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Application: **Doctor of Philosophy in Learning Sciences and Technologies program**

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

My name is Nguyen Hoang Tung Lam, and I am applying to the Doctor of Philosophy in Learning Sciences and Technologies program at Penn GSE. My academic background, interdisciplinary research experiences, and leadership in educational innovation have inspired my commitment to advancing equitable, effective, and technologically enhanced higher education. I am particularly motivated to pursue doctoral research on **“Digital Pedagogies in Higher Education: Redefining Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age — A Case Study of Vietnam”**, examining how digital tools and pedagogical strategies can transform learning experiences while addressing the unique cultural, infrastructural, and institutional contexts of Vietnamese universities.

Academic and Professional Background

I am currently completing a Master of Science in Education, specializing in International Teaching and Global Leadership (ITGL) at Johns Hopkins University. Through this program, I have engaged deeply with global education systems, curriculum innovation, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Collaborative research with faculty and international peers has strengthened my analytical, research, and communication skills while reinforcing my desire to generate research-based solutions for pressing challenges in higher education, particularly in contexts similar to Vietnam.

Previously, I earned a Doctor of Medicine from Hanoi Medical University. Though distinct from education, this training cultivated rigorous research skills, analytical reasoning, and problem-solving capabilities. I co-authored peer-reviewed publications and presented at international conferences in scientific fields such as chemistry and catalysis — experiences that instilled methodological precision, interdisciplinary collaboration, and resilience in tackling complex problems, skills I now apply to educational research.

Complementing my academic training, I have developed educational resources, including a geometry exercise book used by over 1,000 students and a Braille astronomy book for visually impaired learners. These projects reflect my commitment to translating theoretical knowledge into accessible, practical tools for diverse populations.

My leadership and project-management experiences have also shaped my research approach. As Co-Chief Executive Officer of QCOne Group, I oversaw research, development, and dissemination of educational products. I led Vietnam's delegations to international competitions — including the International Olympiad in Artificial Intelligence (Bulgaria), Silicon Valley International Invention Festival (USA), AI for Good Global Summit (Geneva), and the International Astronomy Olympiad (Beijing). In these roles, I coordinated interdisciplinary teams, developed training programs, guided research applications, and supervised presentations. These experiences honed my skills in cross-cultural collaboration, mentorship, and large-scale project management — essential for conducting educational research at the doctoral level.

Research Interests and Proposed Dissertation Focus

My doctoral research will focus on digital pedagogies in higher education, exploring how technology-enhanced learning can be designed, implemented, and evaluated to promote active, student-centered learning and equitable access. Specifically, my project, "Digital Pedagogies in Higher Education: Redefining Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age — A Case Study of Vietnam", aims to examine how digital tools, instructional strategies, and institutional practices can be integrated to transform teaching and learning while navigating cultural and infrastructural constraints.

In Vietnam, higher education has traditionally been teacher-centered, with students often occupying passive roles. While digital pedagogies present opportunities for student-centered learning, their success requires careful consideration of learners' digital literacy, autonomy, and self-regulation, as well as faculty readiness, technological infrastructure, and culturally rooted educational norms. My research seeks to develop evidence-based, contextually appropriate frameworks that enable digital pedagogical transformation in Vietnamese universities.

To address these research questions, I propose a mixed-methods approach:

Quantitative research: Large-scale student surveys to assess digital literacy, access to devices and connectivity, attitudes toward technology-enhanced learning, and engagement with online or blended learning environments.

Qualitative research: Interviews and focus groups with faculty and administrators to understand perceptions, challenges, and experiences of integrating digital pedagogy, and case studies of universities piloting technology-enhanced teaching strategies.

Pilot interventions: Collaborations with Vietnamese universities to implement small-scale digital pedagogy initiatives (e.g. flipped classrooms, interactive online modules,

blended learning), followed by evaluation of learning outcomes, student and faculty feedback, and scalability.

The ultimate goal is to produce actionable frameworks for designing and implementing digital pedagogy that balance innovation with cultural and institutional realities. The findings will contribute both theoretically to scholarship on digital learning and culturally responsive pedagogy, and practically to policy development, curriculum design, and faculty training in Vietnam and similar educational contexts.

Why Penn GSE and Potential Faculty Collaboration

I am drawn to Penn GSE for its reputation as a leading institution in learning sciences and educational research, its emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches combining technology, psychology, sociology, and policy, and its commitment to innovation in educational design and analytics. The Ph.D. in Learning Sciences and Technologies at Penn GSE offers a strong foundation in educational research methods, learning technologies, curriculum design, and data-driven analysis — exactly aligned with my aspirations.

I am particularly interested in collaborating with faculty whose work intersects with my research vision, such as those in the Learning Sciences & Technologies division whose expertise spans learning analytics, digital learning systems, and curriculum innovation. Under their mentorship, I aim to refine and realize my proposed dissertation on digital pedagogies in higher education, applying both theoretical frameworks and empirical research to generate outcomes with potential policy and practical impact in Vietnamese higher-education contexts.

With guidance from Penn GSE's faculty and access to the program's rigorous curriculum — including coursework on big data in education, digital literacies, assessment, and learning technologies — I believe I can build a dissertation and research agenda that is both academically robust and locally relevant.

Long-Term Vision and Impact

Upon completing my Ph.D., I intend to apply my research to improve higher education in Vietnam and other developing contexts. Specifically, I aim to:

Develop faculty training programs and digital learning toolkits to support the integration of evidence-based pedagogical innovations.

Advise universities and policymakers on designing and implementing scalable, equitable, and culturally appropriate digital pedagogical strategies.

Publish research findings in peer-reviewed journals, conferences, and policy briefs to guide both academic and administrative practices.

Foster international collaborations, leveraging networks from Penn GSE to share expertise, exchange best practices, and scale innovations across emerging higher-education systems.

My interdisciplinary background in education, medicine, and STEM research — combined with leadership and cross-cultural collaboration experience — uniquely positions me to conduct this research and to bridge theory and practice in educational technology.

Conclusion

In summary, my pursuit of a Ph.D. in Learning Sciences and Technologies at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education is motivated by a commitment to advancing equitable, effective, and innovative education through rigorous research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and practical application. The program's rich resources, expert faculty, and collaborative research culture provide an ideal environment for achieving these goals. I am confident that my combination of academic preparation, leadership experience, and dedication to improving higher education in Vietnam equips me to make meaningful contributions to the field of digital pedagogy. I eagerly anticipate the opportunity to join Penn GSE, engage in transformative research, and collaboratively shape the future of teaching and learning in the digital era.

Thank you for considering my application.