



MASTER OF ARTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

COHORT HANDBOOK

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



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Program Overview

The Master of Arts (MA) in Higher Education offers students a blend of theoretical and practical coursework. Students will learn about student services in the larger context of higher education and develop knowledge, skills and awareness that will prepare them to be effective and progressive professionals. This program is enhanced by a close relationship with the UA's [Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management & Academic Initiatives and Student Success \(SAEM/AISS\)](#). In partnership with SAEM/AISS, we place students in internships, assign them a professional mentor, and help them procure graduate assistantships (GA) that offer tuition remission.

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.

The MA Cohort

Each year, the faculty admits 15-25 new Master's student into a cohort. The cohort is defined as full-time Master's students who intend to complete the program in four semester. The cohort will take their required courses together.

Student Community

There are many options for new and continuing students to build community on campus. 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.

Suggested 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 HED 611 – Introduction to Statistical Methods HED 617 – Introduction to Student Services	HED 608 – College Student HED 609 – Organization and Administration Elective
THIRD SEMESTER	FOURTH SEMESTER
HED 693 – Internship Elective Elective	HED 627 - Capstone Elective Elective

Electives

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.

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.

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Assistantships (GA) positions are not required, but are strongly encouraged. 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.

The Center facilitates an interview weekend. 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.

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. **To register for the Comprehensive Exams and receive sample questions, please go to:**

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

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

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

relationship with the faculty member, shared research interests and the methodology you intend to utilize.

- 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 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

Frequently Asked Questions

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

Yes, the Master of Arts (MA) in Higher Education can be completed by students who work full-time and will not be able to enroll in three classes per semester. These students are not 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.

2. 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.

3. 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 than six credits outside the College of Education, please consult with your academic advisor.

4. When will I be assigned an academic advisor?

Newly admitted MA students will be assigned an academic advisor from the Center's faculty as well as a professional advisor employed on campus in Student Affairs. These assignments will be communicated via email during the summer prior to fall semester.

5. 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.

6. When should I complete my required internship?

You are encouraged to complete your internship in your third semester.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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 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. This degree does not necessarily prepare students for college-level teaching or K12 administration.

10. 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 reflect 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, professional associations, amongst other things.

Plan of Study Worksheet:

You may use this table to plan out your courses.

Course	Course Dept and #	Credit	Semester
HED 601 Higher Ed in the U.S.	Required	3	
HED 611 Statistics	Required	3	
HED 617 Intro to Student Services	Required	3	
HED 608 The College Student	Required	3	
HED 609 Organization and Administration	Required	3	
HED 693 – Internship	Required	3	
HED 627—MA Capstone	Required	3	
Elective		3	
Elective		3	
Elective		3	
Elective		3	
Elective		3	
		36	