credit vary according to the graduate program. Based on the sliding scale below (total number of hours in the graduate program), graduate students may transfer in hours (with a grade of B or better) with approval of the Program Director.

30-39 hours (up to six hours) \*\*EOE Program falls in this category

40-49 hours (up to nine hours)

50+ hours (up to 12 hours)

Depending on the graduate program, students may transfer six to 12 semester hours of graduate credit earned with grades of B or better. Students should consult with their Academic Advisor to determine the specific number of transfer hours allowed in a program. Up to nine hours (with a 6-year time limit) may be counted in meeting the requirements in two different graduate programs and degree programs. Requests for transfer of credit already earned are made as soon as is feasible when the student is accepted into degree status. Graduate School forms and manuals can be found at: <https://www.wcu.edu/apply/graduate-school/admissions/index.aspx> or by calling the Graduate School.

Courses accepted for transfer credit must (1) be appropriate to the student's program and be approved by the student's advisor, (2) be completed within the 6-year limit for course work applicable toward the degree, (3) have earned a minimum grade of B, and (4) have been offered by a regionally accredited institution for graduate credit. Transfer credit must be approved as part of a program of study at WCU; non-degree students may not request transfer of credit. (A non-degree student who subsequently applies for and is accepted into a WCU graduate degree program may request transfer of relevant graduate credits earned elsewhere, subject to the ordinary grade requirements and 6-year time limit.)

Graduate students who have been admitted to Graduate School may enroll at other regionally accredited graduate-level institutions for coursework which is applicable to their programs provided they have obtained advance permission (pre-approval) from their advisor(s) and the Dean of Graduate School and Research. Such coursework cannot result in exceeding the applicable maximum for transfer credit in the student's program. Students should note that while courses may be transferred into a degree program, grades earned at other institutions are not transferred, and therefore do not count toward a student's GPA. Have students submit a completed Transfer of Credit Form. If transfer credit is pre-approved by the Graduate School, the form will be held by the Graduate School and processed once transcripts are received documenting course completion with a minimum grade of B.

**See Appendices for Complete List of EOE Course Description & Objectives**

### **EOE Face-to-Face Weekend Sessions**

See the EOE website at: [eoe.wcu.edu](http://eoe.wcu.edu) for a list of required weekend sessions and consult with the EOE Program Director regarding any questions. Successful completion of the EOE Program requires attendance at all face-to-face sessions.

See Table 5 for key program milestones.

**Table 5. Program Timeline of Significant Milestones**

Year and Semester/Date	Program Milestones
<b>First Year:</b> Fall	1. Satisfactory completion of all core coursework.
<b>First Year:</b> Spring	1. Satisfactory completion of all core coursework.
<b>First Year:</b> Spring Semester Summer	1. Selection of Thesis/Project Chair 2. Selection of Thesis Committee Members
<b>First Year:</b> Spring Semester	1. Complete EOE Advance to Thesis/Project Form
<b>Second Year:</b> Fall Semester	1. Thesis/Project Proposal Written Document 2. Thesis/Project Proposal Oral Presentation 3. Continue to complete EOE or other elective courses 4. Complete EOE 679 Thesis I/Project I
<b>Second Year:</b>  Spring March <b>Before April 1</b> <b>Before April 1</b>	Complete any remaining EOE or other elective courses Complete Thesis/Project Oral Defense Submit Final Written Thesis or Project Document(s) Apply for Graduation

### EOE ACADEMIC ADVISING

Although all EOE Program faculty support EOE graduate students during their program, several specific roles warrant mention as they relate to student advisement.

The EOE Program Director (PD), currently Dr. Andrew Bobilya, serves as the de facto Academic Advisor for all MS in EOE students. As such, the EOE Program Director serves as the initial point of contact for all policy, procedural, and programmatic questions for the MS in EOE Program.

Among other duties, the EOE PD is responsible for (a) informing graduate students about key program events, (b) coordinating program communications, (c) coordinating student feedback, and (d) generally guiding EOE students throughout the Program. As program growth requires, additional full-time EOE faculty may serve as Academic Advisors.

Students are responsible for meeting with their advisor during their first fall term of enrollment. At this initial meeting, students will review the planning sheet containing a listing of course requirements, and will develop, in consultation with their advisor, a tentative schedule of courses to complete their programs. Students receive program planning documents during the August intensive (EOE 500) and/or from their advisor, and the forms are contained at the end of this Handbook.

## **EOE STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS**

It is the expectation of the EOE faculty that students' academic performance in all courses will be B or above. A GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation. The student's advisor and the EOE Program Director have access to the student's academic record, which is used to monitor the student's academic progress.

A student who accumulates three grades of C or any grade of F will automatically be dismissed from the EOE program. A student who has been admitted provisionally and fails to meet the terms of the provisional admission will also be dismissed from the Graduate School and the EOE program.

### **EOE Program Dismissal Appeal Procedures:**

The following procedures detail the steps for appealing a dismissal from a program for any reason other than final assigned grade(s), including failure to adhere to technical standards. Dismissal from the Graduate School (and therefore dismissal from the Program) based on bad grades may not be appealed. In this case, the affected student must appeal the final grade(s) resulting in the dismissal from the Graduate School. The student is encouraged to meet/talk with the Program Director prior to filing a formal appeal. The student must demonstrate that dismissal was impermissibly or arbitrarily assigned (see Academic Action Policy). That the student simply disagrees with the dismissal does not constitute a basis for a review.

#### 1. Appeal to Program Director:

Within 35 calendar days after the student receives notification of the academic action (cause for program dismissal), the student should submit a formal written appeal to the instructor. This appeal must include:

- (a) A statement of the reason(s) why the student believes the dismissal was impermissibly or arbitrarily assigned (see policy Academic Action Appeal Policy); and
- (b) The resolution sought.

When appealing a dismissal from a graduate program, the student must copy the Dean of the Graduate School on this initial appeal. All correspondence should include contact information. The Program Director must respond to the student's request in writing as soon as possible (no later than ten working days after receiving the student's written appeal). This response should detail whether or not the Program is approving or denying the appeal.

#### 2. Appeal to Department Head:

If the student is unable to resolve the grievance through the appeal to the Program Director, the student should submit a written appeal to the Department Head within 10 working days of receiving the Program Director's written response (from Step 1). If the Department Head is the instructor for the grade assigned, the Associate Dean of the department's college will serve this function. Students appealing to the Department Head assume the burden of proof. Therefore, the appeal must include:

- (a) A statement of the reason(s) the student believes the dismissal was impermissibly or arbitrarily assigned;
- (b) The steps taken to resolve the disagreement over the dismissal; and
- (c) The resolution sought.

The appeal must be accompanied by evidence the student believes supports the conclusion

that the dismissal was impermissibly or arbitrarily assigned. Evidence might include papers, tests, syllabi, or written documentation. Within 10 working days of receiving this appeal, the Department Head will attempt to resolve the appeal. If the Department Head is unable to resolve the appeal within 10 working days, the Department Head will notify the student of the decision and copy the Dean of the Graduate School, and the student has 10 days to appeal to the Associate Dean of the Academic College.

3. Appeal to the Academic College (Associate Dean Review):

If appealing to the Academic College, the student should forward (to the Associate Dean of the Academic College) his/her initial Appeal to the Program Director and the Program Director's response (from Step 1), the subsequent Appeal to the Department Head, and the Department Head's written notification (from Step 2). Upon receipt of the appeal and these materials, the Associate Dean may request further information from the student, the Program Director, and/or the Department Head. If the Associate Dean concludes that the facts alleged by the student do not constitute permissible grounds for appeal as set forth in this Academic Action Appeal Policy or Procedures, the Associate Dean may, in consultation with the Academic Dean and Graduate Dean if applicable, dismiss the review. The student will not be allowed any further appeal. If the Associate Dean determines that the facts alleged in the student's written appeals could, if true, constitute a violation of the Academic Action Appeal Policy or Procedures, the Associate Dean, within 10 working days of receiving all information, shall refer the case to the College Academic Action Committee.

4. Academic Action Committee Review:

The CAAC will consist of faculty members (who do not teach in the program from which the appeal originated) and students as designated by the Academic College (graduate or undergraduate based upon appeal) appointed by the appropriate Academic Dean or Associate Dean. At least two of the faculty members shall be selected from "allied" disciplines or programs. The Associate Dean will serve as ex officio (non-voting) Chair of this committee. The purpose of this committee is to determine whether the facts support the student's contention that the dismissal was impermissibly or arbitrarily assigned or if there was a material procedural deviation, as defined in the policy. It is not the function of the CAAC to re-evaluate the student's work to determine whether the committee agrees with the professional judgment of the Program Director or faculty member(s).

The CAAC Chair shall convene the committee no later than 10 working days from the request by the Associate Dean to examine the student's appeals to the Program Director and Department Head. The committee will also take into consideration any written statements received by the Associate Dean from either the student or the Program Director, and any additional relevant documentation. Additionally, the committee may request oral presentations from both parties. Other relevant parties may be questioned.

Neither the student nor the Program Director may be accompanied or represented in the hearing by legal counsel or other advisor(s). The CAAC may consider only such evidence as is offered by the parties and at the hearing(s) and need consider only the evidence offered that it considers fair and reliable. The burden of proof shall be on the student to

satisfy the committee that a preponderance of the evidence supports a conclusion that the dismissal was awarded arbitrarily or impermissibly as defined. All recommendations of the CAAC shall be made by a simple majority vote.

Within 10 working days from the conclusion of its hearing(s) on the matter, the CAAC Chair will provide a written report to the Academic Dean and to the Graduate Dean (for graduate-level grade appeals). The committee report must include the committee's finding as to whether or not the dismissal assigned was awarded arbitrarily or impermissibly as defined in the policy. If such a determination is made, the CAAC shall recommend a course of action which could include recommending readmission or implementation of some process to re-evaluate the student's actions/work that led to the program dismissal.

5. Review by the Dean:

Within 10 working days after receiving the CAAC's report, recommendations, and other documentation assembled in the review, the Academic Dean will, in consultation with the Program Director and Department Head, determine a final course of action. The Dean will then communicate the final action in writing to the student, faculty member, Department Head, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

*Appeal to the Provost:* An appeal to the Provost is only allowed if the student can establish a reasonable basis that the appeal procedures were not followed, discrimination of a protected class has occurred, and/or a student's exercise of rights guaranteed by the First Amendment has been violated. If the student feels one of these conditions applies, they must file a written appeal to the Provost explaining the situation that warrants this level of appeal. The Provost shall provide his/her written decision to the student within 10 calendar days of receipt of the appeal. No right of appeal is available beyond the Provost.

## **EOE THESIS/PROJECT REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES**

### **Thesis/Project Definition**

A thesis/project is considered a piece of scholarly work. Both require the similar proposal and defense requirements. The main difference between the two is that the thesis involves qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods data collection and the project involves creation of a new educational product or tool that can be used by the Experiential and Outdoor Education community. Both require a scholarly literature review to support the need for the endeavor. Specific guidelines for the thesis and project are outlined in this Handbook.

Thesis and project guidelines will be introduced and reviewed in EOE 503 and EOE 600 and in consultation with your Academic Advisor and thesis or project Chair.

WCU thesis guidelines and resources can be found here:

<https://www.wcu.edu/apply/graduate-school/students/Thesis-and-Disseration-Resources.aspx>

Click on "ProQuest" and then "Resources/Guides" to locate the WCU Graduate School Thesis Formatting Guide. You can also find it directly here:

[https://www.etsadmin.com/docs/wcu/gs\\_thesis\\_guide.pdf](https://www.etsadmin.com/docs/wcu/gs_thesis_guide.pdf)

### Characteristics of Theses and Projects:

- A. A thesis or a project is an exercise in research and/or the creation of a *substantial* original work. You will demonstrate your skills in using the methodologies of your field to examine a topic of interest to your discipline or create a new product (aka project). A "topic of interest to your discipline" means an area of research that is generally viewed as fruitful by other researchers and/or practitioners in the field. Within any discipline, there are typically many sub-fields of interest. Research activities such as a thesis/project usually focus on a limited area, exploring some very specific issues or questions or development of something new, related in some way to Experiential and Outdoor Education.
- B. A characteristic of a thesis/project is that, no matter what the topic or methodology used, the intent of the thesis/project is to make a contribution to the field. A contribution is any new information provided to the discipline. This contribution can take many forms, such as a test of a new theory, a test of a new methodology, an evaluation of an existing curriculum or a development of a new curriculum, and others. The list is endless, but the common element is this: an addition to the knowledge base of your field requires you to have an in-depth understanding of some particular area of your discipline. You must know the current state of the literature if you are to add to it in a substantial way.
- C. In this regard, a thesis/project represents the capstone activity of the EOE Program. To complete it successfully, you must demonstrate mastery over both a specific content area and the methodology of your discipline.
- D. A thesis/project represents an opportunity to work closely with one or more faculty members in your field. Working on a thesis/project, under the guidance of faculty, provides an opportunity for learning that is not typically found in other graduate school activities.
- E. A thesis/project should be personal in nature. A thesis/project is an exercise in self-discipline. Completing a thesis/project requires sustained initiative and focus. **If deadlines are missed it may cause the student to pay additional tuition for one or more additional semesters.** Students work with their Chair to create the structure and timeline. The choice of topic and selection of committee members is up to the students, within the guidelines established by the EOE Program. **Faculty will generally look to the student to be the initiator of the thesis/project work.**

### Thesis Defense

The student must submit a draft final copy of their thesis to the Graduate School for approval. After the defense, the EOE Program Director notifies the Graduate School of the results. Resources for submitting, approving, and/or managing theses can be found at [gradthesis.wcu.edu](http://gradthesis.wcu.edu) including applicable deadlines and a link to ProQuest.

In summary, a thesis/project is a well-written document that adds new knowledge to the discipline and demonstrates that you are competent and worthy of having an advanced degree in the field of EOE.

### Thesis/Project Chair

Any EOE full-time faculty member with Full Graduate Faculty Status may serve as a Thesis/Project Chair for EOE students. During the spring semester of year one, students select a Thesis/Project Chair based upon stated research/project interests. Students should request a Chair by the end of their second semester to efficiently plan and execute requirements for the

thesis/project proposal (see Thesis/Project section of the student handbook for more details). EOE faculty must agree to serve as Chair.

### **Thesis Committee**

In addition to the student's Thesis Chair, EOE students assemble a thesis committee by the beginning of year two in the Program. The thesis committee (three members total with the option of adding a fourth outside member) consists of the Chair, one EOE faculty member and one additional member from a different department or outside of WCU. A project is supervised and evaluated by the student's Project Chair. Projects do not utilize a committee.

Thesis committee members provide input, guidance, and consultation for student's thesis and are responsible for evaluating the written thesis proposal, oral thesis proposal, final written thesis document, and final oral thesis defense (see thesis section of the student Handbook for more details about thesis committee membership). Students are advised to select thesis committee members with content or methodological expertise related to the student's thesis study. The Thesis Chair shall assist students in selecting two additional committee members. Students should identify their thesis committee members by the start of year two in the Program.

#### **1. Committee Members**

- a. The composition of each thesis committee should conform to the following guidelines as often as possible.
  - i. Thesis committees are comprised of at least three members.
  - ii. The Thesis Chair must be a full-time member of the EOE Graduate Faculty.
  - iii. The second member of the committee must be a member of the EOE Graduate Faculty.
  - iv. The third member can be a faculty member from a different department, faculty member from another institution, or a practitioner. If the third member does not hold WCU Graduate Faculty status, an application for WCU Affiliate Graduate Faculty Status must be completed by the August deadline for approval by the Graduate School.
- b. If, in consultation with the Thesis Chair, it is decided that a different composition is needed for membership of a committee, then the Thesis Chair must submit a written request supporting an alternative composition. This request should include justification for this change and be sent to the EOE Program Director. The EOE Program Director will consult with EOE full-time faculty and approve or deny the request.
- c. If a student finds that an already defended proposal is untenable (e.g., data are no longer available or are impossible to collect), then the student *may* form a new committee, *but* a new proposal **must** be defended in both oral and written form.

### **Thesis/Project Procedural Requirements**

To help ensure high quality theses and a fair, constructive evaluation process, the EOE Program has developed the following procedural requirements. These requirements supplement those described in the "Thesis Guide" produced by the WCU Graduate School.

Students must complete EOE 503: Research Methods in EOE, and EOE 600: Advanced Research and Evaluation Techniques during the first year in order to proceed with their Thesis/Project Proposal. The student and EOE Academic Advisor then complete the EOE Advance to Thesis/Project Form (see 'EOE Organization in Canvas for form). During the second year, students will enroll in EOE 679: Thesis I/ Project I in the fall semester and EOE 699: Thesis II/Project II to complete the thesis or project.

## **WRITING THE THESIS PROPOSAL AND THESIS**

The key to writing a good empirical research article is to strive, first and foremost, for *accuracy* and *clarity*. Like any scientific writer, you and your Thesis Chair have some flexibility in the organization, structure, length, and format of your thesis proposal and thesis to best achieve these goals. Below, general guidelines are provided for you to consider as you write your thesis proposal and thesis.

### **Scholarly Journal Article (SJA) Option**

EOE Students have the option to choose to pursue publishing a scholarly journal article instead of a traditional five-chapter thesis.

### **Scholarly Journal Article (SJA) Format**

- The SJA format involves writing a full-length manuscript (6,000 – 10,000 words) which will become chapter 4 and 5 of the traditional thesis.
- The thesis should have a coherent topic with an introduction presenting the general theme of the research and a conclusion summarizing the major findings.
- The student is expected to submit the manuscript for publication prior to graduation.
- The student should be the first author on the published or publishable works. The Chair and committee members will likely be included as co-authors when the manuscript is submitted to a journal to represent their contribution to the submission.
- If an article(s) is multi-authored, the student should clearly justify or clarify the contributions of the other authors in relationship to the research project. Authorship guidelines can be found in the APA manual. Students should be involved with every aspect of their thesis.
- The nature of the study and guidelines from the journal will dictate the formats and nature of each article. The SJA format may vary and should be discussed with your supervisory committee.

**APA standards.** The proposal and thesis should adhere to the latest edition of the APA publishing guidelines and it must be in the graduate school's format. The final thesis document will be formatted according to the graduate school requirements (see graduate school Thesis Guide Formatting Tips: [gradthesis.wcu.edu](http://gradthesis.wcu.edu)).

### **Suggested Thesis Reporting Guidelines**

The following guidelines for reporting qualitative and quantitative research are quoted **directly** from the article referenced below and represent commonly adopted practices among scholars in EOE. The EOE Program is adopting these guidelines as a framework for the EOE thesis while encouraging students to work directly with their Chair and committee to establish the most appropriate format for their specific thesis. The journals referenced in these guidelines represent



many but not all of the related journals that EOE students may choose to publish their work in AND these guidelines are suggested for any thesis regardless of a student's intent to publish.

Seaman, J., Dettweiler, U., Humberstone, B., Martin, B., Prince, H., & Quay, J. (2020). Joint recommendations on reporting empirical research in outdoor, experiential, environmental, and adventure education journals. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 43(4), 348–364. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053825920969443>

### **Reporting Qualitative and Quantitative Research**

In 2018, the APA released separate statements summarizing the work of two committees charged with providing recommendations for reporting qualitative and quantitative research (Appelbaum et al., 2018; Levitt et al., 2018). Below, we summarize select points from each of these articles that are pertinent to issues we see in the JOREL, JOEE, JAEOL, and JEE, beginning with qualitative research. Again, readers are encouraged to consult the original statements for specific guidelines that might enhance their presentations. Here, we limit our discussion to the points that are most relevant to the concerns we frequently notice as editors.

#### Reporting Qualitative Research:

##### *Reporting style and manuscript structure*

Like the committee charged with developing the APA's recommendations, we do not believe authors should devote space to justifying the use of qualitative methods as such. Authors should justify their methods according to their research purposes, focal phenomena, and tradition of inquiry. By implication, the traditional five-part reporting structure (Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Findings, and Discussion/Conclusion) will serve some but not all qualitative reports. Authors should follow that structure only if it serves their presentation. The structure of a qualitative report will most likely be determined by the research aims, nature of the data, and/or tradition of inquiry. For example, it may include a narrative style of reporting, in which the research endeavor is presented as a story. These reports may be organized thematically or chronologically. They may be presented in a reflexive first-person style, detailing the ways in which researchers arrived at questions, methods, findings, and considerations for the field . . . qualitative researchers often combine Results and Discussion sections, as they may see both as intertwined and therefore not possible to separate a given finding from its interpreted meaning within the broader frame of the analysis. Also, they may use headings that reflect the values in their tradition (such as "Findings" instead of "Results") and omit ones that do not (Levitt et al., 2018, pp. 28–29). Reports of grounded theory, for example, may locate the bulk of a literature review in the latter part of a manuscript, because that is consistent with the methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These decisions are not haphazard but flow from the study's methodology and decisions about how best to communicate the study's logic. Authors should therefore be faithful to the tradition of inquiry guiding their study rather than following a formulaic structure, while also providing a rationale if they depart from the conventions of their chosen tradition. Regardless of these structural choices, authors should still follow a journal's formatting requirements regarding section heading style and placement.

##### *Rhetorical features*

Reports of qualitative research can involve other rhetorical features that might be unfamiliar to some reviewers and readers. These include but are not limited to: (a) The use of first-person narration typical of the kind of self-reflexivity required when detailing analytic procedures. In quantitative reports, this can be perceived as bias, whereas in qualitative reports it is used to demonstrate transparency and enhance trustworthiness. (b) The evolution of research questions throughout a project due to the iterative process often used to collect and analyze data. (c) The alteration of methods (e.g., modifying interview questions, changing observational foci) due to the evolution of one's research questions, thematic development, or recruitment of new participants (see Levitt et al., 2018, p. 29). Appearance of these rhetorical features should demonstrate to reviewers and readers that an author is striving for transparency, not that they are biased by their involvement. Authors should avoid solipsism, however, and stay focused on the report as a means of communicating the salient points of a research study. (Autoethnography and autobiography have unique stylistic considerations. See, for example, Sparkes, 2020.) The requirement of transparency places a heavy burden on authors to both reveal and explain the logic of their inquiry as it proceeded, including how their own perspective and judgments shaped its evolution.

### *Representation of context*

A main strength of qualitative research is its ability to represent context, or the “situatedness” of the researcher’s phenomenon of interest (Levitt et al., 2018). Context is represented in at least three ways: (1) “the context of the investigators,” which involves “researchers’ relationship to the study topic, with their participants, and to related ideological commitments”; (2) the “context within which a phenomenon or study topic is being construed” (e.g., a particular cultural setting, historical period, or geographic/environmental space); and (3) the “contexts of [the researcher’s] data sources,” especially as they help to understand participants’ responses or experiences (p. 29, emphases in original). Even if the focus of the research is not on context per se, researchers should describe how the contexts listed above might influence the analysis, themes, and conclusions, as this is a critical aspect of qualitative reporting.

### *Terminology*

Different qualitative traditions use distinctive terminology to communicate their philosophical and methodological commitments. As far as possible, authors should strive for fidelity with the conventions of their chosen tradition of inquiry. This situates a given study in a particular discipline, helps readers interpret its findings, and expands research in outdoor, experiential, environmental, and adventure fields in new directions. Where the meaning of terms is not obvious, such as when technical precision is required, authors should provide definitions to aid understanding and interpretation. At the same time, authors should avoid excessively using jargon that could confuse or obfuscate. Inviting a colleague who is not familiar with the research to read a draft prior to submission is often useful in this respect. Levitt et al. (2018) also provide some broadly accepted terms authors may opt to use when describing their projects. For example, authors may elect to use:

- “Approach to inquiry to refer to the philosophical assumptions that describe researchers’ understanding of the research traditions or strategies . . . For instance, they could indicate whether their approaches to inquiry are descriptive, interpretive, feminist, psychoanalytic, postpositivist, critical, postmodern, or constructivist” (p. 32, emphasis in original);

- “Data-collection strategies” to refer “to the many ways qualitative researchers gather data. These can include activities such as conducting archival research, focus groups, interviews, ethnographic observation, fieldwork, media searches, and reflexive note-taking” (p. 32, emphasis in original);
- “Data-analytic strategies” to refer “to the procedures used to analyze the data (e.g., constant comparison, eidetic reduction, the generation of themes)” (p. 32, emphasis in original);
- “Research design” to refer to “the combination of approaches to inquiry, data collection strategies, and data-analytic strategies selected for use in a given study” (p. 32, emphasis in original). This might involve using a set of conventions governed by a specific tradition, such as grounded theory, or it might involve combining from different traditions to suit a particular study.

### *Methodological integrity*

Even if authors decide not to use the headings above, the categories they reference should be considered required elements of qualitative research reports. Their inclusion is important for establishing a study’s methodological integrity, which reflects how well the literature review is conducted to situate a study’s aims. Approaches to inquiry are selected to address those aims, methods and procedures are used in an investigation to meet those aims, and the articulation of implications are grounded in the methods used and the findings produced (Levitt et al., 2018, p. 33). In other words, the style and structure of a manuscript should help the reader understand the logic underlying an inquiry and grasp the coherence of this logic across all aspects of a report. Methodological integrity is thus central to the validity of claims made in a report of qualitative research—to its warrantability. When elements of a report are missing or not aligned with each other, it can undermine the trustworthiness of the report and weaken its claims (p. 33). (For an extended discussion, see Levitt et al., 2016.)

### *Manuscript Structure*

The APA statement (Levitt et al., 2018) provides a chart outlining the above features in greater detail (see pp. 35–37). Although their chart surpasses the level of specificity we wish to include here. We will summarize and elaborate on some of its recommendations that are sometimes missing in qualitative reports submitted to the JOREL, JOEE, JAEOL, and JEE. Please note that a manuscript’s structural features may vary from the headings used below and may also be applied in different ways. For example, some authors may adopt headings that enable them to discuss the significance of their findings as they are presented rather than separating “Findings” and “Discussion” sections.

1. Title- Manuscript titles should help readers understand the focus of a study. It can also be helpful to reference the research tradition or approach to inquiry used by the author or the research outcome (e.g., The positive effects of outdoor spaces on young people’s mental health during a pandemic).
2. Abstract and Keywords- In addition to summarizing the categories (a) to (d) listed in the preceding section, the abstract should put the study in context, establish its importance, and highlight major findings or claims. In addition, keywords should be selected that (a) are distinct from the title, (b) communicate the essence of the study, and (c) increase the likelihood of the article turning up in an internet search. Authors should consider the kinds

of audiences they hope will discover their article and consider questions such as: What terms would those people use in their literature searches? In what other disciplinary contexts do you want your article to be discovered? Authors should select keywords that maximize visibility in desired contexts/audiences.

3. Introduction- Authors should outline the study's purpose and explain how the chosen methodology contributes to that purpose. Levitt et al. (2018) offer as possibilities "theory building, explanatory, developing understanding, social action, description, highlighting social practices" (p. 35). These details help to evaluate the warrantability of the claims made in the report. AERA (2006) Item 1 Problem Formulation (p. 34) suggests that introductions to research reports should describe the problem or central issue, establish context for understanding it, and emphasize why it is important to address. Often manuscripts lack these crucial elements or expect the reader to infer them. Authors should not conclude the introduction before furnishing readers with a clear understanding of these points, because they establish grounds for the rest of the report.
4. Review of Extant Literature- Although not specifically mentioned in the APA statement, it is imperative to include some kind of literature review addressing prior research. This not only situates the current report in relevant fields of knowledge, it outlines key concepts and relationships that inform the present analyses and findings, and discussion of these findings. AERA (2006) Item 1 Problem Formulation (p. 34) also advises on this issue: authors should review the relevant literature, including (a) an up-to-date review of pertinent discussions from the target journal, and (b) examples from the wider literature on the focal phenomenon. This approach will help authors demonstrate the relevance of their research within and outside the outdoor, experiential, environmental, and adventure fields. (Good sources of guidance on conducting literature reviews include Boote & Beile, 2005; Randolph, 2009.)
5. Conceptual Framework and Research Questions- Authors should specify the conceptual framework used to conduct the research, noting that the theory informing the research design may differ from the theory used to design a program. These elements are often conflated, inadequately differentiated, or their relationship insufficiently explained, making study results and conclusions hard to interpret and limiting the advancement of theory and methodology in our fields. In addition, we sometimes receive manuscripts that do not clearly articulate the research questions or focuses driving a study. This can lead to unfocused, low-level analyses along with findings and discussion sections that are neither conceptually illuminating nor practically instructive. Clear, theoretically informed research questions or focuses are critical parts of all empirical reports, including presentations of qualitative research.
6. Method: Participants and Data Sources- Qualitative research often involves fewer participants than quantitative studies. Although researchers typically should not feel compelled to justify their sample size, it is important to observe (and state) the limits of their analyses based on their sample size and characteristics. In general, smaller sample sizes lend themselves to very rich description or fine-grained analyses rather than thematic saturation, which requires greater breadth and diversity within the sample. Sample sizes should be justified not by an arbitrary or inappropriate standard (e.g., "statistical power")

but rather by the objectives of the study, the tradition of inquiry employed, the analytic methods used, and the claims advanced by the author. Authors of reports with questionable sample sizes may wish to qualify their claims by using phrases like “provisional,” “exploratory,” and “findings suggest,” and by use of the past tense, as in “participants in this study said/reported . . .” rather than “participants in outdoor programs experience . . .” Regardless of sample size, sufficient information should be provided about the research participants to help readers determine whether broader inferences can be drawn from the study (see also the SRCD statement above).

7. Findings/Results- Journal word limits constrain the amount of qualitative data that can be included in a research report. However, sufficient examples should be included to substantiate the major findings and claims. Tabular summaries are sometimes appropriate but are usually not sufficient by themselves, and researcher impressions without evidence from fieldnotes or other supporting data cannot be accepted. Data excerpts should be selected that most clearly illustrate the themes or findings. For brevity, authors may choose to omit data segments determined to be superfluous; however, additional data could be uploaded in a supplementary file if the journal permits (concerns about confidentiality might outweigh the desire for transparency with respect to qualitative data; authors should use their judgment). Data excerpts should be attributed to specific respondents, events, settings, and time points to inform readers of relevant context. To support the plausibility of their interpretation of the data, researchers should consider presenting possible alternative interpretations and offer reasons for rejecting them. If diagrams, illustrations, or photographs are important to include (e.g., in studies involving photo-elicitation), the images should help clarify the method, inform the analysis, or advance the reader’s understanding of the focal phenomenon. If images are not essential for grasping the study’s logic, helping establish context, or substantiating the author’s claims, they should be excluded.
8. Discussion- Authors should synthesize their findings, specify the inferences that can be drawn from their analyses (bearing in mind there might be several inferences, and they could be contradictory), and argue for their contribution. This typically requires situating the claims in the context of prior research or other relevant literature. The discussion should also make clear what is known as a result of the research that was not known before. In doing so, authors should address questions such as: what conceptual, methodological, or practical issue does the research help address? How do these specific findings help readers to better understand a phenomenon and/or advance knowledge in this area? Acknowledging the study’s limitations is also necessary, either in a separate “Limitations” section or alongside other points.
9. Conclusion- This section should re-articulate the issues raised in the Introduction, summarize the key points or outcomes of the research, and emphasize its impact and significance in the appropriate context. Application of the research to an international audience is also important for publication in this suite of journals.

## Reporting Quantitative Research

The APA statement for reporting quantitative research in psychology (Appelbaum et al., 2018) is very comprehensive. In the following section, we focus mainly on selected items from Table 1: Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS), which provides information recommended for inclusion in manuscripts that report new data collections regardless of research design (pp. 6–7). We highlight points that are often missed in manuscripts submitted to our journals. As most of the quantitative articles we receive are effect studies of varying durations, we also draw on Table 4: Reporting Standards for Longitudinal Studies (p. 14).

1. Manuscript Structure- Unlike reports of qualitative research, reports of quantitative research should typically follow the five-part reporting structure of Introduction, Literature Review, Material and Methods, Results, and Discussion/Conclusion.
2. Title- In the title, authors should mention the phenomena under investigation and the relationships between key constructs or variables. Furthermore, the research populations should be identified in the title whenever possible (see SCRD statement above).
3. Abstract and Keywords- The abstract should begin with a clear statement of the problem under investigation and present the main hypotheses followed by a description of the research population, “specifying their pertinent characteristics for this study” (p. 6). A more thorough and detailed description should follow in the body of the manuscript. The method should be described including the research design, sample size, materials used, outcome measures, and data collection procedures. The main findings should be reported in plain language and should be substantiated by effect sizes and confidence intervals and/or statistical significance levels for frequentist analyses, or Bayes factors and/or credible intervals for Bayesian analyses. The abstract should conclude by reporting implications or applications of the findings. Authors should select keywords that are likely to be used by other scholars searching for relevant studies (see expanded discussion on keywords in qualitative section above). For quantitative studies, a keyword that indexes the methods used in the study is often helpful to include (authors of qualitative reports might also consider this suggestion).
4. Introduction- Authors should state the importance of the problem, including its theoretical and/or practical implications, and provide a summary statement capturing main themes from the up-to-date scholarship. Thereafter, specific hypotheses, aims, and objectives should be stated.
5. The Literature Review, or Review of Previous Research- The review should provide a comprehensive summary and discussion of current scholarship both within the target journal and from other relevant sources. Authors should demonstrate familiarity with recent studies concerning the basic phenomena underlying the focus of their research in other disciplinary journals to align, justify, and characterize their scholarship with reference to recent primary research.
6. Materials and Methods- This section must enable the reader to retrace all steps in the research process and gauge the findings on the basis of the information provided. Please be aware that not all readers will be familiar with the highly technical language sometimes used to report quantitative research, so basic explanations of terms will enable more readers to access the article. If relevant, authors should report inclusion and exclusion criteria for

the participants, including any restrictions based on demographic or logistical considerations. It is important to describe the procedures for the selection of participants as well as the settings and locations where the data were gathered, and details of the sampling plan, including power and precision calculations, if the sample is in fact randomized. It might also be important to identify the dates of data collections. For longitudinal designs, the sample characteristics are especially important and should be reported for each measurement occasion, including reasons for any attrition. As modeling of change over time in statistical analyses can be done in various ways, authors should argue for their choice of analytical strategy based on the specific features of the data and the research questions, i.e., if time is conceptualized categorically (“pre,” “post,” “post-plus”) or as real-time intervals. Especially when results of more than two time points are presented graphically with line charts, we encourage authors to consider how time is reflected in the study.

A central focus of the methods section should be the description and definition of all primary and secondary measures and covariates, including measures collected but not included in the report, if this is critical to understanding the design. If applicable, methods used to enhance the quality of the measurements (e.g., training and reliability of data collectors/experimenters) should be described, and information on validated instruments provided. Researchers must also include reliability estimates for scales used in their research, based on their own data rather than past reports. (Estimates may be reported in either the methods or results sections.) In any case, it must be demonstrated that the measurement model actually worked in the sample. In some studies, this might include establishing a model with factor analytical procedures to verify that the measured change can be attributed to the participant and not the instrument. Changes to any items or variables (and the supporting rationale) must be reported. When using psychometric scales, this calibration can be difficult to accomplish, especially with small sample sizes. The APA statement (Appelbaum et al., 2018) requires test-retest reliability in longitudinal studies (p. 7), which builds on the concept that rank-ordering of the scores is stable over repeated measures. However, the reliability of observed scores at a given time point does not necessarily translate to their reliability at other times. In cases where growth or decrease of a score is modeled (which is the case in most longitudinal intervention studies we have seen in the JOREL, JOEE, JAEOL, and JEE), we encourage authors to (a) test for partial and/or approximate measurement invariance (MI) of the factor structure of the score and (b) establish measurement models that allow for comparisons over time and between groups (e.g., between classes or genders). We consider it more appropriate to report any difficulties in MI rather than simply assuming stability of the instruments and to critically evaluate the credibility of the results in the discussion section. The different models analyzed in this MI process may be most effectively reported as supplementary material in an online repository, either provided by the journal or on public online services. In such cases, where the stability of instruments over time and/or across groups can only be assumed, warrantability may be aided by arguing for the validity of the instruments from a theoretical perspective. Depending on the design of the study, specific additional information may be required that cannot be elucidated here. Most importantly, the analytic rationales and strategies for inferential statistics need to be described for primary hypotheses, secondary hypotheses, and exploratory hypotheses.

7. **Results-** The total number of subjects (“n”s) in each group at each stage of the study should be reported. In more complex studies, a flowchart diagram might be appropriate for reporting this. With respect to the statistics and data analysis, diagnostic tests that have been run on the data are required, including an analysis of missing data and the chosen strategy to deal with them, descriptive statistics with checking assumptions of normality, and strategies to deal with violations of the latter. For all inferential statistics, authors should provide the results of all tests conducted, including the exact p-value if null hypothesis statistical testing (NHST) methods were employed. Effect size estimates and confidence intervals should also be included. For regression analyses, correlation tables for all variables in the models are often helpful. For complex data analyses (e.g., structural equation models, generalized hierarchical models, and factor or other multivariate analyses), the results of model comparisons and fit indices should be reported, together with any estimation problems (e.g., failure to converge or other analytic anomalies).
8. **Discussion-** In this section, authors need to make a clear statement for or against all the hypotheses tested in the analysis and discuss the results in relation to similar or different findings in the literature. The results should be interpreted with reference to sources of potential bias, threats to internal and external validity, and the adequacy of sample sizes and sampling validity. Authors should then critically discuss the generalizability of their findings (external validity), taking into account the target population (sampling validity; see SRCD section above), and other contextual issues (e.g., setting, measurement, time, ecological validity). Finally, implications for future research, theory, and/or practical and policy recommendations should be stated.
9. **Conclusion-** The conclusion section in a quantitative article is no different from the qualitative research paradigm. Please refer to the section above.

## **PROJECT REPORTING GUIDELINES**

A project will have many of the same headings up through the review of relevant literature and propose a “methodology” or the focus of the project (e.g., a curriculum). At this point the project reporting will vary dependent on the type of project. For example, one project might have a video presentation while another includes a series of interpretive signs. Regardless of the focus of the project, every EOE project should conclude with the student’s summary comments on the process of developing the project, lessons learned, current or potential impact of the project, and future recommendations.

## **PROPOSING THE THESIS OR PROJECT**

Passing/failing of a proposal or thesis defense should be based only on the quality of the written product and the oral defense. No extraneous factors like the student’s performance in other classes or future career aspirations should be taken into account.

### **Defending the Proposal**

The determination of whether a proposal is ready to be defended is up to the discretion of the Thesis Chair. Students may not send a proposal to the committee without approval from the Chair. After approval for defense from the Chair, a proposal must be sent to the committee at least two weeks of advance to allow sufficient time for review. During the review time, the



committee members (a) evaluate and grade the written product and (b) prepare thoughtful, constructive criticism for the thesis study. The committee members must evaluate the written product using the corresponding form (see EOE Thesis Oral Proposal Evaluation Form in Canvas) to complete the rating form before the oral defense.

The student's score on the written document must be 15 or greater from at least two committee members with no score less than 13 from any member. The thesis Chair will notify the committee members and student of passing/failing the written component.

**Requirements of the Written Product** (see EOE Thesis Written Proposal Evaluation Form in Canvas)

A written proposal must meet the following criteria to pass:

- Clear, thorough, relevant, and up to date literature review of the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of the idea being tested.
- Clear “statement of the problem” or “purpose of the study” that must be well linked to the literature review in the introduction.
- The methodology must be appropriate to answer the question at hand.
- Significant results are NOT a requirement for a thesis study to be successful; However, a clear explanation of the findings, linkage to the extant literature, and thoughtful conclusions are necessary for a thesis to be deemed worthy of a passing grade.

During the oral proposal defense, the student is expected to provide a cogent presentation of the thesis/project and allow for sufficient time to field questions about the thesis/project. After the oral defense, the committee discusses the oral proposal defense, grades it, and tallies scores to determine passing/failing for the thesis. A project oral defense is reviewed and discussed between the student candidate and the Project Chair.

**Requirements of the Oral Proposal** (see EOE Thesis/Project Checklist in Canvas)

The student's score on the oral defense must be 15 or greater from at least two committee members with no score less than 13 from any members. During the oral proposal defense the student should be able to accurately demonstrate:

- Understanding and dominion of the background literature.
- Understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the study.
- Understanding of the research methods and data analyses.
- Understanding of the implications/applications of potential findings of the study.

**Action following Successful Proposal Defense**

- Send Abstract with Abstract Cover Sheet signed by committee (directions provided in the Graduate Schools Thesis Guide linked above). This has to be submitted prior to November 10.
- Complete research, analysis, and writing of thesis under supervision of Thesis Chair. Submit the final product to the graduate program within the established deadlines (consult graduate school website).

### **Action following Unsuccessful Proposal Defense**

- If a student is unable to successfully defend their proposal (written and/or oral) during the fall semester of their second year (before November 1<sup>st</sup>), they will be unable to enroll in the EOE 699: Thesis II/Project II course.
- Students who are not ready to defend their proposal prior to the scheduled defense for all students must have a meeting with their Chair to determine:
  - 1) if they need to switch from a thesis to a project, and
  - 2) to schedule a new oral proposal defense date.
 Importantly, not proposing on the scheduled defense date for all students counts as the first “fail” of the proposal defense.
- A student who fails to successfully defend their proposal two times will be dismissed from the Program. At the discretion of the Chair, students who fail only one portion of the proposal (written or oral) during the fall semester may only be required to redo the remaining portion by November 1<sup>st</sup>. For example, a student who passes the oral defense in the fall but has numerous errors on the written portion may be allowed by the Chair to resubmit the written document before November 1<sup>st</sup>, but not required to complete a second oral defense. In such cases, the committee would still provide the student with feedback on the written document following its resubmission.

### **DEFENDING THE FINAL THESIS OR PROJECT**

The determination of whether a thesis or project is ready to be defended is up to the discretion of the Chair. Students may not send a thesis to the committee without approval from the Chair. After approval for defense from the Chair, a thesis must be sent to the committee with a minimum of two weeks for review prior to the defense date. The committee members must evaluate the written product using the corresponding form (see EOE Thesis Defense Written Document Evaluation Form in Canvas) and complete the rating form before the oral defense. Students completing a project will meet with their Chair in preparation for their oral defense.

**Criteria for passing written component** The student’s score on the written document must be 15 or greater from at least two committee members with no score less than 13 from any member. The Chair will notify the committee members and student of passing/failing the written component.

**Criteria for passing oral component** The student’s score on the oral defense must be 15 or greater from at least two committee members with no score less than 13 from any member (see EOE Thesis Defense Oral Presentation Evaluation Form in Canvas).

### **Action Following Successful Thesis Defense**

- Secure signatures on the Cover Sheet
- Complete all editing requested by the committee
- Assistance with editing can be obtained by contacting the Graduate School Office
- Submit to the Graduate School following the guidelines provided

### **Action Following Successful Project Defense**

- No submission to the Graduate School is required

- EOE students will work with their Chair regarding the most appropriate way(s) to disseminate their final product(s)
- The Chair will notify the EOE Program Director of the successful completion of the project
- The EOE Program Director will notify the Graduate School at: [Gradadmission@wcu.edu](mailto:Gradadmission@wcu.edu) and notify the graduate school that the student has completed their project and that thesis needs to be marked as NR in Banner (This will allow the student's degree audit to clear)

#### **Action following Unsuccessful Thesis/Project Defense**

- The thesis committee can decide whether the student will be allowed a second attempt to successfully defend the thesis, or whether the student has failed the thesis. If the committee determines that the student has failed, the student will not be able to graduate from the Program.

#### **INTEGRITY OF RESEARCH AND OTHER SCHOLARLY WORK**

The WCU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and EOE Program expect high standards of ethical behavior on the part of all persons involved in research and other scholarly work. Students are required to comply with the requirements about honesty and integrity in research, as in all scholarly activity. Complete information regarding IRB can be found at:

<https://www.wcu.edu/learn/office-of-the-provost/research/sponsored-research/research-compliance/Human-Subjects-Research/index.aspx>

#### **Research Involving Human or Animal Subjects (IRB)**

By federal law, all research involving human or animal subjects requires prior ethical review and approval by an independent review committee. At WCU, the relevant committee for research involving human subjects is the Institutional Review Board (IRB). **No data collection or recruitment of subjects may take place without IRB approval.**

Before beginning a research study, students should consult with the Chairperson of their committee regarding the procedure for obtaining appropriate review. Copies of the necessary forms and instructions for submission can be obtained through the WCU IRB website.

In cases where research involving human or animal subjects is being performed at another institution, approval also must be obtained from that institution's appropriate review committee(s). Copies of such approval should be attached to the WCU forms as a part of the review process.

#### **GRADUATE SCHOOL CATALOG**

The Graduate School catalog is available online at <http://catalog.wcu.edu/> (note: please select current catalog year from upper center drop down box). Make sure to select "CURRENT GRADUATE CATALOG" from the menu. Past graduate and undergraduate catalogs are archived here. The catalog outlines all Graduate School policies and procedures. Graduate students operate under the catalog in effect when they were admitted. The Graduate School staff updates the catalog annually.

## ACADEMIC POLICIES OF THE WCU GRADUATE SCHOOL

**Academic Integrity Policy and Process.** *Please click on the link below to review WCU's Academic Integrity Policy. This policy addresses academic integrity violations of undergraduate and graduate students.*

<https://www.wcu.edu/academic-integrity.aspx>

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

### New Student Orientation

At the beginning of each fall semester, all students newly admitted into the EOE Program receive orientation to the Program as a part of the EOE 500 course. Students are given information concerning all aspects of the EOE Program.

### WCU Student Centers and Support Services

Western Carolina University offers a number of supports for students. Below are current web addresses for WCU Centers as of the publishing of this Handbook. Please visit the WCU Homepage for links to the various other campus centers and resources.

### Hunter Library

General website - <http://library.wcu.edu>

Hunter Library provides students with access to thousands of information resources: print and electronic books, newspapers, and scholarly journal articles. These resources can be searched and often accessed online (<http://library.wcu.edu>) or can be searched and located in the library building. Students in need of research or library support can get help online (<http://researchguides.wcu.edu/help>), from the education subject librarian, or from the library research guide: <http://researchguides.wcu.edu/Experiential>

### Instructional Technology Tools

Canvas- link through main university site - <http://www.wcu.edu>

### Student Support

My WCU- link through main university site - <http://www.wcu.edu>

Writing and Learning Commons - <http://walc.wcu.edu>

Information Technology Help Desk - <https://ithelp.wcu.edu> phone (828) 227-7487

### Student Directory and Email

Early in each fall semester, a student directory is updated by the EOE Program Director and distributed to all current EOE students via email attachment. If your contact information (postal mail, telephone, or email) changes during the year, please contact the EOE Program Director Andrew Bobilya ([ajbobilya@wcu.edu](mailto:ajbobilya@wcu.edu)) and Student Support Specialist Denise Royer ([droyer@email.wcu.edu](mailto:droyer@email.wcu.edu)). An email distribution list is also used by the EOE Program Director to communicate programmatic information to students. Students will have the opportunity to opt in or out of this Directory communication system.

The university will use only students' *catamount email* accounts for official communication (including university-wide announcements, individual course scheduling changes, and tuition

billing). **It is crucial that students regularly access their catamount email.**

### Financial Aid

Financial aid for EOE students is currently available in the form of EOE Program scholarships, additional WCU student scholarships, and student loans. General information and details concerning student financial aid can be found through the WCU Graduate School and/or the financial aid office.

The College of Education and Allied Professions also offers scholarships to continuing students. Applications are due by February 1<sup>st</sup> for awards the following academic year. Access the WCU scholarship application through your MyWCU account.

### Advisement and Registration

The EOE Program Director assigns a student's advisor at the time of admission to a program. It is the responsibility of the student to contact his/her advisor for a conference to plan the course of study. This meeting must take place early in the first semester of enrollment and it should involve planning a tentative schedule of classes to be taken to complete the degree.

Details about WCU Graduate School registration processes, as well as current course scheduling, are available on line at <http://registrar.wcu.edu>

### Application for Graduation

You must apply for graduation in your penultimate semester or at the start of your final semester. Access the Apply for Graduation link through the university's myWCU system. When you register for your final semester courses (October for spring; March for summer/fall), it is time to apply for graduation. Delaying your application for graduation may delay your degree conferral.

### Counseling Services

Counseling services are available without charge to students in the EOE Program at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) on the WCU campus and at the Biltmore Park instructional site.

The main Counseling Center is on campus in Cullowhee on the second floor of Bird Building. It is open from 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday. Counseling services at the Biltmore Park location are available on select days and times each semester. For more information and/or an appointment at either site, call CAPS at 828-227-7469.

### Center for Career and Professional Development

Career planning and placement services are available to students in the EOE Program at the Center for Career and Professional Development on the WCU campus and at the Biltmore Park instructional site.

The services provided by the WCU Center for Career and Professional Development include on-campus interviewing, resume referral, letters of reference, interviewing skills assistance, job search assistance, career job listings, and career counseling. For information and/or an appointment at either site, go to <http://careers.wcu.edu> or call 828-227-7133.



## **Appendices**

## Appendix A: Instructions for Completing EOE Fillable Forms

**Important Note:** For current fillable forms, please refer to the EOE Organization page on Canvas. These forms can be downloaded from Canvas onto a computer where they can be completed digitally, shared with committee members, saved, and submitted.

### To add your electronic signature (or initials) to an EOE Form (found on Canvas):

- Create and save your electronic signature:
  - Sign your name on a white piece of paper; scan/crop.
  - Save as an image; choose jpg for “save as type” below “file name.”
  - Store in a file on your computer.
  - Proceed to appropriate document instructions below.
- For an **Adobe PDF**
  - This includes the following forms: EOE Student Information, Individual Student Plan, Thesis/Project Checklist, Thesis Written Proposal Eval, Thesis Oral Proposal Eval, Thesis Defense Written Document Eval, & Thesis Defense Oral Presentation Eval.
  - **Important:** Be sure to fill in all form fields correctly before adding your signature. Once an Adobe document with a signature has been saved, the form fields cannot be adjusted.
  - Click on the calligraphy pen icon (“Sign document...”) on the menu bar at the top of the page.
    - If you do not see this in your menu bar, then click on the “fill and sign” button in the right-hand toolbar, then choose “You.” The calligraphy pen “Sign” button should then appear on the menu bar at the top of the page.
  - Then click “Add signature.”
  - Click on the “Image” button and open the jpg of your saved signature; Then click “Apply.”
  - Click on the “Sign” button on the menu bar again, and you should see an image of your signature. Click this, move it to the area of the document where you’d like to place your signature, and click that spot to drop the signature.
  - After filling in all fields correctly, save the document.
- For a **Word document**
  - This includes the following forms: EOE Advance to Thesis/Project, Request for Thesis Committee, & Final Project Approval.
  - “Copy” your electronic signature and paste it into the “Picture” box beside the request for signature.
  - Drag to size it accordingly.
  - Save the document.



## **Appendix B: EOE Fillable Forms List**

Please see 'EOE Organization' in Canvas for the current list of all forms.

EOE Advance to Thesis/Project Form  
EOE Final Project Approval Form  
EOE Individual Student Plan of Study Form  
EOE Student Information Form  
EOE Thesis Defense Oral Presentation Evaluation Form  
EOE Thesis Defense Written Document Evaluation Form  
EOE Thesis Oral Proposal Evaluation Form  
EOE Thesis Written Proposal Evaluation Form  
EOE Thesis/Project Checklist  
Request for Thesis Committee Form

### Appendix C: EOE-Related Professional Organizations

- American Camp Association (ACA) <https://www.acacamps.org/>
- Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) <http://acctinfo.org/>
- Association for Experiential Education (AEE) [www.aee.org](http://www.aee.org)
- Association for Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE) [www.aore.org](http://www.aore.org)
- Coalition for Education in the Outdoors (CEO)  
<https://www2.cortland.edu/departments/recreation/ceo/>
- Children and Nature Network (CNN) <https://www.childrenandnature.org/>
- Environmental Educators of North Carolina (EENC) <https://eenc.wildapricot.org/>
- Independent School Experiential Education Network (ISEEN)  
<https://www.iseeninfo.com/>
- National Association for Interpretation (NAI) <https://www.interpnet.com/>
- National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP) <https://natsap.org/>
- National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) <https://www.nrpa.org/>
- North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) <https://naaee.org/>
- North Carolina Recreation and Park Association (NCRPA) <https://www.ncrpa.net>
- North Carolina Youth Camp Association (NCYCA) <https://www.nccamps.org/>
- Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Council (OBHC) <https://obhcouncil.com/>
- The Academy of Leisure Sciences (TALS)  
<https://www.theacademyofleisureciences.org/>
- Wilderness Education Association (WEA) <https://www.weainfo.org/>

\*Note: There are many other professional organizations not included in this list including activity specific associations and certifying bodies (e.g., American Canoe Association, American Mountain Guides Association, etc.). EOE students are encouraged to become active members in associations that best support their specific professional interests.

\*\*EOE Students are encouraged to become active members of one or more professional organization during their time in the Program. Oftentimes student membership rates are significantly cheaper, and these organizations offer wonderful opportunities to network, present, and serve in various volunteer roles.

## **Appendix D: EOE Course Descriptions and Objectives**

### **EOE 500: Foundations of Experiential and Outdoor Education**

#### **Course Description**

This course orients students to the nature of graduate study in Experiential and Outdoor Education at WCU. It focuses on cohort building and the educational outcomes of the EOE Program. Students will also be introduced to related opportunities including off campus field courses and elective options. Students will develop a comprehensive plan for completion of the EOE degree that incorporates required courses, electives, and other opportunities. In addition, this course will include an overview of more contemporary and recent scholars in experiential education. Students will select additional readings and topics beyond the class text.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Demonstrate a foundational understanding of the structure of the MSEOE Program.
  - (a) Describe the program goals and their relevance to experiential and outdoor education.
  - (b) Describe how the MSEOE course of study can be integrated with other related programs and opportunities including the North Carolina Environmental Education Certification, Landmark Learning courses, off campus field courses and programs such as the National Outdoor Leadership School and elective options.
  - (c) Describe some of the issues and barriers encountered in graduate work.
  - (d) Describe the program philosophy.
2. Integrate program options into a cohesive plan of study.
  - (a) Develop a two-year plan of study for the MSEOE that includes the sequence of required courses, transfer credits, elective courses, and opportunities external to the Program.
  - (b) Create several potential research questions or project ideas of interest.
3. Develop an understanding of and think critically about the foundations of experiential and outdoor education through seminar-style discussion and student-led presentations on various contemporary and recent scholars in experiential education.

### **EOE 501: Philosophy and Theory of Experiential and Outdoor Education**

#### **Course Description**

This course investigates the major philosophical and ethical strands of thought that have influenced experiential and outdoor education thinking. Students will develop and revise their own philosophy of experiential and outdoor education through interaction with the readings and discussion.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Know and understand the major branches of philosophy and how they relate to experiential education.
2. Identify the major subjects of philosophical inquiry of interest to all educators – including *the nature of learning and personal growth, the role of the educator, and the aims of education* – and how an understanding of these areas informs educational practice and research.

3. Conduct critical analyses to examine and question assumptions about experiential education theory and practice within a program context.
4. Develop informed and coherent working definitions of the major concepts, theories, and philosophies underpinning experiential education through reading, writing, class dialogue, and participation.
5. Develop their own philosophy of experiential education, informed by research and theory in the field.

### **EOE 502: Diversity and Social Justice**

#### **Course Description**

In this course, students will begin by grappling with what oppression looks like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students will understand some barriers to Experiential and Outdoor Education that members of each oppressed group might face, and how we can work toward equity and social justice. Additionally, students will be introduced to various methodological and theoretical lenses to guide socially just and responsible research practices in EOE, and more broadly, social sciences.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Discuss how EOE scholars have applied critical theories to advance the work of diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice in the field.
2. Explore elements of one's own identity and worldview and how our own identities and lenses frame how we view, interpret, and experience EOE.
3. Discuss and critique the ways that both leisure and educational settings can be a site of conflict, power, and social control.
4. Create and support suggestions for individual and societal action for equity related to EOE.
5. Identify barriers that marginalized populations in various "-isms" may face in various EOE settings (racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism etc.).
6. Articulate an understanding of and demonstrate the ability to use key terms within diversity education.

### **EOE 503: Research Methods in Experiential and Outdoor Education**

#### **Course Description**

This course reviews qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches to research in experiential and outdoor education. Topics include research design, methods for data collection and analysis, and strategies for completing research projects, papers, and presentations.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Interpret and evaluate qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research approaches within Experiential and Outdoor Education and related fields.
2. Identify and describe the components of a traditional research report as well as at least three successful ways to structure a research report that *do not* meet traditional standards.
3. Synthesize relevant literature in the field of Experiential and Outdoor Education.
4. Write a scholarly research question.
5. Deliver a scholarly presentation.

### **EOE 600: Advanced Research Methods and Evaluation Techniques**

#### **Course Description**

This is an advanced course that allows students to focus on their area of research design or evaluation technique and to develop a thesis or project proposal. Students will explore a variety of research paradigms including post-positive, critical, hermeneutics, post-structural, and post-human. Students will have opportunities to read and critique a wide range of research methodologies such as ethnography, autoethnography, collective memory work, creative analytic practice, and phenomenology. This course culminates with the student's thesis/project proposal.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Effectively respond to the academic review process.
2. Understand the role of theory and its application in the research process.
3. Identify and describe a range of paradigms and methodologies from post-positivism to post-humanism.
4. Examine ethical dilemmas and issues related to the research process.
5. Create a philosophically consistent map of their research or project plan including questions, theory(s), methodology, methods, strategies for analysis, and ways to represent the data.
6. Create a written and oral research/project proposal.

### **EOE 601: Current Trends and Issues in Experiential and Outdoor Education**

#### **Course Description**

This course is designed to explore developing trends and issues in Experiential and Outdoor Education (EOE). Students will be required to read a wide variety of literature and discuss pertinent issues in the field of EOE.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Identify and critique the major and emerging issues and trends facing Experiential and Outdoor Education professionals.
2. Synthesize relevant literature focused on at least two current issues in Experiential and Outdoor Education.
3. Professionally present research on issues and trends in the field, both orally and in writing.

### **EOE 602: Group Facilitation and Teaching Methods in Experiential and Outdoor Education**

#### **Course Description**

This course emphasizes a variety of facilitation techniques, instructional strategies and teaching methods that focus on an inductive approach to learning. Students will develop and practice strategies for assessing student and participant needs, making effective instructional decisions, selecting appropriate instructional objectives, and evaluating student learning. A variety of specific methods and philosophies relative to experiential and outdoor education for all ages will be introduced.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Describe and demonstrate an understanding of common EOE strategies that promote student learning.
2. Create appropriate assessment tools as effective methods of evaluation of learning.
3. Design and facilitate outdoor education experiences in response to participant's needs and the Program's philosophy, goals, and objectives.
4. Identify, critique, and use EOE related resources to aid in developing an effective sequence of activities.
5. Accurately assess their own ability as a facilitator, grow in their facilitation skills, and provide meaningful peer feedback.

### **EOE 621: Introduction to Interpretation and Environmental Education**

#### **Course Description**

Through readings, site visits, practice and discussion, students will learn about the theoretical and historical background of the fields of interpretation and environmental education. Students will gain practical experience evaluating interpretive displays and presentations, and environmental education programs. Students will ultimately design and implement effective interpretive messages and environmental education programs. Through these experiences, students will also gain knowledge of a variety of careers within the fields of environmental education and interpretation.

Students will begin the NC Environmental Education Certification process ([www.eenorthcarolina.org](http://www.eenorthcarolina.org)) as a part of the course work. Upon completion of this class, students should have completed between 35-40 hours toward the certification, with opportunities to complete additional hours before the end of the semester.

This certification is required or highly recommended by many employers in the formal and non-formal environmental education and environmental interpretation settings.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Describe the components of quality environmental interpretation and education programs.
2. Critique existing interpretive displays and presentations.
3. Create high-quality interpretive displays and presentations.
4. Design and facilitate effective environmental education programs.
5. Serve as a mentor for undergraduate students learning about outdoor and environmental education.
6. Facilitate activities and assist with logistical aspects of off-campus outdoor and environmental education programs and projects.

### **EOE 623: Youth Development**

#### **Course Description**

Students will examine various cognitive, social, and behavioral theories of youth development and explore how these theories impact programing and instruction in Experiential and Outdoor Education.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Identify and describe major theories of youth development.

2. Describe the stages of human development from birth to emerging adulthood and identify major cognitive, social, and physical changes and needs in each stage.
3. Assess the impact of media influences on today's youth.
4. Apply prominent developmental theories to working in EOE with youth.
5. Critically interpret the language and trends of youth behavior.

### **EOE 624: Social Media, Technology, and EOE**

#### **Course Description**

From Facebook to Pokémon Go to avalanche beacons, technology and social media impact the ways in which we see ourselves and relate to one another and to the outdoors. Questions of power, culture, and ideology are deeply interwoven into these leisure spaces and technological products despite their seeming absence. In this course, we will draw on critical theory to analyze these modern leisure spaces and inventions and their impact on Experiential and Outdoor Education.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Understand the layered role of surveillance in social media and communication technologies and its ramifications on current culture and leisure.
2. Critically assess how identity is shaped and disciplined by use of social media and digital technologies.
3. Describe the role of social media in society and in building and shaping community.
4. Articulate the role of EOE in curating, shaping, and resisting social media and digital technologies.
5. Critically assess barriers and opportunities for social media and digital technology use in the outdoors.

### **EOE 627: Wilderness Education**

#### **Course Description**

This is an expedition style course taught in a wilderness environment. Expedition skills are taught experientially to enable students to lead others safely using minimum impact techniques that preserve the environment. Modes of travel include activities from the following: Backpacking, mountaineering, and canoeing. National certification is possible through the Wilderness Education Association and Leave No Trace field trip.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Integrate and apply ethical principles with concepts relevant to expedition planning, risk management, and facilitation.
2. Identify and demonstrate core backcountry expedition skills (e.g., navigation, cooking, LNT).
3. Deepen teaching and group facilitation skills through planning, teaching, and evaluating at least one technical backcountry skills lesson, one Leave No Trace lesson, and one interpersonal skills lesson.
4. Accurately assess ability as an outdoor leader and provide valuable feedback for themselves, their peers, and instructors.

5. Serve as a mentor for undergraduate students learning about wilderness education.
6. Facilitate activities and assist with logistical aspects of multi-day, expedition-style wilderness education programs.

### **EOE 635: Sites, Facilities, and Programs in Experiential and Outdoor Education**

#### **Course Description**

Planned tour to study specific types of parks and recreation and EOE sites, facilities, and/or programs related to current issues and practices (Cross-listed with PRM 435).

*(Current example: EOE 635 courses include a winter break course focused on the Ski and Snowboarding Industry in Utah and a May Session course focused on Environmental Education.)*

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

TBD-These will be determined in advance by the instructor based upon the sites, facilities, or programs selected. Some example objectives include:

1. Discuss, compare, and contrast management strategies used by a range of sites, facilities, and/or programs.
2. Identify the community impacts of the selected sites, facilities, or programs (economic, infrastructure, social, environmental).
3. Discuss and practice principles related to risk management for the selected sites, facilities, or programs.

### **EOE 637: Experiential and Outdoor Education Expedition**

#### **Course Description**

Students will have the opportunity to travel and visit field study sites and public education facilities. Special emphasis will be placed on experiential and outdoor education programs. Students will travel as a group for this one to three-week travel course experience.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Develop a comprehensive trip plan for an Experiential and Outdoor Education-focused travel course including a detailed itinerary, a risk management plan, and lesson plans.
2. Develop and deliver place-based outdoor education lessons.
3. Integrate reflection to promote personal and professional growth.
4. Value and advocate for multi-day, field-based experiences in experiential and outdoor education.

### **EOE 679: Thesis/Project I**

#### **Course Description**

This is the first of two courses that provide students with an opportunity to make an original contribution to the field of experiential and outdoor education through a thesis or project. During this course, students will work with their thesis/project committee Chair as well as their instructor to complete their fieldwork/project and write up their results/project product section of their final report. The course will focus on data collection and analysis techniques and project



implementation strategies. The instructor and Chair will mentor and support each student through the results/product section of their final report.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Implement a meaningful project that integrates critical thinking and utilizes specific knowledge and skills acquired from graduate coursework.
2. Undertake the research or project implementation process while demonstrating an awareness of the research/project obligations, ethical obligations, and scientific method.
3. Identify and execute a strategy for data or outcome analysis and discussion that is philosophically consistent with the chosen methodology.
4. Demonstrate the ability to professionally present research or projects.

### **EOE 680: Independent Study in Experiential and Outdoor Education**

#### **Course Description**

Independent study designed with an Experiential and Outdoor Education faculty member.

#### **Course Objectives**

Students may have an opportunity to (depending on the focus of their independent study)...

1. Explore additional areas of interest related to the philosophical foundations of experiential and outdoor education.
2. Investigate additional research methods used in experiential and outdoor education.
3. Design learning experiences not included in other EOE courses.

*The individual student and supervising faculty member will develop the course objectives that best fit the student's interests and which are not covered in other courses in the Program.*

### **EOE 683: Internship in Experiential and Outdoor Education**

#### **Course Description**

The Internship in Parks & Experiential and Outdoor Education is a culminating professional experience that allows students to connect theory and practice. Students select an agency and position that represents their area of emphasis in EOE. Students are able to build a professional network, focus their aptitude for certain types of work, and develop transferrable skills that can be applied to a new or existing job. Minimum 200 hours of workplace experience.

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

1. Gain professional experience in an area of interest in the experiential and outdoor education industry.
2. Identify, describe, and evaluate experiential and outdoor education service organizational structures, techniques, and procedures.
3. Accept and utilize constructive suggestions to improve professional knowledge, skills, and abilities.

### **EOE 693: Topics in Experiential and Outdoor Education**

**Course Description**

This course will allow faculty to develop and run new courses with focuses not included in the current core or electives. These courses may also be designed in response to new trends in the EOE field. Courses may be offered under this heading up to three times.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to...

TBD-These will be determined in advance by the instructor.

**EOE 699: Thesis/Project II****Course Description**

This is the second of two courses that provide students with an opportunity to make an original contribution to the field of experiential and outdoor education through a thesis or project. Students will work directly with their thesis/project committee Chair and will complete their thesis or project in this course. The final product of this course is the project/thesis defense.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will develop a final thesis or project document. In addition, students will be able to...

1. Articulate research or project objectives clearly; situate research within an academic or scholarly context (theory/paradigm); state claims and evidence clearly; assess claims, evidence, outcomes, and/or results.
2. Organize and relate the research/project clearly as specified in the EOE Thesis/Project Handbook.
3. Demonstrate the ability to cite relevant EOE literature within research or projects.
4. Identify and clearly articulate the contribution that this research/project makes to the EOE field.

**EOE 779: Continuing Research, Non-Thesis****Course Description**

Students will enroll in this course every semester until they have successfully defended their project. During this course, students will work one-on-one with their Chair to complete and defend their project.

**Course Objectives**

Course objectives will vary, as students enrolled in this course will be at different places in the process. The student and the committee Chair will work together to write these objectives.

**EOE 799: Continuing Research, Thesis****Course Description**

Students will enroll in this course every semester until they have successfully defended their thesis. During this course, students will work one-on-one with their Chair to complete and defend their thesis research.

**Course Objectives**

Course objectives will vary, as students enrolled in this course will be at different places in the research process. The student and the committee Chair will work together to write these objectives.