Professional Roles

The University of Michigan takes a strong pride in producing "the leaders and best" in all professions—people who are adaptive, transformational, and informed about contemporary issues in practice, policy, and research. In the professional roles of our master’s programs, the experiences you select should help you understand how to strongly influence both the processes and outcomes of education in a variety of arenas: organizational structures, decision-making, human relations, and curricular and policy matters.

Each student will declare an intended future professional role that provides guidance or a bridge to their future direction. The role that students choose is not a formal programmatic designation, but rather a piece of information about a student’s career goals that is intended to help the student and advisor determine relevant electives, cognate courses, and practical experiences to round out the full degree plan.

**Designer**

Students who select a designer role are interested in creating learning environments and their components. As a designer, the courses and practical experiences you select should help you learn about the range of conceptual, analytical, and methodological "design thinking" practices and how they can be applied to different educational contexts (e.g., classrooms, museums, etc). You should learn how to apply these practices to observe, describe, and understand learners, educators, content areas, and educational contexts in order to create different aspects of a learning environment, including new curricula and instructional approaches, students materials, learner-centered digital technologies and media, etc.

**Educator**

Students who select an educator role are interested in educating others and are committed to active student learning that values diverse talents and ways of understanding. As an educator, the experiences you select should help you improve your understanding of the challenges of classrooms in academic and other professional settings (e.g., museums, schools, corporations, etc.). You should select experiences that help you enhance your skills to prepare and teach coherent, cohesive lessons; integrate current ideas from research, technology, or practice into your work; communicate effectively with parents, students, and other educators; and continue to reflect on and refine your educational practice. You should also learn how to create and maintain an exciting, engaging learning environment. Note: this role does not lead to teaching certification.
Entrepreneur
Students who select an entrepreneur role are interested in being the creator and leader of new enterprises that bring educational products and services to the public at large. As an entrepreneur, the experiences that you select should help you understand the work involved in developing educational products and services and the issues involved in educationally oriented enterprises. You should understand issues of fund raising and fiscal models and the development of school-community partnerships.

Policy Maker
Students who select a policy maker role are interested in influencing or writing district, state, and/or federal educational policy or policy initiatives. Policy makers can include those who work with school boards, state or federal departments of education, professional organizations, or non-profit foundations, etc. As a policy maker, the experiences that you select should help you understand how educational policies are created, implemented, and evaluated. You should also understand the evolution and history of educational policy and the impacts that different policies can have on national and international educational systems.

Practitioner/Instructional Leader
Students who select a practitioner role are interested in either developing or enhancing expertise as facilitators or advisors (e.g., superintendents, curriculum directors, museum educators, school principals, literacy coaches, consultants, staff developers, technology coordinators, etc.). Practitioners see themselves as supporting or leading other educators or professionals in a variety of educative contexts. As a practitioner, you should select experiences that will help you support educators in becoming more thoughtful and knowledgeable about their practice. You should also select experiences that help you translate theory into practice, enhance your knowledge in a given area, and develop mentoring and communication skills.

Researcher
Students who select a researcher role are interested in being a discoverer of new knowledge and a constructor of innovative solutions to educational problems. As a researcher, the experiences that you select that should help you explore the type of work involved in academic research and give you a more detailed understanding of the issues involved in educational research. Additionally, taking a researcher role can give you a taste of research work to help you decide whether you would like to pursue doctoral work or other research activity in the future.