

Sample 6-year plan for students who wish to combine the MA and PhD degree programs, with the option of an integrated CFY

Overview:

This suggested course sequence guidance for combined MA/PhD is a department-internal procedure designed to maximize program benefits and efficiency – the degree requirements are not changed for either the MA or the PhD Program, with the exception of the MA thesis, which can be overlapped with pre-candidacy research for the Ph.D. (This is allowable because the pre-candidacy research is a departmental expectation, not a university requirement.) No classes apply to both degrees in terms of credit accumulation.

This is fastest reasonable schedule (completion of both degrees in 5-6 years); it is not required that students finish in this timeline, but completion in 6 years is the goal. Nor is it required that this timeline be followed in all particulars; rather, this is intended to serve as a starting point for discussion between a student and their Program Planning Committee for the purposes of individual advising. It is one possible plan, but is not expected to be appropriate for all doctoral students.

Although ASHA guidelines specify that students may begin the CFY before receipt of the MA degree, if all required coursework and supervised clock hours have been completed successfully, students should be aware that many states now require that the MA degree be conferred before starting the CFY. Having completed the work without the official degree (equivalency) does not suffice for many states, including Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. Please note that any ASHA pre-requisite coursework also needs to have been completed before commencement of a CFY.

The sequence below presumes satisfaction of undergraduate pre-requisite classes. If those courses are not yet completed, doing so may add between 1-2 semesters to this plan, depending upon applicable prior coursework, and potential for interleaving a small number of such courses into the plan below.

Students can opt to do their CFY after completion of their doctoral work, or to integrate their CFY with their doctoral program on a part-time basis. Students should be aware that spending 50% of their time on a CFY during their doctoral program will likely slow their progress towards completing their dissertation.

The first year is typically focused more on PhD-related coursework, and on initiating research projects with the student's primary mentor. Thus, a typical schedule would be:

Fall year 1: Typically, three PhD courses (9 credits) + lab hours + HESP601.

Typical PhD courses might include statistics (*note that seats are limited for first semester students doing regular registrations, so this may not be available*), a seminar course within the department, a course in NACS (Introduction to Neurosciences, or Cognitive Science), or a course in a related department such as Linguistics, Human Development, Second Language Acquisition, etc.

Students will also register for lab hours (889), and should start taking HESP601, Foundations of Scientific Inquiry – this is a 1-credit course spread across multiple semesters; registration will likely occur in the subsequent year. (*Note: alternatively, this can be taken starting in year 2.*)

Student may instead take two PhD courses, and take 2 clinical MA courses (2 credits each – Child Language Disorders, and either Autism or Language Disorders in Adults).

Winter year 1: Research credits. Students need to complete a total of 24 research credits across their time in the program (6 credits for the MA thesis, 6 credits of doctoral candidacy research, and 12 credits of dissertation research); when these credits are registered for can vary across students depending on their research projects and funding sources.

Spring year 1: Typically, three PhD courses. One course should be Statistics; generally, a second course would be Research Design (HESP 724), or HESP 602 (Neurological bases of communication, 2 credits) possibly combined with NACS 600 (Ethics in Scientific Research, 2 credits). The third course is generally a seminar course either within the department or in a related department. Students will also register for lab hours (889)

Summer year 1: Independent study/lab registration. Possible additional statistics course if available; HESP 417 (Clinical methods; second summer session) if an equivalent course was not taken as part of the undergraduate program.

The second year is typically focused more on MA-related coursework, and on starting in the clinic. Thus, a typical schedule would be:

Fall year 2:

Four clinical MA courses (8 credits):

HESP 616 Child Language Disorders (2 credits, half-semester long)

HESP702 Diagnostics (2 cr., half-semester long)

HESP610 Language Disorders in adults (2 cr., half-semester long)

HESP613 Autism (2 cr., half-semester long)

(If two of these clinical courses were taken in year 1, then a PhD course will be added here.)

Clinic registrations (HESP648A, HESP648B, 3 credits)

Winter semester year 2: Possible MA elective course, possible MA thesis credits (HESP799)

Spring Year 2:

HESP620 Speech Production across the lifespan (3 credits)

HESP612 Fluency Disorders (2 credits, half-semester long)

HESP611 Cognitive Disorders in adults (2 credits, half-semester long)

Clinic registration (HESP 648 B, 2 credits)

Pre-candidacy research proposal

Summer Year 2: HESP 625 (Dysphagia), pre-candidacy research, and possibly final semester of in-house clinic *(third semester of in-house clinic can be either this summer, or subsequent fall; note that some clinical experience in year 3 is recommended immediately prior to starting outside placement in order to refresh clinical memory and/or not lose skills already gained; students may opt to pursue additional clinical experiences beyond those required by the program, either to maintain skills or gain additional breadth).*

The third year is typically focused more on PhD-related coursework, and on completing candidacy research. Thus, a typical schedule would be:

Fall year 3: Additional statistics course, PhD seminar, HESP626 (Language Disorders in School-Aged Children), possible final semester of in-house clinic.

Winter semester year 3: Possible MA elective course, possible MA thesis credits (HESP799)

Spring year 3: Generally, coursework will include either HESP724 (Research Design, 3 cr) or HESP 602 (Neurological bases of communication, 2 credits) combined with NACS 600 (Ethics in Scientific Research, 2 credits) – whichever was not taken in year 1. HESP624 (Voice) can be taken either here, or in year 4. Possibly begin HESP 728 (outside placement) here, rather than in fall of year 4. Continue doctoral coursework and research.

Summer year 3: HESP627 (Augmentative and Alternative Communication).

The fourth year returns to a more MA-focus, with outside placements consuming a large amount of the student's time (typically, placements are 3-4 days per week). Thus, a typical schedule would be:

Fall year 4: HESP 728, 3 credits (outside placement); additional doctoral coursework and research credits. By the end of fall, defend MA thesis or pre-candidacy research project.

Explanation: The MA thesis can also count towards the PhD pre-candidacy research. But the MA thesis is typically a larger project than is needed for a pre-candidacy research project, and students cannot take PhD comprehensive exams until a pre-candidacy research project has been completed. Thus, if a student has progressed far enough in their research to have completed a thesis, they can defend it, and move onwards to prepare for comprehensive exams in year 4. However, a student may opt to defend a smaller pre-candidacy project at this time, and defend an MA thesis later in their program. (For example, a student examining a clinical group might report on a control group's data for their pre-candidacy project, even if the full clinical population for the thesis was not yet recruited.)

Spring year 4: Outside placement if not already completed; HESP624 (Voice) if not already completed; Doctoral coursework; prepare for comps

After year 4, the student should have completed all requirements for the MA degree, except possibly for an MA thesis. Thus, the focus shifts towards completing the requirements of the PhD program, and possibly pursuing a part-time CFY. Some students may be able to complete the program after year 5, but this is heavily dependent on the student's particular research area, and our recommendations below presume a 6-year program

Thus, a typical schedule would be:

Fall year 5: Comprehensive examination; write-up research to date; identify area for PhD dissertation

Spring year 5: Prepare and defend dissertation proposal

Summer year 5 through Fall year 6: Dissertation research

Spring year 6: Defend dissertation

Additional notes:

While MA coursework is likely to all be within the department, doctoral coursework is likely to include courses from related departments; decisions on appropriate courses should be made in consultation with the student's Program Planning Committee (PPC). If the student is pursuing a NACS certificate, or an LSC Fellowship, additional time may be required.

CFYs can be pursued on a variety of different schedules. It is possible to do a half-time CFY during the 5th and 6th years of the program, or to wait and complete a full-time CFY subsequent to the program. A full-time CFY can be completed in 1 year (9 months) following completion of the doctoral program; this allows students to graduate with their Ph.D. in the shortest possible amount of time. If a student wishes to pursue a half-time CFY, the total duration required will depend on the number of hours per week. For example, a 20 hr/wk CFY requires 18 months of work; adjust schedules for other CFY plans accordingly. Please note that the responsibility to find a CFY position lies with the student, not the department.