



UNION INSTITUTE & UNIVERSITY

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Online Master of Education (M.Ed.) Degree
FL Master of Education (M.Ed.) Degree
Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) Certificate

Program Handbook

Florida Academic Center

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UNION INSTITUTE & UNIVERSITY M.ED. / ED.S. LEARNER HANDBOOK

The M.Ed. / Ed.S. Learner Handbook is designed to guide learners in the administrative procedures and processes of these programs as they pertain to the Florida site. This manual also seeks to answer questions that are frequently asked by learners. Therefore, as a learner, you should read the Handbook carefully to become familiar with its content and discuss any questions you might have with a program representative. It is recommended that you familiarize yourself with university policies found in the University catalog that you will find on the program pages of our website. You should consult the Handbook regularly throughout your graduate program, particularly when you are unsure about procedural matters and when you have to meet particular program requirements.

Union Institute & University reserves the right to amend, to modify, or to revise the policies and procedures stated herein as deemed necessary and appropriate and as approved by the Board of Trustees.

Union Institute & University is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Union Institute & University is authorized as a degree-granting institution by the Ohio Board of Regents, the Florida Commission for Independent Education, and the Vermont Board of Education. In California, the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education has determined that, as an accredited institution, Union Institute & University is exempt from the need for Bureau approval.

Union Institute & University does not discriminate in admissions, employment, or policy on the basis of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, or physical impairment. Union Institute & University policies and practices conform with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. Union Institute & University conforms with the provisions of learner rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 as amended.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Dear Learners:

On behalf of the UI&U academic community, I want to welcome you to the Master of Education and Educational Specialist Certificate. Our university has a rich history in innovative academic practice for the adult learner and you are now just beginning a journey that is meant to transform and enlighten you in your roles of scholar / practitioner.

This handbook has been developed to serve as a guide as you matriculate into Union Institute & University. The Master of Education and Educational Specialist Certificate are learner-centered programs. Your work with UI&U will be socially relevant, personally enriching and professionally cogent. As such, program administrators and faculty strive to be responsive to your academic needs and individual goals. We ask you to accept responsibility for fulfilling the requirements of your degree program. We are here to facilitate and foster your academic success. Best wishes as you embark on this academic journey.

Sincerely,

Arlene Sacks, Ed.D
Dean

UNION INSTITUTE & UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT

Union Institute & University empowers adults to acquire, apply, and create knowledge through interdisciplinary, flexible, and collaborative programs focusing on social relevance, personal enrichment, and professional advancement.

MASTER OF EDUCATION / EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

The Union Institute & University Master of Education program with locations in Miami, Vermont, and available online share a common mission statement and criteria for the M.Ed. degree.

The mission of these programs is to foster the development of educational leaders who make meaningful, positive change within their communities and who are committed to life-long inquiry. Related to this mission, our goals are to prepare knowledgeable, thoughtful, and effective teachers, counselors, and administrators; to enliven, challenge, and strengthen practicing educators; to promote the development of educators who are leaders, inquirers, and reformers; to generate knowledge; and through all of these goals, to improve schools and communities.

To reach these goals, we are innovative in our approaches by providing more effective modes of learning and teaching within models that are accessible for adult learners. We offer avenues to inquiry that are meaningful, as they stem from the learner's own questions and address real problems and issues in the world. The program is aimed both at educators seeking professional development in their own specific fields of study, and at individuals seeking licensure/certification in teaching, guidance and counseling, and administration.

EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST DISTINCTION

The Educational Specialist is an advanced certificate program that a learner pursues after completing a Masters of Education degree. The Ed.S. program builds on the Masters degree and expects learners to achieve higher level competencies as they pursue additional certification. Syllabi designated for Ed.S. courses include additional and more rigorous academic assignments than the Master's course work, in order to demonstrate proficiency of Ed.S. outcomes and competencies.

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF THE M.Ed. / Ed.S. PROGRAMS

- We value *learner centered* education based on a view that effective teaching and learning work from the learner's context and towards the learner's goals. As such, the program provides for individually designed study in a close working relationship with a program director and faculty advisor.
- We value *problem-focused* learning. The program supports the learner's exploration of real problems, often in settings in which the learner is working, and provides for final products which may be useful in the learner's work in schools.
- We value *interdisciplinary study* which allows the learner to bring more lenses to bear on the issue at hand, to probe questions more fully, or to approach a problem more creatively than would examination of the problem through only one discipline.
- We value *our learners' understanding that education requires knowledge of, and respect for, individual differences and diversity* of race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, modes of knowing and learning, and ability. Related to this view, *we value highly the critical examination of curriculum, pedagogy, and school organization* as these are embedded in a political, economic, and cultural context.
- We value *critical examination of both theory and practice as essential to effective leadership in education*. Educators should neither accept the ends and means of their work as given nor view their professional education as merely technical; rather they must examine critically their purposes and approaches in order to develop their own "professional identity" (Beyer et al., 1989) and to become agents of change and improvement in their setting.
- We value *critical inquiry in education that emphasizes theory and practice as well as the integration of theory and practice*. We view a strong, rigorously researched knowledge base and ongoing reflection on one's practice to be essential to one's effectiveness as an educator and to school reform and organizational change. We should not lose sight of and involvement in actual practice for the sake of emphasis on theory; nor should we forsake theoretical inquiry as we examine problems in practice. Rather each is essential to and informs the other.
- Thus, we value and have designed programs that accommodate both *University-based and site-based study*, that support the learner in both theoretical inquiry and action research, and that provide for learners to come together in both settings.
- We value not only the importance of many roles to the complex enterprise of education but also *the ways in which these areas of inquiry and roles are necessarily related to one another*. Thus, we offer programs to teachers, administrators, counselors, and researchers and view the M.Ed. / Ed.S. Programs' inclusion of this variety of fields, interests, and roles within education to be important to its mission.
- We value and will work to build *meaningful relationships with schools*. Through identifying and building on what each culture – the university and the school – offers and attempts, we hope both to provide the learner with an enhanced learning environment and to engage in collaborative

inquiry with the schools. Further, through, “professors and professionals” working together and through practitioners in schools teaching in the M.Ed. / Ed.S. Programs, we hope not only to strengthen the relationship between the graduate college and the school but also to acknowledge and tap the expertise of practitioners in the field.

- As we strive to generate knowledge and build understanding regarding the complex questions in education, we also aim to *fulfill both the learners’ goals for learning* and the university’s research goals for improvement.

UNIVERSITY OUTCOMES AND M.ED. / ED.S. COMPETENCIES

In order to be awarded the Master of Education degree or Educational Specialist certificate, a learner must demonstrate the following competencies:

University Outcome I: Communication - Express and interpret ideas clearly, using a variety of written, oral and/or visual forms.

Competencies:

1. Analyze, critique, and synthesize scholarly literature in the field.
2. Construct coherent and organized written documentation using standard English.
3. Critically reflect on experience related to acquired knowledge.
4. Consistently document sources using appropriate APA citation style.

University Outcome II: Critical and Creative Thinking - Use multiple modes of disciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiry to explore ideas and issues from multiple perspectives.

Competencies:

1. Formulate and defend a scholarly analysis of a range of resources.
2. Critically interpret and evaluate research results applicable to the learner's field of study.
- 2B. (Ed.S.) Use research data creatively within field of study.
3. Using critical inquiry, explain theory and how it intersects with praxis in learner's field of study.
- 3B. (Ed.S.) Evaluate the point of intersection between theory and praxis from within field of study.

University Outcome III: Ethical and Social Responsibility - Express ethical & social implications in one's social, professional, artistic and/or scholarly practice.

Competencies:

1. Examine the ethical implications of one's own focus of study, and relate those implications to the larger world.
2. Explain the social implications of one's own focus of study, and relate those implications to the larger world.
- 2B. (Ed.S.) Evaluate the social implications of one's own focus of study, and relate those implications to the larger world.

University Outcome IV: Social and Global Perspectives - Articulate a perspective in the world and one's own place in the global community.

Competency:

1. Examine the contributions of diverse peoples and cultures in the field of study.
- 1B. (Ed.S.) Evaluate multiculturalism within field of study.

Program Specific Outcomes:

Learners who successfully complete requirements for the program will be able to:

1. Access educational theory, ideas, and data from a variety of sources, including electronic.
- 1B. (Ed.S.) Analyze information critically and use it effectively for the learner's stated purposes.
2. Apply a variety of research methods.
- 2B. (Ed.S.) Critique a variety of research methods.
3. Identify a problem in educational practice, to conduct appropriate action and library research into the problem, and to pose practical solutions to the problem.
4. Work collaboratively with colleagues, students, and community members, including providing feedback to others.
5. Critique major debates in education philosophy, in pedagogy, and in education reform.
6. Describe key dimensions of individual differences among students and their implications for teaching, learning, and education environments.
- 6B. (Ed.S.) Evaluate key dimensions of individual differences among students and their implications for teaching, learning, and education environments.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Union Institute & University's M.Ed. / Ed.S. programs utilize a distributed learning model that combines directed study with online seminars. Additionally, learners are required to attend a three-hour workshop during the first week of each new semester. The program is designed to present learning activities in an organized manner, with the clearly delineated assignments completed each term.

Union Institute & University's M.Ed online program is delivered completely electronically through a learner management system.

Program Overview

- M.Ed. Degree
Credits to Degree = 36-45 semester credit hours
FT Option = 9 semester hours /PT Option = 6 semester credits
Minimum Time to Degree: 1 year for the 36 cr. hour program, or 1/1/3 years for the 45 cr. hour program.
- M.Ed. Degree - Online
Credits to Degree = 36 semester hour credits
FT Option = 9 semester hours/PT Option = 6 semester hours
Minimum Time to Degree: 12 months
- Ed.S Certificate
Credits to Certificate Completion = 30-39 semester credit hours
FT Option = 9 semester hours/PT Option = 6 semester hours

ACADEMIC CALENDAR AND TERM BASED PROGRAM

The academic year for the UI&U M.Ed. / Ed.S program is 12 months. The academic year is divided into three sixteen-week semesters. Each semester is divided into two eight-week terms. Full time learners take two courses/6 credits each eight week term. Part time learners register for one course/3 credits each eight week term. Each learner's academic year is based on the first term or enrollment date. Learners register for specific learning activities each semester based on program requirements. Full time enrollment status is defined as registering for nine or more credit hours per semester. Part time enrollment status is considered as being registered for six semester hours or less per semester.

- Course Numbering System
M.Ed. courses are #500-599
Ed.S. courses are #600-699

Directed Study

Directed study permits graduate learners to work independently while pursuing the objectives of course syllabi with guidance and instruction from your assigned adjunct faculty. For those learners whose specializations are grounded by State certification regulations, directed study courses are pre-determined by the State's mandated guidelines. Faculty, as experts in the field, are responsible for developing outcomes-based syllabi that delineate what the learner should master in relation to the specific content area that serves as the focus for each course. University outcomes and competencies are identified within each syllabus for the purpose of direct assessment. A variety of activities are thoughtfully designed and aligned to course content to ensure that there is academic evidence that supports the mastery of all stated outcomes and competencies. These activities may include, but are not limited to, research papers using APA guidelines, annotations on readings, power point presentations, school-based observations, site visits, interviews, and participation at professional conferences and workshops.

THE LEARNING PLAN

The Learning Plan for each learner delineates the courses, faculty, and total credit hours to be completed during the learner's matriculation in the program. It is designed prior to the start of the learner's first semester.

COURSE SYLLABI

Each seminar and course syllabus contains the following:

- A course title, prefix and course number
- Number of credit hours
- A detailed description of the course
- University outcomes and graduate competencies to be met within the specific course
- A plan for development of proficiency in each area that includes:
 - Course competencies
 - Learning strategies that may include reading current research and texts in the field, conducting site visits, conducting interviews with professionals, attending professional conferences/workshops.
 - Learner products supporting mastery of course content may be in the form of scholarly research papers, critically annotated bibliographies, annotated notes taken during a seminar, journal article critiques, originally designed manuals, and interviews of professionals.
- Bibliography
- Additional resources
- Grading Criteria

Transfer Credit Policy

The M.Ed program allows up to six graduate credits (the equivalent of two courses) from a regionally accredited university are eligible to be reviewed by the Admissions Committee for approval of transfer. Transfer credits from the Ed.S. program may be from courses taken above the Master's Level. The transfer courses must have been completed in the past five years with an

equivalent grade of “B” or above. These transfer credits must be specifically applicable to the learner’s area of concentration.

Transferability of credit to another institution is at the discretion of the accepting institution. It is the responsibility of the learner to determine if credits earned while enrolled at Union Institute & University will be accepted by another institution.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING INTERNSHIP

The internship in Guidance & Counseling is a 150-clock hour (minimum) experience that occurs in the final semester of all Guidance & Counseling academic programs.

PREPARATION FOR THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

Prior to the final semester the learner fills out an application for the counseling internship and submits it to the faculty advisor. The faculty advisor maintains ongoing collaboration with the various public school districts that place Guidance and Counseling learners. The faculty advisor submits all forms to the appropriate representative for the respective county’s public school district. Prior to the start of the learner’s final semester, the public school district notifies the university of placement. At this point, the faculty advisor contacts the field supervisor to set up an appointment and informs the learner of the assigned placement. The faculty advisor meets with each field supervisor prior to the learner reporting to the school site.

All learners must participate in a workshop convened by the faculty advisor prior to the start of the internship experience. During this workshop, learners receive their syllabus and review the guidelines and university expectations for this practicum experience.

It is the learner’s responsibility to coordinate an appropriate time frame in which to meet this requirement. These hours may be determined by the learner in consultation with the field supervisor. The internship experience begins and ends in the learner’s final semester of the graduate program. Internships cannot be completed during the summer months and may not be conducted within the learner’s own school site.

ELEMENTS OF THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

The learner maintains a log that documents internship hours and activities (individual counseling, group counseling, consultation, parent meetings, academic planning, etc.) as well as a reflective journal that examines the weekly internship experiences.

During the internship, the learner is expected to be exposed to many of the facets of a comprehensive school guidance & counseling program. The learner is to be provided with opportunities to increase proficiency in the full range of competencies that serve as the foundation for the school guidance counselor.

INTERNSHIP EVALUATIONS

The field supervisor is to complete a mid-semester evaluation (at approximately 75 hours into the internship) and a final evaluation at the end. The learner is to keep a journal of hours and activities, which is to be signed by the field supervisor. When all documentation is submitted to the faculty advisor, a grade can be assigned to the learner for the internship experience.

E- PORTFOLIO

Learners in the M.Ed. Program complete their final course with an electronic portfolio. This culminating experience demonstrates mastery of program outcomes and competencies through specialty designated evidentiary assignments from all courses taken throughout your degree program.