

# Am I a Fit for This Program?

Ed.D. in Educational Leadership | Sul Ross State University



This self-assessment is designed to help you determine whether the Sul Ross Ed.D. in Educational Leadership is the right fit for your professional context and goals. Read each section carefully and answer honestly. The program has specific eligibility requirements that are not flexible — understanding them now will help you make an informed decision before investing time in your application.

**Important: If you answer 'No' to any item in Section 1 (Eligibility Requirements), you do not currently meet the minimum qualifications for admission. Please contact the Program Director before proceeding with your application.**

## Section 1: Eligibility Requirements (Non-Negotiable)

All applicants must meet the following criteria. These are program requirements established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Sul Ross State University.

- I hold a Master's degree from a regionally accredited institution.**  
*Degrees in education or a related field are required. Minimum graduate GPA of 3.0.*
- I hold a current Texas Principal or Principal as Instructional Leader (PaIL) Certificate.**  
*This credential is required for all applicants. The certificate must be current and not expired. A Master's degree in School Administration typically satisfies this requirement. Out-of-state certificates do not automatically qualify. Contact the Program Director.*
- I have a minimum of three years of leadership experience in P-12 education, higher education, or a related organizational setting.**  
*Leadership experience must be substantive and not limited to classroom teaching. Roles such as principal, assistant principal, instructional coach with authority, district coordinator, or equivalent positions qualify.*
- I am currently employed in a role that gives me authority to lead organizational change.**  
*The program's Dissertation in Practice requires you to design, test, and implement improvement initiatives in your organization over three years. You must have a leadership role, not just proximity to leadership, to fulfill this requirement.*
- My employer will provide written verification of my leadership authority, data access, and organizational support for doctoral work.**  
*A formal employer verification letter on organizational letterhead is a required application component. If your supervisor would not support or sign such a letter, this program may not be feasible for you at this time.*

## Section 2: Organizational Readiness

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Because the Ed.D. uses improvement science as its core methodology, your organizational context is not just a backdrop to your doctoral work. It is the site of your research. The questions below assess whether your current professional situation supports sustained improvement inquiry.

- I have meaningful access to organizational data relevant to my Problem of Practice.**  
*This includes student achievement data, staffing data, program outcomes, or other data sources appropriate to your improvement work. You must be able to collect and analyze data and not just observe it.*
- I can realistically sustain my improvement work in this organization for three years.**  
*Significant role changes, job transitions, or organizational restructuring during the program can jeopardize your Dissertation in Practice. Consider your employment stability honestly.*
- The problem I want to address is one I have the authority to act on, not just observe or recommend.**  
*Your Dissertation in Practice requires you to design and test interventions, not merely propose them. If your role requires going through multiple layers of approval to implement any change, consider whether that context is feasible for improvement science inquiry.*
- My organization serves rural, borderland, or linguistically diverse communities, or my work directly connects to the needs of such communities.**  
*The program prioritizes applicants whose work aligns with Sul Ross's mission. You do not have to work in a rural or borderland setting, but you should be able to articulate a meaningful connection to underserved or rural/borderland community contexts.*

## Section 3: Professional Goals and Program Alignment

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This section helps you assess whether the program's design, focus, and outcomes align with your professional goals.

- I am seeking a professional practice doctorate focused on organizational improvement and not a research Ph.D. focused on generating new theory.**  
*The Ed.D. prepares scholar-practitioners who lead improvement in their organizations. If your primary goal is an academic research career or generating original theoretical scholarship, a Ph.D. program may be a better fit.*
- I am interested in pursuing or advancing toward the Texas Superintendent Certificate.**  
*The program's specialization is in Superintendent and District-Level Leadership. This is the current program pathway. You do not need to be a superintendent, but this specialization should align with your leadership trajectory.*
- I can commit an average of 12–15 hours per week to doctoral work while maintaining full-time employment.**  
*The program is designed for working professionals, but it requires genuine time commitment, including coursework, a weekly 90-minute synchronous session, reading, and dissertation*

development. If this is not realistic in your current life circumstances, consider your timeline carefully.

- I am comfortable working in an online, cohort-based learning environment.**  
*All instruction is delivered online. You will progress through the program with the same cohort of approximately 15 students. There are no campus residencies, but regular synchronous participation is expected.*

## Likely Fit vs. Likely Not a Fit

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| Likely a Strong Fit  | May Not Be the Right Fit — Yet   |
|--|--|
| Holds principal certification and is in a leadership role        | Does not hold Texas principal certification                            |
| Currently leads change with access to organizational data        | In a role without authority to implement change                        |
| Works in or serves rural, borderland, or underserved communities | No connection to rural/borderland/underserved contexts                 |
| Pursuing or aligned with superintendent-level leadership         | Goals primarily academic or theoretical (Ph.D. pathway)                |
| Can commit an average of 12-15 hrs/week while working full-time  | Cannot sustain an average of 12-15 hrs/week given current life demands |
| Has stable employment for the 3-year program                     | Expecting significant role or job change in next 1-2 years             |
| Employer will actively support doctoral work                     | Employer unlikely to provide required verification letter              |

## Before You Apply: A Reflection Prompt

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Based on your honest responses above, describe in a few sentences: (1) Your current role and how it positions you to lead organizational change. (2) The problem in your organization you most want to address. (3) Why this moment in your career is the right time to pursue a doctorate. If you struggled to answer any of these questions, that is important information, and a conversation with the Program Director may help clarify your path.

## Next Steps

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If you have confirmed your eligibility and believe this program aligns with your professional context and goals:

- Review the Problem of Practice Quick Reference Guide to begin developing your Letter of Introduction.
- After completing the ApplyTexas portion of the application, the Graduate School will reach out to provide a site for uploading the remaining application materials..
- Contact the Program Director if you have questions about your fit or eligibility before investing time in your application.

If you identified gaps in your current eligibility or readiness, this does not necessarily mean the program is not right for you. It may mean the timing needs adjustment. The Program Director welcomes conversations about your development pathway.

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*Sul Ross State University Ed.D. in Educational Leadership | Improvement Science | Rural & Borderland Communities*