

A GUIDE TO GETTING A MASTER'S DEGREE IN EDUCATION



MARYMOUNT
UNIVERSITY

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THINKING ABOUT GETTING A MASTER'S DEGREE IN EDUCATION?

America's education system is desperately in need of **skilled, innovative, and empathetic educators** who have the ability to lead and prepare students for success, both inside the classroom and beyond. A [master's degree in education](#) can prepare aspiring educators to effectively transform the current state of America's education system and perpetuate change for future generations.

Whether you're a recent college graduate who has been planning to pursue a long-term teaching career or whether you're a working professional with several years of experience in another field looking to make a [career shift](#), getting a master's degree in education will prepare you to make a difference in the lives of students and fellow educators.

Whatever your situation, this resource will help you decide whether or not to pursue a master's degree in education. Let's get started.



SHOULD YOU PURSUE A MASTER'S DEGREE IN EDUCATION?

Making the decision to pursue a master's degree is an investment, plain and simple. And choosing to pursue a master's degree in education is no different. You will need to invest your time, money, and energy, and only you will be able to decide if getting an MEd is worth the return on investment.

That said, we're here to help you decide if pursuing a master's degree in education is right for you. Let's dive into some of the factors you should consider while deciding if, when, and where you want to pursue a graduate degree in education.

GETTING AN MEd — THE COSTS:

Balancing Your Personal & Professional Responsibilities:

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Financing Your MEd:

Getting a master's degree requires a financial investment. Tuition can be costly. If you're already paying off loans from a previous degree, taking on further loans might not be particularly appealing. But between [scholarships specific to future educators](#) as well as [grants and work-study programs](#), there are many ways other than loans to fund your graduate education.





GETTING AN MEd — THE ROI:

Become a (Better) Teacher with an MEd:

In short, an MEd will help you to [become a better teacher](#). Graduate education programs place a heavy emphasis on pedagogy, teaching methods, educational philosophy, and educational technology. If you are [new to the field of education](#), getting a master's degree will give you in-depth understanding by providing not only the educational theory and philosophy but also the means to translate those into practical instructional skills for today's diverse classrooms.

For those who already have a background in education, a master's degree can help sharpen the tools you already have by giving you a greater understanding of Special Education, English as a Second Language, STEM, and Global Education.

Some master's programs provide concentrations that enable you to become a content or subject specialist. For example, you can pursue a concentration in technology education, science and math education, educational psychology, special education, or literacy education. Specializing can make you more valuable if it is an area of particular need in your location.

And of course, as an educator, you know the value of being a lifelong learner. There is always more to know, and pursuing a master's in education will help you to learn evidence-based strategies to better support today's diverse learners.



GETTING AN MED – THE ROI:

Increase Career Mobility with an MEd:

In many fields, advanced degrees often translate into [more pay](#), and education is no different. In fact, in many schools and school districts, an advanced degree often means an automatic pay raise for teachers. Depending on your school or school district, the increase in pay may be more profitable in the long run, even after accounting for tuition.

Not all of the payoff of a master's in education is felt in the classroom. For some, a master's degree opens the door to other education-related opportunities as well, like becoming a school administrator or a mentor to other teachers. It may even provide options outside of the school setting, such as a textbook author, corporate trainer, career counselor, school technology consultant, education policy advocate, or curriculum developer, to name a few.

Further, a master's degree in education tells people that you are knowledgeable, valuable, hard-working and committed to your field. Teachers who have master's degrees are highly respected among their colleagues, administrators, and parents. You may even find that having a master's degree helps when being considered for tenure or promotion.



WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR IN A GRADUATE EDUCATION PROGRAM?

Curriculum of an Education Program:

You should research the curriculum offered by the program. [Read the course descriptions](#) to see what they cover. Figure out if the program lines up with your own educational and professional goals.

For example, if you hope to obtain a certain certification or meet continuing education requirements, make sure that the program will enable you to reach your goal.

Specializations Within an Education Program:

By seeking a specialization within your graduate program, you will set yourself apart with a competitive edge and the knowledge that you have skills in a concentrated area of your field.

If you intend to specialize, look for programs that have a good reputation in your specialty area. If you aren't sure, find a strong general program that has some concentrations so that you have the option of choosing one as you learn more.



Flexibility of an Education Program:

Find a program that allows you flexibility in taking classes. See if the program offers some [classes online](#) or in the evening to allow you to continue working. Some programs offer a mix of online classes during the school year and in-person classes over the summer to accommodate working students.

Also, look into how the program structures its part-time or accelerated tracks. Some programs place time requirements on the maximum amount of time you can take to complete the degree.



THE FIELD OF EDUCATION IS PERFECT FOR CAREER CHANGERS

Many people decide post-graduation or even mid-career that they want to become a teacher.

Did you know that most education degrees do not require a related bachelor's degree or teaching experience? Individuals who have varying professional backgrounds like psychology, English, history, sociology, philosophy, biology, and criminal justice can bring a lot of diversity of experience to the classroom.



Believe it or not, there are actually some advantages when you make a [career shift](#) and jump into a career as an educator: You have work experience outside of a school setting and expertise in an area separate from education. In other words, you can bring variety to your classroom beyond lectures and notes because you're more than a teacher; you're an expert in another field.

Further, there is a [growing need for teachers](#) all over the nation, so job placement rates look exceptional for aspiring educators.

“Virginia is now facing a severe and growing shortage of qualified teachers, and in some high-poverty divisions, the shortages are reaching crisis levels. The number of unfilled teacher positions across the state has increased by 40 percent over the past 10 years. In 2016, two months into the school year more than 1,000 fully-funded positions remained vacant. This trend must be reversed in order to secure the Commonwealth’s future economic growth and prosperity.”

-Recent Executive Order from the Governor of Virginia.



EXPLORE THE CAREER SHIFT GUIDE

Maybe you're disillusioned with your current career or maybe your undergraduate field of study is no longer your passion — whatever your reason, here at Marymount University, we want to help you pursue your dream career by equipping you with the right graduate degree. That's why we created a digital resource page perfect for aspiring career shifters: **10 Graduate Degrees that Don't Require a Related Bachelor's.**

[EXPLORE THE GUIDE](#)

ADDITIONAL READING

Interested in reading more about the benefits of getting a master's degree in education? Check out the following blog articles for more information — and more inspiration.



5 REASONS FIELD EXPERIENCE IS BENEFICIAL FOR FUTURE TEACHERS



6 HELPFUL RESOURCES WHEN PREPARING FOR THE PRAXIS AND VCLA EXAMS



EDUCATING A VULNERABLE AMERICA: 3 WAYS AN MED WILL EMPOWER YOU



WHY SHOULD I GET AN M.ED. WHEN I CAN START MY CAREER WITH A TEACHING CERTIFICATE?



TEACHING IN A CHANGING WORLD: HOW A MASTER'S IN EDUCATION CAN SET YOU ON A NEW PATH



HOW SHOULD YOU PREPARE TO APPLY TO A GRADUATE EDUCATION PROGRAM?

How should you prepare to apply to a graduate education program?

Each program has its own application requirements: transcripts, letters of recommendation, statements of purpose, filing fees, resumes. And each program will have different deadlines as well. Research the requirements of all the programs you want to apply to. If you are considering several programs, make a chart or table to keep all the requirements and deadlines straight.

Attend an Education Event:

We know your time is precious, but in order for you to choose the perfect graduate education program for you, you may want to seriously consider attending an on-campus education event at your institution of choice. For instance, Marymount University hosts in-person and virtual [Education Events](#) where you can get all of your questions answered and all of your concerns assuaged.

[Keep reading to learn more about why you should attend an Education Info Session](#) while you consider getting a [master's degree in education](#).



HOW SHOULD YOU PREPARE TO APPLY TO A GRADUATE EDUCATION PROGRAM?

Consider What Entrance Exams to Take:

Check to see if you need to take any exams before applying. The GRE is required by many advanced degree programs, but not all graduate education programs require it. Consider taking the licensure exams before applying as well. In many states, a passing score on the [Praxis exam or the VCLA test is a requirement](#) before you can apply for a license or certificate.

If you need to take any exams, be sure to speak with an admissions representative or education advisor for the right exams for your area of interest. Allow yourself plenty of time to prepare for the exams.

Give Yourself a Timeline:

It will take time to research programs, determine a program's requirements, obtain copies of your transcripts, prepare for the GRE or [Praxis](#), ask for letters of recommendation, and fill out applications. Make a plan for taking any exams or courses, obtaining all the necessary pieces of information and completing your applications. If you need to take some extra courses before even applying to a program, you'll need time for that, too.

Gather Your Letters of Recommendation:

In particular, make sure you build in enough time to ask for letters of recommendation. You will probably need multiple letters of recommendation for each application. Take the time to think carefully about whom to ask to recommend you, and then give those people 3-4 weeks to write and mail their letter of recommendation.

Don't forget to make it easy for your recommenders by providing them with all the information they need to recommend you: deadlines, forms, a description of the program, pre-addressed stamped envelopes (for those who want to mail in their letters), maybe even a copy of your Statement of Purpose and a reminder of your accomplishments they may want to mention. You may also want to plan to send them a reminder as the deadlines get closer.

Write Your Statement of Purpose:

Most programs require some kind of Statement of Purpose, an explanation of why you want to pursue a master's degree in education. Take the time to [write a compelling statement](#). If you are [changing careers](#), the Statement of Purpose may be particularly important in communicating your interest in the field and your ability to do the program.

Craft Your Graduate School Resume:

Take the time to thoughtfully craft your resume, especially if this is a career change for you. Your resume is another important way to show your qualifications for a new career in education. Highlight past opportunities you have taken to teach or mentor your colleagues, customers or the public in your current field, or mention volunteer activities that involve teaching and instruction. Don't underestimate the value of your "real world" experience from your current career to help in your new career in education.





WHAT IS THE EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR TEACHERS?

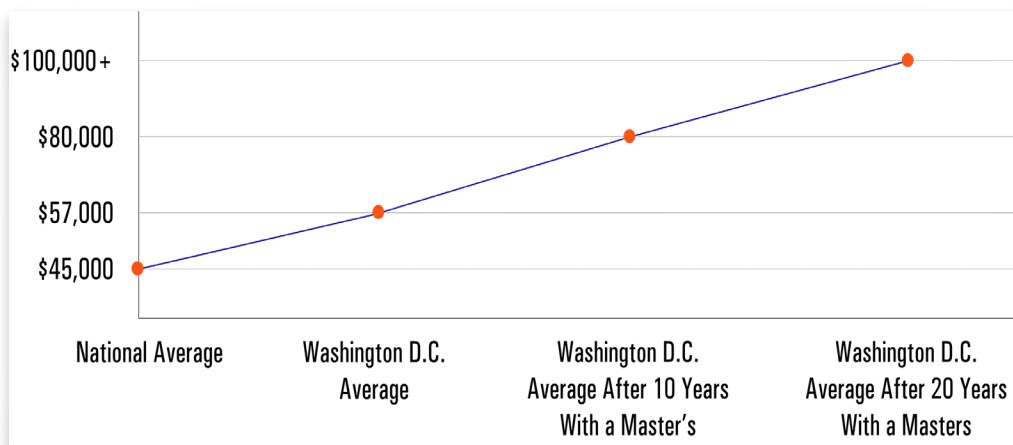
Working in the field of education isn't generally thought of as particularly lucrative. But the idea that teachers don't get paid well is a myth that we'd like to debunk.

Like any other profession, there's a range, but the national average salary for educators sits at around \$45,000. That climbs to above \$50-60,000 in some states like California, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania or in regions like the DMV. Starting salaries for teachers' assistants can indeed be pretty low, but research shows that salaries can increase with academic advancement.

Teacher Salaries in the D.C. Area:

[Marymount University](#) offers its [Master of Education](#) degree program on its campus in Arlington, Virginia, which is just a few miles outside of D.C., which happens to be known for its [higher-paying teaching jobs](#).

The average teaching salary in Washington D.C. is \$57,000, which is over the \$45,000 national average. In D.C. public schools, you can earn \$80,000 per year if you have a master's after you've been teaching for 10 years — and as much as \$100,000 after 20.



Certain districts in the D.C. area boast exceptionally high salaries, such as the public school system in Arlington, Virginia, which has an average of over \$74,000, making it the highest in Virginia. Fairfax, VA has similarly well-paid teachers — with an average of about \$62,000.

\$ 74,000

Arlington, VA Average

\$ 62,000

Fairfax, VA Average

\$ 45,000

Arlington, VA Average



MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY'S GRADUATE & CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS IN EDUCATION

Marymount is one of the leading teacher education programs in the greater Washington D.C. area. Marymount alumni are teaching in public, private, Catholic, and independent schools. Marymount graduate students participate in dynamic field experiences in a variety of school settings and are prepared for the challenges in today's classrooms.



MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY'S GRADUATE & CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS IN EDUCATION

Marymount's Graduate Education Programs:

- [Catholic School Leadership \(M.Ed. with PK-12 licensure\) / Administration and Supervision \(M.Ed. with PK-12 licensure\)](#)
- [Curriculum and Instruction \(M.Ed. without licensure\)](#)
- [Elementary Education \(M.Ed. with teaching licensure, PK-6\)](#)
- [Secondary Education \(M.Ed. with teaching licensure, 6-12\)](#)
- [Special Education: General Curriculum \(M.Ed. with teaching licensure, K-12\)](#)

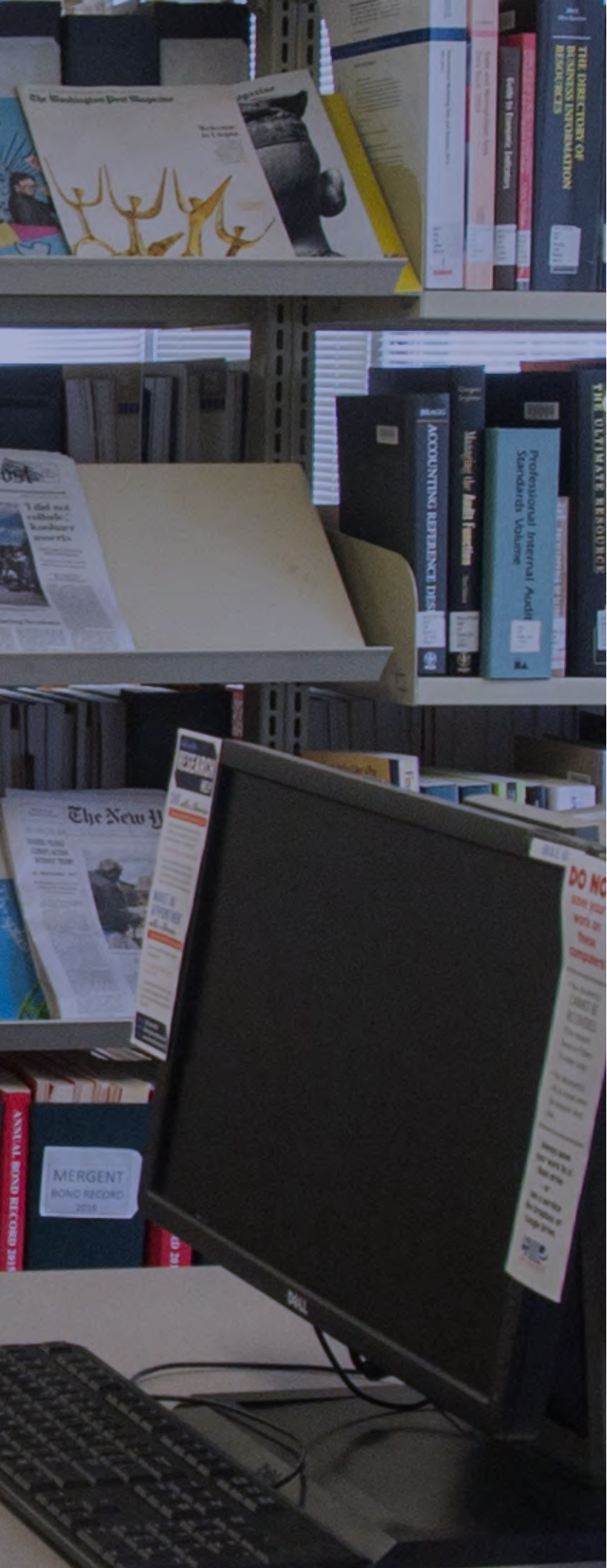
Marymount's Certificate Programs in Education:

- [English as a Second Language](#)
- [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics \(STEM\)](#)
- [Special Education](#)

Marymount graduate students are prepared and ready to enter the teaching profession. Upon graduation, students have over [100 hours of field experience](#) connected to coursework before the student teaching semester.

Marymount's teacher preparation programs are accredited by the Division of Teacher Education and Licensure of the Virginia Department of Education and the [Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation](#) (CAEP), formerly NCATE.


All courses are taught by full-time or adjunct faculty who have taught in the field or discipline and have a terminal degree such as a PhD or EdD. Classes are collegial, with 20 students or fewer, which leads to meaningful engagement between students and faculty.



MED FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



[Dr. Lisa Turissini](#) spent 15 years as a teacher, school principal, and executive vice president of schools for a nonprofit organization. Lisa joined Marymount University in 2004 as an adjunct professor and University Supervisor of student teachers. She was the Education Coordinator for the M.Ed. cohort program at Marymount's Reston Center from 2007-2012. In 2013, she became Chair of Marymount's Education Department. If you want to get in touch with Dr. Turissini directly, you can email her at lturissi@marymount.edu.



“As an aspiring educational leader, it is time to further develop your understanding of teaching techniques, classroom management strategies, and professional resources so that you will have the skills to become a more valuable member of an educational community. It is so important to remain innovative in your teaching and to always be learning and always be reflecting on your practice.

There is a much larger purpose to educating our next generation. We are helping to prepare them to make a living, a life, and to make a difference in the lives of others. Improving upon your own teaching and learning can help you become an even more effective and passionate educator in this very rewarding field.”



CONNECT WITH US:

Here at Marymount University, we're dedicated to preparing the next generation of leaders in education — leaders who can make a difference in the lives of students, both inside and outside the classroom. If you're dedicated to advancing your knowledge and your skills in the field of education, we encourage you to reach out to us by phone (**703-284-5901**) or by email (grad.admission@marymount.edu). We can't wait to help you achieve your future goals!

Interested in attending an upcoming in-person or virtual Education event? Want to schedule an appointment with our Education Graduate Enrollment Coordinator?

Click below to visit our Education Events Page!

EXPLORE EVENTS

Ready to take the plunge? You can start your online application today!

APPLY NOW