Department of Curriculum & Teaching
Teachers College, Columbia University

PROGRAM GUIDE:
MASTER OF ARTS (MA) IN CURRICULUM AND TEACHING
(MA-CURR)

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Program name: Master of Arts in Curriculum and Teaching  
Degree level: Master of Arts  
Department: Curriculum & Teaching  
Major code: MA-CURR  

The first pages of this Guide describe the Department and the Program, including purposes, structure, academic and other expectations, and construction of the individual Program Plan. Following these are a “Frequently Asked Questions” section and a section containing various important Teachers College policies.

The Program and the Department

The Department of Curriculum & Teaching, http://www.tc.columbia.edu/curriculum-and-teaching/, established in 1938, was the first of its kind in the U.S., a department devoted to the scholarly study of problems of curriculum and teaching across all subjects and all levels of schooling, from early childhood through the doctorate. The education of teachers, supervisors, and, as we now emphasize, teacher-leaders, working both within and without traditional classroom arrangements, has always been a priority. Broad questions about the nature, purpose, and design of curriculum and schooling, and about the theory and practice of teaching, remain at the core of all our programs.

Addressing such questions today calls for critical analyses of the ways in which curriculum, teaching, and schooling contribute to social inequalities, and for a commitment to educating for social justice. Thus, in all our programs, the preparation of teachers, educational leaders, teacher educators, and educational researchers is designed to provide students with the intellectual tools needed to re-imagine schools and other educational enterprises, with the ultimate aim of enabling all children, including in particular those who have acquired labels and those who have been, and are, stigmatized and excluded on the basis of race, first language, or country of origin, access to and success at a rich and critical education.

Our location in New York City compels us to focus intensely on the lives of children and youth who attend under-resourced schools and face complex challenges in urban centers. This concern, however, is compatible with and indeed enriches attention to problems of teaching and curriculum in suburban and rural settings as well as international contexts. A distinctive feature of the Department, and of Teachers College as a whole, is the breadth and complexity of perspectives afforded by a student population that is truly local, national, and international.

The Department and the MA program in Curriculum and Teaching are organized around three philosophical stances underlying Teachers College as a whole, reflecting its long-standing tradition of preparing teachers as education leaders: teaching as inquiry, teaching as curriculum making, and teaching for social justice. The overarching intention of the Master of Arts is to assist educators who expect to exert leadership, with their colleagues, in school settings and other curricular spaces.
Program Description

The MA in Curriculum and Teaching (MA-CURR) provides students a core of common experiences and shared challenges in conjunction with the opportunity to shape a course of study reflective of their individual needs, interests, and purposes. This 32 point program is designed for educators who wish to deepen their knowledge, skill, and vision as teachers, as educational leaders, and as developers and designers of curriculum. Basic premises of the program are, one, that teachers are necessarily and rightly adapters and designers of curriculum, and, two, curriculum specialists are properly grounded in and informed by first-hand understanding of teaching and learning and real contexts. Equally fundamental is the belief that educators in all contexts have the opportunity and the responsibility to orient their work to, and assess it in light of, ever-present, variously manifested, needs for and goals of social justice.

The program is especially well suited for students who are intellectually curious and who are ready to play a vital role in shaping their own course of study. It is organized around a core of common coursework, and associated field experience, dealing with principles, history, and skills of curriculum design and of pedagogy, in context of an alert and critical attention to social, ethical, professional and other challenges facing educators and children/young people in schools. Beyond these common requirements, MA students, working closely with an advisor, design a course of study reflecting their particular interests, needs, and desired area(s) of professional expertise. As a source of continuity, and a culminating activity, all students conduct an “Integrative Project,” focused on an issue, problem, and/or question identified by the student.

The MA in Curriculum & Teaching is designed so that it can be completed by full time students in three semesters (summer – fall – spring or fall – winter – summer). Such a schedule is demanding. It calls for strong motivation, a high degree of clarity about educational interests and purposes, and prompt, careful, planning and advisement, as well as some flexibility. A four semester plan may also be made and considered full time. The program may also be taken part time, in multiple configurations. Many students will find a four semester timeline, or a longer timeline if feasible or necessary, advisable. It is recommended that prospective students seek advising on this matter at the time of application.

Prospective students should please note that this program does not lead to certification. The Department offers other MA programs leading to professional certification (for those already licensed to teach) or to initial certification (for those not yet licensed to teach). There are also in New York State “independent routes” to certification: some students may wish to explore the feasibility of pursuing such a route in conjunction with the MA CURR. Please seek guidance from an advisor if you are uncertain about which program(s) might be appropriate for you.

Please see “MA in Curriculum & Teaching Program Requirements” for a detailed presentation of core and elective coursework and other requirements.
Advising

Students are assigned an advisor on admission. Ordinarily, that advisor is the faculty member who directs the program. In addition, students consult with other Department faculty whose areas of expertise align with particular student interests. The advisor works with the student to design a course of study that reflects and furthers the student’s interests, that is appropriately challenging, that constitutes a viable path towards timely completion of the program, and that conforms to program and College guidelines.

Students are expected to consult with faculty advisor prior to initial registration. Students draft a Program Plan, in consultation with advisor and subject to advisor approval. A program planning tool is available to assist with this process. This Plan will be tentative at the start, and will be reviewed and revised on a regular basis by student and advisor together. Entering students please note: You will need a PIN to register. The PIN will not be assigned until after you have consulted with your advisor and your initial plan has been agreed upon.

Integrative Project

The year-long Integrative Project is an opportunity for MA – CURR students to design and conduct a disciplined and searching study of an issue, problem, and/or question of particular interest, germane to the student’s curricular, pedagogical, investments and professional contexts and aims. These inquiries may take multiple forms, for example, action research, design study, or academic paper synthesizing and critiquing prior research. In all cases, an end goal is for students to arrive at a well-grounded, articulated perspective and/or a set of recommendations for their own practice and continuing thought. The Project provides continuity during students’ MA studies, and constitutes a substantial culminating activity. Please see “Program Requirements” for further details.

Practicum/Field Work

A 50 hour practicum is associated with C&T 4005, Principles of Teaching and Learning. This field experience provides students an opportunity for independent observation and reflection on teaching, learning, curriculum, and assessment in a contemporary context in New York City. In conjunction with other course activities, and students’ own prior experiences and current interests, the field experience often contributes to the formation of the inquiry question or design problem that will shape the Integrative Project. The placement is made by program staff in consultation with the student. Students who are interested in specific sites as possible placements should consult with program staff at the very beginning of the semester in which C&T 4005 is to be taken (or, for part time students, prior to the close of the prior semester).

Certification and Licensure

The MA in Curriculum and Teaching (MA-CURR) does not lead to certification. For advice on New York State licensure requirements, interstate reciprocity, “independent routes” to
certification, and related matters, please consult the Office of Teacher Education (OTE), http://www.tc.columbia.edu/office-of-teacher-education/ The Department of Curriculum and Teaching also offers an MA program leading to professional certification in New York State. For information about this program, please consult with your advisor.

**Transfer Credits**

No transfer credits into 32 point MA programs are permitted.

Interested students may wish to consider the Department’s Master of Education (Ed.M) program, http://www.tc.columbia.edu/curriculum-and-teaching/ct-programs/degrees/master-of-education/ All 32 points of the MA-CURR may transfer in to the 60 point Ed.M program. Students may apply to the Ed.M as they are nearing completion of the MA-CURR. Please note that two years of teaching experience are required for admission to the Ed.M.

**Grade Requirements**

The minimum acceptable grade for the core courses (C&T 4002, 4005, 4052, and 4114/4130/4145; excepting C&T 4502, for which see below) is B –. Students who do not earn the minimum must re-take the course, in its entirety, and achieve a grade of B – or higher. Tuition charges will apply.

With respect to other courses, students are advised that College policy dictates that no more than 8 credits at C – will count towards the degree; a student receiving more than 8 credits at C – or lower will be dismissed. Please see the College’s Academic Standards for Students: https://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/associate-provost-enrollment-services/academic-standards-for-students/

Please also note that, per Department policy, no more than six credits (exclusive of CT 4502) may be taken on a Pass/Fail basis. (Core courses may *not* be taken P/F; C&T 4502 is the exception; see below.)

The Integrative Project is graded as follows:

C&T 4502.01 (Fall) is graded P/F. A “P” means that the student is meeting at least the minimal requirements and making at least adequate progress.

C&T 4502.02 (Spring) is also graded P/F. Again, a “P” simply means that the student is meeting at least the minimal requirements and making at least adequate progress. A “P” for C&T 4502.02 does *not* mean that the student has satisfactorily completed the Project.

Satisfactory completion of the Integrative Project is determined by the instructor of C&T 4502.02, on review of final, timely submission. The instructor will communicate the determination, in writing, to the student and the advisor. If the Project is found satisfactory, the advisor will make the necessary notation in the student’s record (the academic audit).

A student who does not achieve Satisfactory completion of the Integrative Project by the deadlines stipulated in C&T 4502.02 (which are aligned with the College’s graduation timetable) must re-take 4502, for 0 points. If the student’s project has been deemed viable
but the report is in need of revision, the student will usually work independently with her/his existing 4502 instructor. If the project is not deemed viable, the student will need, on re-taking the course, to attend all meetings and fulfill all requirements given in the syllabus, and will be guided and evaluated by whoever is instructing the course at that time.

Should a student fail to achieve Satisfactory completion of the Integrative Project on a second attempt, the Program will decide whether or not to permit the student to continue in the program (and if the decision is affirmative, under what conditions).

**Academic Integrity**

Students who submit work either not their own or without clear attribution to the original source, fabricate data or other information, engage in cheating, or misrepresentation of academic records, may be subject to charges. Sanctions may include dismissal from the college for violation of the TC principles of academic and professional integrity fundamental to the purpose of the College.

The Department of Curriculum and Teaching reserves the right to decide on the appropriate measure in response to a violation of the principles of academic integrity. This decision will be made by the course instructor, in consultation with the program director and/or the department chair, and might entail: requiring a retake of the assignment in question, lowering the final course grade, failing the course, or being dismissed from the program and the College. Students have a right to appeal these decisions with the department chair and/or the Office of the Ombuds.

**Satisfactory Progress**

The MA program must be completed within 5 years. A student wishing an extension beyond this limit must petition the program director, in writing, providing an acceptable reason for the extension, and a plan for completion. If the student has earned at least 16 credits prior to the five year point, has demonstrated satisfactory academic performance to date (attaining at least a “B” average), and has proposed a reasonable plan, the program may approve the plan and recommend to the Department Chair that it be accepted. The petition will be forwarded to the Registrar’s Office for approval. Such a plan must conform to the program requirements in existence at the time of petition, which may differ from those under which the student entered the program.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**MA in Curriculum & Teaching**

1. **If I want to be a full-time student how many points should I be taking?**

   Twelve points is considered a full time load in the fall or spring semester. Six points is considered a full-time load in each summer session. With approval from your advisor, you can take up to 14 points an academic year semester.

2. **If I am teaching full-time, how many courses can I take each semester?**
Two courses a semester would be the maximum advisable during the academic year when you are teaching; one course is generally a more satisfactory load.

3. What if I need to be a full-time student for loan, housing, insurance purposes, but I can’t take 12 points?
During the semesters you are enrolled in a practicum (i.e., when taking C&T 4005, for 4 points) or working on your master’s project (4502 for 1 or 0 points), your advisor can sign a “certificate of equivalency” (COE) form indicating that the college considers you a full-time student.

4. How much time will I be in the field for the 4005 practicum? What about for the Integrative Project (4502)?
The 4005 practicum requires 50 hours of field work during the fall semester. Time commitments for the Integrative Project vary depending on the nature of the project, but students whose project has called for them to be in the field average 10-15 hours a week from October through mid-April.

5. What will the M.A. program cost?
Information about current tuition and fees, and more, can be found at: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/admissions/tuition-and-fees/
Prospective students may find it helpful to start at the Teachers College Admissions website: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/admissions/index.htm

6. What scholarships and financial aid programs are available?
Various scholarships and sources of financial aid are available, please see: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/admissions/financial-aid/

7. Do I have to begin a program in fall semester?
No. Students may begin the program in any semester, although a summer or fall start is appropriate for full time students intending to complete the program in three consecutive semesters. Prospective are invited, and entering students must, consult with Professor Roosevelt as their advisor about the start date that makes most sense for them; students are in any case required to get advisement before registering for their first courses.

8. I have questions about Teachers College, living in New York City, etc.
Good places to find additional information about Teachers College, living in New York City, orientation sessions, and more are: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/admissions/index.htm and: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/
Information about housing at Teachers College is available at: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/housing/

9. I want to browse the schedule of courses. Can I do that?
This link takes you to the schedule of classes: https://www.tc.columbia.edu/academics/courses/
TC Academic Catalogs are available at: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/catalog/
10. I want to apply! What should I do?
You can initiate your application here: https://www.tc.columbia.edu/admissions/admission/

11. I still have questions. Whom should I contact?
Please direct your questions to the Program Director, Professor Dirck Roosevelt, dr2692@tc.columbia.edu

Teachers College Standard Policies and Procedures

Non Discrimination. Continuing its long-standing policy to support active equality for all persons, Teachers College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, citizenship status, veteran status, disability, pregnancy, gender expression or any other criterion specified by federal, state or local laws, in the administration of its admissions, employment and educational policies or scholarship, loan, athletic and other school-administered programs. Rather, Teachers College affirms that it admits students and selects employees regardless of their race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, citizenship status, veteran status, disability, pregnancy, gender expression or any other criterion specified by federal, state or local laws and thereafter accords them all the rights and privileges generally made available to students or employees at the school.

Services for students with disabilities. Teachers College is committed to providing educational and professional opportunities for all individuals and assisting them in making their experience at Teachers College successful and positive. The Office of Access and Services for Individuals with Disabilities (OASID) works with all academic departments, faculty members, and administrative offices in an attempt to ensure that individuals with disabilities can participate fully and equally in the Teachers College community. For further information, including office location, phone numbers and more, please see: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/oasid/

TC email account. Students are expected to monitor their TC email accounts. For the full text of the Student Responsibility for Monitoring TC email account please refer to http://www.tc.columbia.edu/policylibrary/Student Responsibility for Monitoring TC Email Account.

Grade-correction procedure. The normal procedure for effecting a correction of a final grade on the official student record would be through direct discussion between the student and the instructor. If redress cannot be attained through such discussions, the student may next appeal to the department chairperson of the department offering the course. If resolution cannot be attained through appeal, the student may next appeal to the Vice Provost for Student Affairs. In situations where the student feels that such an appeal process might not be in the student’s interest, counsel and assistance can be sought from the Ombudsman or the Vice Provost for Student Affairs.

Office of the Ombuds. The College Ombuds is a resource available to students, faculty, and staff for resolving problems and conflicts. Members of the College community can use the
services of the Office when they need assistance or advice, or after other efforts have not succeeded. The Office provides information and explains options for resolving a wide range of problems and rectifying many situations affecting the academic or work life of members of the College community. The Ombuds responds to all concerns and continually works for a satisfactory outcome for all parties involved in a situation. The work of the Office is confidential, impartial, independent, and informal. See: http://www.tc.columbia.edu/ombuds/