The University of Hong Kong
Faculty of Education

Master of Education (MEd)
Higher Education

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This specialism helps university and college managers navigate the cutting-edge ideas and the best practices of integrating strategies of internationalisation, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, problem-based learning, and quality assurance. The courses draw on interdisciplinary perspectives contributed by sociology, economics, political science, administrative studies, and comparative education. The learning process is driven by practical insights from experienced professionals of international agencies, national governments, funding bodies, academic associations, universities, polytechnics, community colleges, liberal arts colleges, research centers, academic health science centers, branch campuses, and joint educational ventures.

Who would benefit from this specialism?

This specialism provides excellent opportunities for professional development of university and college managers, administrative professionals, college lecturers, policy analysts, research staff, business officers, academic librarians, service coordinators, student affairs specialists/managers, staff and campus developers. This specialism brings together an excellent mix of disciplinary, cultural, organisational, and institutional representations to enlighten the diversity of campus compositions, perspectives, and innovations.

Mode of study:

The specialism is available in 1-year full-time and 2-year part-time modes of study.

Outline of the four specialist courses:

Course 1: Comparative Higher Education Policy Studies (6 credits)

This course focuses on eight policy themes: (1) system design; (2) access and equity, (3) quality assurance and accountability, (4) privatisation and financing, (5) student experience and employability; (6) critical inquiry and innovation; (7) ITC and distance learning; (8) autonomy, governance and management. Students develop policy analysis skills by examining trends and problems in higher education systems of Canada, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, the EU, UK, USA, and other jurisdictions. With the help of comparative research, students acquire a multi-stakeholder worldview about similarities and differences in the policy contexts of global higher education.

Course 2: Globalization and Higher Education (6 credits)

The concept of globalisation has been taken as a salient feature of our times. Within a context of intensified globalisation, universities worldwide now encounter far greater challenges, and are subjected to an unprecedented level of external scrutiny. The change in governance ideology in the higher education
sector has altered the way in which universities are managed. Higher education institutions everywhere are subject to global trends that link higher education systems globally, with the potential for creating severe problems for higher education in smaller or poorer nations in a world divided into centers and peripheries, and leading to exacerbated dramatic inequalities among the world’s universities. This course will provide critical analysis of major policy issues including the growing commercialisation of higher education and the values of the marketplace, the increasingly freely traded ‘knowledge products’ in the international marketplace, and the erosion of the university as an intellectual institution. This course aims to assist students to discuss these issues in an international and historical context, with particular foci on policy, governance and management in China and Asia. It examines how universities are responding to globalisation in their cultural complexity and social contexts, using examples from a variety of social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds.

Course 3: Higher Education Leadership (6 credits)

This course enlightens professional learners on leadership theories and best practices in leadership in universities and colleges. The course examines differences in leadership styles, and compares roles of intellectual leadership, executive leadership, strategic leadership among others. The participants will explore differentials in cultures, values, intelligences, and styles of leadership across the field of international higher education. The course will help both advanced-level and emerging leaders re-imagine and re-engage the concepts of public good, social responsibility, cross-cultural respect and tolerance, gender equity, and learner empowerment that are increasingly crucial for the organisational success. This course draws on local and international case-studies. Students will have a chance to develop their own leadership profile and map their future career trajectories in the field of higher education.

Course 4: Organizational Theories and Strategies in Higher Education (6 credits)

Organisational frameworks in higher education are different from those in businesses, governmental institutions or civic organisations. Strategic planning, key performance indicators and funding schemes differ across academic divisions. University governance is driven by multi-layered coordination of executive, legislative, consultative and evaluative structures and mechanisms that are increasingly challenged by competition for resources and scientific impact. This course examines how the organisational structures emerge and transform in the process of moving from elite to mass higher education. Students will learn to discern the organisational theories that explain the growing interdependencies among governance, finance, infrastructures, epistemic norms and organisational culture in universities and colleges. The course aims at: (1) fostering strategic thinking for organisational development; (2) conducting critical analysis of management and planning approaches in public and private higher education institutions; (3) shaping skills in facilitative and integrative transformative frameworks. By drawing on institutional case studies, students will examine key tensions between centralised and decentralised approaches, open and closed systems, structuralism and creativity, contingency and sustainability, diffusion and connectivity.

In addition to four specialist courses, students will also have to complete:

- The compulsory core course Educational Issues and Research (6 credits);
- Three elective courses (6 credits each); and
- An option of a professional portfolio (12 credits) or a research project (12 credits).