

# **HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION**

**GRADUATE CERTIFICATE  
STUDENT HANDBOOK**

*(updated June 2021)*

**DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATIONAL  
POLICY,  
RESEARCH &  
ADMINISTRATION**

**COLLEGE OF  
EDUCATION**

**UNIVERSITY OF  
MASSACHUSETTS  
AMHERST**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education Leadership & Administration graduate certificate is a 15- credit academic program focused on the study of leadership, management, and organization in higher education with a focus 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 describes program requirements and provides information to assist you during your time in the program. If you have additional questions, contact [info-leadership@umass.edu](mailto:info-leadership@umass.edu). Information is also available on the [program website](#).

## ADVISING

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, the Program Coordinator is available for advising sessions. Contact [info-leadership@umass.edu](mailto:info-leadership@umass.edu) to set up a meeting. Your instructors may also be useful resources.

## ADMISSIONS

You can take up to two classes prior to formally applying to the program. Materials required for consideration include:

- [application form](#)
- personal statement
- resume
- transcripts from undergraduate and graduate institutions attended (can be unofficial)
- two letters of reference

Submit your materials to [info-leadership@umass.edu](mailto:info-leadership@umass.edu) or:

Kate Hudson  
Program Coordinator, Higher Education Leadership Certificate  
N182 Furcolo Hall  
813 N Pleasant Street  
University of Massachusetts  
Amherst, Massachusetts, 01003

## NetID

Your NetID and password allow you to access many resources, including [SPIRE](#) (the campus student information system), your courses in Blackboard and Moodle, and the library. It is sometimes also referred to as your SPIRE ID. You'll receive your NetID via email after you fill out the Non-Degree Enrollment Application in SPIRE.

## UMASS EMAIL (GMAIL)

You will also receive a [UMass email](#) address (GMail), which will be your "official" email contact for the University. You can access your email through GMail, and can also set it to forward to a different address that you use.

## SPIRE

[SPIRE](#) is the student information system used at UMass Amherst. SPIRE is used to enroll in courses, and is also where you check your grades.

## BLACKBOARD & MOODLE

The Certificate program uses [Blackboard Learn](#) and [Moodle](#) platforms for online courses. The course platform will be listed in SPIRE when you register.

## LIBRARY

Your NetID gives you access to the Libraries at UMass Amherst, and more specifically to online databases you can use to find journal articles about topics in which you are interested. We are currently developing an online tutorial on using library resources for our online students. Steve McGinty is our library subject specialist for Education. He can help you find materials that will help your academic work. Steve can be contacted at [smcginty@library.umass.edu](mailto:smcginty@library.umass.edu).

## WRITING CENTER CONSULTING

This program requires extensive writing. If you need help with your writing, The [UMass Amherst Writing Center](#) offers consulting, and appointments can be carried out online so you can take advantage of their services even if you are at a distance!

## DISABILITY SERVICES

Disability Services provides services for students who require accommodations due to a disability. There are three main areas these services cover: (1) collecting diagnostic documentation in order to identify individuals with qualifying disabilities, (2) determining eligibility for reasonable accommodations and modifications to campus programs and services, (3) notifying faculty/instructors/program coordinators of a student's accommodation eligibility while participating in their course/program.

In order to be eligible for accommodations, you must first register with Disability Services. The registration process involves completing an intake form and submitting supporting diagnostic documentation. Intake forms are available on the [Disability Services website](#).

## ENROLLING IN COURSES

### Returning Students - Enrolling in Courses through SPIRE

Students in the Higher Education Leadership & Administration Certificate program use SPIRE (the student information system for the University of Massachusetts Amherst) to enroll in classes. Please note that because the program is a graduate certificate, not a degree program, you are considered a "non-degree student."

1. **Create an enrollment appointment.** For returning students (meaning that you took a course in the prior semester) who have their NetID and password. Log in to [SPIRE](#). In SPIRE go to: Main Menu > Enrollment > Summer/Wntr/Non-degr Enroll Appt and follow the instructions.
2. **Enroll in classes.** Once you have an enrollment appointment (this should be immediate), go to Main Menu > Enrollment > Add Classes.

### New Students - Enrolling in Courses through SPIRE

For new students or students who haven't been enrolled in a class recently, you will need to create a student record (or reactivate it) prior to being able to enroll in classes. Please note that because the program is a graduate certificate, not a degree program, you are considered a "non-degree student."

1. **Create a student record.** Go to [SPIRE](#). From the menu options on the right hand side, under the heading Apply/References click on Non-Degree Enrollment Application. Fill out the form there. You will receive an email with your NetID and password (this may take up several days.)
2. Once you have received your NetID and password, follow the instructions for creating an enrollment appointment listed above under "Returning Students."

### **Dropping a Class Before the End of Add/Drop**

Before the Add/Drop Deadline for the term, you can drop classes using [SPIRE](#). The course will not appear on your transcript and all the course fees will be removed from your account.

### **Dropping a Class After Add/Drop**

Between the end of Add/Drop and the end of the withdrawal period, you can still drop a class using [SPIRE](#). The course will appear on your transcript as “W” and you will receive a 50% refund on the course tuition (but not the registration fee.)

### **Late Drops**

If you need to drop a class after the withdrawal period is over, contact a UWW Advisor at [advising@uww.umass.edu](mailto:advising@uww.umass.edu) or 413-545-3430. Please note that you will still be responsible for tuition and the registration fee. More information about [Class Drop](#).

## **PAYING YOUR TUITION BILL**

Bills are generated by the Bursar’s Office around the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month after you have registered for a class, and are due by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the following month. You will receive an email to your UMail account when your invoice becomes available.

You may view and pay your bill in QuikPAY. To access QuikPAY, log in to [SPIRE](#). Go to Main Menu > Finances > View/Pay Bill.

### **International Payments**

Information about international payments can be found [here](#).

### **Financial Aid**

Financial aid is unfortunately not available for the Higher Education Leadership Certificate program. Please visit [UMass Human Resources](#) for more information about Continuing and Professional Education tuition benefits for UMass and MA state employees.



# 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 EDUC 601a (Foundations of Higher Education) early on in your program. The program is flexible in terms of how many courses you take each semester.

## Required Courses

EDUC 601a – Foundations of Higher Education\*

EDUC 674 – Leading Higher Education

EDUC 621 – Managing Higher Education

EDUC 723 – Organizing Higher Education

Elective – Courses currently include EDUC 697SK Helping Skills for Higher Education Professionals, EDUC 601 College Student Development Theory, EDUC 697K Supporting Student Success, EDUC 692R Introduction to College Teaching, EDUC 748 Community Colleges in America. We will be rotating new courses regularly. You may also want to consider completing a practicum course as your elective (see below for additional information).

\*Students interested in the community colleges track can use EDUC 690a Community College Foundations in place of EDUC 601a Foundations of Higher Education.

## Practicum

Whether you are looking to try a different field or gain breadth of experience in your current field, a practicum can be a valuable experience. The practicum provides an opportunity for you to obtain more experiential learning related to higher education. Although you are responsible for identifying your own practicum site, you should work with an adviser regarding the setting and the requirements for completion.

## Goals

- To reinforce the value and importance of the linkage between academic and experiential learning in higher education administration.
- To help students develop skills in applying classroom learning to higher education practice.

## What is a Practicum?

### **Do you want to gain more experience within your area of specialization?**

Perhaps you would like to explore a more specific area within your specialization. For example, you may want to gain more experience in program evaluation.

### **Do you want to gain experience outside of your current area of specialization?**

What other areas of higher education are you interested in? Consider researching areas of higher education that interest you and then look for a practicum that is geared towards that area.

### **Do you want experience in a different type of institution or in a different geographic area?**

Additionally, consider your own higher education background in terms of where you have worked or been educated. Public or private? Size? Student population? Geographic region? If you have lots of experience with large, public institutions, why not look for a practicum in a small, private institution? The depth and quality of experiences that you can gain now will only help you to further define your philosophy of higher education, as well as the type of institution in which you wish to work in the future.

An intensive, 120-hour experience, similar to an internship, is an excellent way to become a generalist and gain valuable experience that will help to prepare you for any career direction you choose to take. No matter which general direction you choose for a practicum, you will gain valuable experience and be exposed to new ideas, new styles of supervision, and new ways of working with students.

You will need to complete a minimum of 120 hours at your practicum site. You will also need to complete a Practicum Contract.

**Practicum Contract:** The contract must be signed by you, your adviser, and your practicum supervisor BEFORE starting your

practicum. The contract specifies your goals and objectives for the practicum, the minimum hours that the practicum will encompass, and the timeline in which the work will be completed. The contract should also include clearly specified beginning and ending dates.

### **Sample Practicum Learning Contract**

TO: Your Advisor, Higher Education Program

FROM: Student Name

PRACTICUM:

Practicum Site Location

Site Supervisor

Start & End Date

Total Hours

- I. Reason(s) for selecting this particular practicum site
- II. Planned learning outcomes for practicum experience
- III. Outline of Practicum
  - A. What will your regular responsibilities be?
  - B. What are the expected outcomes/products that will be produced during this experience?
  - C. What are your supervisor's expectations regarding professionalism, mentorship, and supervision?
  - D. What are the intellectual competencies and practical skills that you hope to enhance through this practicum experience?
  - E. How do you plan to connect knowledge based on theory, research, and assessment to your experience?
- IV. Approvals
  - A. Student
  - B. Site Supervisor
  - C. Advisor

**Practicum Reflections:** You will work with your adviser to determine additional assignments beyond the practicum hours. Usually theses will include a bi-weekly reflection about your practicum and a final reflection about your experience. These assignments will be submitted to your adviser. You will also be asked to “meet” with your adviser every two-three weeks in-person, over the phone, or via Zoom to discuss your progress in your practicum placement.

**Setting Up a Practicum:** There is considerable flexibility in terms of sites and job descriptions, based on the interests of each student. While you are responsible for locating your own practicum site, faculty can offer direction in how to go about identifying an appropriate site given your interests and professional goals. If you are considering a practicum as part of your certificate experience you're encouraged to make an advising appointment to discuss your plans. It's better to start the conversation early!

**What Supervisors Want from You:** Here are things that supervisors are looking for from students doing practica in their organizations. These standards can be used as a basis for evaluating the performance of practicum students.

#### Primary Standards

- Basic understanding of department, including: operations, function, philosophy, issues, programs, and relationships
- Degree of involvement and participation
- Open and regular communication and dialogue with supervisor
- Satisfactory completion of activities outlined in objectives, including practicum requirements
- Professional commitment and seriousness of purpose
- Professional judgment
- Sensitive and effective interpersonal relationships

#### Secondary Standards

- Ability to take initiative and assume responsibility, including leading or co-leading projects
- Ability to objectively evaluate experiences
- Organizational ability
- Knowledge and understanding of higher educational and organizational behavior
- Sensitivity to ethical considerations
- Dependability
- Ability to work independently
- Ability to express ideas verbally and in writing

### **What Practicum Students Want From Their Supervisors:**

Practicum students have identified what they would ideally like to see from their supervisors.

- Demonstrate perceptiveness, concern, and support for personal and professional development of practicum student
- Set aside sufficient time for discussion, clarification, information, and advising
- Maintain professional trust, sharing of real and significant information, regular, open, honest, and direct communication
- Assist in identifying worthy, relevant, and reasonable objectives
- Provide ongoing encouragement and evaluation of performance in terms of objectives, process, and outcomes
- Discuss underlying philosophical and organizational relationships of the internship and office/institution, including exposure to relevant literature and resource material
- Provide guided freedom and give direction when necessary
- Involve the practicum student actively in as many areas of the organization as possible
- Provide exposure to and explanation of administrative options
- Establish, clarify, and relate expectations for performance
- Serve as a role model
- Provide opportunities for feedback to the supervisor
- Commit to the educational goal of the practicum
- Understand the limitations of the practicum and of the student

**Managing Your Supervisor:** Taken from *Managing Up!*, by Michael and Deborah Singer Dobson, these qualities and actions can help you to better manage the ongoing relationship that you develop with your supervisor at your practicum site, as well as your colleagues.

#### Do Good Work

- Review your job description and try to exceed your performance standards
- Set aside time each day for long-term efforts and projects
- Ask for feedback and use it to experiment with different approaches
- Set and work out a plan to achieve personal and professional development

#### Be Supportive, Not Competitive

- Be a team player, not a team competitor
- Get involved in the office/institution, in order to network and find support among institutional constituents

#### Choose Your Battles

- Make sure you are attuned to your boss' goals and expectations in order to avoid unnecessary conflict
- Learn how to negotiate like a pro by listening carefully and researching the issue
- Keep your word, avoid conflict with those depending on you
- Accept responsibility when you have made a mistake. Find a way to rectify the mistake (if a solution can be found), or a way to avoid repeating it in the future

#### Develop Strong Communication Skills

- Take your job seriously but yourself lightly
- Learn how to provide clarity in confusing situations, ask open-ended questions, and remain neutral in conflicts
- Prepare and provide constructive feedback for both those you supervise and those who supervise you
- Learn how to say “no”

#### Buyer Beware!

- Know the politics of the department and the limits of your own position's power

- Contain your own discriminatory beliefs and attitudes, including: racism, sexism, misanthropy, classism, homophobia and xenophobia
- Recognize cultural and other differences in attitudes, behaviors and communication styles

**Common Practicum Problems:** It often is difficult to navigate working with one or more supervisors, as well as others in the department. Not every experience is ideal and you may run into several issues during the course of your practicum. Here are some common problems:

- Unclear expectations
- Too many assigned responsibilities
- Too few assigned responsibilities
- Little knowledge of departmental or campus culture and/or politics
- Misstep or mistake that seems irreparable
- Multiple supervisors with different styles
- Assigned tasks in which you don't feel confident or comfortable

All of these problems can be fixed with only one solution – better communication between you and your supervisor. Be assertive, polite, and willing to talk about the issue in a professional way. If a problem does develop, go straight to the person with whom the problem is most directly relevant. If the problem is not with your supervisor, you might want to talk with him/her first about some potential strategies around confrontation and resolution before you proceed. Always, always, be diplomatic in any situation or approach. If a problem persists and you cannot seem to resolve it on your own, contact your adviser.



## 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](mailto:info-leadership@umass.edu). The deadlines to submit the form are listed on the program website. UMass Amherst has three graduation dates each year, in February, May, and September.

The form is available from the [program website](#). 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**

- Use 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
  - Students completing their final class in the Fall semester should mark February conferral
  - Students completing their final class in the Spring semester should mark May conferral
  - Students completing their final class in the Summer semester should mark September conferral
- Use "Educational Policy, Research, and Administration" for "Department" even if you belong to another department on campus
- Use "Higher Education Leadership and Administration" for "Certificate Program"
- Leave the final grade blank for any courses still in progress - the Graduate School will fill this in
- Leave the signature field blank
- View a [Sample Certificate Eligibility Form](#)