Proposal for a Graduate Certificate Program in Qualitative Research
Department of Educational Studies in Psychology, Research Methodology and Counseling
College of Education
The University of Alabama

A. Background

Need/Rationale
The University of Alabama’s College of Education has developed a rigorous sequence of qualitative research courses facilitated by dedicated specialists in qualitative inquiry. Student interest in qualitative research has grown considerably over the past five years and multiple students have communicated an interest in formalizing their sequence of coursework in qualitative research. Creating a Graduate Certificate in Qualitative Research will provide our students with a means to establish their own expertise as emerging scholars in the field of qualitative inquiry. This proposal for a Graduate Certificate in Qualitative Research solidifies an established course sequence of 15 credits that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical application, and field-based experience. Though this certificate is housed in the College of Education, it is anticipated that it will be of interest to an interdisciplinary array of graduate students across the university. These graduate courses in qualitative research are primarily populated by students from the College of Education. Additionally, students from an interdisciplinary array of departments maintain a presence in our qualitative course offerings. Faculty from the following areas have referred their students to our qualitative research courses: Communications, English, Women’s Studies, Library Studies, Political Science, and the Interdisciplinary Studies PhD program.

Currently, no certificate programs in qualitative research exist at universities in the State of Alabama. However, other universities outside Alabama with a strong emphasis in educational research have developed qualitative research certificates of their own. The University of Georgia has long emphasized a qualitative research program and has developed a sequence of courses leading to a certificate in qualitative inquiry. This 15-credit certificate is open to graduate students across the university and has averaged 20 certificates awarded each year, over the past three years. Similarly, the University of Tennessee offers a 15 credit graduate certificate through the College of Education. Georgia State requires certificate students to complete 21 credits in order to earn their Certificate in Qualitative Research in Education. Nova Southeastern University offers an off-campus certificate program that requires 18 credits for completion.

The Graduate Certificate Program in Qualitative Research distinguishes itself from its peers by offering 15 credits of coursework specifically focused on qualitative inquiry (other certificate programs allow for coursework in other content areas that simply use qualitative research). All graduate coursework required for the proposed certificate is already offered through the Educational Research Ph.D. program (CIP Code # 13.0603). As a consequence, students who earn a Certificate in Qualitative Research will have successfully completed five (5) courses all with a specific focus on qualitative inquiry. Further, the required fieldwork course (BER 687) will afford all students the opportunity to employ their methodological skill in the field, thereby gaining valuable hands-on
experience through which to understand their classroom knowledge. (Fieldwork experiences typically take place in school-based or community group locales and require the approval of the university Institutional Review Board before data collection can begin.)

Students who complete the Certificate Program in Qualitative Research will be provided with formal recognition of their expertise in qualitative research methods. This recognition will communicate to prospective employers that graduates have the skills and abilities necessary for rigorous qualitative research in addition to any content-area expertise related to the student’s content area. As a consequence, graduates who seek an academic position as a faculty member, for example, will be able to distinguish themselves from other applicants through their dedication to qualitative research methods. Further, the certificate program is designed so that graduates may go on to teach qualitative methods at the collegiate level. This will, again, improve the standing of our graduates in relation to their peers across the country.

**Demand (Enrollment Projections 1-5 years/projected competed in first 5 years)**
Graduate enrollment in current qualitative course offerings has been robust. It is expected that enrollment in the certificate program will consist of 25 students within the first five years of program implementation. Assuming that some of these students will have already completed introductory qualitative research courses at the time of the certificate’s inception, it is projected that 15 certificates will be awarded at the end of the 2016-2017 academic year.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Projected Total Enrollments</th>
<th>Projected Total Completions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
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**Delivery Format:** Campus Only.

**Semester of Expected Implementation:** Fall, 2012.

**Resources:** No additional personnel or resources needed. Course requirements for the Certificate Program are currently offered and represented in three-year course planning.

**Statement of support of Dean and Provost:** This certificate proposal was vetted fully in the appropriate committees in the College of Education, and Dean McLean indicates that it has his endorsement and the support of Provost Bonner.

**B. Application, Admission, & General Requirements**
An applicant to the Qualitative Research Certificate Program must have completed a master’s degree in education (or a related field) to apply for the Qualitative Research
nondegree certificate program. The applicant selects the Qualitative Research Certificate Program when applying at the Graduate School’s online “Graduate Application Center.”

The application will include the requested materials, including a Statement of Purpose focusing on the student’s goals in pursuing a Qualitative Research certificate. Applicants also submit a writing sample directly to the department for faculty consideration when the faculty review the Graduate School certificate program application.

General Requirements:
- The prerequisite for this certificate is that students have a Masters degree in education (or a related field) and be accepted to the Qualitative Research nondegree certificate program by the Graduate School and departmental faculty.
- Applications will consist of evidence of having a Masters degree, a statement of purpose, and writing sample.
- Minimum Required Hours: 15.
  - 9 unique hours to the certificate program in addition to the standard research method coursework students typically take as a part of their own traditional programmatic coursework (as an example, if enrolled in a doctorate program in the College of Education, graduate students typically take 3-6 hours of qualitative research courses as part of their doctoral degree program requirements. As a consequence, students who choose to enroll in the qualitative research certificate program will take an additional 9-12 hours of coursework specific to qualitative research).
- Certificate completion will be monitored by certificate program administrators.

Typical Course Sequence:
- Spring: BER 632
- Fall: BER 633
- Spring: BER 630
- Fall: BER 687
- Spring: BER 695

Transfer of Credit: None.

Certificate Completion Requirements:
BER 630: Case Study
BER 632: Reflexivity and Resistance in Research (Re)Presentations: Qualitative Research Methods II
BER 633: Aesthetics & Ethics: Qualitative Research Methods III
BER 687: Field Experience
BER 695: Special Topics (focus shifts yearly)
Capstone Presentation

Time Limit: 6 Years.
**Hours that might be used later:** No more than 9 hours may be used towards a doctoral degree in Educational Research at the University of Alabama, at the discretion of the program faculty. Because students enrolled in the Educational Research doctoral degree already develop an area of methodological expertise through their doctoral coursework, their participation in this certificate would be redundant. As a consequence, students who enroll in the Educational Research doctoral degree are not eligible for the certificate.

**C. Evaluation**
Plan to determine if certificate program is meeting both program’s expected outcomes and expected student learning outcomes:

The overarching certificate evaluation is displayed in the following charts regarding (I.) Student Learning Outcomes and (II.) Programmatic Outcomes:

### I. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcome</th>
<th>How Measured</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Demonstrate knowledge of historical and theoretical literature on Qualitative Research</td>
<td>• Development of historical and theoretical literature review for research prospectus (BER 633); &lt;br&gt;  o BER 633 instructor will evaluate this component using Student Learning Outcome rubric (see below).</td>
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<td>2) Demonstrate application of qualitative research coding and analytic strategies.</td>
<td>• Design and implementation of observation research assignment (BER 632) &lt;br&gt;  o BER 632 instructor will evaluate this component using Student Learning Outcome rubric (see below).</td>
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<td>3) Demonstrate ability to design and conduct independent research in the field.</td>
<td>• Design, implementation, and write-up of field-based inquiry assignment (BER 687) &lt;br&gt;  o BER 687 instructor will evaluate this component using Student Learning Outcome rubric (see below).</td>
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<td>4) Demonstrate ability to communicate</td>
<td>• Capstone presentation of research</td>
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In order to maintain evaluative consistency across the certificate, student learning outcomes will be assessed according to the same 5-point rubric (see below). Thus all successful certificate students must achieve passing scores in the four student learning domains.

The following rubric will be utilized to evaluate student-learning outcomes (score of 3 or better is required to pass each outcome):

5 = (Target) Excellent. All points of the learning outcome are answered fully and persuasively with comprehensive documentation. All the information is valid and pertinent. Organization is logical and language is clear and concise.

4 = Good. All points of the learning outcome are answered with documentation that generally supports the answer. By and large the information is valid and pertinent. Organization is logical and language is clear and concise. Minor errors of detail are tolerated.

3 = Adequate. All points of the learning outcome are treated but at a minimal level and with superficial documentation. Most of the information is valid and pertinent. Organization is logical and language is clear. Small errors are tolerated.

2 = Inadequate. Some of the points called for by the learning outcome are answered and documentation is either lacking or is erroneous. Portions of the information are invalid and not pertinent. Organization lacks a logical flow and language is vague. Major points made in the answer are in error.

1 = Unacceptable. Few of the points asked for by the learning outcome are answered, documentation is absent, and most of the information is incorrect. The answer does not address the question, lacks logical flow and indicates a deficiency in verbal skills.

0 = N/A The learning outcome was not completed.

### Program Outcomes

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| 1) Enrollment of 25 students within first five years of program inception, developing as follows:  
   a. 7 new students in year 1;  
   b. 5 new students in year 2;  
   c. 3 new students in year 3; | • Enrollment figures, compiled on an annual basis |
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<td>d. 5 new students in year 4; e. 5 new students in year 5.</td>
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<td>2) Award 10 certificates by year 4; 15 certificates by year 6.</td>
<td>Based on number of students who complete all certificate requirements.</td>
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<td>3) Develop network of certificate scholars both currently enrolled and graduated. a. Utilize network as student and programmatic resource (list of certificate graduates &amp; employment, etc.)</td>
<td>List of enrollees and graduates maintained by certificate coordinators. o Invite certificate graduates to Capstone presentations; o Make available list of graduates and occupations as example of uses of certificate and skills.</td>
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