

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Prospective Students to the ICE/IEPA MA Program
(Revised September 2022)

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](#) describes general Stanford Graduate School of Education (GSE) policies, while the [ICE/IEPA MA Program Requirements](#) lists specific course 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 Master's (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 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 offered by the Graduate School of Education are described on [this](#) website; all others may be found [here](#).

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 to 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 the skills and knowledge gained from those courses.

The quantitative methods course, Introduction to Data Analysis and Interpretation (EDUC 200A), is designed for MA students who enter the program without a strong quantitative background but 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 websites, 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 least 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 Quasi-Experimental Research Design & Analysis; and EDUC 430C is Using Data to Describe the World: Descriptive Social Science Research Techniques. All three are worth taking if you want to learn how to conduct impact evaluations.

How many days per week are ICE/IEPA MA students on campus?

Students may expect to be on campus Monday through Friday earlier in the academic year, especially in Autumn and Winter quarters. 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.

Most students live on campus. 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.

MA PAPERS AND ADVISORS

What questions do the MA Papers usually address?

See [here](#) for lists from the past several years. As is evident by their titles, the MA Papers address a wide range of topics.

Do many ICE/IEPA students develop co-authored MA Papers? I understand this is a relatively new option.

Students are strongly encouraged to work with one other student (in pairs) to develop co-authored MA Papers. Students must decide whether 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. Since we began offering this option in 2017-2018, about 3-4 pairs of students each year have written co-authored MA Papers. While most students write their papers individually, we strongly encourage students to work with a writing partner.

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

Given the need to obtain Human Subjects Research and IRB approval from Stanford before collecting data involving human subjects and the short turn-around between the time the approval is obtained and when data need to be collected, students rarely travel to collect data. Instead, students whose petitions to collect data are approved usually obtain data in the local area or by using online technologies to conduct interviews with or distribute surveys to participants. We recommend that students maintain relationships with organizations in countries where they have worked or studied 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 S.F. 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 must be collected by the middle of Spring quarter and a first draft written by the end of that quarter.

May I use existing 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?

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, the World Bank, or ministries of education. Many faculty in the GSE 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 that outlines one's plans for collecting 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 was changed to be “article-length” in 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 impact policy. Students in the IEPA program are encouraged to submit their work to policy-related journals and to make other efforts to participate in policy discussions related to their MA Papers.

What do students do in the summer at the end of the academic year?

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

THE COHORT AND ADVISORS

I understand that the average cohort size is around 20 students, which is smaller than 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. In addition to such personalized attention, our students appreciate being able to get to know their cohort members and students in the other master’s and doctoral programs. Small cohorts of students make for smaller class sizes, leading to higher participation and learning rates.

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

With Joint Degree Programs in Business and Law within the GSE and the fact that GSE MA students take courses in many schools and departments throughout the University, our students work with students from many different fields and perspectives. Many courses in the GSE allow students to work on group presentations and papers. In some, students organize working- and writing-groups based on shared interests and to balance their different strengths.

How and when are advisor assignments made?

Before starting the program, the program director assigns students to advisors based on students' research interests and faculty members' availability. We do our best to accommodate students' interests. 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 with a faculty member outside of the ICE-core, but most likely within the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Interdisciplinary Policy Studies in Education (SHIPS) area of the GSE.

FUNDING OPTIONS

What options are available to fund my studies, including departmental fellowships?

Most GSE MA students fund their education through loans and personal savings. Information on financing one's MA degree may be found on these websites: [Financing Your Master's Degree](#) and [Financial Support](#) from the GSE (including a list of [external fellowships and grants](#) compiled by GSE Admissions; information on [Other Loans](#) from the Stanford Financial Aid Office; and [Finaid](#) – a resource for student loans and scholarships. Eligible admits are encouraged to fill out the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) and the [Stanford Graduate Student Loan Application](#) as described in the [Admitted Student Guide](#).

What are my funding options as an international student?

International students' funding options are limited; most finance their MA studies with personal savings, [private/alternative loans](#), and/or scholarships and grants from their governments and other sources.

As for part-time jobs, in most cases, visa restrictions limit the jobs that international students can undertake. The Bechtel International Center is an invaluable resource for international students on such matters.

WORK, INTERNSHIPS, AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

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

We know that prospective students are eager to explore all options available regarding academic and professional opportunities, such as internships and paid positions. Some may view the latter as relieving some of the financial burdens of taking on student loans or digging into personal savings to fund one's Stanford graduate degree.

The time one has at Stanford goes by very quickly. The pace of the quarter-system is much faster than that of semesters and takes some getting used to. We strongly encourage students to focus on their academics at Stanford, as this is a huge component of what attracts students to the ICE/IEPA MA program. The opportunity to develop a research project of one's choosing, have

meaningful interactions with ICE faculty, and enroll in many different courses in a year are all unique aspects of our program.

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 faculty advisors.

A small number of students each year 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).

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

By the summer quarter, when students are working on their MA Papers, those close to completing their projects may work up to 20 hours per week. 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 different email lists, and work with the career resources in the GSE and elsewhere.

Students can participate in 8-10 week internships in Africa and South Asia with [Stanford Seed](#), which offers paid education-related opportunities to our students immediately after the end of the master's program (usually in August through October).

Do ICE/IEPA MA students intern or work during the summer quarter while completing their MA papers? How do they find such opportunities?

Not many, but some ICE/IEPA MA students have internships or work in the final quarter of the program. Those who want to have internships or work over the summer are usually successful in finding opportunities, often on campus. It depends largely on whether one has carved out the time to find such opportunities.

Most of these opportunities are on campus and are found organically. Students will take classes with or reach out to specific professors who need research assistants or interns to work on their projects. Others will hear about jobs and internships through campus email lists or by word of mouth. The various career services offices on campus also host internship and job fairs throughout the year. Finally, EdCareers provides a weekly e-newsletter publicizing work opportunities for GSE students.

What jobs and internships have ICE/IEPA MA students and graduates landed?

On our website, we provide lists of [recent job and internship placements of our students and graduates](#) and job placement [annual reports on the past several cohorts of GSE graduates](#).

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

While it is the case that most ICE/IEPA MA students do not take part in internships during the academic year, some do so during the summer when their course loads are much lighter or immediately after the end of the program (such as with [Stanford Seed](#)). Regardless of whether they have internships, all our students gain work-related skills in several ways.

First, developing a MA Paper from start to finish provides our graduates with the exact skills highly sought after by employers in various fields. Our students develop a deep understanding of topics related to their MA Papers and become immersed in the latest research and thinking on their topics. They gain an understanding of theoretical perspectives valuable to critically and analytically thinking about various educational and other social issues. They know how to work independently while considering feedback from multiple sources, such as their advisors, instructors, and peers. Working on their papers while also taking a full-load of courses lets our students know how to organize, prioritize tasks, and manage their time effectively. They develop strong oral and written communication skills and the ability to evaluate the work of others. By participating in the annual meeting of the [Comparative and International Education Society \(CIES\)](#), our students gain the opportunity to participate in an academic conference and meet scholars from around the world.

Second, taking courses over four quarters allows our students 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. Also of interest to our students are courses in curriculum construction, evaluation, and policy analysis, in addition to nonprofit management, philanthropy, and design thinking.

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 career resources are available to students and graduates?

[Stanford EdCareers](#) provides career services for GSE students and graduates. They offer a range of services and events to meet the needs of all students and graduates at any stage of their careers, including skill-based workshops with other students, graduates, and employers.

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

- clarifying interests, skills, values, and work styles;
- 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 LinkedIn and Facebook Groups for current students and alum.

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 [Stanford Career Education](#), in addition to the Office of the Vice Provost of Graduate Students, the Haas Center for Public Service, and the Graduate Life Office, among others.

What are other career services 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 discussing 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 evolve. Based on these meetings, we organize in-person and video conference sessions with graduates in careers and at organizations of interest to our students, particularly in international education and development fields.

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

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

Depending on their prior experience, over half our students land jobs during the summer; the rest do so soon after graduating. On our website, we provide lists of [recent job and internship placements of our students and graduates](#) and job placement [annual reports on the past several cohorts of GSE graduates](#).

OTHER QUESTIONS

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

While there are no guarantees of admission to ours or any other doctoral program, graduates of the ICE/IEPA MA program generally fare well in doctoral admissions. Current MA students go through the same admissions process as regular applicants to the doctoral program. Although there is no preference given to currently enrolled students, they have the advantage of being in the presence of the faculty members who will review their files. However, because doctoral applications are due toward the end of Autumn quarter, this leaves little 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 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 faculty members with whom they hope to work.

Is it possible to defer admission to the MA program?

Typically, the ICE/IEPA MA program does not allow deferrals. Every year, the pool of applicants changes, and admissions decisions are made not only on each applicant's strengths but also on what each one can contribute to the cohort. We also find that entrance into our programs has become 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. If you have any questions, contact Prof. Christine Min Wotipka (cwotipka@stanford.edu).