FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – M.S. IN HIGHER EDUCATION

M. S. in Higher Education Program at a glance:

✓ This degree is geared toward those students who plan to work in an administrative capacity in a higher education institution (in student affairs, academic affairs, administrative affairs, development, etc.). It is a total of 36 graduate credit hours.

✓ Part of the curriculum is a Practicum course/experience, which consists of a seminar plus a minimum of 120 hours (in one semester) of unpaid work in a department/division of a higher education institution in an area/department different from where the student may be working or doing a Graduate Assistantship. This is required of every student, even if s/he works full time. There are a number of ways this requirement can be met, even for those students who already have full time employment.

✓ If you are interested in a graduate assistantship, those are competitive, and are managed through FIU's Division of Student Affairs. Please contact Dr. Cathy Akens at akensc@fiu.edu if you have questions about the process.

✓ The minimum requirements for admission are a baccalaureate degree and an undergraduate GPA of 3.0 in the last 60 credit hours of upper-division undergraduate study.

✓ Work experience in higher education such as four-year institution, community college, or student affairs areas is preferred but not required

✓ The deadline for admission is **February 1st** for Fall of the same year. In addition to the application, the following materials must be submitted through FIU’s Graduate School website (gradschool.fiu.edu) by the deadline:
  o Two (2) letters of recommendation;
  o Personal statement (letter of intent);
  o Updated resume;
  o An official copy of your transcripts.
F.A.Q.

1. **What is the deadline for admission into the program?**

Applications are accepted through FIU’s graduate school. February 1st is the deadline for admission into the next Fall term (which begins in August of that same year). The program only admits once a year. However, if you are interested in an assistantship, we strongly recommend that you get your application and all of the required documents into the Graduate School before that deadline, and that you order your transcripts sent to the Graduate School so that they arrive in January, if possible. It takes a number of weeks for all of your documents to be processed by the Graduate School and sent to the program for an admissions recommendation.

2. **What information should my personal statement cover?**

Your personal statement should include the following information:

- Why you want to complete this particular degree;
- What you want to do with the degree when you graduate;
- If you have had experience working in higher education, describe what it was;
- If you have had experience during your undergraduate years in clubs, organizations, etc., describe in what capacity;
- Anything in your record that you would want to address (e.g., if your GPA is under 3.0).

3. **Who should write my letters of recommendation?**

It is preferable to have previous college instructors of yours fill out the recommendation letters. The recommenders should address how they assess your potential for success in a graduate program. You can also get one letter from an employer, especially if it is from a higher education setting. The letters must be submitted through the FIU’s Graduate School online application. The instructions are on the graduate school website.

4. **Can this program be completed online? If not, are some of the courses offered online?**

At this time, only a few of the courses are online. Most of the courses are offered face-to-face, from 5:00 to 7:40 in the evenings Fall and Spring semesters. There are also courses offered in the Summer, although the schedule varies from the Fall/Spring semesters, and there are mostly electives offered in the summer.

5. **How many students are accepted to the program each term?**

Between 60-80 students are accepted for Fall term.

6. **Is the program part-time or full-time? How long does the program usually take?**

The program can be taken full time or part time. Most students take the 36 credits in two years. However, the degree must be completed by six years from entry into the program.
7. **What are the areas of specialization?**

Areas of specialization depend on the interests of each student, as 12 credits out of the 36 are electives. Students can choose their electives from any of the graduate courses taught at the University. There are also a number of higher education administration electives, as well as graduate courses in counseling, international/intercultural education, curriculum and instruction, etc. Some of our students want to specialize in student affairs, while others want to focus on administrative affairs or academic affairs, for example.

8. **What is the difference between a graduate assistantship and the practicum?**

A graduate assistantship is awarded on a competitive basis, and it could be for two years, for example. Students who are in a graduate assistantship are awarded tuition remission, and other benefits. (For information about Graduate Assistantships, please contact Dr. Cathy Akens at akensc@fiu.edu. The practicum experience consists of 120 hours of unpaid experience in a department or unit in a higher education institution, accomplished within one semester-- fall, spring, or summer. Graduate assistants and those working full time must still complete a practicum, and the placement must be in a different department than where the student is a G.A. or a full time employee.

9. **When do I sign up to take the practicum?**

The Practicum course/experience is taken in the second year of the program, once you have mastered the theoretical background. EDH 6045 College Student Development Theory is a prerequisite for the Practicum. Further details on the practicum will be given at the program orientation.

10. **Is there a possibility for employment with the university after graduation?**

There is a possibility of employment at the University after graduation, and our students are introduced to national opportunities for employment at other institutions.

11. **Will I be able to implement the courses necessary to complete the new graduate certificate in academic advising in the program, possibly while fulfilling the 12 credits of electives required for the M.S. program?**

Yes, you can get both degrees at the same time but you will have to complete 39 credits for the M.S. instead of 36, because you can only use 12 credits from your M.S. to satisfy the 15 credits of the advising certificate.
12. **What is the estimated cost of the program?**

You can get that information online at our website (http://finance.fiu.edu/controller/UG_Calculator.htm). It depends when you would be starting the program, as tuition tends to change every year.

13. **My undergraduate GPA is under 3.0. Should I still apply to the program?**

Yes, you may. Admission to the program is highly competitive. However, the program admissions committee reviews not only the prospective applicant’s GPA, but also the other sections of the application package. Your Personal Statement is very important. In it, you should state not just why you want to be in the program and what you intend to do with the degree, but also address why your undergraduate GPA was lower than 3.0. Your two letters of recommendation will be looked at carefully as well, and you should try to get them from professors you had in your undergraduate program. They should address what they think your potential for succeeding in graduate school is. If you were involved in student activities as a leader or participant in your institution (clubs, organizations, part time work, etc.), this would be very helpful for your case. Perhaps one of your letters of recommendation could be from a supervisor or faculty sponsor of one of these activities. Lastly, if you have taken the GRE, submit your GRE scores. Even though they are not required, if they are high, the committee will consider those.

It is important to note that FIU’s graduate school computes a candidate’s undergraduate GPA based only on the upper-division (3000 and 4000 level) courses in a student’s program (usually up to the last 60 credits in a program). This is called the UG 60, and it could be different than the GPA of the entire undergraduate program.

If you are admitted under this exception, you will be notified that you have been provisionally admitted, and you must earn a cumulative GPA of 3.0 upon the completion of 9 graduate credits within one year of admission (if more than 9 credits are taken, all credits will be used to determine if the condition was met). Upon meeting this condition, you will exit the provisional status and be fully admitted. Students who are admitted on a 10% exception are not eligible to apply for a graduate assistantship or scholarship.

14. **Are there any scholarships available?**

There are very few scholarships available. You can contact FIU’s graduate school and they will direct you to the best source of information regarding availability.

15. **My undergraduate degree is not in Education. Can I still apply?**

Yes, many of our students have undergraduate degrees in other disciplines (majors in arts and sciences or business, for example).
16. I just missed the deadline date for application into the program. Can I take some courses as a non-degree seeking student now, apply to the program by the next admission deadline, and then transfer the courses I took into the program?

Yes, you may take up to 12 credits as a non-degree seeking student. You apply through the Registrar’s Office, where you must complete a Non-degree Seeking Student form. We recommend that you take the courses that will give you a theoretical background of the discipline. They are EDH 6634 Organization & Administration of Student Affairs, EDH 6047 College Student Life and Culture, OR EDH 6055 Access & Choice in U.S. Higher Education. If you are admitted to the program, courses that are successfully completed with a grade of B or better can be transferred (included) into the program by requesting this from the Graduate Program Director (program leader) for the M.S. in Higher Education program. EDH 6633 Introduction to Higher Education and EDH 6045 College Student Development Theory should be taken the first semester after being admitted to the program and not while in you are classified as non-degree seeking.

17. I am still completing my undergraduate degree, but want to apply to the program. May I do so?

Yes, if you are in your last semester as an undergraduate student, you may apply to the program. You will have to have official transcripts sent to the Graduate School at the time of your application (even though it will still show you as an undergraduate student). If you meet the admissions requirements and you are recommended for admissions, you will be notified that your entry into the program is “conditional” until you send official transcripts to the Graduate School with your final undergraduate degree posted.

18. Do you assign an advisor to each student?

Yes, we will assign an advisor to each student at the program orientation, which takes place on a weekday in the first week of the fall term. Until then, we are happy to answer any questions you may have about the program by email, and if that is not enough, we can schedule a time to speak with you on the phone. In cases where more complex questions are involved (e.g., transfer of credits from another institution), the Graduate Program Director of the program can schedule an appointment with you. There will also be “open advising” opportunities each term; students will be notified. In addition, the program faculty who teach your courses may be able to answer your questions before or after class.

19. Once I am accepted to the program, is there an orientation?

Yes, once you are accepted you will get an email to your FIU email account, informing you of the date and time of the orientation, where you will meet the faculty and ask any questions you may have. Normally, the orientation will take place on a weekday during the first week of the fall term.
20. Can I take any courses as my 12 credits of electives?

You do not need prior permission to take your electives as long as the courses are graduate level (5000, 6000, or 7000 level courses). There are a number of electives in the higher education program. Also, students may take their electives in an area of their interest (e.g., counseling, curriculum and instruction).

21. I started a master’s program but didn’t complete it. Can I transfer some of the credits over to this program?

It depends on what the courses are. Only six (6) graduate credits from a regionally accredited institution in which you received a grade of B or better may be transferred into the program. Your advisor or the Graduate Program Director of the Higher Education Program will advise you and process this for you. Please be informed, however, that the “clock” of the maximum of six years to complete the M.S. program will start when you took those courses if you wish to transfer them into the program.

22. I applied to the program by the deadline date. How long will it be until I am informed if I have been accepted?

It depends. The sooner you apply and upload all of your documents to the Graduate School, the sooner you will hear. This may not happen until after the admissions deadline has passed. The graduate school gathers all of your documents, computes your UG 60 GPA, and refers your file to the academic program once it is complete. The program’s admissions committee then meets and sends its recommendation to the Graduate School, who will in turn send you an email about the decision. However, if your undergraduate GPA is under 3.0, the decision may be rendered a number of weeks past the admissions deadline. The reason for this is that program has the option to admit, as an exception to the 3.0 GPA, up to 10% of the number of students who were fully admitted. Therefore, the program committee cannot decide on the 10% exception group until the total number of those who were fully admitted is known.

23. Are there “first-year” courses I should take once I am admitted?

Yes, they are EDH 6045 College Student Development Theory, and EDH 6633 Introduction to Higher Education Administration. And, if you need a third course, you may also take EDH 6634 Organization & Administration of Student Affairs, and EDH 6047 College Student Life and Culture, OR EDH 6055 Access & Choice in U.S. Higher Education. These are requirements of the program and will give you the theoretical background to prepare you for the rest of the program.

24. May I take my elective courses first?

We highly recommend that you take all of your REQUIRED courses first. That is because toward the end of your program, if you only need an elective course for graduation, there are a myriad of choices in case the elective course you want is full. However, if you need a particular required course, and it is full, you may not be able to graduate when you planned.
25. How will I know my progress once I am in the program?

Once a student is admitted, an online Panther Degree Audit will be available for the student and faculty to clearly see what progress is being made in the program, and what is left to take.

26. Where do I find information about the curriculum of the program and about what I need to submit to the Graduate School in order to apply?

That information is easily accessible online at [http://education.fiu.edu/masters_degrees.html?expanddiv=ms18](http://education.fiu.edu/masters_degrees.html?expanddiv=ms18)

27. I am an international student and I am interested in applying. How should I go about the process? Are there any additional requirements?

As an international student, you will need to submit official TOEFL or IELTS scores in order to demonstrate English proficiency, in addition to the standard application materials. The minimum scores for admissions are 80 for the TOEFL and 6.5 for the IELTS. Additionally, if you earned your degree from an institution outside the United States, you will need to have your transcripts evaluated and validated by the FIU’s Graduate School. Please contact them for further information at gradadm@fiu.edu.

28. I want to become a teacher and/or a principal. Is this the right program for me?

The MS in Higher Education Administration is designed to train graduates to work in administrative and leadership roles in higher education. This program is not meant to train teachers or administrators for the K-12 setting (see FIU’s Educational Leadership Program). If you intend to teach higher education administration subjects at a university, you must complete a doctoral program in higher education.

29. I work full-time. Do I still have to complete the Practicum? Can I use my job as the Practicum?

All students are required to complete a one-semester Practicum experience (120 hours). Practicum is typically an unpaid experience, and paid employment or graduate assistantships cannot be considered for practicum credit. Many of our students work full-time and are able to complete the practicum in one semester, as there are a number of placements that can be made that will not interfere with a full time position. During the program orientation, you will receive further information about the practicum.
For more general questions regarding graduate admissions, registration and enrollment please refer to the School of Education’s Office of Graduate Studies F.A.Q. at http://education.fiu.edu/ogs/faq.html.