



**GRADUATE PROGRAM
IN HIGHER EDUCATION
LEADERSHIP**

(Updated July 2026)

**HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP
STUDENT HANDBOOK
2026-2027**



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INTRODUCTION TO THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

This Handbook serves as a guide for students pursuing a Master of Arts in Higher Education Leadership or a Master of Arts in Intercollegiate Athletics Leadership at Messiah University. In addition to this document, students should also make themselves familiar with the policies and requirements for graduate students contained in the School of Graduate and Professional Studies Catalog for Messiah University.

Disclaimer

The Graduate Program in Higher Education Leadership Handbook serves as a reference guide regarding the Program's policies, procedures, and services. This handbook is not intended to, nor does it contain the complete and exact text of all rules, regulations, policies, and procedures that relate to graduate students. The School of Graduate and Professional Studies Catalog also contains policies, procedures, and information about services for graduate students and should be used in conjunction with this program-specific handbook. It is not uncommon for individual programs to establish policy and expectations that exceed the minimum standards delineated in the School of Graduate and Professional Studies Catalog. When this occurs, the text of this program-specific handbook supersedes that which addresses the same topic in the School of Graduate and Professional Studies Catalog.

The provisions and requirements stated in the Graduate Program in Higher Education Leadership Handbook are not considered to be an irrevocable contract between the student and Messiah University. The University reserves the right to amend, revise or modify content at any time and to revoke any rule, regulation, and schedule, both academic and financial, within this publication. Changes will be communicated to all students with the effective date that has been established by the University. The University will endeavor to inform graduate students of any changes. However, it is the students' responsibility to keep themselves apprised of current policy and procedures by referencing the website. Publishing on the graduate programs website shall be deemed to be reasonable notice of any such change.

Mission of Messiah University

Messiah University is a Christian University of the liberal and applied arts and sciences. The University is committed to an embracing evangelical spirit rooted in the Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan traditions of the Christian Church. Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character, and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society.

Mission of the Graduate Program in Higher Education Leadership

The Graduate Program in Higher Education Leadership equips visionary higher education leaders to be agents of innovation and renewal. The program focuses on preparing educational leaders to be effective, transformative agents in various higher education settings. Toward this end, the program has four interrelated goals: (1) equip leaders to transform various higher education contexts; (2) prepare practitioners to make effective, strategic, and innovative decisions to assure excellence in educational programs and mission-driven initiatives; (3)

develop scholars who advance the field of higher education and its contribution to society; and (4) nurture leaders with a professional identity rooted in their Christian faith.

Design of the Program

The Graduate Program in Higher Education Leadership is a 36-credit hour program designed for students who (a) have graduated from an accredited undergraduate institution; (b) aspire to become effective, transformative agents in higher education settings; (c) want to advance the field of higher education and its contribution to society; and (d) wish to be trained by seasoned, Christian faculty members.

Goals for the Higher Education Leadership degree

(Student Success, Strategic Leadership, College Athletic Leadership, or Individualized):

- To equip leaders to transform various higher education contexts, including colleges/universities, professional associations, and higher education agencies.
- To prepare practitioners to make effective, strategic, and innovative decisions to assure excellence in educational programs and mission-driven initiatives.
- To develop scholars who advance the field of higher education and its contribution to society.
- To nurture leaders with a professional identity rooted in the ethical and vocational sensibilities of the Christian tradition.

Goals for the Intercollegiate Athletic Leadership degree:

- To prepare professionals with a comprehensive understanding of athletic administration, including strategic planning, organizational effectiveness, event management, sport marketing, and leadership formation;
- To develop educators who understand the philosophical context of intercollegiate athletics and related athletic associations;
- To develop leaders who leverage the benefits of intercollegiate athletics for access, equity and student success;
- To nurture athletic leaders with a professional identity rooted in the ethical and vocational sensibilities of the Christian tradition.

ACADEMICS

Admission

Admission Process for Degree-Seeking Students

Applications are accepted and reviewed throughout the year on a rolling basis; therefore, students may apply into the program at any point. HIED 511: Foundations of Higher Education or HIED 530: Intercollegiate Sport Administration (Summer intensive) is the preferred point of entry but must be completed within the first year of study.

Application materials can be found on the graduate programs website, which can be found at the following address: <http://www.messiah.edu/gradprograms>. As indicated on the application, materials should be emailed to GradPrograms@messiah.edu. Official transcripts and other documents may be mailed to Graduate Programs, 1 University Avenue, Mechanicsburg, PA, 17055.

Admission decisions will be made by the Graduate Program Committee for Higher Education Leadership upon review of the application materials, interviews (when applicable), and other relevant information that has been provided. The decision to admit a student is based upon both quantitative and qualitative criteria that in combination lead the committee to believe that the applicant possesses the following: (a) the academic preparation, abilities, and drive to successfully complete the program; (b) the potential to contribute positively to the work of Higher Education; and (c) the desire to grow personally and professionally.

Admission Requirements for Messiah University Graduate Programs

1. Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution
2. Completed Application and Application Fee
3. Official transcripts from all colleges or universities attended
4. Undergraduate cumulative GPA of 3.00 or above
5. Written personal statement of purpose (not to exceed 500 words)
6. One recommendation (professional and/or academic)
7. Resume or Curriculum Vita
8. Any additional material specified by your chosen program

Additional Admission Requirements for the Master of Arts in Higher Education Leadership Program

1. Interviews (in person or by web conference) will be conducted in cases in which the department's admissions committee needs more information to make its admission decision.
2. Conditional Admission – Students who do not initially meet all of the requirements for admission may be accepted for conditional admission.

Transfer Credits

Up to 9 of the total number of credits required for the degree may be accepted as transfer credits provided that:

Transfer credit is credit earned at another institution and applied to meet requirements at Messiah University. Students may transfer graduate coursework from other institutions under the following conditions:

- The coursework must be completed at a regionally accredited institution.
- The credits are graduate level.
- A minimum grade of “B” was earned for each transferred course.
- The credits must be completed within seven (7) years upon matriculation to Messiah University. See individual programs for exceptions.
- The course is not listed as one required to be completed at Messiah University. See transfer credit chart in the catalog.
- The number of credits transferred does not exceed the maximum allowed in the student’s program. See transfer credit chart below.
- Currently enrolled students who wish to take credits at another institution and transfer them to Messiah University must have written approval of the Program Director prior to starting coursework.
- Only credits and courses are eligible to be transferred. Grades earned at the original institution are not calculated into the student’s Messiah University grade point average.

Courses Required to Be Taken at Messiah University

For the Graduate Program in Higher Education Leadership the following courses must be completed at Messiah University and may not be counted as incoming transfer credits:

1. HIED 511: Foundations in Higher Education
2. HIED 562: Internship
3. HIED 563: Internship II in Higher Education
4. HIED 565: Thesis

Academic Advisors

Academic Advising is an essential process in the University setting. Upon entering Messiah University, every matriculated student is assigned a faculty academic advisor who, through experience, professional background, and example, is qualified to assist the student in planning the coursework for the program of study, in developing strategies for academic success, and in providing guidance and information in preparation for the student's career and life goals.

Academic advisors are available during their regularly scheduled office hours, virtual office hours or by appointment at other times. In addition, a student may communicate with his or her advisor any time by email. A reasonable response time is 2-3 business days.

While academic advising assists students in their academic planning, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to meet the academic requirements for graduation. Each student is expected to communicate regularly with his or her advisor to discuss the development and implementation of a plan of short- and long-term academic goals. The final responsibility in meeting graduation requirements, however, rests with the student.

Course Registration

Students admitted to the University formally register for classes using the student information system and in consultation with his/her academic advisor. Prior to registration, students must ensure their accounts are up to date with Student Financial Services. The procedure is as follows:

1. Registration materials, including the schedule of classes, will be made available to current students in March (for fall term), October (for spring term) and January (for summer term).
2. Students will discuss recommended course selections for the upcoming registration with their academic advisor. The student and advisor should keep a copy or record of the courses approved for registration.
3. Subsequent to the advising meeting, the advisor releases the advisor hold on registration via Self-Service Banner and the student registers for courses at the appropriate time.

Uniformity of procedure is required to handle the large volume of students and ensure fairness to all students. Advisor's approval helps students identify courses appropriate for his/her program, interests, and abilities. Proof of payment is required to ensure students do not build large balances which they are unable to pay.

Course Schedule and Calendar

The Graduate Program in Higher Education Leadership offers courses in three different formats: (a) one-week intensive courses held on campus (b) eight-week courses conducted entirely online and (c) eight- week hybrid courses. Individual courses are offered in only one of the three formats listed above, so students must take each course in its prescribed format. Intensive courses take place in July and the eight-week and 16-week online courses take place in the fall and spring semesters.

The one-week intensive courses, HIED 511 Foundations of Higher Education and HIED 530 Intercollegiate Sport Administration, will be offered annually in order to ensure that all students complete this course within the first year of study.

Students register for multiple terms at one time. During the Fall registration period (around April 1), students should register for Early Fall and Late Fall courses. During the Spring registration period (around November 1), students should register for Early Spring and Late Spring courses. During the Summer registration period, students should register for Early Summer (if needed) and Summer Intensive courses.

Specific dates for these terms for the next academic year can be found [here](#).

Curriculum

Curriculum-- Master of Arts in Higher Education Leadership

All students will be required to complete seven common courses, three concentration courses, and two elective courses which will provide the basis for excellence in educational practice within higher education organizations. Each student will be required to complete 9 credits in a chosen concentration.

Required Core Courses (27 credits; 36 total)

HIED 511: Foundations of Higher Education (3)

HIED 512: Organizational Culture and Governance in Higher Education (3)

HIED 513: Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness (3)

HIED 514: Equity Issues in Higher Education *** (3)

HIED 515: Strategic Leadership in Higher Education (3)

HIED 516: Legal and Ethical Issues in Higher Education (3)

HIED 562: Internship in Higher Education (3)*

*HIED 567 serves as a substitution for students who have two or more years of professional experience upon admission and who have received approval.

***Prerequisite: 6 credit-hours in the program

Concentration and Elective Courses ** (see Below)

For up to date courses required and the course descriptions, search the Graduate Studies Catalog current year: <https://www.messiah.edu/academic-catalog/>

Student Success Concentration

College Athletics Leadership Concentration

Strategic Leadership Concentration

Individualized Concentration

Curriculum-- Master of Arts in Intercollegiate Athletic Leadership

Required Core Courses (33 credits; 36 total)

HIED 530: Intercollegiate Sports Administration (3)

HIED 531: Events and Facilities Management (3)

HIED 532: Marketing and Sponsorship in Intercollegiate Athletics (3)

HIED 534: Intercollegiate Coaching (3)

LEAD 550: Organizational Effectiveness (3)

LEAD 501: Character of a Leader (3)

HIED 514: Equity Issues in Higher Education*** (3)

HIED 515: Strategic Leadership in Higher Education (3)

HIED 516: Legal and Ethical Issues in Higher Education (3)

HIED 553: Enrollment Management in Higher Education (3)

HIED 562: Internship in Higher Education* (3)

Or HIED 567: Professional Seminar serves as a substitution for students who have two or more years of professional experience upon admission and who have received approval.

**Prerequisite: Completion of 12 hours in the program.*

***Prerequisite: Two (2) or more years of higher education experience required for HIED 567.*

Must have approval upon admission.

**** Prerequisite: 6 credit-hours in the program*

Elective courses for IAL:

For up to date courses required and the course descriptions, search the Graduate Studies Catalog current year: <https://www.messiah.edu/academic-catalog/>

Graduation Requirements

Academic advisors provide counsel to students regarding curriculum and graduation requirements; however, responsibility for completing appropriate requirements for graduation rests with the student. Students working toward a graduate degree must file an online Application for Degree with the registrar's office at the beginning of their last full year in the program. Applications require the approval of the Graduate Council and the Community of Educators before students are formally admitted to degree candidacy. This is the only means by which a diploma is awarded and the degree is recorded on the student's transcript.

Specifically, graduation from the Graduate Program in Higher Education Leadership requires (a) an overall minimum GPA of 3.0; (b) successful completion of all required course work; (c) recommendation of the student's academic advisor and the Graduate Program Committee for Higher Education; (d) compliance with all other Messiah University policies for graduation.

Students are encouraged to complete the program in two to four years, and all students must complete their degree within six years from the time they begin the program. Students are expected to be continuously enrolled from the time they begin their program.

ONLINE EDUCATION AT MESSIAH UNIVERSITY

The emergence of web-based technology and electronic media has brought exciting opportunities for student learning. It has also provided the flexibility that graduate students desire as they seek to balance home, work, family, and education.

Learning Management System

The Learning Management System (LMS) at Messiah University is Canvas. Courses and coursework can be delivered asynchronously (on one's own schedule) and/or synchronously (live) using a variety of tools. Students can learn more about how Canvas is used at Messiah by visiting [this article](#) from the Information Technology Services blog.

Prior to your first course, your professor will contact you with helpful links and tutorials that will prepare you for your online coursework. In the interim, Canvas can be accessed from a link on the [ITS Student page](#) or from FalconLink. You may want to bookmark the Canvas site in your browser for quicker access in the future. Navigating Canvas will be critical to your academic success; the Canvas [student quickstart guides](#), [student guides](#) and help feature, provide greater detail on each aspect of Canvas.

Technology Requirements

Students in the online program must possess basic computer skills and have regular access to a computer with the minimum system requirements that follow

Please refer to the Technology department website for the most up to date requirements:

<https://www.messiah.edu/info/21491/students>. Read all of the pages under MORE INFORMATION for details related to cell phones, computers, software, and internet connections for distance learning. If you have any computer questions that are not answered in these pages please feel free to call Technology Support at (717) 796-4444 or email techsupport@messiah.edu. They are available to answer any computer questions you might have and can help with passwords and FalconLink problems.

Technical Support for Students

For your convenience, while you are taking an online course, “real person” assistance will be available in “real time” if a technological program arises. A telephone hotline and instant messaging will be staffed from 8:00 AM to 11:00 PM, Eastern Standard Time, seven days a week, by the University’s Information and Technology Services staff.

Please leave a message providing your name, number, and a brief description of the issue you are experiencing. You will receive a call back as soon as possible.

- Standard support by phone at 717- 796-5039 [Monday – Friday 7am-5pm]
- After Hours by phone 717-796-5039 [Evenings 5pm-11pm and Weekends 8am-11am]
- Via email at techsupport@messiah.edu

Computer Access Policy

This policy articulates the standards of behavior that are expected of all individuals using the University’s computers and/or networks. The full text of the Computer Access Policy can be found on the graduate programs [website](#).

GENERAL POLICIES

Students with Disabilities

Any student whose disability falls within ADA guidelines should inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester of any special accommodation or equipment needs necessary to complete the requirements for this course. Students must register documentation with the Office of Academic Accessibility. Contact aaa@messiah.edu, (717) 796-5382. See the [School of Graduate Studies Catalog](#) for the University's full ADA Policy

Academic Appeals

Students who find it necessary to request an exception to an academic policy must send a written petition to the registrar's office stating the request and rationale, in addition to any supporting documentation for the request. The registrar's office reviews the petition and notifies the student and academic advisor of the decision. A copy of the petition and decision is retained in the student's record.

Academic Integrity

Personal integrity is a behavioral expectation for all members of the Messiah community: administration, faculty, staff, and students. Violations of academic integrity are not consistent with the community standards of Messiah University. These violations include:

1. Plagiarism. Submitting as one's own work part or all of any assignment (oral or written) which is copied, paraphrased, or purchased from another source, including on-line sources, without the proper acknowledgment of that source. Examples: failing to cite a reference, failing to use quotation marks where appropriate, misrepresenting another's work as your own, etc.
2. Cheating. Attempting to use or using unauthorized material or study aids for personal assistance in examinations or other academic work. Examples: using a cheat sheet, altering a graded exam, looking at a peer's exam, having someone else take the exam for you, using any kind of electronic mobile or storage devices (such as cell phones, PDAs, Blackberry, iPods, iPhones, Flash drives, DVDs, CDs), communicating via email, IM, or text messaging during an exam, using the internet, sniffers, spyware or other software to retrieve information or other students' answers, purposely disconnecting from the internet to cause a lock on an online exam, etc.
3. Fabrication. Submitting altered or contrived information in any academic exercise. Examples: falsifying sources and/or data, etc.
4. Misrepresentation of Academic Records. Tampering with any portion of a student's record. Example: forging a signature on a registration form or change of grade form on paper or via electronic means.

5. Facilitating Academic Dishonesty. Helping another individual violate this policy. Examples: working together on an assignment where collaboration is not allowed, doing work for another student, allowing one's own work to be copied.

6. Computer Offenses. Altering or damaging computer programs without permission. Examples: software piracy, constructing viruses, introducing viruses into a system, copying copyrighted programs, etc.

7. Unfair Advantage. Attempting to gain advantage over fellow students in an academic exercise. Examples: lying about the need for an extension on a paper, destroying or removing library materials, having someone else participate in your place, etc.

Education Regarding Academic Integrity Policy- Messiah University is responsible to clearly articulate the Academic Integrity Policy to students by publishing it in the School of Graduate and Professional Studies Catalog. Faculty should reference the policy in their course syllabi. However, primary responsibility for knowledge of and compliance with this policy rests with the student.

Records of Violations of Academic Integrity- As the custodian for student education records, the registrar's office maintains records of academic integrity violations for all students in accordance with the University's Schedule for Records Retention.

Penalties for Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy - A faculty member may exercise broad discretion when responding to violations of the Academic Integrity Policy. The range of responses may include failure of the course to a grade reduction of the given assignment, or in the event of a particularly egregious offense, suspension or dismissal from the Program.

The academic integrity policy in its entirety can be found in the [Graduate Program Student Catalog](#) and should be reviewed by every student, as the primary responsibility for knowledge of and compliance with this policy rests with the student.

GOVERNANCE

Graduate Program Advisory Council for Higher Education Leadership

This council is comprised of the Program Director of the Graduate Program in Higher Education Leadership and graduate admissions representatives.

This council is the initial governing body for the Graduate Program in Higher Education Leadership. Among other things it reviews curriculum and makes curricular recommendations. It also reviews and decides upon admission applications and graduation applications. In addition, this council hears and issues an initial decision on academic appeals related to admission status, individual course grades, probation, and dismissal from the program and readmission.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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