

**COLLEGE** of **EDUCATION**  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

**ADVISING GUIDELINES  
FOR THE  
EDUCATION SPECIALIST DEGREE**

**INTRODUCTION**

This document provides helpful information about policies and procedures in the Education Specialist degree (Ed.S.) process. It is designed to enhance the quality and consistency of advising, ensure equity and integrity in the degree process, and promote continuous progress toward the completion of this degree.

The three major steps to an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree are detailed below.

1. Admission and Assignment of an Initial Advisor and Formation of Proposed Program of Study (Form ES-1)
2. Completion of the Program of Study
3. Certification of Completion of Proposed or Amended Program (Form ES-2)

The Graduate School's regulations, requirements, and administrative processes which affect your progress toward your degree are found in the *Graduate School Bulletin* and *Graduate School Handbook* which can be found at the Graduate School website: <http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/policies-forms>

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION POLICIES  
FOR THE EDUCATION SPECIALIST DEGREE**

The following guidelines are among the most important for an Education Specialist degree; however they do not exhaust the list of policies that support your graduate education in the College of Education. Academic programs of study within each concentration have distinct requirements that may differ from programs of study in other concentrations.

Each student is assigned an advisor in their concentration area. Your advisor's name is listed in your SPIRE account. Your advisor will guide you through the degree program and serve as your point of contact for your concentration's requirements.

In conjunction with your advisor, you will chart a program of study which will meet the Education Specialist degree requirements, your concentration's requirements and your unique needs. Courses and course details can be found online in SPIRE under *Catalogs & Schedules*.

## PROGRAM OF STUDY

### DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The Education Specialist degree (Ed.S.) in the College of Education requires a program of study that meets the following criteria:

- It must contain a minimum of 30 credits beyond the Master's degree.
- All 30 credits must be earned within a four-year period at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- All courses must be at least at the 500 level (none at the 400 level or below).
- At least 15 credits must be earned with College of Education courses.
- At least 18 of the credits must have a course number of 600 or above.
- No more than 9 of the credits can be independent studies or practica.
- No more than 6 independent study credits per term.

All credits must be approved by your advisor.

### CONCENTRATION REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Several concentrations have slightly different regulations and requirements. See your faculty advisor for information on such items as using independent study credits or student teaching credits toward degree requirements.

### ENROLLMENT STATUS

#### Degree Status

Students admitted as fully qualified to undertake a program toward a graduate degree are termed *degree-seeking students* as opposed to *non-degree* students.

#### Full/Half/Part-Time Degree Status

Degree status is often critical to College of Education students because of the way it relates to student loan payments or loan deferments. The Graduate School defines full-time status as **nine (9) or more** credits; part-time status as **eight (8) or fewer** credits; and (for loan deferments) half-time status as **six (6) or more** credits per semester.

### STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS

The Statute of Limitations (total time period allowed to earn a degree) for the Education Specialist degree is **four (4)** calendar years from acceptance.

### INDEPENDENT STUDY AND INDIVIDUALIZED PRACTICUM

An Independent Study or Individualized Practicum is intended to serve as an opportunity for students to develop a specific knowledge base or set of professional competencies which cannot be developed through regular course offerings. They cannot be used to satisfy specific course requirements in a degree program or for state licensure, nor should an Independent Study or Individualized Practicum serve as the core of a student's degree or licensure program.

## Advising Guidelines for the Education Specialist Degree

Students choose an instructor whose knowledge or professional competency will provide depth in a particular area. The student and the instructor work out an explicit contract which specifies the goals, procedures, and outcomes of the Independent Study or Individualized Practicum. Note: If the instructor is an adjunct or is not a member of the College of Education faculty, a faculty sponsor from your concentration will have to sign. Contracts are available on the College's website: <http://www.umass.edu/education/students/current/overview>

A student's completed program of study cannot have more than 9 credits of Independent Studies or Individualized Practica.

## COURSE REGISTRATION

### Registering for a Course

To register for a course, students use SPIRE, the University's secure online student information system. Information on how to use SPIRE can be obtained at <http://www.oit.umass.edu/spire> or at OIT offices in the Lederle Low Rise Building.

### Registering for an Independent Study or Individualized Practicum

The Independent Study or Individualized Practicum forms are available on the College's website at <http://www.umass.edu/education/students/current/overview/>. Enter the information online, then print and obtain the instructor's signature. Note: If the instructor is an adjunct or is not a member of the College of Education faculty, a faculty sponsor from your concentration will have to sign. As students cannot register for these courses, they must bring the form to the Curriculum Coordinator in 123 Furcolo Hall who handles the registration.

## MAXIMUM CREDIT LOAD

You may register for up to sixteen (16) credits during the fall and spring semesters, nine (9) credits during the summer session, and four (4) credits winter session.

If you want to register for more than the maximum credit load, you must complete a Course Credit Overload Form obtained from the Curriculum Coordinator in the College of Education's Academic Affairs Office. Signatures must be obtained from your advisor and the Graduate Program Director indicating approval. Return the form to the Curriculum Coordinator who obtains the Graduate Program Director's signature, then forwards it to the Dean of the Graduate School for review.

## ADDING, DROPPING OR CHANGING A COURSE

You may add, drop, or change courses up to 10:00p.m. Eastern Standard Time of the tenth class day of the semester. This period is referred to as the Add/Drop period. Only your final selections will appear on your permanent record. A student is not able make any changes on their own after this date.

You can request a change to your course schedule after the Add/Drop period by obtaining a Late/Add Drop form from the Curriculum Coordinator in the College of Education's Academic Affairs Office and obtaining the appropriate signatures. Return the form to the Curriculum Coordinator.

You can drop a course after the Add/Drop period providing approval is obtained by your instructor. You will receive a grade of Drop (DR) from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> week of the semester and recalculation of the bill will depend on when the course is dropped.

If you drop a course after the 6<sup>th</sup> week of the semester, your instructor will assign you a grade of Withdraw Passing (WP) or Withdraw Failing (WF). You cannot withdraw from a course after final examinations begin.

## Advising Guidelines for the Education Specialist Degree

### **WITHDRAWING FROM THE UNIVERSITY**

Graduate students voluntarily withdrawing from the University must send a letter to the Graduate Program Director, indicating the reasons for the request. Please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator in room 123 for more information.

### **CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT**

Graduate students not enrolled for any course credits, but who are candidates for a degree, must pay a Continuous Enrollment Fee each semester (excluding summer terms) to maintain continuous registration until the degree for which the student has been accepted has been formally awarded. Deadline for payment of this fee is by the deadline indicated on your Spire account. Any student who does not pay this fee by the appropriate deadline, and later seeks readmission or applies for graduation, must pay the accumulated program fees plus a readmission fee. Students seeking readmission must file a written request with the Graduate Program Director, endorsed by their Chair/Advisor, for review. If approved, the Graduate Program Director will request readmission with the Graduate Dean.

### **GRADING POLICY**

#### **Grades**

Instructors of graduate courses determine whether the courses are graded with letter grades or a Pass/Fail. Faculty must clearly describe the grading policy and options at the beginning of the semester. Many courses allow the student to change the grading options. However, you must request a change in the grading policy at the beginning of the semester. If you want to follow this course of action, contact your instructor. You then change the grading policy in your SPIRE account.

Letter grades carry the following numerical equivalents for purposes of computing grade point averages: A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, B = 3.0, B- = 2.7, C+ = 2.3, C = 2.0, C- = 1.7, D+ = 1.3, D = 1.0, F = 0. Graduate students enrolled in undergraduate courses may receive grades of C- = 1.7, D+ = 1.3, D = 1.0.

#### **Incompletes**

You can obtain credit for an Incomplete (INC) only by finishing the work required by that course. If a grade has not been submitted by the end of one calendar year after the time of enrollment in that course, the Incomplete (INC) changes to an Incomplete Failure (IF). The initiative in arranging for the removal of an Incomplete rests with you. To be considered as making satisfactory progress, graduate students are expected to carry no more than 6 credits of Incompletes (INCs).

### **SATISFACTORY AND REASONABLE PROGRESS**

You must make satisfactory or reasonable progress toward completion of the Education Specialist degree by the end of four years which is the Statute of Limitations for this degree. If you are not making satisfactory or reasonable progress, the Graduate Program Director/Associate Dean for Academic Affairs will apprise the Dean of the Graduate School of your lack of progress and recommend termination.

In order to be considered as making satisfactory progress, all Education Specialist candidates are required to file a Proposed Program of Study (Form ES-1) before the end of their first year and to complete all course work before the end of their fourth year.

### **ACADEMIC AVERAGE**

In the courses you are taking to satisfy your degree requirements, a minimum standard for satisfactory work is a 3.0 grade point average. If you have a semester grade point average below 2.8 in any two semesters (consecutive or otherwise), you will be subject to academic dismissal.

## Advising Guidelines for the Education Specialist Degree

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Graduate students who request a leave of absence must petition the Graduate Program Director through their advisor who, in turn, provides justification for the request to the Dean of the Graduate School. If the Dean of the Graduate School grants a leave of absence, the student's statute of limitations is extended appropriately.

**A student on leave of absence must maintain continuous enrollment by registering for Continuous Enrollment and paying the Program Fee every semester during the leave. A student on leave is not considered to be actively completing a degree program, relinquishes full-time status, and loses deferred status on any outstanding student loans.**

### READMISSION

You must reapply and pay all associated fees if you are:

- an applicant who has previously been admitted to the College of Education but did not enroll on the entrance date stated in the acceptance letter
- a graduate student at the College of Education who was accepted for one degree program and wishes to apply for another degree program
- a degree candidate who has not continuously enrolled in courses or has not paid the Continuous Enrollment/Program Fee

### COMPLETION OF DEGREE

Your degree is not automatic after the completion of coursework. You must complete appropriate paperwork and apply for the degree.

You must fill out the Education Specialist Form ES-2 and the Education Specialist Degree Eligibility Form **online** and obtain the appropriate signatures.

Submit them **at the same** time to the Graduate Program Coordinator in the Academic Affairs Office, 123 Furcolo Hall by the deadline posted in the College of Education's weekly bulletin, *The Beacon* which can be found at <http://www.umass.edu/education/news/beacon/>

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### FINANCIAL AID

The University's Financial Aid staff members are available to assist you in learning more about the various loans, employment, and scholarship programs. For current application procedures, contact Financial Aid Services, Room 243, Whitmore Administration Building or go to <http://www.umass.edu/umfa>.

Some graduate assistantships are available within the College of Education for teaching, project, and research assistantships. When available, they are advertised in the College of Education's weekly bulletin, *The Beacon* which can be found at <http://www.umass.edu/education/news/beacon/>. Information and application procedures are included in the listings.

#### FIVE COLLEGE LIBRARY USE

The libraries at Amherst College, Smith College, Hampshire College, and Mount Holyoke College are normally available to students from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, subject to the rules and procedures established by each library.