Indiana University Northwest
School of Education

Masters Program Portfolio Handbook

THE CHECKPOINT SYSTEM

Admission to and progress in any of the five Masters programs in Education at Indiana University Northwest is monitored through a three-step Checkpoint system. For each program, the first Checkpoint is Admission. The Director of Student Services uses the Checkpoint One monitoring form to assess the student’s application materials. If the student meets the requirements for admission to that program, the student passes through the first Checkpoint and the Director of Student Services signs and dates the Checkpoint form. The student is then included in the database, assigned a faculty advisor, and an academic folder is created. The signed Checkpoint form is included in the students’ folder.

Checkpoint Two occurs at the completion of the Masters course work and is conducted by the Master Seminar instructor. At this point candidates must demonstrate mastery of Conceptual Framework portfolio outcomes I–VI, as defined below, meet grade and GPA requirements, and have demonstrated adequate dispositions. If these requirements are met, the seminar instructor signs and dates Checkpoint Two, includes it in the database and students’ academic file, and the student is authorized to enroll in the Masters exit course.

The Director of Student Services/Licensure Officer conducts Checkpoint Three for each Masters candidate at the end of their exit project. If the candidate has successfully completed his or her Masters exit project, demonstrated mastery of Conceptual Framework outcome VII, and met requirements for dispositions, courses, and GPA within the allotted timeframe, the candidate passes through Checkpoint Three and is recommended for graduation and the confirmation of the Masters degree.

DISPOSITIONS

The faculty of the School of Education at Indiana University Northwest adopted Master Educator dispositions to promote and support professionalism as outlined in state and national standards. Dispositions are introduced early and assessed twice throughout each program. Candidate dispositions are monitored and success in demonstrating these dispositions is documented through evaluation forms, candidate personal assessment forms, and faculty and staff observations and reports. Additionally, for those candidates who consistently demonstrate professional dispositions, instructors and staff can complete Exemplary forms.

For those candidates needing assistance in recognizing when their own dispositions may need adjustment, instructors and staff can complete Deficiency forms. This requires that the instructor, the candidate, and his/her advisor map a plan to remediate the deficiency. The Deficiency form is then placed in the candidate’s advising folder. Finally, all candidates are encouraged to reflect upon and improve their dispositions regularly. All candidates are required to complete Personal Reflection forms and discuss ideas on how they could improve their dispositions with their advisors. Evaluations of dispositions are housed in student academic files and are reviewed as part of the Checkpoint procedure for program completion.
The 14 Master Educator dispositions are:

1. Sets high standards and expectations for self, students, and colleagues
2. Continuously evaluates self for improvement
3. Accepts responsibility and demonstrates leadership
4. Recognizes a variety of ideas and values cultures
5. Is committed to providing a variety of ways for students to learn
6. Is committed to teaching all learners
7. Makes instructional decisions to enhance learning and teaching
8. Utilizes ethical principles in assessment decisions
9. Treats people fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect
10. Respects and fulfills personal and professional obligations
11. Cultivates and promotes a safe, caring, and supportive learning environment
12. Dialogues with colleagues and other decision makers affecting education
13. Collaborates and communicates with family and community
14. Demonstrates a work ethic and utilizes reflection to improve personal and organizational performance

THE PERFORMANCE-BASED PORTFOLIO

The faculty of the School of Education at Indiana University Northwest developed the Master Educator Conceptual Framework and a portfolio assessment system as the basis for its Masters degree programs. Programs are centered on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to become Master Educators who are adept in their profession, who incorporate a rich understanding of content knowledge and educational pedagogy into their practice, and who renew themselves and their teaching through inquiry and professional development. Outcomes were adapted from the standards put forth by the National Board Teaching Standards. Candidates demonstrate they have achieved these outcomes through artifacts they submit as evidence in a portfolio, and through classroom and field assessments, before moving to the exit course for any Masters program.

The Master Educator Conceptual Framework has been mapped to both national and state standards to ensure that outcomes related to pedagogical and content knowledge are addressed and assessed, comprehensively, throughout each Masters program. The learning objectives in each of the Masters course syllabi are linked to Conceptual Framework outcomes to ensure that all candidates are given sufficient opportunities to produce portfolio artifacts demonstrating that they have developed the requisite knowledge and skills.

The Master Educator Conceptual Framework addresses eight broad learning areas:

I. REFLECTION
Master educators think systematically about their practice and learn from experience. They consistently evaluate educational decisions in their teaching and management of the classroom and seek and use the advice of their colleagues and draw on education research to improve their practice. Reflection on practice is an integral part of coursework in the Masters programs. This reflection takes many shapes. From individual reflection on a candidate’s work in a journal or
teaching, to the reflection that is required to prepare a portfolio during the Masters program seminar, candidates are encouraged to reflect on their work and make modifications.

II. COLLABORATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Master educators are members of learning communities. They work with other professionals to improve school effectiveness, work collaboratively with parents, other professionals, and community agencies, and take advantage of community and private resources. Candidates work collaboratively with parents, other professionals, and community agencies, and take advantage of community and private resources. In the Master teacher education programs, this standard emphasizes how family, school and community are important and how they form the environment within which our candidates work and their students live.

IIIa. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
Master educators are responsible for managing student learning. They use multiple methods to create and maintain a positive climate for learning, orchestrate learning in group settings, and place a premium on active student engagement.

IIIb. ASSESSMENT
Master educators are responsible for monitoring student learning. They systematically assess students, use assessment results to drive instructional strategies, use multiple methods to assess student progress, accurately use standardized tests, and assure that student assessments are linked to instructional and behavioral standards and outcomes.

IV. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT
Master educators are committed to students and their learning. They acknowledge the diverse needs of their students and modify their practices, accordingly, understand how students develop and learn, accommodate students’ ability levels and learning styles, and treat all learners equitably.

V. KNOWLEDGE & INSTRUCTION
Master educators know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students. They are mindful of their instructional plan and purposes, understand how knowledge in their subjects is created, organized, and linked to other disciplines, utilize the knowledge of effective teaching to convey a subject to students, employ multiple teaching strategies that enable all children to learn, and use a variety of instructional technologies and teaching manipulatives to foster learning. Candidates demonstrate they are committed to providing a variety of ways for students to learn.

VI. EDUCATIONAL EQUITY
Master educators understand the importance of educational equity and its effects on schooling. They understand why working toward social justice in schools is important for educators, understand how educational policy is created and how educators, parents, and others can impact the creations of educational policy, treat all students equitably, and use historical, sociological, and philosophical perspectives to inform classroom instruction and management. Candidates demonstrate they are committed to teaching all learners, acknowledge the diverse needs of students, and modify their practices accordingly.
VII. FORMAL INQUIRY
Master educators use inquiry strategies to inform decision-making in the schools. They find relevant research literature and write a literature review, use formal inquiry methods to inform classroom practices or school policies and practices research and inquiry to renew themselves and their teaching, and conduct and report a formal inquiry project.

In order to assess candidates’ portfolio artifacts, a series of rubrics were created for each of the Masters Conceptual Framework outcomes.

CREATING THE PORTFOLIO

Courses in each Masters program have at least one assignment that is directed towards meeting one or more of the Master Educator Conceptual Framework outcomes. Additionally, candidates are expected to draw from their practice in demonstrating their mastery of outcomes. Portfolios addressing outcomes I – VI are assembled and assessed in one of the three-credit hour Masters Portfolio Seminars, K500, E518, or S512 and typically reside in a 3-ring binder.

To demonstrate his or her mastery of an outcome, candidates assemble evidence to address each of the major indicators of an outcome rubric. Then they write a two-page reflection on the concept, drawing from and citing professional literature to support their ideas. In the reflection, candidates also explain how their evidence demonstrates their mastery of the concept. Several pieces of evidence can be included to address a single outcome and evidence can be used as documentation of more than one outcome. The goal is for candidates to provide evidence of mastery of each of the outcomes. Because of differences in programs and professional experiences, candidates may use a wide variety of evidence to document mastery of the same outcome. The final portfolio will be a personal reflection of the candidate who prepared it.

The final piece of the Master portfolio, outcome VII, is completed and scored in the Masters exit class. This outcome, Formal Inquiry, is demonstrated through the implementation, presentation, and defense of the Masters’ project.

ASSESSING THE PORTFOLIO

The Masters seminar instructor scores portfolio artifacts and reflections I-VI using the Conceptual Framework outcome rubrics. Scores of 3 or 4 are considered passing. Candidates who receive a grade of 1 or 2 on an artifact and reflection will be given feedback by the seminar instructor and asked to revise and resubmit. The numerical scores are defined as:

4 = Excellent (clear, convincing, and consistent evidence)  
3 = Quite Satisfactory (clear and convincing evidence)  
2 = Needs Revision (limited evidence)  
1 = Unacceptable (little or no evidence)

Scored portfolio score sheets are included in candidate portfolios and copies are placed in candidate academic files. When portfolios are complete, they are made available for a minimum of two weeks for the entire faculty to review.