Education Policy Ph.D. Program
Prospective Student - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Program Questions
What is the goal of the program?
The goal of the Education Policy Ph.D. program is to produce the next generation of education policy scholars and researchers by providing students with deep content knowledge, disciplinary grounding, and training in the use of rigorous, cutting-edge methods. Our program is founded on the apprenticeship model, in which students work with their advisors and others on research projects throughout the program. The Ph.D. in Education Policy has a proven record of preparing students for a variety of research careers, such as professors at top tier universities and policy researchers at premier research firms, non-profit research organizations, and government agencies.

Who are the faculty advisors and how are students matched for their apprenticeship?
All students are paired with a member of the standing faculty in a “mentorship” or “apprentice” model. These matches are made in consultation with the student. While some students remain with the same advisor for the duration of the program, others may benefit from shifting advisors as their interests change. Our program is flexible to allow for student growth and development. The current faculty advisors are John Fantuzzo, Richard Ingersoll, and Jon Supovitz. The Ed Policy division is in the process of hiring additional faculty who will serve as faculty advisors for doctoral students. Faculty members from other divisions at GSE may serve on dissertation committees but cannot act as primary advisors.

How does the apprenticeship work?
Students who matriculate into the Ed Policy Ph.D. program participate in a 20-hour-a-week apprenticeship for the four years of the program. Through the research apprenticeship, students learn to design, conduct, and communicate the results of empirical research, including presenting papers at scholarly conferences and submitting articles to scholarly journals for publication. As part of the apprenticeship, students often have opportunities to engage with research teams that include faculty and students from other divisions and from other universities.

What are the required courses?
Our program offers a balance of flexibility and rigor. We want our students to be able to tailor their courses to their own interests and expertise while ensuring that they develop methodological and content-area expertise.
We require 16 courses. Of those 16, at least three must be quantitative methods courses (though most of our students choose to take more), and two must be qualitative or mixed-methods courses. Beyond this, two courses are intended to provide students with grounding in disciplinary lenses used to examine education, and an additional four courses in the general area of Education Policy allow students to develop content-area expertise in specific subfields. A full overview of the Planned Program of Study can be found on our website.

One of the strengths of our program is that students can take courses in nationally ranked departments across the University of Pennsylvania. Many of our students take courses at the Wharton School, the School of Social Policy and Practice, and in departments including Sociology and Political Science. Advisors work closely with students to design their course of study.

Where can I find information about Penn GSE courses as well as 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 Catalog for a description of courses.

What is the typical course load?
Students receive full tuition for up to eight courses for the academic year. Students typically take four courses in the Fall Semester and four courses in the Spring Semester. Following the completion of the required 16 courses, students are able to audit up to one course per semester if they believe this would further their research or development as a scholar.

What are the milestones of the program?
Ed policy students complete the Ph.D. comprehensive examination, write and defend a dissertation proposal, and write and defend their dissertation. The comprehensive exam is designed to move students toward their dissertation; for most students, the exam serves as the first chapter of their dissertation, where they provide an in-depth literature review of their content area. For more information about the school’s Ph.D. requirements, please see the Ph.D. degree requirements.

What is the typical length of the program?
Our Ph.D. program is designed to be completed in four years—two years of full-time coursework and two years to complete exams and dissertation. The University’s maximum time limit for completion is ten years after matriculation. A detailed timeline is available on our website.

Application Questions
What are the admissions requirements for the program?
Please see the application instructions for detailed instructions. If you have 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.
What should I say in my essay?
Successful applicants articulate their reasons for pursuing a Ph.D. and demonstrate how their research interests align with the research portfolio(s) of one or more members of the Ed Policy faculty. The essay should be no longer than 750 words.

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?
Applications open up in the fall. Online applications and all supplemental materials must be received by the deadline (December 5, 2018, for Fall 2019 enrollment) to be guaranteed review by Ed Policy faculty.

Can I attend as a part-time student?
One of the strengths of our program is that it allows students to become fully immersed in research and coursework. Thus, a part-time option is not available for Education Policy doctoral students.

Campus Visits and Information Sessions
If I would like to visit the campus, who should I contact?
Please see the Penn GSE Campus Visit page for information on visiting the campus.

Where can I learn more about information sessions?
Please see the Admissions Events page for information about upcoming events and to RSVP.

Funding Questions
What kinds of support do Ed Policy doctoral students receive?
Our doctoral students receive tuition, stipend, and health care support for four academic years. Most of our students are also funded in the summer, either through their advisor’s research grants or through Penn GSE funding (see below for more details).

Can doctoral students hold any other employment while in the program?
Penn GSE fully funds their doctoral students to allow them to devote their full attention to graduate study. The University does not allow fully funded doctoral students to hold any other employment (either internal or external to the University) while receiving funding during the academic year. Please reach out to the GSE Financial Aid Office at finaid@gse.upenn.edu or (215) 898-6415 if you have any additional questions.

What about summer funding?
Most of our students continue their work with faculty on research during the summer (Ph.D. students are eligible to apply for summer funding from GSE following years 1, 2, and 3 of their program). Occasionally, in consultation with their advisor, students take advantage of other
opportunities during the summer, including paid internships and fellowships at research organizations.

**Other Miscellaneous Questions**

*How many students matriculate into the program every year?*
Approximately two to five students matriculate into the Education Policy program each year. Across Penn GSE’s eight PhD programs, approximately 20 students matriculate each year. This provides both a more intimate cohort within Education Policy as well as a larger cohort of doctoral students concentrating in a variety of areas across Penn GSE.

*What are the demographics of GSE students?*
Our student body is comprised of accomplished, diverse students from all over the country and the world. Please see the [GSE class profile](#).

*What careers do graduates seek?*
The Ph.D. in Education Policy has a proven record of preparing students for a variety of research careers, such as professors at top tier-universities and policy researchers at premier research firms, non-profit research organizations, and government agencies. Some alumni have also on to lead schools, districts, and other organizations. Please see the [Alumni section](#) of our website for a list of where some of our graduates are now.