



Interdisciplinary Studies in Human Development (ISHD) M.S.Ed. Program Prospective Student - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Application Questions

What is “human development”?

The branch of psychology concerned with the study of progressive behavioral changes in an individual from birth until death. It is related to the term “developmental psychology” which is the scientific study of changes that occur in human beings over the course of their lives. Originally concerned with infants and children, the field has expanded to include adolescence, adult development, aging, and the entire lifespan. Our program tends to focus on childhood and adolescence.

What are the admissions requirements for the program?

Please see the [application instructions](#) for detailed instructions. The ideal candidate has a strong undergraduate training in social sciences, exposure to research and strong interest in human development. There is no previous experience required and no pre-requisite courses required, although psychology courses are recommended. If you have any questions about the application material or submitting the application, please reach out to the GSE Admissions Office at admissions@gse.upenn.edu or (215) 898-6415.

Is there a cut off test score or GPA?

No, there is no minimum test score or GPA - your application will be reviewed holistically. However, to get a sense of the average test scores for current Penn GSE students, please see the [GSE Class Profile](#).

When should I apply?

We recommend that you apply earlier in the application review cycle to receive priority consideration with regard to [scholarships](#). However, the program has a [rolling admissions policy](#); the program will continue to review applications until spots have been filled. We receive most of our applications between January and the end of April, but we accept applications as early as September.

Is part-time available?

Part-time is available to full-time Penn employees and others with permission from the program. Please note that most of the courses are offered during the day.

Campus Visits and Information Sessions

If I would like to visit the campus, whom should I contact?

Please see the [Penn GSE Campus Visit page](#) for information on visiting the campus.

Where can I find information about information sessions?

Please see the [Admissions Events page](#) for information about upcoming events and to RSVP.

Program of Study Questions

What are the required courses?

Students are required to take 10 courses. There are two courses that all ISHD Master's students are required to take: EDUC-560 Human Development and EDUC-860 Proseminar in Human Development. In addition to these two courses, students choose three Developmental Foundations courses, one Social, Cultural & Policy Foundations course, one Quantitative Methodology course, one Qualitative Methodology course, and two graduate-level (500+) elective courses. Please see the ISHD M.S.Ed. planned program of study on the [ISHD M.S.Ed. web page](#) for more information.

How flexible is the program of study?

We have designed the ISHD Program for maximum flexibility. Students meet with advisors to design a program of study that meets their needs while covering the basics of the field of human development. The planned program of study serves as a guide for course selection.

Which two elective courses can students take?

Students can take any two graduate-level (500+) courses at any of the schools across the University of Pennsylvania, as long they have permission for the course from the department in which the course is housed. Students check with their academic advisor on their elective course selections.

Where can I find information about Penn GSE courses as well other graduate-level courses that are being offered across the University of Pennsylvania?

Please see the [Penn Course Roster](#) for a list of courses that are offered each semester. The Course Timetable for the Penn Graduate School of Education is under "Education." Please see the [Penn Course Register](#) for a description of courses.

Are there other requirements in addition to the 10 courses?

In addition to the 10 courses, students are also required to take the Master's Comprehensive Exam or complete a Master's Thesis. Writing a thesis usually requires staying an additional semester.

What is the typical course load?

Students typically take four courses in the fall, four courses in the spring, and two courses in the summer. However, other options are available depending upon individual need and preference. Students can finish the program at their own pace.

What is the typical length of the program?

The program is designed to allow students to complete 10 courses at their own pace: one calendar year, three semesters or even two years. Normally, students take two semesters plus a summer term to complete the program (during one calendar year, September – August). However, some of our students stay longer to research and write a master's thesis.

Is it possible to do a dual degree or dual major?

Yes, students in the ISHD M.S.Ed. program may pursue a joint degree (for example, M.S.Ed. – M.S.W.) or a dual major within Penn GSE. We will “double-count” up to four courses from another program toward the 10-course ISHD M.S.Ed. degree upon approval of your academic advisor and the other program. Please note that this will extend the length of time it will take to graduate.

Funding Questions

What are some ways to pay for my Penn GSE education?

- Please see the GSE Financial Aid Frequently Asked Questions: http://www.gse.upenn.edu/admissions_financial/finaidfaqs
- Resident Advisor positions: <http://www.collegehouses.upenn.edu/join/ra>
- Resources via the Graduate Student Center: <http://www.gsc.upenn.edu/resources/employment.php>

Please reach out to GSE Financial Aid Office at finaid@gse.upenn.edu or (215) 898-6415 if you have any additional questions.

Research Opportunity Questions

Are there opportunities to do research with faculty?

Yes! Students who receive a [graduate assistantship](#) can request to do research with a faculty member for their graduate assistantship. Students who do not receive a graduate assistantship can directly reach out to faculty members to volunteer to do research with them. Many faculty members are more than happy to take on research assistants if the research interests align. Students can also seek out other research opportunities across the campus by contacting the programs or centers directly. Penn is one of the nation's premier [research](#) universities.

Other Miscellaneous Questions

Do students have an academic advisor?

Yes, all ISHD Master's students are paired with an academic advisor.

How many students are in the program?

There are approximately 20 students who matriculate into the program every year.

What are the demographics of GSE students?

Please see the [GSE class profile](#). Some of the countries represented in the ISHD program include the United States, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Chile, Pakistan, Bangladesh, United Kingdom, and Kenya.

What careers do graduates seek?

Our graduates typically seek careers in youth programming and services, urban and ethnic studies, and academic research. Many of our graduates go into doctoral programs in Human Development and Family Studies, and seek research and academic positions afterwards. Please see the [ISHD M.S.Ed. web page](#) for a list of where our graduates are now.

Are there opportunities to speak with current students?

Please see the [Penn GSE Admissions Events](#) for opportunities to speak with current students.

Are there opportunities to speak with alumni?

Our alumni participate in Penn GSE Admissions Events to speak with prospective students and would be more than happy to speak with you. Please see the [Penn GSE Admissions Events](#) page for more information. If you are unable to attend one of the events, we would be more than happy to connect you with alumni. Please reach out to the ISHD Program Assistant at madelan@gse.upenn.edu for more information.