



# MASTER OF ARTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

STUDENT AFFAIRS COHORT  
HANDBOOK

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



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## Program Overview

Each fall, the faculty admits 15-25 new Master’s students into a cohort. The Master of Arts (MA) in Higher Education full-time student affairs cohort offers students a blend of theoretical and practical coursework to explore student services within the larger context of higher education. Students will develop knowledge, skills, and awareness that will prepare them to be effective and progressive professionals. This program is enhanced by a close relationship with University colleagues in Campus Life and Student Initiatives & Academic Affairs.

### Distinguishing characteristics of the MA Cohort:

- Students are enrolled in the program full-time and complete the program in four semesters.
- Students will take all required courses together and follow the curriculum outlined in this document, including certain classes that offer unique perspective on student affairs and student development:
  - HED 608 –The College Student
  - HED 617 – Introduction to Student Services
  - HED 627 - Capstone
- Students will be placed in a professional internship.
- In addition to their academic advisor, students will be assigned a professional mentor.
- Students are strongly encouraged to participate in a professional development workshop series designed to supplement and enhance the program.

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 within 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.

## Graduate Assistantships

While Graduate Assistantships (GA) positions are not required, they are strongly encouraged. The Center facilitates an interview weekend a month or two after admission to support you in procuring an assistantship. We invite newly admitted students to campus to meet with students, faculty and alumni. We also arrange interviews for available GA positions. While we do not make hiring decisions, we work closely with campus employers to ensure that successful HED MA students are offered GA positions. The dates and details for this even change annually and are communicated in January to newly admitted students to the HED MA cohort.

Most GA positions are one-year appointments at .50 FTE and provide a tuition remission and stipend. The details of each GA positions should be negotiated with the hiring departments and questions about tuition remission and insurance should be directed to the Graduate College.

## Academic Advisor

Dr. Amanda Kraus will serve as the academic advisor for all students in the cohort and will advise on curricular or program-related questions. You are welcome to call, email or schedule meetings with her any time.

Dr. Kraus can be reached at (520) 621-6501 or [akraus@email.arizona.edu](mailto:akraus@email.arizona.edu).

## Professional Advisors

Each student in the cohort will be assigned a professional advisor who works on campus in student services. Your professional mentor can offer practical advice, and advise you on professional development, internships, job searching and other campus dynamics. We encourage building relationships with your professional advisor by grabbing coffee or lunch or perhaps asking to visit their office and talk about their jobs and careers. There may be additional times when we utilize your advisors to assist in our professional development opportunities.

## Professional Development Workshop Series

Students in the cohort will be invited to participate in a monthly professional development workshop series designed to supplement the academic experience. These sessions will include topics such as resume building, internship information, job search preparation, wellness in graduate school, and other relevant topics that will help to support your experience in our program. We strongly encourage your participation in this series and suggest that you discuss attendance with your supervisors as needed.

## Academic Program

The courses listed 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.

| FIRST SEMESTER   | SECOND SEMESTER  |
|--|--|
| HED 601 – Higher Education in the United States<br>HED 611 – Introduction to Statistical Methods<br>HED 617 – Introduction to Student Services | HED 608 – The College Student<br>HED 609 – Organization and Administration<br>Elective |
| THIRD SEMESTER   | FOURTH SEMESTER  |
| HED 693 – Internship<br>Elective<br>Elective   | HED 627 - Capstone<br>Elective<br>Elective   |

## Electives

Students will choose at least five electives, in addition to the required courses, to complete their MA degree. 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 the 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.

## Internships

One internship is required for completion of the MA program. For those students in the MA cohort, it is recommended that you complete your internship in your third semester. Students will be assigned an internship through an interactive, matching process in the spring of their second semester. Students will enroll in HED 693 and receive three credits for their internship. **Note: HED 693 has a pull-down option and you must select three credits.**

Students are encouraged to do additional internship work, and may receive up to one credit for an additional internship. For those students working full-time, please consult your academic advisor to develop a plan to complete your internship that fits with your schedule.

## 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 our 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 marginally 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 the methodology you intend to utilize.

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\* 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 Higher Education faculty to sit on the thesis committee. Additional committee members are allowed and may represent other departments.
- 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 the process for a 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 sets UA's Higher Ed Master's program apart from others?

UA's program offers students a blend of theoretical and practical academic experiences. Students will learn about student affairs and administration in the larger context of higher education. Our faculty prioritizes social justice, access, and equity and reflects these values in research and teaching. The Master's program also benefits from a strong relationship with the division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. Students complete internships in the Division and are assigned professional advisors to help navigate job searching and professional associations among other things.

### 2. 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 K-12 administration.

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

The student affairs cohort is designed for full-time graduate students, to be completed in four semesters.

There is another MA option for students who cannot enroll full-time and/or are not interested in an academic focus on student affairs. These students will **not** be enrolled into the Cohort. While they must complete 36 credits and either successfully pass comprehensive exams or defend a thesis, they are not required to complete an internship or to take HED 627 – MA Capstone.

### 4. Can I apply for admission into the student affairs cohort in the spring?

No. Admission into to the student affairs cohort is fall-only, to facilitate a common curricular experience.

### 5. 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.

### 6. How many electives can I take outside of Higher Education or the College of Education?

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.

**7. When will I be assigned an academic advisor?**

Newly admitted MA students will be assigned their academic advisor as well as a professional advisor employed on campus in Student Affairs. These assignments will be communicated via email during the summer prior to your first semester.

**8. 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 in completing a thesis.

**9. When should I complete my required internship?**

You are encouraged to complete your internship in your third semester. Dr. Kraus will facilitate a process to identify options and match you.

**10. What if I do not receive a graduate assistantship (GA)?**

While most students do receive a GA position, if you do not, it's OK! You can continue to apply for GA positions that become available. You may also consider completing additional internships to build your resume and make professional connections.

**11. 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.

**12. 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:

You may use this table to plan out your courses.

| <b>Course</b>                             |          | <b>Credits</b> | <b>Semester</b> |
|---|----------|----------------|-----------------|
| HED 601 – Higher Education in the U.S.    | Required | 3              | Fall 1          |
| HED 611 – Intro to Statistical Methods    | Required | 3              | Fall 1          |
| HED 617 – Intro to Student Services       | Required | 3              | Fall 1          |
| HED 608 – The College Student             | Required | 3              | Spring 1        |
| HED 609 – Organization and Administration | Required | 3              | Spring 1        |
| HED 693 – Internship                      | Required | 3              | Fall 2          |
| HED 627—MA Capstone                       | Required | 3              | Spring 2        |
| Elective                                  |          | 3              |                 |
|   |          | <b>36</b>      |                 |