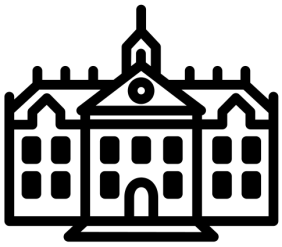
UMass Amherst

College of Education

Department of Educational Policy, Research and Administration

Higher Education Program Graduate Student Handbook



Academic Year 2025-2026

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CONTACTS

EPRA Office - N122 Furcolo	(413) 545-2288
Dean, Gregory (Greg) J. Kelly	educdean@umass.edu
Assoc. Dean of Academic Affairs, Darrell Earnest	dearnest@educ.umass.edu
Assoc. Dean of Research & Faculty Development, Sarah Fefer	sfefer@educ.umass.edu
Assoc. Dean of Diversity and Inclusion, Justin Coles	jacoles@umass.edu
Graduate Program Director (GPD), Nina Tissi-Gassoway	ntg@umass.edu
EPRA Departmental Administrator, Joy Jarme	epra@umass.edu
EPRA Dept. Chair, Bjorn Nordtveit	bjorn@umass.edu

Higher Education Core Faculty

Benita J. Barnes (she/her)	barnesbj@educ.umass.edu
Katrina A. Calhoun (she/her)	kcalhoun@umass.edu
Shane Hammond (he/him)	shammond @umass.edu
Kate Hudson (she/her)	katehudson@umass.edu
Nina Tissi-Gassoway (they/them & she/her)	NTG@umass.edu
Musbah Shaheen (he/him)	musbahshahee@umass.edu
Ryan Wells (he/him)	rswells@educ.umass.edu

Affiliated Faculty

Elisabeth Bennett	eebennett@umass.edu
Susan Campbell	smroberts@umass.edu
Brian Kapitulik	bkapitul@umass.edu
Anna Fox Reilly	annafox@umass.edu
Judy Raper	jraper@umass.edu
Lin Tang	lintang@acad.umass.edu
Susan Wyckoff	swyckoff@educ.umass.edu

INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education graduate program is geared toward people who are interested in pursuing careers as administrators, faculty, researchers, policy analysts, and student affairs professionals in colleges, universities, and state or federal agencies devoted to post-secondary education.

The program offers the following credentials:

- M.Ed. degree (with online and in-person options)
- M.Ed. + Master of Public Policy and Administration (MPPA) dual degree (in-person)
- Ph.D. degree (in-person)
- Graduate certificate (online).

Each program of study has structured course offerings as well as the flexibility to choose electives and design a plan of study that incorporates your personal interests while satisfying the program requirements. The M.Ed. program emphasizes preparation for a career as an administrator in student affairs or academic affairs. The Ph.D. program stresses preparation for a career as an administrator, researcher or faculty member.

The MPPA/M.Ed. dual degree program is designed for students interested in a range of policy issues that affect postsecondary education, such as state governance and coordination, financial aid funding, and affirmative action in admissions and hiring. Graduates will be ready for research, policy analysis and management positions in federal and state governmental agencies, consulting organizations, education research groups and nonprofit organizations working on education issues. For more information about this program, see the School of Public Policy website.

The graduate certificate in Higher Education Leadership is a 15-credit fully online academic program focused on the study of leadership, management, and organization in higher education with an emphasis on the intersection of theory and practice. This graduate certificate is aimed at the many current and future leaders in higher education who would benefit from leadership training, but who do not need another advanced degree. The program is taught online making it convenient for busy professionals from a wide geographic area.

This handbook is intended to lay out program requirements and provide information to assist you throughout your graduate program. If you have any questions, please consult with your academic adviser. Information is also available on the Higher Ed program website.

Information for Newcomers

Many websites at UMass Amherst have information that will help you get adjusted to your new life as a Higher Education student.

Getting Started

Check out the New Graduate Student Checklist as soon as possible to learn about such things as obtaining your email account and university ID card (UCard), which is necessary to gain swipe card access to Furcolo Hall.

Higher Education Program

Higher Education Student Resources includes projected course schedules, links to forms, and electronic versions of handbooks.

UMass Amherst College of Education

The UMass Amherst College of Education site has information related to being a graduate student in the College of Education and the department of Educational Policy, Research, and Administration (EPRA). The Information for Current Students pages have resources related to living, learning, and making progress on your degree. You should also familiarize yourself with College of Education Advising Resources available to you, including the college's Graduate Student Handbook.

UMass Amherst Graduate School

The Graduate School website contains policies, procedures, and deadlines, as well as information on graduate student services. On the Graduate School home page, the "current student" link has helpful links with several important .pdf documents.

Higher Education Student Association "HESA"

Higher Education Student Association (HESA) is the graduate student organization for master's and doctoral students in the Higher Education program. They also welcome members from other departments and programs within the College of Education. HESA provides regular opportunities for collaboration between master's and doctoral students through social events as well as professional and academic development. Graduate students are also encouraged to get involved with the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) and the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO).

SPIRE

SPIRE is the student information system used at UMass Amherst. SPIRE is where you will enroll in courses, check your grades, print a transcript, change contact information, and check financial status. More information is available at the Instructional Technology (IT) SPIRE help page. For general Instructional Technology help or log in assistance, please go to the UMass IT help center.

Email Login

You will also receive a UMass email address, which will be your "official" email contact for the University. You can access your email through Google Mail as part of Apps at UMass Amherst. It is important to check your email regularly, as this is where you will receive important communications while you are at UMass.

Please make sure to log in to the UMass Email website and sign in to "Google Mail" using your net ID and password. If you have another Google account, you may need to create a new profile or use an additional browser.

Graduate Employee Organization

All graduate students with assistantships are eligible for membership in the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO). Working under the GEO contract provides you with tuition reimbursement, a stipend, and eligibility for health, dental, and vision benefits in addition to union representation. Should you ever have concerns about your assistantship or your contract, get in touch with the EPRA Steward, a current graduate student who represents graduate employees in EPRA.

Resources for In-Person Students (in person M.Ed. and Ph.D.)

The resources below are helpful for in-person students at UMass Amherst

UMass Student Life

Information about student life on campus, including links to parking services and the regional free public transportation system, UMass Transit.

Resources for Online Students (online M.Ed. and Graduate Certificate)

In addition to the above resources, there are many additional websites at UMass Amherst that are helpful for students taking classes online. The Online Student Resources page is especially helpful.

Online Course Search and Enrollment

In order to search for online courses there are several websites that we suggest. One is the Explore Classes website, offered by UWW. Not only can you search by term and program, but you can see online classes throughout the University. There is also a College of Education Course Search webpage which is in development.

Once you find classes you are interested in enrolling in, you enroll using SPIRE. The instructions on the How to Enroll in Online Courses webpage are often very helpful. Please note that new Graduate Certificate Students likely need to do steps one to three, whereas M.Ed. students might only need to do Step 3.

Once you successfully enroll in an online class, you log into the class through the UMass LMS online portals. Please note that we are transitioning to Canvas and currently have three active systems. Your class system is listed on SPIRE on your course management page.

Higher Education Program Competencies

The Higher Education Program uses the Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators, which were developed by NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and ACPA College Student Educator International, the two largest professional organizations in higher education and student affairs. The 10 professional competency areas lay out essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of all student affairs educators, regardless of functional area or specialization. Throughout your degree program, you will use both in-class and out-of-class experiences to develop the following competencies:

1. **Personal and Ethical Foundations (PEF)** - Involves the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to develop and maintain integrity in one's life and work; this includes thoughtful development, critique, and adherence to a holistic and comprehensive standard of ethics and commitment to one's own wellness and growth. Personal and ethical foundations are aligned because integrity has an internal locus informed by a combination of external ethical guidelines, an internal voice of care, and our own lived experiences. Our personal and ethical foundations grow through a process of curiosity, reflection, and self-authorship.

2. **Values, Philosophy, and History (VPH)** - Involves knowledge, skills, and dispositions that connect the history, philosophy, and values of the student affairs profession to one's current professional practice. This competency area embodies the foundations of the profession from which current and future research, scholarship, and practice will change and grow. The commitment to demonstrating this competency area ensures that our present and future practices are informed by an understanding of the profession's history, philosophy, and values.

3. **Assessment, Evaluation, and Research (AER)** - Focuses on the ability to design, conduct, critique, and use various AER methodologies and the results obtained from them, to utilize AER processes and their results to inform practice, and to shape the political and ethical climate surrounding AER processes and uses in higher education.

4. **Law, Policy, and Governance (LPG)** - Includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions relating to policy development processes used in various contexts, the application of legal constructs, compliance/policy issues, and the understanding of governance structures and their impact on one's professional practice.

5. **Organizational and Human Resources (OHR)** - Includes knowledge, skills, and dispositions used in the management of institutional human capital, financial, and physical resources. This competency area recognizes that student affairs professionals bring personal strengths and grow as managers through challenging themselves to build new skills in the selection, supervision, motivation, and formal evaluation of staff; resolution of conflict; management of the politics of organizational discourse; and the effective application of strategies and techniques associated with financial resources, facilities management, fundraising, technology, crisis management, risk management and sustainable resources.

6. **Leadership (LEAD)** - Addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of a leader, with or without positional authority. Leadership involves both the individual role of a leader and the leadership process of individuals working together to envision, plan, and affect change in organizations and respond to broad-based constituencies and issues. This can include working with students, student affairs colleagues, faculty, and community members.

7. **Social Justice and Inclusion (SJI)** - While there are many conceptions of social justice and inclusion in various contexts, for the purposes of this competency area, it is defined here as both a process and a goal which includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to create learning environments that foster equitable participation of all groups while seeking to address and acknowledge issues of oppression, privilege, and power. This competency involves student affairs educators who have a sense of their own agency and social responsibility that includes others, their community, and the larger global context. Student affairs educators may incorporate social justice and inclusion competencies into their practice through seeking to meet the needs of all groups, equitably distributing resources, raising social consciousness, and repairing past and current harms on campus communities.

8. **Student Learning and Development (SLD)** - Addresses the concepts and principles of student development and learning theory. This includes the ability to apply theory to improve and inform student affairs and teaching practice.

9. **Technology (TECH)** - Focuses on the use of digital tools, resources, and technologies for the advancement of student learning, development, and success as well as the improved performance of student affairs professionals. Included within this area are knowledge, skills, and dispositions that lead to the generation of digital literacy and digital citizenship within communities of students, student affairs professionals, faculty members, and colleges and universities as a whole.

10. **Advising and Supporting (A/S)** - Addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to providing advising and support to individuals and groups through direction, feedback, critique, referral, and guidance. Through developing advising and supporting strategies that take into account self-knowledge and the needs of others, we play critical roles in advancing the holistic wellness of ourselves, our students, and our colleagues.

Assistantships and Funding

Assistantships are available for Ph.D. students and students in the in-person M.Ed. program. Assistantships occur in a variety of areas that change from year to year, and include a full tuition waiver as well as great health benefits. Pay for graduate students is very competitive, with assistantships running from 10 to 30 hours per week.

Assistantships are not guaranteed and the application process for them is separate from the program admission process. Assistantship opportunities continue to be posted throughout the spring, summer, and into the first weeks of the fall semester, so we encourage you to be patient even if you do not have an assistantship lined up immediately. However, given budget concerns and changes in campus practices since the Covid-19 pandemic, assistantship opportunities are in shorter supply than in the past. The higher education faculty continue to strive to help students find positions, but the ability to do this is limited by new institutional realities.

If you are accepted into the Higher Education program, keep an eye on the Graduate School's Graduate Assistantship Job Opportunities Web page and the College of Education newsletter to learn about opportunities. We also recommend directly contacting any departments of interest to ask about assistantship opportunities.

If you receive an assistantship of at least 10 hours after the start of the fall semester, your tuition waiver will be retroactive to the beginning of the semester.

The process for doctoral students is similar to master's students. Each year, a limited number of teaching- or research-focused assistantships are available to doctoral students through the Higher Education program and the College of Education.

Once you have secured an assistantship, we recommend that you decide with your supervisor what your expectations for the position are and what will be expected of you, including professional development. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO) contract.

M.Ed. PROGRAM – In-person

Academic Requirements

This master's degree in higher education prepares professionals for careers in the administration of colleges and universities. You complete a core of required foundation courses, a series of specialization courses, at least 120 hours of supervised practice, and a final integrative project. A minimum of 36 credit hours is required for the master's degree. The program of studies varies on whether you are in the in-person or online program.

In-Person M.Ed. Program of Study

All in-person master's degree students must complete the following:

FOUNDATION (CORE)	21 credits
EDUC 643 Foundations of Higher Education	- (3 credits)
EDUC 678E Confronting Oppression in Education	- (3 credits)
EDUC 644 Critical Perspectives on Equity and Justice	- (3 credits)
EDUC 641 Assessment, Evaluation & Research	- (3 credits)
EDUC 682 Supporting Student Success	- (3 credits)
EDUC 698ED Prof. Practice and Career Development	- (3 credits)
EDUC 675 Master's Integrative Seminar	- (3 credits)
PLUS SPECIALIZATION COURSES	15 credits
TOTAL CREDITS	36 credits

Recommended sequence for in-person M.Ed.

The courses and course progression below is recommended for full-time Master's students in Higher Education. Part-time students typically only take two courses per semester, but would still be responsible for this set of courses over a greater number of semesters. Each course is worth 3 credits, with 36 total credits required for graduation.

Fall 1

- EDUC 643 Foundations of Higher Education
- EDUC 678E Confronting Oppression in Education
- Elective / Specialization Course

Spring 1

- EDUC 644 Critical Perspectives on Equity and Justice in Higher Education
- EDUC 682 Supporting Student Success
- Elective / Specialization Course

Fall 2

- EDUC 689ED Professional Practice & Career Development in Higher Education
- EDUC 641 Assessment, Evaluation & Research in Higher Education
- Elective / Specialization Course

Spring 2

- EDUC 675 Master's Integrative
- Elective / Specialization Course
- Elective / Specialization Course

M.Ed. PROGRAM – Online

Academic Requirements

Online students are generally professionals working in the field and each program of study is tailored to the individual student. Students work with their advisor to develop a program of study depending on their goals. At a minimum, it is expected that a student takes at least one class every fall and spring term. If they do not, they must enroll in Continuous Enrollment (GRADSCH999). Often students take two classes each fall and spring and one to two classes each summer term. All classes are in U+ sections unless permission is given by the Program Coordinator.

Online M.Ed. Program of Study

All online master's degree students must complete the following

FOUNDATION (CORE)	24 credits
EDUC 601 College Student Development Theory	- (3 credits)
EDUC 641 Assessment, Evaluation & Research	- (3 credits)
EDUC 643 Foundations of Higher Education	- (3 credits)
EDUC 644 Critical Perspectives on Equity and Justice	- (3 credits)
EDUC 682 Supporting Student Success	- (3 credits)
EDUC 698ED Practicum*	- (3 credits)
EDUC 675 Master's Integrative Seminar	- (3 credits)
One of the following three courses	
EDUC 621 Managing Higher Education	- (3 credits)
EDUC 674 Leading Higher Education	
EDUC 723 Organizing Higher Education	

**Waivable with appropriate experience and program consent*

PLUS SPECIALIZATION COURSES	12 credits -
TOTAL CREDITS	- 36 credits

Online students may choose to complete additional certificate programs as part of their M.Ed.

- Social Justice Graduate Certificate in Teaching for Diversity
- Digital Media Design and Making in Education Graduate Certificate
- Bilingual and Dual Language Education Graduate Certificate

Please note that some classes may be offered at synchronous times.

Course Descriptions for In-Person and Online M.Ed.

Foundations of Higher Education (EDUC 643)

This is the first course for students in the master's degree program in Higher Education. There are several goals for the semester:

- As a survey course it is designed to introduce you to different areas of study within higher education. You'll discover topics that you'll be inspired to delve in to in greater depth during your time as a master's student.
- You'll become familiar with the eight competencies in which you are expected to develop expertise during your time in the program.
- We'll focus on your writing, particularly how to write an academic paper using scholarly resources, how to develop and support an argument, and the various aspects of APA style.
- We'll discuss the importance of good nutrition, adequate sleep, exercise and self-care in your life and develop strategies to maintain balance in your life, both while you are a student and during your professional career.

We'll take time at the beginning of every class for "group advising." You can ask questions about program requirements, strategies for thinking about your practicum, or your experience as a master's student.

Critical Perspectives on Equity and Justice in Higher Education (EDUC 644)

This course is part of a two-semester introduction to the study of higher education for students in the Master's program. Its content focuses on the political economy of and oppression within higher education institutions. It does so using a variety of historical, sociological, and anthropological approaches to the study of higher education. By the end of the course, participants will be able to: 1) Summarize major changes in the history of higher education in the United States and describe their relationship to contemporary conditions in colleges and universities; 2) Situate higher education institutions within political, economic, and societal structures—specifically as they relate to structures of opportunity and cumulative advantage / disadvantage experienced by individual students; 3) Explain systems of power, privilege, and oppression within contemporary society and describe how higher education institutions both shape and are shaped by these systems; and 4) Evaluate contemporary higher education policy and practice utilizing a variety of critical perspectives drawn from history, sociology, and anthropology.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research in Higher Education (EDUC 641)

This course provides an introduction to assessment, evaluation, and research from a higher education perspective, including the similarities and differences in these activities. In this seminar, students will learn the processes of systematically assessing, evaluating, and/or researching a problem in the field of higher education, in order to generate knowledge and improve practice. In other words, we read and discuss issues of higher education, but through the lens of assessment, evaluation, and research. The aim of this course is to help students link knowledge about higher education with the analytic, research, evaluation, and communication skills necessary for informing and improving policy and practice in higher education.

Professional Practice and Career Development in Higher Education (EDUC 698-ED)

After a student's practicum (described below) has been completed, this course provides an opportunity to reflect upon that experience with classmates and an instructor. The structured reflection on professional practice helps to provide deeper learning from the experiences and to relate them to the academic coursework being taken. In that way, it is preparation for the Integrative Seminar the following semester. The course also provides career development, discussing issues such as career choice and job strategies. Practical aspects of the transition to the job market are also discussed, such as resume preparation and interviewing.

Integrative Seminar (EDUC 675)

During your last term prior to graduation, master's students take this capstone course. The course is the capstone experience for students completing their masters' degrees in Higher Education Administration. It is intended to allow you an opportunity to reflect upon your educational experience in the master's program and to demonstrate your knowledge of the higher education program's core competencies. In the integrative paper you will investigate a real-life challenge that stems from your professional practice (this could be your assistantship, practicum, or other work experience). The course culminates in a formal presentation.

The goal for this course is for each of you to develop a deeper understanding of the eight competencies associated with the higher education program. With two or more years of coursework and many more years of experience in higher education, you possess a great deal of knowledge from many different sources—including your own experiences as a student and administrator, informal theories that you have developed, formal theories that you have read about, and information synthesized from these and other sources. Your goal is to figure out how all of these things fit together to offer creative solutions to the many complex problems we face as higher education professionals.

Students with outstanding incomplete grades are not eligible for enrollment in this class. All outstanding work for courses with incompletes must be handed in to the instructor prior to the beginning of the semester when you plan to take Integrative. As part of this course, students will demonstrate their proficiency with the HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM COMPETENCIES through a capstone project and an oral defense, as designed by the course instructor.

Independent Studies & Supervised Practice

Independent work may receive credit as an Independent Study provided that the work is performed under the guidance of a graduate faculty member and the course is properly recorded as part of the student's registration. Students who are interested in doing an Independent Study must draw up a contract at the time of registration and have it approved by the faculty member supervising the study.

Supervised Practice is also an option for those who would like another experiential component in their curriculum. Students must have a faculty member sign off on the plan of study, but an external person typically jointly supervises. You can think of this opportunity as a second practicum experience, which is how the College technically considers it.

Generally, the maximum number of independent study or supervised practice credits an M.Ed. student may take is three; if you have a compelling reason to take additional independent credits you must submit a written request to the faculty as a whole for approval. The Independent Study Contract and Individualized Practicum Contract can be found here.

Practicum Requirement – In-person Students

A minimum of 120 hours of approved practicum experience is required and allows you to obtain more experiential learning related to higher education. Most students choose to do their practicum during the summer months between the first and second year of the program, although for some it is more convenient to do it at a different time. The practicum includes at least 120 hours, and there is considerable flexibility in terms of sites and job descriptions, based on the interests of each student. **You are responsible for locating your own practicum site** and should work closely with your academic adviser during this process. Please be aware that applications for competitive internships through major national associations (e.g., ACUHO-I, NODA) must typically be submitted sometime between late November and early January. As a result, you should begin planning your practicum placement early in your first semester of the M.Ed. program. More details can be found on the Current Students page.

Students with at least five years of full-time professional experience in higher education may request to waive the 120 hours of practicum experience (but not the course). To request a waiver, you must write a one-page statement describing your prior professional experience. This statement should be submitted to your adviser who will present the request to the faculty for approval.

International students who want to fulfill their practicum requirement by completing a paid summer internship off campus (e.g., ACUHO-I, NODA) must obtain authorization through Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Please visit the Office of Global Affairs website for detailed information about CPT.

Practicum Requirement – Online Students

Practicum experiences for online students vary based on your career goals and desired experiences as part of the program. Contact the program coordinator to discuss your options!

Grading

If possible, coursework for higher education students should be taken for a letter grade. However, Higher Education students are welcome to request the satisfactory/unsatisfactory (S/U) option for any course, and do not need any special permission from the Higher Education concentration in order to do so. Higher Education faculty will provide the S/U option for students in any of our classes if requested. Please note that the university requires you to take at least half of your courses for a letter grade in order to obtain your graduate degree and so, please plan accordingly.

Course Modality

Our Higher Education M.Ed program is offered both online and in person. Students can take courses in either modality but should discuss these options with their faculty advisor and ensure they understand the cost/funding differences between online and in person courses.

Courses of Study

Requests to substitute alternate courses for those that are required should be made to your faculty advisor with a brief written rationale. The Higher Education faculty will work to be flexible in supporting your timely degree completion. However, required courses are unlikely to be allowed to be substituted, given their centrality to your learning and development:

Advisor and Advising Forms (College of Education)

The Higher Education Program assigns an advisor to each student during the admissions process, but students have the option to change advisors. A Change of Advisor form should be filled out. The College of Education requires students to complete a series of forms in pursuit of the M.Ed. degree. Information pertaining to these forms can be found on the College of Education website.

M.Ed/MPPA - DUAL DEGREE PROGRAM (No Online Option)

M.Ed/Master's of Public Policy & Adminstration Dual Degree Academic Requirements

The MPPA/M.Ed. dual degree program is designed for on-campus students interested in a range of policy issues that affect higher and postsecondary education, such as state governance and coordination, financial aid funding, and affirmative action in admissions and hiring. Graduates will be ready for research, policy analysis and management positions in federal and state governmental agencies, consulting organizations, education research groups and nonprofit organizations working on education issues.

Students enrolled in dual degree programs may begin their studies in either program. It is best to complete a full year in one program before beginning the second program. During the second year, students will fulfill the core requirements of the other program. Students typically fulfill the remaining requirements of both programs in the third year of study. However, there is flexibility in planning, given individual circumstances and preferences. Full-time students can complete the 60-credit program in three years.

Dual Degree M.Ed./MPPA Program of Study

This example program of study is likely to change for individuals based on whether they start in Higher Ed or Public Policy, whether they are part-time or full-time, and what courses are offered each semester.

FOUNDATION (CORE)		42 credits
Foundations of Higher Education	-	(3 credits)
Critical Perspectives on Equity and Justice	-	(3 credits)
Assessment, Evaluation & Research	-	(3 credits)
Prof. Practice and Career Development	-	(3 credits)
Master's Integrative Seminar	-	(3 credits)
Confronting Oppression in Education	-	(3 credits)
Higher Education Policy	-	(3 credits)
Policy Methods	-	(3 credits)
Politics & Policy Process	-	(3 credits)
Economics & Public Policy	-	(3 credits)
Policy Analysis	-	(3 credits)
Statistics	-	(3 credits)
Public Management	-	(3 credits)
Policy Capstone	-	(3 credits)
HIGHER ED. SPECIALIZATION COURSES		9 credits
PUBLIC POLICY ELECTIVE COURSES		9 credits
TOTAL CREDITS		60 credits

Recommended sequence - dual degree M.Ed./MPPA

Fall 1
EDUC 643 Foundations of Higher Education
EDUC 641 Assessment, Evaluation, and Research in Higher Education
EDUC 678E Confronting Oppression in Education
Spring 1
EDUC 644 Critical Perspectives on Equity and Justice
EDUC 647B or 621A Higher Education Policy or Higher Education Finance Policy
Higher Education Specialization Course
Higher Education Specialization Course
Fall 2
EDUC 698ED Professional Practice and Career Development
SPP 601 Politics and Policy Process
SPP 605 Economics and Public Policy
SPP 614 Professional Development Seminar
SPP 607 Policy Methods
Spring 2
EDUC 675 Master's Integrative Seminar
SPP 603 Public Policy Analysis
SPP 608 Statistics for Public Policy
SPP 697AA Statistics for Public Policy Lab
Fall 3
SPP 602 Public Management
Public Policy Elective Course
Public Policy Elective Course
Spring 3
SPP 609 or SPP 610 Policy Workshop or Capstone
Public Policy Elective Course
Higher Education Specialization Course

Ph.D. PROGRAM

Ph.D. Academic Requirements

A Ph.D. in higher education prepares students to become scholar-practitioners, researchers, policy analysts, or faculty members. Our doctoral students often become active members of the higher education research community. Students often present at professional conferences individually, with other students, and in collaboration with faculty members. Common national conferences attended include ASHE, AERA, NASPA, ACPA, and CIES. Doctoral students are also often active in publishing their work individually or in collaboration with others. Many of these publications are in some of our most prestigious academic journals in the field of higher education (e.g., *Higher Education*, *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *Journal of Higher Education*, *Journal of College Student Development*, *Research in Higher Education*, *Review of Higher Education*). After completion of coursework, comprehensive exams, and the dissertation, our graduates go on to a variety of distinguished careers.

Although admitted students develop their own unique program of study, they enter with a doctoral cohort that serves as a source of support throughout the doctoral process. Higher Education doctoral students will take the proseminar each semester.

Summary of Credit Requirements

All doctoral students should complete the following at a minimum:

CORE HIGHER ED COURSES (3 courses) - Foundations of Higher Education - Critical Perspectives on Equity and Justice - Higher Education Policy OR Higher Ed Finance Policy	9 credits
METHODS COURSES - Quantitative Research Methods - Qualitative Research Methods - Additional Research Methods	12 credits - (6 credits) - (3 credits) - (3 credits)
PROSEMINAR/RESEARCH PROJECT - Research in Higher Education course	6 credits - (1-3 credits/sem)
SPECIALIZATION COURSES (5 electives)	15 credits
DISSERTATION	10 credits
TOTAL CREDITS	52 credits

Suggested sequence for full-time doctoral program of study

This shows the type of program of study that would be appropriate for a full-time doctoral student. Many students could follow this guide and be fine. However, doctoral education is also meant to be individualized, so this can be modified. Talk to your advisor about course selection and timing that makes sense for you.

Fall 1
EDUC 643 Foundations of Higher Education (if no higher ed master's; another elective if so)
Elective / Specialization Course
Research Methods course
EDUC 717 Research in Higher Ed - one-credit proseminar
Spring 1
EDUC 644 Critical Perspectives on Equity and Justice in Higher Education
Elective / Specialization Course
Research Methods course
EDUC 717 Research in Higher Ed - one-credit proseminar
Fall 2
Elective / Specialization Course
Elective / Specialization Course
Research Methods course
EDUC 717 Research in Higher Ed - one-credit proseminar
Spring 2
EDUC 647B Higher Education Policy -OR- EDUC 621A Higher Education Finance Policy
Research Methods course
EDUC 717 Research in Higher Ed - **three-credit class (research project)**
Fall 3 (if needed)
Elective / Specialization Course OR Research Methods course
(prepare for comprehensive exams)

Sample sequence for part-time doctoral program of study

This shows the type of program of study that might be appropriate for a part-time doctoral student. The pathways for part-time students vary and are very individualized. Communicate with your advisor to create a plan that fits your situation and needs.

Fall 1
EDUC 643 Foundations of Higher Education (if no higher ed master's; another elective if so)
Research Methods course
EDUC 717 Research in Higher Ed - one-credit proseminar
Spring 1
EDUC 644 Critical Perspectives on Equity and Justice in Higher Education
Research Methods course
EDUC 717 Research in Higher Ed - one-credit proseminar
Fall 2
Elective / Specialization Course
Research Methods course
EDUC 717 Research in Higher Ed - one-credit proseminar
Spring 2
EDUC 647B Higher Education Policy -OR- EDUC 621A Higher Education Finance Policy
Research Methods course
EDUC 717 Research in Higher Ed - **three-credit class (research project)**
Fall 3
Elective / Specialization Course
Elective / Specialization Course
Spring 3
Elective / Specialization Course
Elective / Specialization Course
Fall 4
Elective / Specialization Course
Comprehensive Exams

Proseminar

During the first two years of the doctoral program, students are required to take the proseminar course, EDUC 717 – Research in Higher Education. This course will be taken with your cohort, and with other doctoral students who are taking courses (prior to the comprehensive exam). The course provides a place for community building, professional development, orientation to the field of higher ed, and group advising. For three semesters, this course will be taken for one credit. For one (final) semester, the course will be taken for 3 credits, and will be a full course to assist you with writing a complete research study, which is often used to meet the requirements for the comprehensive exam (see below).

Research Requirements

The College of Education requires doctoral students to have at least four research methods courses, at least two of which must be quantitative methods and at least one of which must be qualitative methods.

Students considering writing a qualitative dissertation should take **Qualitative Research Methods (EDUC 619)** as early during their doctoral studies as possible, followed by **Qualitative Data Analysis (797A)**, or the equivalent. In addition, we strongly recommend that students arrange to complete additional courses or independent studies covering qualitative data management and advanced methods (interviewing, ethnography, etc.) consistent with their interests.

Students considering writing a quantitative dissertation should take **Statistics I (EDUC 555)** and **Statistics II (EDUC 656),** as early during their doctoral studies as possible, if they have not already taken the equivalent of these courses in prior graduate work. Beyond these courses, most students would be well served to take **Regression Analysis (EDUC 660)**. In addition, we strongly recommend that students arrange to take courses covering the following areas: survey research methods, secondary data analysis, and/or advanced statistical courses such as Structural Equation Modeling. Of course the selection of methods courses will likely be different for each student depending on prior experience and research interests.

Your Individualized Program of Study

In addition to your adviser, you will be assigned a second faculty member who, with your adviser, will be on your Program of Study Committee. Students should meet with this committee once prior to the end of the first semester. An important part of this process is developing a set of goals for the program of study, and a set of courses and experiences to meet those goals. The committee will provide advice around this process, and students will be expected to have a well-designed program of study (subject to change, of course) by the end of their first year. Students who choose an advisor outside of the higher education concentration must notify the higher education program coordinator. Please note that, unless a student has received permission from both the College of Education's Graduate Program Director and the Graduate School, a student's primary dissertation advisor must have an appointment in the Department of Educational Policy, Research, and Administration.

Forms and Milestones

In order to receive your degree or certificate on time, submit all required forms and paperwork to the college's Academic Affairs office ahead of the posted College of Education deadlines. This allows time for checking and processing by the college to ensure everything is complete and correct well ahead of Graduate School deadlines.

See the Degree Forms and Milestones page on the college web site for access to electronic forms and submission instructions.

1. **Set up your program and advisor** - by end of first semester of study
   Form D1: Advising Information

2. **Confirm guidance committee and propose your program of study.**
   Form D2: Proposed Program of Study

3. **If you need to change your course of study:**
   Form D2A: Amendments to Program of Study

4. **Form your comps committee**
   Form D3: Committee Membership Comprehensive/Qualifying Examination Committee

5. **Get your research approved**
   Form D3A: Comprehensive Human Subjects Review Approval

6. **Schedule your exam**
   Form D4: Announcement of Comprehensive/Qualifying Exam

7. **Submit results of the exam**
   Form D5: Results of Comprehensive/Qualifying Examination

8. **Form your dissertation committee**
   Form D6: Formation of Dissertation Committee

9. **If you need to change your committee membership**
   Form D10 - Change of Committee Membership

10. **Get your dissertation proposal approved**
    Form D7: Dissertation Proposal Approval
    Form D7A: Dissertation Proposal Human Subjects Review Approval

11. **Schedule your final oral examination**
    Form D8: Announcement of Final Oral Examination

12. **Submit results of your final oral examination**
    Form D9: Results of Final Oral Examination

13. **Confirm eligibility to graduate**
    Submit the Doctoral Degree Eligibility Form and Form D9: Results of Final Oral Examination and a signature page from your committee.

Annual Review of Doctoral Students

Doctoral students will be reviewed annually to reflect on strengths and areas for improvement, and to gauge adequate academic progress. This review will include a written reflection by the student of their progress toward goals set in the prior year, and a statement of goals for the subsequent year. The student's advisor will respond to this review in writing. The annual review meeting, to occur near the end of the spring semester each year, will take place with the Program of Study committee, which typically consists of the adviser, and one other assigned faculty member. The “Annual Advising Form” in the table above will be completed as part of this process.

First Year Portfolio Assessment

At the end of the first year, students complete an e-portfolio as part of their annual review process and meet with a team of faculty to review. This requirement is designed to be a formal check-in to gauge the student’s progress, any challenges and/or needs. The faculty team, called the Guidance Committee, consists of the student’s advisor and one additional faculty member (as assigned by the faculty).

The e-portfolio consists of the following:

- 2 original papers/assignments that include instructor’s comments
- The completed “Annual Advising Form” which includes a reflection on the past year and goals for the upcoming year.

The student should submit a completed first year portfolio and establish a meeting with their advisor by April 1st. The student will meet with the faculty team by the end of the Spring semester to receive feedback and discuss their progress in the doctoral program.

Second Year Review

Prior to taking Comprehensive Exams, often at the end of the second year, students will meet with their Program of Study committee to review the student’s progress, as well as an empirical research project (see below) that exemplifies the students’ direction toward comprehensive exams and the dissertation. The purpose of this meeting is to help students to generate a realistic assessment of whether they are prepared to take their Comprehensive Exams.

Comprehensive Exams

The comprehensive examination is designed to provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and expertise necessary for conducting dissertation research as a doctoral candidate in this multidisciplinary applied field. Comprehensive exams consist of two papers (12-15 pages each) in response to writing prompts prepared in collaboration with your advisor (see below), as well as a completed research paper (details below).

- One paper reviewing targeted literature related to a specific research problem in the study of higher education.
- One paper addressing research design and its application to the study of a specific research problem in the study of higher education.
- An applied research paper (this paper will typically be developed as a required assignment in EDUC 717 and may be further embellished for the comprehensive exam) that includes an introduction, literature review, research design section, findings section, discussion section, and a conclusion. (The paper should be a maximum of 40 pages total.)

While this examination assumes some common knowledge within Higher Education as a field of study, we understand that you, and each student in the program, bring a unique set of perspectives, theories, concepts, and skills that have been developed through the core Higher Education courses and a unique broader program of study. Therefore, each person will have a unique set of questions.

Once you have completed all the coursework (with no incompletes) , you should inform your adviser that you are ready to take the comprehensive exam. This may occur at any time during the year. Students in the higher education concentration are required to complete the higher education comprehensive exam process outlined in this handbook, even if their faculty advisor is outside of the higher education concentration.

First, meet with your adviser to finalize the composition of the comprehensive exam committee and discuss the timing for the exam. You and your adviser then discuss possible research problems and topical areas that may be addressed with your exam papers. These can be related to the problems that you aim to study in your dissertation work if you choose. In consultation with your committee, your advisor will finalize research problems and related questions for each of the two papers. The exam aims to show your readiness to undertake dissertation work, but also to serve as a bridge and provide momentum to doing that work.

You will propose the three-week exam period that will be approved in advance by the committee. At this time, you and your adviser will establish a date for the defense with the committee.

Once you receive the two comprehensive exam questions from your adviser on a date you have selected, you will have three weeks to write the two papers and submit them to the committee. (The research paper may also be worked on at this time, but it is highly recommended that the research paper already be completed by this time.) The date of the defense will have already been set, and you must ensure that there are two weeks for the committee to read the papers.

When submitting their comprehensive exam for review, students must provide a statement (typically by email) declaring that the papers were written totally independently. Students are not allowed to discuss or work on these two applied analysis papers with any other individuals (including spouses/partners). This is different from most assignments and exams completed for coursework, and it is important to understand this facet of comprehensive exams. Although students' answers should be informed by coursework, comps papers should be completely original writing.

At least two weeks after the submission of the papers, you will meet with the committee for a formal defense of the examination. You will be expected to make a brief presentation on the three papers. This presentation should describe: 1) the overall argument of the paper; 2) your thoughts on the writing process for the paper; 3) elements of the paper you thought were particularly effective; and 4) elements of the paper that you feel could be improved. You will also be asked to respond to questions from the committee about each of the papers. The committee will then make a decision about the results of the exam. Typical decisions include "Pass – No Revision Required" and "Pass – Some Revision Required." A decision to "Not Pass" a comprehensive exam is rare, and most often is the result of under-preparation. For that reason, we strongly advise that you consult with your advisor and/or Program of Study committee to determine whether they believe you are sufficiently prepared to take your comprehensive exams as well as to develop an agreed upon approach to the applied analysis papers.

Dissertation Proposal: Committee, Defense, and Credits

Each student works on developing a dissertation proposal (usually the first three chapters), which they defend before a dissertation committee of three or more faculty (the committee is declared on the D-6 form). At this time, each student must have at least two people from their department (Educational Policy, Research, and Administration) and at least one person from outside their department (Educational Policy, Research, and Administration) serve on their dissertation committee. Exceptions to this policy require the permission of both the College of Education's Graduate Program Director and the Graduate School.

Each student must complete a total of 10 dissertation credits and maintain continuous enrollment (pay student fees) from the time they complete comps to the point at which they defend their dissertation and graduate. It is each student's responsibility to sign up for dissertation credits (or pay continuous enrollment fees), in consultation with their adviser. Together, you and your advisor should determine which semesters you should enroll in dissertation credits, as well as decide how many credits to take in each semester.

HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION GRADUATE CERTIFICATE

Graduate Certificate Academic Requirements

The Higher Education Leadership and Administration graduate certificate program is taught in an online format making it convenient for busy professionals from a wide geographic area. It can be completed in one year by taking two classes in each of the fall and spring semesters, and the final course in the summer. Alternatively, courses can be spread out over more semesters.

The Higher Education Graduate Certificate program website contains more details about the program. Contact info-leadership@umass.edu with any questions.

Graduate Certificate Program of Study

Four Required Courses

- EDUC 643 – Foundations of Higher Education*
- EDUC 674 – Leading Higher Education
- EDUC 621 – Managing Higher Education
- EDUC 723 – Organizing Higher Education

*Students interested in the community colleges track can use *EDUC 674C Community College Foundations* in place of *EDUC 643 Foundations of Higher Education*.

One Elective Course

Below are a few options for elective courses, but there is much flexibility:

- EDUC 659A Helping Skills for Higher Education Professionals
- EDUC 601 College Student Development Theory
- EDUC 682 Supporting Student Success
- EDUC 692R Introduction to College Teaching
- EDUC 748 Current Issues in Community Colleges

We rotate new elective courses regularly. You may also want to consider completing a practicum course as your elective (see below for additional information).

Practicum (Recommended)

A practicum is a wonderful opportunity to get experience working in a different kind of office or institution. It is similar to an internship. Talk to your advisor or Kate Hudson (katehudson@umass.edu) to discuss options and to arrange for a practicum during your program.

Advising for Online Students

We want to make your experience in the certificate program as useful and engaging as possible. Our students come from different educational and professional backgrounds and have different reasons for participating in the program. If you have questions about the program or want to brainstorm how your learning experience can best fit your learning goals, please contact info-leadership@umass.edu to set up a meeting. Your instructors may also be useful resources.

Graduate Certificate Curriculum

The Higher Education Leadership Certificate consists of 15 credits. The courses are intended to develop expertise in leadership and management within the context of higher education. There are four required courses, and an elective. Ideally you will take Foundations of Higher Education (EDUC 643) early in your program, or EDUC 674C Community College Foundations. The program is flexible in terms of how many courses you take each semester.

Completing the Program

During the semester when you are taking your final class for the graduate certificate, you will need to submit the Certificate Eligibility Form to info-leadership@umass.edu. UMass Amherst has three graduation dates each year and these are the same dates of certificate completion, which are in February, May, and September; specific dates of deadlines to submit the form are listed on the program website. The Certificate Program Guidelines explain the process.

Please fill out the Graduate Certificate Eligibility Form. There are minimum requirements, including a minimum G.P.A. and being in financial good standing. If approved, you will receive your official certificate from the Graduate School four-six weeks after the degree conferral date, and you should be able to see your certificate appear on your transcript.

When completing your Certificate Eligibility Form, be sure to

- Enter your UMass email address on the form
- Check your mailing address and name in SPIRE - these will be used for your certificate
- Mark your degree conferral period based on the date following your final class:
    - final class in the Fall semester - mark February conferral
    - final class in the Spring semester - mark May conferral
    - final class in the Summer semester - mark September conferral
- For “Department” enter "Educational Policy, Research, and Administration" *even if you belong to another department on campus*
- For "Certificate Program" enter "Higher Education Leadership and Administration"
- Leave the final grade blank for any courses still in progress - the Graduate School will fill this in
- Leave the signature field blank
- Send to info-leadership@umass.edu

Transferring Credits into a Degree Program

Certificate course credits may be transferred into the Higher Education M.Ed. or Ph.D. program at UMass Amherst, and sometimes other programs as well. There are requirements for this process, listed on the UMass Graduate Transfer of Credit Policy and Forms as well as program requirements. There is a non-degree transfer of credit form that must be filled out while you are in your degree program, prior to graduation. This process must have approval from your program advisor, and their signature is required on the form.