

# F.

## GRADUATE FOCUS AREA

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This section addresses the third major component of the MA in Applied Professional Studies (MAAPS) Program

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## Introduction to the GRADUATE FOCUS AREA and its Tracks

The **Graduate Focus Area** is the career-related portion of the MAAPS Program. In this section of the degree, each MAAPS student builds on their passions and expertise to set and then attain professional goals within their own area of specialization. To accommodate our students' interests and learning mode preferences, we offer four ways to structure a focus area in MAAPS: the Self-Designed (SD) track, the Educating Adults (EA) track, the Organizational Leadership (OL) track, and our new Social Change (SC) track.

In the **Self-Designed track of MAAPS**, students are afforded the opportunity to research and design their own area of focus or specialization. With the support of particular program resources in the early stages of MAAPS, SD track students create a **Graduate Focus Area Learning Plan** which will serve as a trajectory to their professional future. Rather than following a predetermined curriculum, the self-designed (SD) area of focus allows the student to curate their professional learning by selecting their own desired outcomes as well as the methods of learning to attain those outcomes. With ongoing advising input, SD students work with their advising team to customize their area of focus into an official graduate focus area that meets the standards of academia and of the professional field. The self-direction, advising opportunities plus flexibility that are features of the Self-Designed track of MAAPS allow students to create a fully customized graduate focus area in the professional field or fields of the student's choice, even if the area sought is outside of standard graduate programs. In fact, many SD track MAAPS students pursue emerging or hybrid fields in order to be at the forefront of emerging issues impacting their profession. The most flexible of all MAAPS tracks, the Self-Designed track allows students to create a focus area that comfortably fits their talents and aspirations. The only limits are the need to follow *six basic requirements* for creating customized focus area. Those six requirements *for a focus area are:*

- (1) *the focus area is congruent with the student's personal and professional goals;*
- (2) *the focus area is available for investigation (knowledge & competence development) in accordance with the program's Professional Competencies via 26 credit hours of study including an average of 10 hours of Graduate Guided Individualized Learning (GGIL) or approved alternative;*
- (3) *the focus area is described in a title phrase (75 characters in length) that specifies both the core activity to be studied and its primary context for application;*
- (4) *the focus area is not already addressed by existing DePaul graduate programs or by nationally recognized curricula leading to official designated licensure;*
- (5) *the focus area is supported by at least three years of experience (or equivalent) in the student's background; and,*
- (6) *the focus area is supported by a specified professional setting within which the student can practice, apply, and/or derive learning throughout his/her graduate study.*

**Structured Focus Area Tracks of MAAPS:** For students who prefer to hit the ground running by choosing an established focus area in areas currently vital to today's world of work, MAAPS offers **three structured tracks**. During the foundational core classes (AP 504 and 501, see below), students in the structured tracks work with a track champion who provides guidance about norms, standards, and emerging issues in the fields of either educating adults, organizational leadership, or social change. As with the self-designed focus area track, students in the structured tracks also complete a **Graduate Focus Area Learning Plan** to serve as their roadmap through the program. The structured EA, OD, and SC tracks have some track-specific required courses at the center of their focus areas, but their learning plan still allows some room for customization of the degree

through choice of electives, independent study topics, prior learning projects, and other learning options the program offers.

The **Educating Adults track** is designed for students working in diverse settings who are involved in the process and practice of adults' learning. Grounded in current research and best practices in adult education and learning theory, the EA track is made up of a set of core courses and learning activities which ideally can be applied in the students' own workplace/practice setting. Participants in this track deepen their knowledge and skills in the areas of assessment, facilitation, evaluation, and applied research to improve their repertoire of core and cutting-edge knowledge and skill as educators of adults. This track is for educators of all kinds--trainers, managers, coaches, teachers, and more.

Students in the EA track must take the four courses in the required course list to satisfy eight of the nine Focus Area competencies. The ninth competency, AP 520, Research Methods, is satisfied through LLS 450b. The four required Educating Adults courses plus the 450b research course satisfy the required 20 credits in the structured OL track. Students in this track are strongly advised to choose teaching and learning -related liberal learning seminars to supplement their focus area learning.

Required courses (subject to change):

- Enhancing Practice with Theory* (4 credits cover competency AP 510, theories, and AP 560, Larger Contexts)
- Facilitating Adult Learning* (4 credits cover competency AP 550, Organizational and Interpersonal Dynamics and AP 540, Communication Modes)
- Designing Educational Offerings* (4 credits cover competency AP 574, Reflection on Practice, and AP 585, Develop Further Ability in one of the Competency Areas-Supplemental)
- Assessing Adult Learning* (4 credits cover competency AP 530, specialized skills in the Professions, and AP 570, Ethical Issues)

The **Organizational Leadership track** is designed for students interested in developing and applying effective leadership skills to succeed in the modern business world. Learning obtained through the track's core courses will provide opportunities for students to positively impact their organizations by using enhanced leadership skills not only to find solutions to problems within all types of organizations but to advance their teams toward a forward- thinking collaborative vision.

Students in the OL track must take the four courses in the required course list to satisfy eight of the nine Focus Area competencies. The ninth competency, AP 520, Research Methods, is satisfied through LLS 450b. The four required leadership courses plus the 450b research course satisfy the required 20 credits in the structured OL track. Students in this track are strongly advised to choose leadership- related liberal learning seminars to supplement their learning.

Required courses (subject to change):

- Enhancing Practice with Theory OR Leadership, Change, and Positive Organizations* --(4 credits cover competency AP 510, theories, and AP 530, Specialized Skills)
- Leading through Evidenced-Based Decision Making OR Design Thinking for Leaders* --(4 credits cover competency AP 540, Communication Modes, and AP 550, Organizational and Interpersonal Dynamics)
- Leading for Social Change OR an approved alternative* --(4 credits cover competency AP 560, Larger Contexts, and AP 585, Develop Further Ability in one of the Competency Areas-supplemental)

□ *Ethics in the Professions* --(4 credits cover competency AP 570, Ethical Issues, and AP 574, Reflection on Practice)

The **Social Change (SC) track** is designed for persons whose practice involves leading effective social change in their communities and organizations. The core courses, relevant liberal learning seminars, and action-oriented capstone project will enhance their imaginative and responsible action through rigorous inquiry and networking and collaboration with other advocates. Integral components of this track are ethical decision-making, collaboration, change management approaches in the local and global stages, and inclusive perspectives.

Students in the SC track must take the four courses on the required course list below to satisfy eight of the nine Focus Area competencies. The ninth competency, AP 520, Research Methods, is satisfied through LLS 450b. The four required social change courses plus the 450b research course satisfy the required 20 credits that make up the structured SC track. Students in this track are strongly advised to choose social change-related liberal learning seminars to supplement their learning.

Required courses (subject to change):

□ *Leading for Social Change* --(4 credits cover competency AP 560, Larger Contexts, and AP 585, Develop Further Ability in one of the Competency Areas-supplemental)

□ *Enhancing Practice with Theory OR Leadership, Change, and Positive Organizations* (4 credits cover competency AP 510, theories, and AP 530, Specialized Skills)

□ *Leading through Evidenced-Based Decision Making OR Design Thinking for Leaders* (4 credits cover competency AP 540, Communication Modes, and AP 550, Organizational and Interpersonal Dynamics)

□ *Ethics in the Professions* (4 credits cover competency AP 570, Ethical Issues, and AP 574, Reflection on Practice)

## MAPPING THINGS OUT AND STAYING ON TRACK

Admission to MAAPS involves a number of interviews to ensure the best student to program fit and to begin from the outset the exploratory dialogue essential to a personalized graduate education. At the point of admission to the MAAPS Program, each student proposes an area of focus they wish to pursue through MAAPS. Specific plans for the Focus Area are worked out through the career mapping course called *Investigating Professional Pathways* (AP 504), the *Professional Planning Proseminar* (AP 501), and through ongoing interaction with the **advisory and support team** (Faculty Mentor, Professional Advisor, Academic Advisor and, where appropriate, Track Champion).

During the *Investigating Professional Pathways* (AP 504) and the *Professional Planning Proseminar* (AP-501) courses, students deepen knowledge of ever-changing professional fields and their own evolving professional identities to shape learning plans designed around a framework of nine competencies which have been determined to be essential to successful professionals in most of the important fields shaping the twenty first century.

The description of each student's Focus Area is found in Part I of their **Graduate Focus Area Learning Plan**. All students, especially those in the self-designed MAAPS track, will add additional details pertaining to the way their nine competencies will be achieved in Part III of their **Graduate Focus Area Learning Plan**. (See Guidebook Section G.)

## **PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES in the Focus Area:**

### **A Brief Introduction**

The Graduate Focus Area in the MAAPS Program requires students to identify, develop, and demonstrate abilities in the following key elements of professionalism:

- ▶ ability to understand the main theories/ideas that guide and explain practice in one's Focus Area (*Competence AP-510*);
- ▶ ability to engage various methods of research appropriate to one's Focus Area (*Competence AP-520*);
- ▶ ability to apply specialized skills appropriate to one's Focus Area (*Competence AP-530*);
- ▶ ability to engage communication modes appropriate to one's Focus Area (*Competence AP-540*);
- ▶ ability to understand the organizational & interpersonal dynamics within which practitioners in one's Focus Area define and fulfill their roles/responsibilities (*Competence AP-550*);
- ▶ ability to interpret challenges from larger contexts (e.g., temporal, social, or international) facing one's Focus Area (*Competence AP-560*);
- ▶ ability to analyze ethical issues involved within one's Focus Area (*Competence AP-570*);
- ▶ ability to engage reflection in/on practice within one's Focus Area (*Competence AP-574*);
- ▶ supplemental opportunity to further develop ability in one of the previous areas (*Competence AP-585*); and,
- ▶ culmination. (*See Culmination Options at end of Guidebook Section F.*)

### **ADDRESSING PROFESSIONAL FOCUS AREA COMPETENCIES**

**\*NOTE:** A fuller description of each of the nine competences listed above is included at the top of each Competence Page in Part III of the **Graduate Focus Area Learning Plan** (*See Guidebook Section G*).

The nine professional competencies form the structural framework for each MAAPS Focus Area. This is the case whether the method of demonstrating each of them is chosen by the student in the self- designed track student and their advisory team or whether most are demonstrated through the track- specific required courses in the structured (EA, OL, SC) tracks.

All MAAPS students must address all of the program's nine professional competencies.

Opportunities for degree customization come in the varied ways students may address their competencies. Students following the self-directed track have the greatest number of options regarding when and how they satisfy the nine competencies since they fill their Focus Areas with their choice of relevant courses, independent or prior learning projects, or other means of demonstrating the learning required to achieve their stated professional goal. Students in the defined tracks give up some degree of choice of how to address their competencies so that they may follow a structured plan already built around accepted standards in the track's professional field. In practice, this is because **several of their nine MAAPS competencies will be satisfied by completing their track-required courses**. However, the defined track students still have room to personalize their Focus Areas through approved substitutions and choice of electives, liberal learning seminars, and possible independent or prior learning projects.

*Some professional competencies can be covered by MAAPS program core courses* in the ethics, communication, and inquiry areas, though students are free to consider and propose alternatives where appropriate to their learning backgrounds and goals. Below is a list of competencies that can be satisfied by required core courses if appropriate to the student's learning plan. (Note: since each professional competence correlates to two credit hours, four credit hour courses can satisfy two competencies. Students looking to add an additional competency for taking a four credit hour course should confer with their mentor and advising team to make the best choice for the second competency.)

<u>Competency</u>	<u>Core Course Option</u>
Main Theories/Ideas (AP-510)	----- <i>Enhancing Practice with Theory</i> or approved alternative
Methods of Research (AP-520)	----- <i>Applying Systematic Inquiry</i> or approved alternative
Communication Modes (AP-540)	----- <i>Writing for Graduate Students</i> or approved alternative *
Ethical Issues (AP-570)	----- <i>Ethics in the Professions</i> or approved alternative

**\*NOTE:** The *Writing for Graduate Students* course cannot be substituted unless the student has passed the graduate level writing proficiency exam.

## RECOMMENDED COURSE TO COMPETENCE MATCH

Track	Recommended Course	Credits	Competence Match
EA	Enhancing Practice with Theory	4.0	AP-510 AP-574
EA	Assessing Adult Learning	4.0	AP-560 AP-570
EA	Facilitating Adult Learning	4.0	AP-530 AP-540
EA	Designing Educational Offerings	4.0	AP-530 AP-550
EA	Investigating Professional Pathways	4.0	AP-20 CORE COURSE AP-504
OL	Enhancing Practice with Theory	4.0	AP-510 AP-574
OL	Leadership, Change, and Positive Organizations	4.0	AP-550 AP-540
OL	Applying Ethics in the Professions	4.0	AP-570 AP-560
OL	Evidence-Based Decision Making	4.0	AP-530 AP-585
OL	Investigating Professional Pathways	4.0	AP-20 CORE COURSE AP-504
SC	Enhancing Practice with Theory	4.0	AP-510 AP-574
SC	Transformational Leadership	4.0	AP-560 AP-570
SC	Leading for Social Change	4.0	AP-560 AP-540
SC	Arts for Social Change	4.0	AP-530 AP-550
SC	Investigating Professional Pathways	4.0	AP-20 CORE COURSE AP-504



**Website Addendum for Self-Directed Track MAAPS Students:  
Building Learning Activities and Products in the Focus Area**