

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Prospective Students to the ICE/IEPA MA Program
(Revised November 21, 2019)

COURSES AND PROGRAM OF STUDY

What are the course requirements for the ICE/IEPA MA degree? Aside from the program requirements, what kind of courses may I take?

The [Master's Degree Handbook](#) lists the requirements and other course options for the ICE/IEPA MA program (click on Program-Specific Requirements).

Many courses offered by the Graduate School of Education are open to students of all levels (undergraduates, master's, and doctoral). Seminars and workshops tend to be populated only by graduate students. By Winter quarter, ICE/IEPA MA students have room in their schedules to take 1-2 electives; this number usually increases in Spring quarter. Students are encouraged to take classes from throughout the School on topics that relate to their interests or that build on their research skills. They are also free to take courses in other schools and departments throughout the University, such as the social science disciplines found in the School of Humanities & Sciences, as well as courses with spots available for Education students in the Schools of Business, Engineering, and Law, among others.

Course requirements differ only slightly for the ICE and IEPA MA programs. Aside from taking one additional required course, students in IEPA must include some policy discussion in their MA Papers if their topics are not already focused on policy. It is not uncommon for students to switch from one program to the other during the year, which is approved in most cases with just a few signatures on a change of program form.

How can I find out about other courses and their descriptions?

Courses in Education are described on [this](#) web site.

One of the strengths of the Graduate School of Education is its methodological training. What courses are available to master's students?

Students in the ICE/IEPA MA program are required take at least one research methods course, which may include either a quantitative or qualitative methods course. In most cases, students take two or more methods courses because of the value that our students, faculty, and prospective employers place on such skills.

The quantitative methods course, Introduction to Data Analysis and Interpretation (EDUC 200A), is designed for MA students who come in without a strong quantitative background but who are willing to work hard and learn how to become both consumers and producers of quantitative-based research. Taking EDUC 200A prepares students to enroll in EDUC 250B (Statistical Analysis in Education: Regression) in Winter.

Those with strong quantitative skills may not need to take an introductory course. Course options for them are described in the next section.

The qualitative methods course, Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods (EDUC 200B), also designed for MA students, is often taken in Winter quarter by those who use such methods to analyze data for their MA Papers. This course provides students with the skills to analyze text data (e.g., open-ended survey data, textbooks, policy documents, content from web sites, etc.), and conduct observations and interviews.

I am very interested in acquiring the skill-set necessary to conduct randomized control trials and quantitative impact evaluations for education programs in lesser developed countries. Are there courses you would recommend beyond the core offerings of the ICE/IEPA MA program?

Consider enrolling in the EDUC 430-series. EDUC 430A is Experimental Research Design and Analysis; EDUC 430B is Causal Inference in Quantitative Educational and Social Science Research; and EDUC 430C is Using Data to Describe the World: Descriptive Social Science Research Techniques. All three are worth taking if you are interested in learning how to conduct impact evaluations.

On average, how many days per week are ICE/IEPA MA students on campus?

Earlier in the academic year, especially in Autumn and Winter quarters, students may expect to be on campus Monday through Friday. We find that students learn better when their classes are spread throughout the week. When course loads lighten up later in the year, students may find that they only need to be on campus 3-4 days per week in Spring quarter and 1-2 days in Summer. While some students commute from San Francisco and Oakland, we recommend that students benefit from the lower prices and convenience of on-campus graduate student housing, which offers options for couples and families. Most students live on campus.

MA PAPERS AND ADVISORS

The ICE/IEPA MA program lasts for four quarters. Is it possible to conduct fieldwork overseas for the MA Paper?

Because students are enrolled in classes full-time, it is not possible for students to conduct fieldwork for their MA Paper projects. However, students often maintain relationships with organizations in countries where they have worked or studied in order to keep open the possibility of that organization playing a role in the MA Paper project, such as by distributing questionnaires, sharing data they may have collected, or recruiting participants to be interviewed. In other cases, students apply theories relevant to developing countries to contexts in the local area. For example, when a student realized the infeasibility of traveling to Africa to collect data, she instead worked with an organization in the SF Bay area that serves African immigrants. Students might find it possible to travel outside the U.S. during an end-quarter break in order to conduct a few interviews or to make some observations, but even this is hard to do in the few days between quarters. All data need to be collected by the middle of Spring quarter and a first draft written by the end of that quarter.

May I use preexisting data for my MA Paper? For example, are there international data collections available that I can use to analyze trends in the data to predict student achievement?

Definitely. In fact, we highly recommend that students use extant data sets for their projects. Students are not limited to quantitative data sets such as those produced by UNESCO, World Bank, or ministries of education. Many faculty in the School possess qualitative data sets that may be analyzed for one's MA Paper. This is something to discuss with one's advisor, the program director, and the program assistants early in the academic year.

Students also have the option to collect original data, for example, through the use of surveys, but this is not encouraged. We strongly recommend utilizing existing data due to the additional resources (e.g., time, money, skills) needed to collect and analyze original survey data. There are also additional course requirements for those who propose to collect their own data and a petition is required by the end of Autumn quarter for those who would like to collect their own data.

What do students do with their MA Papers if they develop policy recommendations? Are their policies accepted and used by non-academics? Or do they use their MA Papers as pilot studies for later research, including research for PhD dissertations?

Once the MA Paper project was changed to be "article-length" on 2009-10 and students adhere to the guidelines of the academic journal of one's choosing, the possibilities are now greater for graduates to publish their papers but there are other ways for one's work to reach a wider audience and to impact policy. Students in the IEPA program are encouraged to submit their work to policy-related journals and to make other efforts to take part in policy discussions related to their MA Papers topics.

What do students do in the summer?

During Summer quarter, students “workshop” their MA Papers in order to complete their final projects by the end of July/early August. Students are required to remain in the area throughout summer quarter and to attend every meeting of the weekly seminar and will often start their job searches over the summer if they haven’t done so already. Those who are further along with their projects may be able to begin a job or an internship on a part-time basis before the end of the program.

**** New option starting in 2017-18****

Students are strongly encouraged to work with one other student (in pairs) to develop co-authored MA Papers. Students need to decide whether or not to take on this option by the time they start writing their pre-proposals due in mid-December. Those who pursue this option would be required to share their workload evenly. More details will be provided to those who are admitted to the program.

THE COHORT AND ADVISORS

I understand that the average cohort size is around 20 students, which is smaller compared with the other programs I’m considering. Why is this the case?

Having a cohort of roughly twenty students allows the program director, the program assistants, and faculty advisors to provide each of our students with the individualized attention required to complete a high quality MA Paper in one year’s time. In addition to such personalized attention, our students appreciate being able to really get to know their cohort members in addition to those in the other master’s and doctoral programs. Small cohorts of students allow for smaller class sizes, which lead to higher rates of participation and learning.

How does the program promote cohort collaboration on projects both in and outside of the classroom?

Many courses in the Graduate School of Education provide students with the opportunity to work on group presentations and papers. In some courses, students are organized into working- and writing-groups based on shared interests and to balance different strengths. With Joint Degree Programs in Business and Law within the Graduate School of Education (GSE), ICE/IEPA MA students have the opportunity to take classes and join clubs with students from other schools across campus. For example, in 2012-13, students from the ICE/IEPA MA program worked with students from the Graduate School of Business to participate in two Education Leadership Case Competitions at Northwestern and Cal-Berkeley.

How and when are advisor assignments made?

Prior to the start of the program, the program director assigns students to advisors based on students’ research interests and on faculty members’ availability. We do our best to accommodate students’ requests. In most, but not all cases, students are assigned to one of the core ICE faculty. Because an increasing number of GSE faculty are engaged in international and cross-national research, it may be the case that a better fit may be made between a student and a faculty member outside of the ICE-core, but most likely within the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Interdisciplinary Policy Studies in Education (SHIPS) area.

FUNDING OPTIONS

What are my funding options, including departmental fellowships and work study?

The majority of MA students in our programs fund their education through loans and personal savings. Admits who are eligible are encouraged to fill out their FAFSA and Stanford’s Graduate Student Loan application as soon as possible.

What are my funding options as an international student?

As funding options for international students are limited, most pay for their MA studies with personal savings and private/alternative loans. More information may be found [here](#) and [here](#).

As for part-time jobs, in most cases, visa restrictions limit the kind of job one is allowed to undertake. International students who are able to work on campus look for jobs on their own – usually outside of the GSE.

It is rare for MA students to land a teaching or research assistantship in the School as these are reserved for doctoral students.

WORK, INTERNSHIPS, AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Do students in the ICE/IEPA MA program work or have internships?

We know that students who are about to enter the program are eager to explore all options available to them in terms of both academics – like coursework and their MA Paper research – as well as professional opportunities, such as internships and paid positions. Some may view the latter as a way to relieve some of the financial burden of taking on student loans or digging too deeply into personal savings to fund one's Stanford graduate degree.

We strongly encourage students to focus on their academics during their time at Stanford as that is what has made you consider the ICE/IEPA MA program in the first place – the opportunity to develop a research project of their choosing, have meaningful interactions with ICE faculty, and enroll in as many ICE courses as possible. The time you have at Stanford will go by very quickly. The pace of the quarter-system is much faster than the semester-system and takes some getting used to.

With that in mind, we look at the MA Paper project as one's "internship" experience – a hands-on experience in educational research that takes students from initial ideas explored one summer to a manuscript of publishable-quality the next. Your partners in this process include the program director, the program assistants (advanced doctoral students in International Comparative Education), and your faculty advisors.

Each year, a very small number of students decide to work but are limited to no more than 8 hours per week. They tend, however, not to start these positions until Spring or Summer quarters (which likely means having to take a lighter load of courses in Spring when one's classmates are taking a full load).

Should one decide to take on a job or internship, we highly recommend that it overlap with one's MA Paper project in order to multi-task efforts. For example, one could work for an organization that collects data on schools, which one could then analyze for both the organization and for one's MA Paper research. It may also be possible to earn academic units for the time spent at an unpaid internship.

By the summer quarter when students are working on their MA Papers, those who are close to completing their projects may work up to 20 hours per week on or around campus. But generally, because of how busy they are with their full load of courses and MA Paper research during the school year, we neither require nor encourage students to work or take on internships. As a result, it is up to students to find internships on their own. This becomes easier to do once students are on campus, are subscribed to a number of different email lists, and/or work with the careers resources in the School and elsewhere.

Unlike some of the other schools I am considering, Stanford does not have an internship component, but has an MA Paper component instead. How does the GSE make sure that students who want to be practitioners after graduation acquire relevant [work-related] skills?

While it is the case that ICE/IEPA MA students typically do not take part in internships during the academic year, some will do so during the summer when their course loads are much lighter. Regardless of whether or not they have internships, all of our students gain work-related skills in a number of ways.

First, the process of developing a MA Paper from start to finish provides our graduates with many skills highly sought after by employers in a range of fields. Our students develop a deep understanding of topics related to their paper topics and become immersed in the latest research and thinking on their topics. They gain an understanding of theoretical perspectives useful to thinking critically and analytically about a range of educational and other social issues. They know how to work independently while taking into account feedback from multiple sources such as their advisors, instructors, and peers. Working on their papers, while also taking a full load of courses, allows our students to become highly organized and to manage their time effectively. They learn how to write well and to critique the work of others. By presenting their paper proposals at the annual conference of the [Comparative and International Education Society \(CIES\)](#), our students gain the opportunity to actively participate in all aspects of a professional meeting.

Second, taking courses over the span of four quarters provides our students with the opportunity to enroll in many skill-based courses. In addition to the year-long seminar in applied research methods, ICE/IEPA MA students usually enroll in 2-4 additional social science-based research design and methods courses that

enable them to become skilled in collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. Other courses in curriculum construction, evaluation, policy analysis, and service-learning are available, as are courses in nonprofit management and philanthropy.

Finally, our students gain work-related skills through their extra-curricular activities, including taking on leadership roles in one of the [650+ student groups and organizations on campus](#), including GSE student groups such as the GSE Student Guild, the GSE-GSB EdClub, and the Students of Color Committee, among others.

What are some of the career resources available to students and alumni?

Career services for students and alumni of the Graduate School of Education are provided by [Stanford EdCareers](#). The office provides a range of services and events to meet the needs of all students and alumni. Workshops organized by EdCareers allow students to meet alumni and employers and to learn specific skills such as how to write effective cover letters and resumes.

Career counseling appointments are available to assist students and alumni through the various stages of the job search and career exploration process such as:

- clarifying interests, skills, values, and work style;
- exploring various career options;
- developing short and long term plans for one's career search;
- identifying strategies and resources for obtaining a job; and
- learning effective resume writing, interviewing, and networking techniques.

The Stanford EdCareers Database is a gateway to counseling, job opportunities, employer profiles and more. It includes close to 1500 educational organizations and nearly 200 active job postings at any given time. Its weekly newsletter is distributed to all registered students/alumni who opt in. Stanford EdCareers also maintains a LinkedIn group and Facebook page for current students and alumni.

Furthermore, Stanford EdCareers engages its campus partners to meet the evolving needs of GSE students and graduates with its key partners such as the Stanford career development center known as BEAM: Bridging Education, Ambition & Meaningful Work, the Office of the Vice Provost of Graduate Students, the Haas Center for Public Service, and the Graduate Life Office, among others.

What other career services are available to students in the program?

We strive to continuously develop career resources for our students and graduates to further our ability to produce uniquely skilled graduates who are competitive in ever-changing domestic and international labor markets. In addition to conferring about their short- and long-term career goals in individual meetings at the beginning of the program, we provide regular check-ins with students throughout the year as their interests and goals inevitably change. Based on these meetings, we organize in-person and video conference meetings with alumni in careers and at organizations of interest to our students, particularly in fields related to international education and development.

In addition, we arrange get-togethers with international visitors and other scholars who are on campus and organize panels of alumni who speak to students about their experiences and their job searches. Students are encouraged to attend annual job fairs organized by the Stanford Association for International Development, join GSE alumni groups on LinkedIn and Facebook, and connect with alumni mentors through the Stanford Alumni Association. To supplement the expansive resources now provided by Stanford EdCareers, we maintain an active alumni email list to which we post professional opportunities sent to us by our large network of ICE/IEPA alumni.

What are typical jobs that graduates pursue immediately after finishing the program?

Depending on how much prior experience they have, over half of our students land jobs during the summer, and the rest do so soon after graduating. The ICE website [lists](#) a sampling of recent job placements for our MA program graduates.

What if I would like to concentrate my job search in a specific city or in another country? Are there career services or placement advisors to help assist in this matter?

It may take more effort on one's part to conduct a job search in a specific location but there are resources to help with this process. Breaks between quarters may allow for opportunities to travel to specific locations to look for jobs. In addition to EdCareers, students and alumni may find it useful to connect with Stanford's career education center, [BEAM: Bridging Education, Ambition & Meaningful Work](#), which has email lists, workshops, career fairs, and an extensive library of online and print materials, including resources for those seeking careers in specific locations.

OTHER QUESTIONS

What are my chances of getting admitted to the doctoral program if I first enter the MA program?

Current MA students go through the same admissions process as regular applicants to the doctoral program. While there is no preference given to currently enrolled students, they have the advantage of being in the presence of the faculty members who will be reviewing their files. Given that doctoral applications are due toward the end of Autumn quarter, there isn't much time to reveal one's full potential as a student. As a result, most students complete the MA program and apply to doctoral programs after gaining another 1-3 years of work experience, especially in the realm of educational research. In the meantime, those who plan to apply to doctoral programs are urged to remain in contact with their MA degree advisors and/or other faculty members with whom they hope to work. While there are no guarantees of admission to ours or any other doctoral program, graduates of the ICE/IEPA MA program fare very well in doctoral admissions generally.

Is it possible to defer admission to the program?

The ICE/IEPA MA program does not allow deferrals. Every year, the pool of applicants changes and admissions decisions are made not only on the strengths of each applicant but also on what each one is able to contribute to the cohort. We also find that entrance into our programs becomes increasingly competitive over the years so while one may be among our admitted students one year, this may not be the case the next.

Thank you for your interest in the ICE/IEPA MA Programs at the Stanford Graduate School of Education. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact Prof. Christine Min Wotipka (cwotipka@stanford.edu).