

Admissions Requirements & Process

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Sul Ross State University

Overview

Admission to the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership is competitive and mission-driven. The program seeks experienced leaders whose professional work aligns with Sul Ross State University's commitment to serving rural, borderland, and linguistically diverse communities.

The inaugural cohort is limited to 15 candidates to ensure exceptional mentorship, meaningful faculty interaction, and a cohort composition that supports collaborative learning across diverse organizational contexts.

Eligibility Requirements

To ensure that admitted students possess the professional background and academic readiness necessary for doctoral-level inquiry and leadership, applicants must meet the following criteria:

Educational Background

- Master's degree from a regionally accredited institution in education or another appropriate field
- Minimum graduate GPA of 3.0
- Official transcripts from all graduate institutions

Professional Experience

- Minimum of three years of leadership experience in P-12 education, higher education, or related organizational settings
- Texas Principal or Principal as Instructional Leader Certificate (or an equivalent credential appropriate to the applicant's professional context)
- Demonstrated potential for scholarly inquiry and leadership advancement

Note: Future specialization tracks may include alternate leadership pathways; in such cases, professional experience requirements may be adjusted to ensure both accessibility and rigor appropriate to the respective track.

Organizational Context and Improvement Science Readiness

Because the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership is grounded in improvement science, applicants must be embedded in an organizational context that allows them to design, test, and refine change initiatives over time.

Successful applicants typically:

- Hold leadership roles with sufficient authority to lead change initiatives
- Have access to organizational data to support sustained improvement inquiry
- Work within systems where long-term, continuous improvement is feasible over the duration of a three-year doctoral program

Technical and Academic Preparedness

- Demonstrated competence in online learning environments and digital communication
- Basic proficiency with research tools and quantitative/qualitative data analysis
- Capacity to meet the rigorous expectations of a doctoral-level cohort-based program

Employer Verification Required

Because meaningful improvement science work requires organizational support and access to data, applicants must provide written verification from their employer confirming:

- Leadership authority to lead change initiatives
- Access to organizational data for improvement inquiry
- Organizational support for conducting dissertation work over three years

This requirement ensures students can successfully complete a Dissertation in Practice that produces real organizational improvement, not just theoretical proposals.

Program Commitment

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider employment stability and role continuity during the three-year Ed.D. program. Significant changes in employment context may introduce unexpected challenges or delays in program completion.

Application Materials

Applicants must submit a comprehensive application demonstrating readiness for doctoral study and alignment with program mission. All materials should be submitted through the ApplyTexas portal and supplemental submission process.

Required Materials

1. Online Application Form

Complete the Sul Ross State University Graduate Admissions application through ApplyTexas. Select "Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership" as the program.

2. Official Transcripts

Submit official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended (undergraduate and graduate). Transcripts must be sent directly from the issuing institution to Sul Ross State University Graduate Admissions.

3. Evidence of Administrative Certification

Submit a copy of your Texas Principal or Principal as Instructional Leader Certification or equivalent administrative credential. Credentials must be current and not expired.

4. Letter of Introduction / Statement of Purpose (3-5 pages)

A substantive written statement addressing:

- **Professional background:** Your current role, career trajectory, and leadership experience
- **Problem of Practice:** The authentic organizational challenge you seek to address through doctoral study. Describe the problem, why it matters, who is affected, and why it persists
- **Motivation for doctoral study:** Why you are pursuing the Ed.D. at this point in your career and what you hope to accomplish
- **Program alignment:** How your professional context and leadership work align with the program's focus on rural, borderland, and linguistically diverse communities
- **Readiness for doctoral work:** Your capacity for rigorous study, disciplined inquiry, and sustained intellectual engagement

This statement is the most important component of your application. It should demonstrate clear thinking, substantive professional experience, and genuine commitment to improvement-focused leadership.

5. Video Presentation (5-7 minutes)

A recorded video presentation addressing:

- Brief professional introduction and current role
- The problem of practice you hope to address
- Why doctoral study is the right next step for your leadership development
- How your work aligns with Sul Ross State University's mission

The video allows the admissions committee to assess your communication skills, professional presence, and authenticity. It should be professionally recorded but does not require sophisticated production—clear audio, good lighting, and genuine engagement with the content matter most.

Technical specifications:

- Length: 5-7 minutes (strict maximum of 8 minutes)
- Format: MP4, MOV, or link to unlisted YouTube/Vimeo video
- Upload through the supplemental materials portal

6. Letters of Recommendation (Two required)

At least one letter must be from a current or recent supervisor who can attest to your:

- Leadership ability and professional effectiveness
- Academic readiness and capacity for doctoral-level work
- Ability to manage multiple responsibilities and sustained commitment
- Potential for leading organizational improvement

The second letter may be from:

- A professional colleague who has observed your leadership work
- A faculty member from your master's program
- A community or organizational partner
- Another supervisor or mentor

Letters should be substantive (at least one full page) and provide specific examples of your leadership capacity, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to improvement.

Recommenders should submit letters directly through the SRSU-designated portal.

7. Professional Résumé or Curriculum Vitae

A current résumé or CV documenting:

- Professional experience with roles, responsibilities, and dates
- Educational background (degrees, certifications, credentials)
- Professional development, presentations, or publications (if applicable)
- Professional affiliations or leadership in educational organizations (if applicable)

8. Employer Support and Data Access Verification

A letter from your immediate supervisor or organizational leadership confirming:

- Your current leadership role and authority to lead organizational change initiatives
- Your access to organizational data necessary to support improvement science inquiry over the three-year program
- Organizational support for you to design, test, and implement change initiatives as part of your Dissertation in Practice
- Understanding of the time commitment required for doctoral study and confirmation that your role allows for this commitment

This letter should be on organizational letterhead and signed by an appropriate supervisor or administrator (e.g., superintendent, executive director, dean, or other senior leader). The letter demonstrates that your organization understands and supports your doctoral work and that you are positioned to conduct meaningful improvement science inquiry within your professional context.

Sample language for the letter:

"I confirm that [Applicant Name] holds a leadership role within [Organization Name] with sufficient authority to lead organizational change initiatives. [Applicant Name] will have access to organizational data necessary to conduct improvement science research and will be supported in designing, testing, and implementing change initiatives as part of the Ed.D. Dissertation in Practice. We understand the time commitment required for doctoral study and support [Applicant Name]'s participation in this program."

9. Evidence of Impact (Optional)

Applicants may submit supplemental materials that demonstrate leadership impact, such as:

- Reports documenting organizational improvements you led
- Publications or presentations
- Program evaluations or assessment results
- Strategic plans or initiatives you developed
- Awards or recognitions for leadership work

Optional materials should be selective. Submit only evidence that meaningfully strengthens your application. Quality matters more than quantity.

Selection Process

The Ed.D. Program Admissions Committee reviews applications holistically, considering the full range of materials to assess:

Professional Readiness

- Depth and quality of leadership experience
- Clarity of the identified problem of practice
- Evidence of impact in current professional role
- Capacity to continue working full-time while engaged in doctoral study

Academic Preparation

- Graduate academic record and writing quality
- Intellectual curiosity and analytical thinking demonstrated in application materials
- Capacity for scholarly reading, research, and sustained study
- Communication skills (written and verbal)

Mission Alignment

- Professional context and commitment to serving rural, borderland, or linguistically diverse communities
- Problem of practice relevance to program focus
- Potential contribution to cohort diversity of setting and experience
- Alignment with program values and improvement science methodology

Cohort Composition

The committee constructs each cohort intentionally to include leaders from varied organizational settings - school districts at different levels, central office roles, and geographic locations. This diversity enriches networked learning and ensures students learn from improvement work across multiple contexts.

Selection decisions consider how each candidate will contribute to and benefit from the cohort learning community.

Application Timeline

Expression of Interest: Open now

Application Portal Opens: SOON 2026 (following SACSCOC approval)

Application Deadline: April 15, 2026

Admissions Decisions: June 1 or Approximately 4-6 weeks after application deadline

Program Start: Fall 2026

After You Apply

Application Review:

Complete applications are reviewed by the Program Admissions Committee following the application deadline. The committee meets to discuss candidates and make admission recommendations.

Interviews:

Some applicants may be invited to participate in a virtual interview to discuss program fit, readiness for doctoral study, and their problem of practice. Interviews are conducted via Teams or Zoom and typically last 30-45 minutes.

Admission Decisions:

Applicants are notified of admission decisions via email. Admitted students receive information about enrollment procedures, program orientation, and next steps.

Enrollment Confirmation:

Admitted students confirm their intent to enroll and complete registration processes according to the timeline provided in their admission letter.

Questions About Admissions?

For questions about application requirements, the selection process, or whether your qualifications meet program expectations:

Program Director: Dr. John Decman

Email: john.decman@sulross.edu

Program Email: educationdoctorate@sulross.edu

Sul Ross State University

The Frontier University of Texas