

**MASTER OF EDUCATION
DEGREE PROGRAM**

STUDENT HANDBOOK

**FOR STUDENTS PURSUING
THE SELF-DESIGNED M.ED DEGREE
(36 credits)**

**TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS
SCHOOL FOR PROFESSIONAL STUDIES**

February, 2003

Non-Discrimination Policy

Regis University complies with all local, state, and federal non-discrimination laws and regulations in the provision of educational services.

Equal Access to Classes and Learning Accommodations

Equal access to education means equal opportunity to learn. Under Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, students with verified disabilities, who are otherwise qualified, have a right to equal access to classes at Regis University. If you are a student with a disability, you need to discuss necessary accommodations with the Director of Learning Support Services (Carroll Hall, Room 225, 303-458-4941 or 800-388-2366 x 4941).

Changes to This Handbook

The policies and procedures set forth in this handbook are subject to change as judged appropriate by Regis University. Any such changes may be implemented without prior notice and without obligation and, unless specified otherwise, are effective when made. A copy of this handbook is posted on our Regis University, Teacher Education website (www.regis.edu.spsteachered) where it will be updated as required.

Note on This Handbook

This student handbook is designed for the sole use of students pursuing the non-licensure, self-designed track to the Master of Education (M.Ed) degree at Regis University. Students pursuing teacher licensure along with the M.Ed degree are provided with a separate student handbook which, although there is some overlap, prescribes a different set of requirements. This handbook and all forms and handbooks referred to in this handbook may be downloaded and printed from our website: www.regis.edu/spsteachered then go to either Graduate/Forms or Graduate/Handbooks.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE MASTER OF EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAM

Welcome

Welcome to Regis University and the Master of Education (M.Ed) Program. Regis University is comprised of three separate academic units: (a) Regis College, (b) the School for Health Care Professions, and (c) the School for Professional Studies. Regis College offers a full range of undergraduate programs in the liberal arts, sciences, business, and education. The School for Health Care Professions offers undergraduate and graduate programs in a variety of health care areas, and the School for Professional Studies (SPS) offers a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate programs for the working adult and includes the Teacher Education Programs division which offers this Master of Education (M.Ed) Program.

While the Teacher Education Programs division offers a variety of other programs leading to teacher licensure at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, the M.Ed (i.e., the self-designed track) Program is specifically designed to provide adult students with a graduate degree that combines the perspectives of adult learning theory, self-designed elective coursework, a focus on the K-12 educational spectrum of issues, and the guided independent study (GIS) delivery system. **This program is especially appropriate for already licensed and practicing teachers and others interested in combining professional growth with school improvement pursuits.**

This handbook is designed to provide helpful information with regard to the policies and procedures which permit the M.Ed Program to work successfully for you and which distinguish it from more traditional graduate programs in education. Use it as a reference throughout your time in the program. You will find the answers to many of the questions you are likely to have during the course of each semester as well as the entire program, and you will use our website (www.regis.edu/spsteachered) to find the forms referred to in this handbook on a regular basis. We recommend that you read the entire handbook when you begin the program and reread the appropriate sections, as needed, thereafter. **You are responsible for knowing all of the material and meeting all of the requirements that are described in this handbook.**

Guided Independent Study

What distinguishes this program from other graduate programs is its format for course delivery, one which we call guided independent study (GIS). GIS is a process of learning in which you work with a faculty advisor to plan your program of study and with course consultants to design individual courses. After thinking about your learning needs, you will specify the competencies, knowledge, skills, or understandings you wish to acquire, and/or specialized projects you wish to complete during your graduate program. Then you will identify the means by which you will accomplish your objectives and how that work will be evaluated. In this process, you can expect guidance, suggestions, and thoughtful support and challenges from your Faculty Advisor and course consultants. You will submit an overall Degree Plan specifying the course work you wish to complete, and you will make each course plan official with a learning contract. Your course consultants will evaluate your work as you complete each contract and, at the end of each term, they will assign a grade according to the evaluation criteria specified in your learning contract.

One exception to the GIS delivery system used in this program is the Research Methods course (EDFD 642) which is offered in a regular classroom format every term, usually on the Lowell Campus in Denver. This class meets 1 evening per week. Students in the Denver metro area and others who are willing to travel to the Campus may wish to choose this option. Of course, this same course is always available via GIS as well.

The Academic Term

Students in the self-designed M.Ed program follow a calendar which includes both semester and 8 week terminology. Depending on the application or policy being discussed, both terms are used in this *Handbook*. The academic year is divided into 3 semesters (i.e., Fall, Spring, and Summer). Each semester is divided into two 8 week terms. All courses taken by students in this program are taken in the 8 week format. A full load (e.g., for financial aid purposes) would be the equivalent of 6 credits per semester (i.e., one course each 8 week term). On average, students follow this academic load pattern; although, some may choose to accelerate their work toward degree completion, and others may follow a slower pace.

Getting Started/Orientation

Orientation to the Master of Education Program is extremely important relative to your success in the program. Most students are unfamiliar with the process of guided independent study, many have been away from school for several years, and some are anxious about their ability to do graduate level work. For these and a host of other

reasons, we attach great importance to the sequence of events which constitute your orientation to our program. We have developed a four step process for each newly accepted student which is designed to provide a smooth transition into the program: (a) a letter of acceptance into the program providing the name and contact information for your assigned Faculty Advisor, (b) an online orientation utilizing our program website, (c) an individual meeting with your Faculty Advisor, and (d) a group orientation session, which is usually scheduled during your first semester of matriculation in the program.

Letter of Acceptance

Your letter of acceptance into the program will indicate your admission status, the name and contact information for your assigned Faculty Advisor, instructions for accessing our website for step-by-step directions for proceeding through an Internet orientation, the date for your group orientation, and a request that you take the initiative to contact your Faculty Advisor to schedule an individual meeting.

Internet Orientation

In your acceptance letter, you are guided to our website for a list of activities to be completed prior to your meeting with your Faculty Advisor (see New Student/Online Orientation). The materials include this *Student Handbook*, the *Guidelines for Academic Papers and Research Projects*, and other activities designed to prepare you for success in our program. When you have completed the online orientation and compiled a list of questions, you are ready to meet with your Faculty Advisor. Please take the initiative in arranging this meeting.

Individual Meeting with Faculty Advisor

Once you have completed the online orientation, you are sure to have many questions. The next step is to contact your Faculty Advisor and schedule an individual meeting. In terms of student success in the program, we have found that this meeting is probably the most important step in your orientation process; therefore, you will not be permitted to register for courses until this meeting has taken place. Your Advisor will have three primary goals for this meeting:

1. to allow you to ask all of your questions and have them answered;
2. to discuss your specific goals for your graduate studies and begin the process of designing your Degree Plan;
3. to guide you through the initial registration process, including having your student ID/Library card validated. (Please Note: In GIS, as the courses

you will take have no physical space requirements, you do not need to rush to register for fear of being *closed out* of any classes; therefore, we ask that you not attempt to register prior to your Faculty Advisor meeting.);

Group Orientation

As a final step in your orientation process, you will be required to attend a group orientation at our Denver Tech Center (DTC) campus. You are informed of this Orientation date in your letter of acceptance. During the Group Orientation, you will have an opportunity to meet the other students who are beginning the program with you, and you will attend sessions covering our expectations for graduate level academic writing and the telecommunication tools/skills you will need to be successful in our distance learning format.

Also, during your program, you will be expected to attend a minimum of three (3) scheduled seminars. Seminar dates are posted on the website under Important Dates for Graduate Students. All seminars are held at our Southeast (DTC) Campus. Maps for all of our campus locations may be found on our website.

A Final Note on Orientation

In effect, our experience with bringing new students into this program leads us to view your entire first term as a continuing orientation for each of you. Once you have completed an entire cycle of registration, finding your course consultant(s), submitting the necessary learning contracts and other paperwork to your Faculty Advisor, working with your course consultant(s) to complete the academic work called for in your learning contracts, attending a mid-semester seminar, and completing your work and receiving your grades; you should feel pretty comfortable with the GIS process.

Setting Goals and Time Frames

Each student comes to this program with different goals, time frames, and personal realities. During your initial meeting with your Faculty Advisor, you will discuss ways to plan your program that balance your work toward your degree with the rest of your life.

How quickly do you want to complete the program? Your timing is one of the most individualized aspects of this program. To maximize your success, be honest with yourself about how much time you have available. Our experience is that a steady pace of courses works best for students, whether that pace is one course or two courses each 8

week term. If you are working full time and have a family at home, we do not recommend that you take more than two courses at a time. For graduate students, two courses (i.e., 6 credits) per semester (i.e., one each 8 week term) are considered full time. Discuss your course load with your Faculty Advisor if you wish to register for more credits.

ADMISSION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Admission Requirements

1. Completed application form
2. \$75 non-refundable application fee (waived for Regis University graduates)
3. Unofficial copy of degree bearing transcript (Official transcript must be received within 2 months from your degree granting institution as **sent directly to the Regis University Teacher Education Program Admissions Office**)
4. Two confidential letters of recommendation
5. Current résumé
6. Required essays

Admission to the Program

If you have received this handbook, you have already been admitted to the Master of Education (M.Ed) Program; however, short of full admission, a specific category of admission status, as described below, may apply. Your letter of acceptance indicates your admission status.

Conditional Admission

Students may be admitted to the M.Ed Program pending completion of the admissions file. If you are admitted conditionally, you must submit any missing documents no later than 1 month after the beginning of your first 8 week term. The conditions and time limits are specified in your acceptance letter. If your file is still incomplete at the due date, you will not be permitted to register again until the file is complete. (NOTE: This may affect your financial aid award, so you will want to consult with the Financial Aid Office about your plans.)

Provisional Admission

Students may be admitted to the M.Ed Program with the provision that certain academic requirements be met by the end of the first 8 week term. If you were admitted

provisionally, you must satisfy the requirements specified in your letter of acceptance by the end of your first term. If you do not meet these requirements by the end of the first term, you will not be permitted to continue in the program.

Delayed Admission or Registration

Applications to the M.Ed Program will be kept for 1 year. After 1 year, students who apply to the program but do not complete the admissions process, or students who do not register for courses within 1 year after being accepted, must reapply for admission. If you reapply to the program after 1 year has elapsed, you must comply with all requirements for admission including any which have changed since your first application. The application fee is waived for students who reapply.

Withdrawal from the M.Ed Program

If you must withdraw from the M.Ed Program, you must notify your Faculty Advisor in writing of your intention. If you withdraw after registering for course work, you must follow the procedures for withdrawing from a course as prescribed in the Regis University Bulletin. You are responsible for any tuition outstanding to the University at the time of your withdrawal according to policies stated in the Bulletin. If you are receiving financial aid, you must also notify the Financial Aid Office of your intention to withdraw.

Readmission after Absence of 1 Year or More

Students who fail to register for courses for 1 year or more will be placed on inactive status. This includes students who have been suspended or dismissed from the program for any reason. Students who wish to resume their work with the M.Ed Program after an absence of 1 year or more may be required to reapply for admission. Such students must comply with all admissions and program requirements, including any which may have changed during their absence. The application fee is waived for students who reapply.

EDFD 500: Essentials for Graduate Level Writing

Some students, those who meet all other requirements for admission but whose writing is judged as slightly deficient for graduate level work, may be admitted provisionally pending successful (i.e., defined as a “B” or better grade) completion of

EDFD 500, Essentials for Graduate Level Writing. This 3 credit course may not be counted toward the 36 credit hours required for graduation.

MASTER OF EDUCATION DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Before the master's degree can be awarded, each student must complete requirements in three general areas: (a) credit hours, (b) seminar attendance, and (c) the oral presentation on the research project.

Credit Hours

A total of 36 semester credit hours is required to complete the program. The 36 credit hours include 12 semester hours for your 4 core courses, 18 semester hours for your self-designed elective courses, 3 semester hours for Research Methods, and 3 semester hours for the Research Project. A cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.00 is required for graduation.

Core: (12 credits)

EDFD 600 Philosophical Foundations of Education
EDFD 603 Multicultural and Ethical Perspectives in Education
EDFD 610 Current and Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Education
EDFD 630 Theories of Human Development and Learning

Electives: (18 credits)

Self-designed and transfer courses. Up to 6 graduate credits may be transferred from other accredited institutions.

Capstone: (6 credits)

EDFD 642 Research Methods
EDFD 643 Research Project

Total: 36 credits

Research Methods and Research Project

As part of the credit hour requirement, all students complete a capstone experience which includes Research Methods (3 credits) and Research Project (3 credits). Typically, Research Methods is completed during 1 term, and the Research Project is completed in the subsequent term. While these are normally the last two courses taken before graduation, students may choose to complete this two course sequence in mid program. We encourage students to do applied projects and action research as well as

more traditional types of academic studies. Completed projects which receive an A grade are bound and kept in the Regis University Library and are available for reading. Procedures for completing these two courses are described in detail in the *Guidelines for Academic Papers and Research Projects*.

Degree Plan

Your Degree Plan outlines the course work you will undertake to complete the 36 credit hours required for the degree. It includes the 12 credit core of required courses, 18 credits of self-designed courses, and 6 credits for Research Methods and Research Project. The Degree Plan serves as a kind of *road map* to guide you along the path to your degree. The process of developing your Degree Plan helps you to decide what particular focus you will give to your course work within the program and establishes, in advance, the course titles and course numbers you will need to register each term. To see a sample Degree Plan, go to the website under Current/Graduate Students and click on Forms.

The Degree Plan should be completed and submitted to your Faculty Advisor by the beginning of your second semester in the program. Therefore, as you move toward the end of the first semester, you will want to give attention to the courses you want to include in the balance of your graduate program. Ideas for courses to include in your Degree Plan may come from:

1. projects or knowledge you would like to apply in your current teaching situation;
2. catalogs/course descriptions from other universities or colleges;
3. consultations with your course consultants or other persons who have expertise in areas of interest to you; or
4. discussions with your Faculty Advisor.

Once your Degree Plan is approved by your Faculty Advisor, you may proceed with the knowledge that any future changes in that plan may only be initiated by you. Changes in your Degree Plan may be made up to the beginning of the semester before graduation, at which time you will be applying for graduation, and your Degree Plan will become your official graduation clearance document. All course numbers and titles on the Degree Plan will need to match exactly the course numbers and titles appearing on your official university transcript.

Transfer Credits

Your Degree Plan may include up to 9 semester hours taken outside of Teacher Education Programs, of which a maximum of 6 may be transferred from another regionally accredited institution. Generally, transfer credits will only be considered to replace credits in the elective portion (18 cr hrs) of the requirements stated above. In order to be considered for transfer, a course must have a grade of *at least* B. If the course has a grade of P or S, the student must provide a letter from the institution or instructor indicating that his/her work for the course was equivalent to at least a grade of B. The student must request an official transcript from each institution where the credits being petitioned for transfer were earned. **Each transcript should be mailed from the institution's registrar directly to your Faculty Advisor.** Although they may be *official*, any transcripts issued to, mailed to, or hand-carried by the student will not be acceptable as transfer documentation. The Faculty Advisor has final discretion on the transferability of credits, and the student must have a Degree Plan on file before such transfer credits will be considered.

Seminar Attendance

Students in this particular (i.e., self-designed, 36 credit) Master of Education degree program must attend a minimum of 3 day long seminars as a requirement for graduation. Typically, these seminars are offered once each semester. Seminar dates are posted on the website under Important Dates for Graduate Students. Due to the nature of our program (i.e., GIS), students sometimes miss the social interaction inherent to a more traditional graduate program. The seminars provide an opportunity for students to come together to network and share experiences in the program. At the same time, the seminars provide the faculty with the opportunity to schedule a variety of guest speakers as well as sessions designed to provide students with helpful information pertinent to well-defined stages in the program. Afternoon seminar sessions are reserved for student oral presentations on their research projects.

A few weeks before each seminar, check the website for the seminar announcement and call for RSVPs. You will be asked to indicate whether you will be attending and/or presenting at the seminar. While you need not attend every seminar throughout your enrollment in the program, beyond the minimum of attending three, we believe you will find these events attractive and worthwhile and encourage you to attend as often as possible.

You will receive three blank Seminar Attendance Vouchers during your initial meeting with your Faculty Advisor. Please bring a completed voucher each time you attend a seminar. Your Faculty Advisor will collect them during the first session in the morning.

Oral Presentation

You are required to successfully complete an oral presentation on your Research Project at one of the seminars. Normally, you would schedule this presentation for the first seminar following approval of your Research Project Proposal (i.e., which is developed during the Research Methods course). Usually, the oral presentation is made during the term in which you are completing the final chapters of your Research Project. Scheduling the oral presentation at this time allows you to complete all degree requirements and graduate as soon as your Research Project receives final approval. A sample of the evaluation form which is used for the oral presentations as well as some helpful guidelines for preparing your presentation may be found at the website under Forms. In addition, the *Guidelines* contains detailed information with regard to these processes.

REGISTRATION, TUITION, AND FINANCIAL AID

Registration

We recommend that you register for 3-6 credit hours in any term in which you are enrolled. In our experience, adults who progress more quickly toward their degree objective tend to have a higher completion rate; however, students attempting more than 6 credit hours often have trouble completing all of their work within the 8 week term. Classroom teachers, for instance, may find it necessary to take a lighter load during the school year and accelerate during the summer semester when they are off contract. Students on financial aid need to be aware of minimum credit hour loads required for continued financial aid eligibility.

You may register for your courses in a variety of ways. Currently, we suggest that students submit their registration information:

1. in person at any Regis University site,
2. via telephone by calling either 303-348-7420 or 800-569-8932 from a distance, or
3. online at www.regis.edu (click on WebAdvisor).

Before you attempt to register, be prepared with your student ID# and the correct course number(s), title(s), and # of credit hours. **You are responsible for providing the correct information.** You will received a printed registration confirmation within a week. Please check this information for accuracy.

The registration period for a particular 8 week term usually opens about 6 weeks prior to the start of that term. An Add/Drop period exists during the first week of the term. If you drop a course during this period without adding another course, there is a per course drop charge (i.e., currently \$22). After the Drop/Add period, the University offers a Withdrawal period, during which you may receive a prorated tuition refund, and a grade of “W” is entered on your transcript. See the Regis University Bulletin for further information on add/drop, withdrawal, and refund policies.

Tuition Payment

Each student is responsible for knowing Regis policies with regard to payment of tuition. Regis University prints a booklet entitled, *Paying Your Tuition at Regis University*, which details your options. Ask for a copy when you meet with your Faculty Advisor, or call the registration office (i.e., see previous section) and ask that a copy be mailed to you. You must pay or defer your tuition by the end of the first week of each term.

Financial Aid

Financial aid is a complex subject which must be handled directly by the Regis University Office of Financial Aid. Faculty cannot answer questions about financial aid issues. Graduate students are responsible for initiating the financial aid process if such aid is required. For complete and current financial aid information, please contact the Financial Aid Office at 303-458-4066 or 800-388-2366 (x4066). Remember that the application/approval process can take up to 10 weeks, so it is important to plan ahead and begin early.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Grading Guidelines

This degree program uses letter grades from A to F to represent the evaluation of student work. Grades of A and B are used for outstanding and very good work. As is common in graduate programs, a grade of C or lower indicates unsatisfactory work. Plus and minus grades are used, except there is no grade of A+. Grading policies for Graduate Programs are described fully in the Regis University Bulletin.

Guidelines for Grading Papers

The following is a description of the grading standards for work submitted in this program.

- "A" grade:** An "A" paper shows appropriate choice of topic and sources, clearly defines the topic to be covered, explains how it will be covered, and then meets the goal it sets. Fact and opinion are clearly differentiated. Reasoned arguments are supported by appropriate evidence. The paper flows smoothly and uses a minimum of professional jargon. Standard English grammar, spelling, and punctuation are used throughout. The style and format of the paper follow the standards set forth in the TEP *Guidelines for Academic Papers and Research Projects* (2001).
- "B" grade:** A "B" paper also shows appropriate choice of topic, clearly defines the topic to be covered, and explains how it will be covered. It differs from the "A" paper by showing less in-depth research and is less closely reasoned. The paper may flow less smoothly, and there may be minor errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, style, or format.
- "C" grade:** A "C" paper indicates difficulties in one or more of the following areas: (a) structuring the topic and researching it appropriately, (b) constructing reasoned arguments, (c) difficulty in writing clearly, (d) problems with using standard English, and/or (e) serious problems with style and format.

"D" grade: A "D" paper shows a predominance of the problems associated with a "C" paper.

"F" grade: An "F" paper lacks quality and falls short of graduate level work in all areas above. Also, any paper not turned in will carry this grade.

Guidelines for Course Grades

The final grade for a course is often an area of concern for students and course consultants. While the decision to award a particular grade is an individual one, M.Ed Program faculty suggest the following guidelines:

1. all grades should be considered in light of the course objectives which were included in the learning contract;
2. the quality of written and oral expression is always an important factor to consider in assigning a grade; and
3. completion of requirements is also important. The student is expected to meet the requirements which were agreed upon at the time the learning contract was signed. If changes were made, these need to have been agreed upon by all three parties (i.e., student, course consultant, and faculty advisor).

To help in assigning a specific grade, these further considerations are provided.

Basic criteria for an "A"

The student:

1. fulfills all course objectives at a high level of proficiency; overall, the quality of the work is distinctive and sets a standard of leadership among peers;
2. shows a high degree of personal initiative and independence; s/he works beyond the basic requirements in pursuing project goals and mastery of the subject matter and demonstrates a high level of effort and involvement which are reflected in the thoroughness, depth, and quality of the work. (This is necessarily a subjective judgment on the part of the course consultant and must be based on the subject matter to be covered.);
3. demonstrates orally and in writing a clear grasp of the content and its relevance to the course. S/he is able to identify and, particularly, to interrelate major concepts or areas in distinctive and personally relevant ways, provides relevant concrete examples to

- illustrate theoretical points, and uses references to literature and outside resources to support ideas; and
4. submits material that is well-organized and written at a graduate school level; the organization and presentation of ideas reflect clarity of thinking and depth of understanding; writing is succinct and to the point without excess verbiage and *padding*; resources are well documented, and bibliographies are written in appropriate APA format.

In sum, an “A” reflects a clearly superior performance.

Basic criteria for a “B”

The student:

1. fulfills all contract obligations; projects show some degree of originality and personal investment but, in the opinion of the course consultant, falls short of the criteria for “A” work;
2. shows an acceptable level of initiative and fulfills all content requirements of the course; level of effort and involvement is acceptable, but not outstanding;
3. conveys an understanding of basic concepts but may not make adequate further use of this information by demonstrating ways in which ideas relate to each other, describing how the content is relevant to one’s own life and educational professional goals, providing illustrative examples (i.e., making creative connections), and backing up theory with examples; and
4. submits materials which are adequate in organization, clarity, use of documented resource materials, and writing ability so that major rewriting is not required in order to meet the course objectives; however, the material is not as professional in quality;

Basic criteria for a “C”

The student:

1. fulfills contract obligations only partially or superficially; projects appear to be done with minimal personal investment of time and effort; even when maximum effort is made, the outcome is of less than “B” level of performance;
2. appears to lack focus of adequate personal initiative and requires an unusual amount of prodding or coaching from the course

consultant; minimal effort appears to be involved in doing the readings and projects; various contract elements may be overlooked or minimized so that overall performance appears weak or haphazard;

3. struggles to grasp basic concepts or makes minimal effort at comprehension and integration; when asked, s/he has difficulty providing examples to illustrate points, and may skim readings and fail to cross-relate concepts; presentations fall short of the depth, quality, and thoroughness of “B” level work; and
4. submits material of unacceptable quality (e.g., the writing or organization of ideas is substandard, contract guidelines are not followed and documentation or use of outside materials is inadequate).

If your performance stays at this level, the course consultant will refer you to your Faculty Advisor. Such perfunctory work will lead to academic probation and/or suspension from the program.

Incomplete Grades

You are expected to fulfill all requirements for each course within the term of registration. If extraordinary circumstances make it impossible for you to finish your course work, you must write to your Faculty Advisor, with a copy to your course consultant, requesting that a grade of Incomplete (I/F) be entered. This request should be received at least 2 weeks before the end of the semester. Your letter should indicate your name, the course number and title, the reason(s) for requesting this extension, and the projected date for completing the work.

The Grade Report mailer you will receive shortly after the term ends will list the grade as I/F. This means that the work is incomplete, and the course requirements must be completed no later than the end of the following semester, or you will receive an F. When the work is complete and the final grade is received from your course consultant, your Faculty Advisor will complete a Change of Grade form and forward it to the Registrar’s Office. You will not receive another Grade Report mailer showing the change, but the grade will be updated on your academic transcript. Other notes with regard to incomplete grades:

1. if your Faculty Advisor does not receive a grade for a course and you do not submit a written request for an Incomplete, your grade for the course will be an F; and

2. if you have Incomplete grades at the end of a given term, you may not be allowed to register for any new courses for the next semester. Speak with your Faculty Advisor.

Requests for additional extensions (i.e., beyond 1 semester) must be in writing and approved by the Associate Dean. Such approval will be granted only under unusual and documented circumstances (e.g., a serious illness or family emergency).

If you drop or withdraw from a course after you have started to work with a Course Consultant, please let the Course Consultant know right away.

Failure to complete coursework in the term of registration may affect those on financial aid. A grade of I/F may cause you to be placed on financial aid probation or could result in suspension from financial aid. Please check with the Regis Financial Aid Office for details with regard to your particular situation.

In Progress Grades

Students taking the following courses will automatically receive a grade of In Progress (IP) unless the instructor submits a grade to your Faculty Advisor:

1. Research Methods, and
2. Research Project.

These courses are ones in which the expectation is that some students may need more than one term to complete their work. A grade of IP must be completed by the end of the following semester.

Repeating a Course for a Higher Grade

Students have the option of improving a grade earned in a course at Regis by repeating the same course at Regis University. A Repeat for Higher Grade Form must accompany the Registration Form during the regular registration period. The Repeat for Higher Grade Form is available in the Office of the University Registrar. Regardless of whether the repeat grade is higher or lower than the original grade, the last grade earned is the grade for which credit is awarded and grade points are calculated in the grade point average. All previous grades are replaced with an (R) notation and the hours are recorded as zero (0.00) with a repeat notation indicating that the course was retaken. Further guidelines and restrictions with regard to this option may be found in the Regis University Bulletin.

Administrative Errors in Grades

Any administrative error with regard to a grade needs to be corrected within 1 year from the date the grade was entered.

Academic Probation/Suspension

If a student's grade point average falls below 3.000, he or she will be placed on academic probation. A student placed on academic probation has 1 semester to raise his or her grade point average to 3.000. Normally, a student on probation is permitted to take only one course per term. A student who fails to raise his or her cumulative grade point average to 3.000 will be suspended from the Master of Education program. In addition, a student who receives a grade of C or less in two courses will be subject to academic review and may be suspended from the program. If feedback from Course Consultants indicates that a student has deficiencies in his/her writing skills, program faculty may require that this student seek assistance in this area.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

Academic honesty is at the very foundation of teaching and learning. Since trust is so important, the sanctions for presenting the work of others as your own are severe. At the same time, we know that beginning students are sometimes uncertain about what constitutes appropriate citation of work by others. If you are unsure of how to document work written or presented by others, please ask for help.

In the M.Ed program, we expect that all work will be your own and that all sources for that work will be appropriately cited. Plagiarism is a serious offense that may result in the assignment of a failing grade or suspension from Regis University. The Regis University Bulletin provides further information about policy and procedure in this area.

ACADEMIC PROCESSES

Each 8 week term, you will want to take it upon yourself to initiate and monitor the processes which govern your continued enrollment and progress in the program. Processes such as registration, payment of tuition, and financial aid (i.e., if needed) have been covered earlier in this handbook. Once those processes have been completed, you will be responsible for completing the appropriate paperwork for each course and doing the work specified on your learning contracts. Your careful attention to the following procedures will save you valuable time at the beginning of each term and enable you to optimize the time you have to focus on your academic work.

Selection of Course Consultants

For your *core courses*, you will select your course consultants from a list (see website) of Affiliate Faculty who have been pre-approved to work with students in this graduate program. All have extensive experience in K-12 education, and all hold doctoral degrees. The choice of a course consultant is always a concern, particularly for new students, but your Faculty Advisor can make suggestions if you have trouble making a decision.

For your *self-designed courses*, you may continue to choose consultants from the approved list of Affiliate Faculty, or you may wish to bring in an outside consultant. The consultant must have an earned doctorate in education or a closely related field and, of course, have the content expertise necessary to lead you through the learning contract you will develop. If you do choose to work with an outside consultant, you will need to submit the following documentation in addition to the required paperwork described in the next section:

1. Course Consultant Registration Form (go to Forms on our website),
2. Copy of the course consultant's current résumé, and
3. Copy of an official transcript showing the highest degree earned.

If you decide to use one of the Affiliate Faculty on the approved list, none of these items are required.

Required Paperwork

Course Consultant Stipend Payment Form

The Course Consultant Stipend Payment Form contains the information needed to pay your course consultant. It also contains all of the necessary contact information for you and the consultant. The stipend for each course is paid separately; therefore, a separate stipend form must be submitted for each course. Please fill out the form completely. If you do not know a piece of information, it is your responsibility to get the information before you send in the form. The Course Consultant Stipend Payment Form is available at our website under Forms. Please make copies of this form for use each term.

Learning Contract

A learning contract is a document that specifies what your goals (i.e., course objectives) are for the course, how you will meet them (i.e., course requirements), and how you will know how well you have met them (i.e., methods of evaluation). For a sample format, go to Forms on our website. For some of your courses (i.e., the core courses), learning contracts have been written in advance and are available on the website under Curriculum. These contracts may be modified to meet your specific goals, but the amount of work required should not be reduced.

If there is no pre-designed learning contract (i.e., as with self-designed courses), you will have the primary responsibility for designing the contract, with light assistance from your course consultant. This may mean some pre-planning and research before the term begins in order to develop an understanding of what you want to accomplish in the course. This is a time where your self-motivation and desire to shape your own learning are critical. While students often initially find this to be a difficult step to take, learning to design your own courses can be one of the more satisfying experiences you will have in the program. The smoothest transition from pre-designed courses to self-designed courses often occurs if a course consultant who is familiar with the process of designing courses facilitates your first self-designed course. Contact your Faculty Advisor for suggestions on course consultants.

Writing a Learning Contract

One of the things which makes writing a learning contract difficult is the sense which many students have that they cannot make plans for learning about a subject unless they already know a great deal about it. This perspective probably has its genesis in the

ways in which schools have traditionally functioned, passing information from the knowledgeable to the uninitiated. In this model, knowledge exists in a fixed state, and the student's role is to discover the pre-existing knowledge about the subject. In the M.Ed program, we see the student role as a more active, participatory one. To become part of this new way of being a student, here are some suggestions to help you design courses:

1. Begin by jotting down some notes on everything that you already know/ believe about the subject. By each item you list, write down how you know it (i.e., from reading, personal experience, discussions, etc.). When you finish, review your ideas and sources. Ask yourself if your information comes from a wide range of sources. Are these likely to be academically acceptable sources?
2. Ask yourself what you want to know about the subject and what sources might be available to find out about the subject. Browse libraries, bookstores, and the Internet to see if there seem to be resources which address your questions. It is best to begin this before you talk with your course consultant, but do limit this initial exploration to a week or so and try to do it before the beginning of the term;
3. Make a list of your questions and possible course objectives and have them available for your initial meeting/phone conference with your course consultant. Discuss them with your consultant and get some feedback on how they might fit into your course objectives. Come to an agreement with your course consultant about how you will develop your learning contract. Be sure that you discuss what sources you will use as readings and references. If your consultant is new to Regis, make sure that he or she knows who your Faculty Advisor is and how to get in touch with him or her;
4. Write up your learning contract in detail. Make sure that your course requirements will expose you to the variety of perspectives that exist in the subject you are studying. Keep an open mind; the goal of your coursework is to broaden and deepen your perspectives on the subject, not to confirm your pre-existing beliefs. Be creative about your course requirements; do not limit yourself to a few types of assignments. Try to include experiential activities as well as reading and writing assignments; and
5. Make sure that your course requirements are designed to help you meet your course objectives and that the methods of evaluation will measure the extent to which you have met your objectives.

Course Description Form

The first courses you will take, the core courses, have fixed course descriptions which are included on the learning contract, printed in the Regis University Bulletin, and known to the University Registrar. Therefore, it is not necessary for you to submit a course description when taking one of the four core courses listed below:

EDFD 600	Philosophical Foundations of Education
EDFD 603	Multicultural and Ethical Perspectives in Education
EDFD 610	Current and Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Education
EDFD 630	Theories of Human Development and Learning

Your capstone courses, EDFD 642: Research Methods and EDFD 643: Research Project, both taken later in your program, also have fixed course descriptions and, likewise, do not require that you write a course description.

For courses which you create (i.e., your self-designed courses), however, no such description exists until you write it and submit it along with your stipend form and learning contract. Should a future employer or academic institution require a course description for one of your self-designed courses, the Registrar would provide the one you have submitted. Therefore, it needs to be done in a professional manner. Handwritten course descriptions will not be accepted. The course description should provide a brief paragraph describing the course and its objectives. It needs to be written for a graduate level course (i.e., it utilizes key words such as analyze, assess, synthesize, create, evaluate, substantiate, further the knowledge of, differentiate, etc.). Use the Course Description Form provided at the website under Forms and make sure this sheet is typed or formatted on a computer.

Submitting Paperwork

Depending on whether you are taking core courses, individualized courses, or some combination of the two, the items described in the following paragraphs need to be submitted to the Teacher Education Office (the address is on each stipend form) no later than the second week of each term. All paperwork for a particular course must be sent in one packet. **Please do not send individual pieces of the required paperwork for a course. They will be returned to you.** Failure to submit your course paperwork in a timely fashion may delay the forwarding of grade evaluation report forms and end-of-term instructions to your course consultant, and most importantly, the stipend payment to your course consultant.

Required Paperwork for Core Courses

Two pieces of documentation must be completed by you and your course consultant and forwarded to the Teacher Education Office *no later than the second week of the term*:

1. Course Consultant Stipend Payment Form, and
2. the Learning Contract.

Discuss with your course consultant who will take responsibility for forwarding the above paperwork. In any case, both parties should keep copies of the above documentation, and the original copies go to the Teacher Education Office.

Required Paperwork for Self-Designed Courses

Three pieces of documentation are required for self-designed courses (i.e., those courses created and designed by the student with assistance from the course consultant). Again, these are due *no later than the second week of the term*.

1. the Course Consultant Stipend Payment Form,
2. the Learning Contract, and
3. the Course Description.

If an outside consultant (i.e., one not on the approved core list) is being used for the course, we strongly recommend that the student take responsibility for forwarding that paperwork as well. Often, outside consultants are not familiar with program paperwork processes and need to be guided by the student. Again, copies should be kept by both parties, and the originals go to the Teacher Education Office.

Completing Your Work

Students new to guided independent study find that the major difficulty comes from the fact that completing their work is much more in their hands than it is in a traditional class format where there is peer pressure to complete assignments on time. The tips listed below are compiled from the experiences of the students who have preceded you in this program:

1. get started early each term. Procrastination is a terminal pitfall to success in this program;
2. set a schedule for your work so that you work steadily rather than sporadically;

3. establish how you will gather the information required to meet the objectives for the course. Identify a library where you will do most of your work and develop a working relationship with library staff there, or become Internet savvy with regard to research tools you can use from your home computer. We will offer training sessions on Internet research skills at Orientation and at each of our mid-semester seminars;
4. work actively to have your beliefs about your subject challenged. In a classroom course, the differing perspectives of the teacher and other students often provide this challenge; in an independent study course, you will need to seek out a variety of perspectives on the subject;
5. stay in contact with your course consultant throughout the course. Turn in assignments throughout the term, not just at the end. Use feedback on early assignments to improve later ones. If you are stymied or confused, be assertive enough to contact your course consultant or your Faculty Advisor. Do not let molehills become mountains. Remember that Regis faculty have been exposed to most of the possible issues in GIS and can often shed new light on your problems; and
6. avoid incomplete (I/F) grades. Nothing will throw you off your projected timetable for completing your masters degree faster than incomplete grades. Strive to have all work for each course completed and submitted to your course consultant at least 2 weeks before the term end date. As course consultants normally work with several students each term, they will appreciate your consideration of their time during this hectic period of the term, and you will benefit by providing yourself with a couple of weeks to prepare for the next semester.

End of Term Processes

Course Evaluation and Grade Form

Assuming all required paperwork was completed and submitted in a timely fashion at the beginning of the term, your course consultant will receive a Course Evaluation and Grade Form with instructions for completing and returning this form, including your grade, directly to your Faculty Advisor by a set deadline.

The University Registrar will mail a grade report to you about 3 weeks after the close of the term. **Please do not call your Faculty Advisor to find out what your grade was for a particular course.** This is an extremely hectic period in the term for your Faculty Advisor, and your grade may be difficult to access immediately. If you wish to know your grade sooner than that, you may request that your course consultant send

you a copy of your final evaluation for the course. Please submit your request along with a self-addressed, postage paid envelope when you submit your last assignment.

Course Consultant Evaluation Form

A Course Consultant Evaluation Form is provided at the website under Forms. We would appreciate it if you would make copies of this form and take the time to fill it out at the end of each term and send it to your Faculty Advisor.

SKILLS FOR SUCCESS IN THIS PROGRAM

Writing Skills

The ability to write well is an essential skill for success in graduate work. Students come to this program with varying levels of confidence in their writing. If you are a student who is uncomfortable with academic writing, know that you are not alone. Let your Faculty Advisor know your concerns so that he or she can direct you to core course consultants who are good at helping students with their writing. Remember that writing is a skill that can be developed!

Some beginning students may be required to complete a writing course before starting the program or concurrently with taking their first graduate courses. This decision is based on the quality of writing exhibited in the entrance essays. If you are required to take the writing course, it is because we believe that it is essential for your success in the program.

Style, Format, and Grammatical Conventions

Academic writing is governed by stylistic conventions that differ from those in other forms of writing. The M.Ed program has adopted the style described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. This is the most frequently used guide to academic writing in the social sciences. All students should acquire this manual and refer to it as needed. Chapter 2 is required reading prior to your first meeting with your Faculty Advisor.

Graduate faculty have prepared another writing support resource, the *Guidelines for Academic Papers and Research Projects*, which will be your primary source for questions of style and format for the papers you will write in the program. This manual highlights APA style and format issues which our faculty wish to emphasize for you. It is available at our website under Handbooks.

All work submitted to Regis should be written at a level appropriate to graduate students with particular attention to correct English grammatical usage and spelling. All students, no matter what their native language, are expected to be competent writers of English.

Library and Research Skills

Chances are good that you will be pleasantly surprised by the ways in which research for papers has been simplified by new library and research technologies since you were last in school even if that was only 2 or 3 years ago. At the same time, it has become increasingly important for students to be able to evaluate and discriminate among the massive amounts of information now available on many topics on the Internet. If you need help in this process, there are many resources available, ranging from your course consultants to your Faculty Advisor to university and local librarians. Sessions on using the new technologies for research are presented during your orientation and during each mid-semester seminar. The time you spend advancing your skills in this area should pay huge dividends in terms of time savings throughout your program.

The Regis University distance library staff is especially attuned to the needs and concerns of distance students. Do not hesitate to ask for their assistance when needed.

We expect that you will use appropriate readings from academically credible sources in all of your courses. Your core course contracts will list required texts which are available through the Regis University Bookstore. In other courses, you will be responsible for choosing readings in conjunction with your course consultant. Your Faculty Advisor will review your choices and may require modifications.

Time Management Skills

The ability to effectively manage your time and the support of family members, roommates, and friends in this endeavor are critical to your success in this program. Our guided independent study format provides great flexibility for those with busy schedules, but you will find that time quickly gets away from you if you do not manage it to your advantage. Based on our experience in helping hundreds of working adults like yourself successfully complete this program, we repeat the following tips:

1. get started early. Procrastination is a terminal pitfall in guided independent study;
2. determine a best time of day for you to get your work done and set a schedule for your work so that you work steadily rather than sporadically;
3. establish how you will gather information. Become Internet and library savvy;
4. stay in contact with your course consultant throughout the course. Turn in assignments early and throughout the term, not just at the end. Use feedback on early assignments to improve later ones;
5. if you are having trouble with a course or a course consultant, use your Faculty Advisor as a resource. Regis faculty have been exposed to most of

the possible issues in mentored studies and can often shed new light on your problems; and

6. avoid making mountains out of molehills. Especially early in the program, contact your Faculty Advisor when you have a question, get it answered, and keep moving forward.

GRADUATION

Application

The filing of a formal Graduation Application Form is required *no later than the beginning of the semester in which you expect to complete graduation requirements*. Failure to do so may delay graduation. The application form is available on the website under Forms. A Graduation Application Fee, which is currently \$80, must accompany your application.

Please note the difference between the terms, *commencement* and *graduation*. Commencement is a ceremonial event and not your actual graduation from Regis University. Your graduation takes place after all of your course work and other requirements have been completed, final grades have been entered into the system, and a graduation verification has been completed. Regis University has two commencements each year (i.e., in May and December) and three graduation dates (i.e., in May, August, and December).

Graduation Honors

The Master of Education degree with honors is awarded to candidates who complete the program requirements with a cumulative grade point average of 3.850 or higher. Students who are designated Honor Graduates will receive diplomas after graduation with HONORS affixed.

Time for Completion

Upon acceptance into the program, you have 6 years to complete the program. Otherwise, you may need to reapply and meet any new requirements then in place.

Planning for Graduation

Planning for graduation should begin during your first semester and continue throughout your program. It is your responsibility to keep track of all aspects of your progress toward graduation. Your Faculty Advisor is there to help you through this

process, but it is critical that you also be an active participant in this process. This includes the following components:

1. develop your Degree Plan with the assistance of your Faculty Advisor. A first draft is due to your Faculty Advisor by the beginning of your second semester in the program. The Degree Plan lists all of the courses (i.e., totaling 36 credit hours) which comprise your M.Ed. degree. Make sure you keep a copy of your Degree Plan where you can readily refer to it. It is your road map toward your degree;
2. attend a minimum of three program seminars. Keep the schedule for each seminar and note the sessions which you attended in case additional documentation is needed;
3. make your oral presentation on your Research Project as required;
4. keep track of your progress. Each term, you will receive a grade report. File this report and copies of your learning contracts for that term with your Degree Plan so that you can note your progress toward your degree. PLEASE NOTE: You **will not** receive an updated grade report for courses in which you took an Incomplete (I/F) grade (i.e., when that work is completed). However, your Faculty Advisor will enter the grade change on your transcript;
5. be aware of grade point average requirements. The minimum GPA for graduation is a 3.0. No more than 6 semester hours of course work may have grades of C. Transfer credit must be at a B- or better grade;
6. keep your Degree Plan current. If you want to change your plan, discuss the change with your Faculty Advisor and submit a revised copy of your Degree Plan;
7. request a Regis transcript during the semester prior to the semester in which you intend to graduate. Compare it to your Degree Plan. Make sure that you will have earned the minimum number of semester credits (i.e., 36) required for the degree;
8. as you approach the Research Methods/Research Project sequence, work closely with your Faculty Advisor. A conference is required before you begin the Research Methods course to discuss potential topics and outcomes for the Research Project. If you intend to complete the Research Methods course via GIS, you will want to attend an orientation session at one of the seminars preceding your enrollment in Research Methods. However, this course is available as a traditional class on the Lowell Campus. Detailed information about this sequence of events and other matters related to the Research Project are found in your *Guidelines for Academic Papers and Research Projects* which you received during your online orientation; and
9. apply for graduation at the beginning of the semester in which you plan to finish.