



MASTER OF ARTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

HANDBOOK

Department of Educational Policy Studies
and Practice
The Center for the Study in Higher Education



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Program Overview

Students pursuing a Master's in Higher Education will develop knowledge, skills and awareness to prepare them to be effective and progressive professionals, researchers and academics working in a range of institutions and administrative and policy or advocacy contexts relevant to higher education. This program may be completed full- or part-time.

The minimum credit requirement to complete the MA is 36 semester hours, of which not more than six credits may be transferred in from other institutions. Not less than 12 credits must be earned on the University campus in Tucson (i.e., some coursework may be taken at other locations where University of Arizona courses are offered). All work applied to the degree must be completed with 6 years, with some latitude possible by petition to the Graduate College.

Student Community

We encourage you to become involved with the [Higher Education Students Organization](#) (HESO) to plan social and academic events for students.

The Center has an active Facebook page. Please join us at: [Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Arizona](#) to learn more about students, faculty, alumni, and events.

UA's [Graduate and Professional Student Council](#) (GPSC) advocates for graduate students on campus and supports community building.

Academic Advisor

You will be assigned an academic advisor from among the Center for the Study of Higher Education faculty. Your advisor's name and contact information will be emailed to you before you begin classes.

Academic Program

The courses listed below are required. 36 total credits are required for degree completion. Six units of elective credit may be taken outside of the College of Education. Additional credits must be approved by your academic advisor.

1. HED 601 – Higher Education in the United States
2. HED 608 – The College Student
3. HED 611 – Introduction to Statistical Methods
4. HED 609 – Organization and Administration

Electives

You are encouraged to take electives in Higher Education, but you may certainly enroll in courses outside of Higher Education. All courses must be at the 500- or 600-level. If you wish to take more than six credits outside the College of Education, please consult with your academic advisor.

Transfer Credits

Students may transfer in no more than six academic credits to apply toward the MA degree. Transfer courses must be approved by the student's academic advisor. Students are encouraged to discuss transfer credits with their advisors as soon as possible. Once approved, the student should complete the **Evaluation of Transfer Credit** form on UAccess Student – Grad Path.

Summer Session

Students are welcome to take summer courses in consultation with their academic advisor. Summer session courses are not covered under the tuition remission package associated with a GA position.

Comprehensive Exams or Thesis Option

A student must successfully pass comprehensive exams or defend a thesis in order to satisfy the requirements of the MA in Higher Education. You may choose to complete either the exam or thesis.

Comprehensive Exams

Through this written examination, the student is expected to demonstrate a deep understanding of foundational and contemporary higher education literature, models and theories.

You will be prompted by the Department’s Graduate Coordinator to register for Comprehensive Exams via email. Sample questions may be available from the office.

Format for Comprehensive Exam

The format for the comprehensive exam includes questions from HED 601 and two other courses, selected by the student and the student’s advisor.

Timeline

Exams will take place the second Friday in November and the second Friday in April*. The exam is traditionally taken in the last semester of MA coursework. The student will have four hours to complete the exam - about an hour and twenty minutes per question. Copies of the completed exams will be distributed to the instructors of these courses and reviewed blindly. Students must successfully pass (not “low pass”) at least two of three areas to pass the Comprehensive Exam. Students who fail all three questions, two of the three questions, or one question and “low” pass one other question will have failed the Comprehensive Exam. Students may request disability-related accommodations for comprehensive exams by working with the UA Disability Resource Center.

Master’s Thesis

The Master’s thesis is an alternative to the comprehensive exam. Should a student select the thesis option, the student will need the support of a Higher Education faculty member to chair the thesis committee. It is advised that the student identify this faculty member and an initial research question by spring/second semester of the first year of study. Students may register for 6 thesis credits that count toward or in addition to the 36 required credits.

Sample Thesis Timeline

- Spring/Second Semester:
 - Develop a research question and discuss with academic advisor.
 - Identify a committee chair from the Higher Education faculty. When selecting your Chair, consider your relationship with the faculty member, shared research interests, and methodology you intend to utilize.

* If the second Friday of April is the weekend of the Easter holiday, the exam will be moved to the third Friday of April.

- Identify at least two additional faculty members to sit on the thesis committee. Preferably these committee members will be from HED or EPSP, but they may represent other departments. Additional committee members are also allowed.
- Summer:
 - Develop a literature review.
 - Begin Institutional Review Board (IRB) process.
- Fall/Third Semester:
 - Submit paperwork to IRB and secure approval to conduct research.
 - Pilot your study.
 - Write a proposal – typically five chapters for a total of 20-25 pages:
 1. Introduction
 2. Literature Review
 3. Methodology
 4. Findings
 5. Implications
 - Schedule a proposal defense. Submit a final draft of your proposal to your Chair at least 3 weeks out. Revise, then send updated draft to your committee at least 2 weeks out.
- Spring/Fourth Semester:
 - Expand your study to achieve your desired sample number.
 - Complete your thesis by following the proposal outline and expanding to about 100 pages.
 - Schedule your defense. Follow process for proposal defense. Leave yourself at least two weeks after your defense and before graduation to revise and submit to the Graduate College

Required Forms

All forms can be found in [UAccess Student - Grad Path](#) and must be routed electronically for approval by your advisor.

The following forms must be completed before graduation:

1. Responsible Conduct of Research Form
2. Evaluation of Transfer Credit (only if using external transfer courses)
3. Master's/Specialist Plan of Study
4. Master's/Specialist Committee Appointment Form
5. Master's/Specialist Completion Confirmation Form
6. Submission of thesis for archiving (*required if student completes a thesis*).
7. Exit survey

UA Resources

UAccess

UAccess is the UA system students use to enroll in courses and access their Bursar account and all required University forms. It is crucial to monitor your account to keep up with tuition payments and miscellaneous fees (CatCard, printing, etc.). <https://uaccess.arizona.edu/>

Desire 2 Learn (D2L)

D2L is the learning management system students use to access all course content (syllabi, readings, assignments, etc.) for their classes. Students' D2L login is the same as their UAccess login. [D2L Help Page](#)

CatCard

A CatCard is your UA identification card. Students can use CatCards for meal plans, campus purchases, printing charges, admission to some University events, building access, and more. It is important to get your CatCard as soon as possible. The cost is \$25 for your first card (employees receive their first card free). The CatCard office is located in the lower level of the Student Union across from Wells Fargo. <https://catcard.arizona.edu/>

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does one do with a Master's degree in Higher Education?

A Master's degree in Higher Education prepares you for a variety of professional and academic roles. Most students, upon graduation, work on a college or university campus doing direct service with students in advising, housing, student activities, multicultural affairs, etc. Students may also go on to pursue doctoral work with the ultimate goal of a faculty or administration position. This degree does not necessarily prepare students for college-level teaching or K12 administration.

2. Is this program designed for students who work full-time?

Yes! This program is designed for students to enroll in classes that fit with their work and life schedules. Students must complete 36 credits and either successfully pass comprehensive exams or defend a thesis, but this can all be completed at their own pace with the guidance of their academic advisor.

3. Can I apply transfer credit to my program?

Students may transfer in no more than six academic credits to apply toward the MA degree. Transfer courses must be approved by the student's academic advisor. Students are encouraged to discuss transfer credits with their advisors as soon as possible. Once approved, the student should complete the **Evaluation of Transfer Credit** form on UAccess Student – Grad Path.

4. How many electives can I take outside of HED or COE?

Students will choose at least five electives, in addition to their required courses, to complete their MA degree. You are encouraged to take electives in Higher Education, may certainly enroll in other courses. All courses must be at the 500- or 600-level. If you wish to take more the six credits outside the College of Education, please consult with your academic advisor.

5. When will I be assigned an academic advisor?

The name and contact information of your academic advisor will be communicated via email during the summer prior to fall semester.

6. When considering a Master's thesis or comprehensive exams, is one a better choice than the other?

Both options are valuable. Comprehensive exams help students reflect on critical content and concepts. The thesis is an opportunity to conduct research, however, given the length of the program, time management is critical to be successful. It normally takes a *minimum* of two semesters to complete a thesis, and planning should begin prior to that. (See timeline above).

7. I am having trouble registering for/enrolling in classes?

With questions or difficulties related to enrollment, please drop by the main office: College of Education Room 321, or call (520) 626-7313.

8. Where can I find a list of resources for Educational Policy Studies and Practice graduate students, including information on funding sources, Grad Path, and University or College policies?

Please visit this site for a variety of academic and university resources:

<https://www.coe.arizona.edu/epsp/gradresources>

Plan of Study Worksheet:

| Course | | Credits | Semester |
|---|----------|-----------|----------|
| HED 601 – Higher Education in the U.S. | Required | 3 | |
| HED 611 – Intro to Statistical Methods | Required | 3 | |
| HED 608 – The College Student | Required | 3 | |
| HED 609 – Organization and Administration | Required | 3 | |
| Elective | | 3 | |
| Elective | | 3 | |
| Elective | | 3 | |
| Elective | | 3 | |
| Elective | | 3 | |
| Elective | | 3 | |
| Elective | | 3 | |
| Elective | | 3 | |
| | | 36 | |

You may use this table to plan out your courses.