

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**

EDPO 604 – B01 – Education Policy Implementation  
3 Credits, Summer 2021  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., ONLINE

**Faculty**

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**Prerequisites/Corequisites**

None.

**University Catalog Course Description**

Focuses on the implementation stage of the policy process and examines the interactions among education policies, stakeholders, and places. Provides students with an understanding of the contexts and factors that impede or promote the implementation of education policies and considers strategies for effectively achieving the desired policy objectives. Offered by Graduate School of Education. May not be repeated for credit.

**Course Overview**

Implementation failure is often why well-intentioned education policies do not yield the results expected. However, implementation is a complex change process that operates within several contexts, occurs at multiple levels, and involves a set of dynamic interactions among many policy actors, organizations, and locations. This course examines the importance of implementation in the education policy process, as well as its complexities and subtleties, and focuses on the critical factors that impede or promote ability of educational agencies and communities to accomplish the objectives of adopted public policies. By looking closely at the “who, what, why, how, and for whom” and tracking the evolution of policy implementation in education, including using case studies, this course will identify and analyze areas for potential improvement, discuss lessons learned to inform education policy design, and explore the implications for policy and practice.

**Course Delivery Method**

This course will be delivered using a lecture, group collaboration, and seminar format.

## Learner Outcomes or Objectives

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Gain an understanding of the contexts of implementation and its relation to policy.
2. Interrogate and examine the role of politics and stakeholders in the policymaking process.
3. Gain an understanding of the evolution of policy implementation in education.
4. Hone critical thinking skills through class discussions and writing assignments.

## Professional Standards

Not Applicable.

## Required Texts

Honig, M. I. (Ed.) (2006). *New directions in education policy implementation: Confronting complexity*. Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press.

Viennet, R., & Pont, B. (2017). *Education policy implementation: A literature review and proposed framework*. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 162. Paris: OECD Publishing.

\*Additional required reading assignments are loaded in the *Content* section of Blackboard and will be assigned to the course calendar after the first week.

## Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time via Blackboard.

## Assignment Overview

*Additional details for each assignment are in the section below.*

### 1. Mid-Term: Policy White Paper (30pts)

Students will choose an education policy and advocate for a particular position on that topic (6-8 pages). Students will make an argument to a hypothetical policy-maker or policy influencer on why the policy should be adopted and explaining how it should be implemented.

### 2. Mid-Term: White Paper Presentation (20pts)

Students will present their white paper in a mock policy meeting and advocate for the policy's adoption and implementation. The presentation will include supporting graphics, visual, an explanation of supporting research, oral arguments, and an opportunity for mock policy-makers to ask questions.

### 3. Final Policy Paper (30pts)

In this research paper (10-12 pages), students will identify an education policy and explore its implementation, highlighting the context and interactions of various policy-makers and stakeholders. After establishing the policy and its original intent, the author will use at least 8 peer-reviewed articles to discuss the complex dynamics around implementation, including potential barriers and challenges. The paper will include recommendations to policy-makers or to relevant policy influencers on how to go about enacting and sustaining the policy's implementation.

#### 4. **Final Policy Presentation** (20pts)

During the final class of the semester, students will deliver a 15-minute presentation summarizing their policy implementation research paper.

### **Other Requirements**

1. Students are expected to attend all classes virtually with cameras active. Please provide advance notice, when possible, if you must miss a class. On these occasions, please get notes and handouts from a colleague.
2. Students are expected to read all assignments prior to class and have them accessible during virtual sessions.
3. Students are expected to actively participate in discussions and activities and to treat one another with respect, both in class and on-line.
4. All assignments must be submitted on time. Unless prior arrangements are made, late work will be penalized by 2pt/day.
5. Other online requirements and expectations will be discussed the first day of class.

### **Grading**

This course uses the university-wide system for grading graduate courses. See <http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/grading/> Cumulative points corresponding to each grade are as follows:

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C	70-79
A	93-96	B	83-86	F	≤ 69
A-	90-92	B-	80-82		

### **Professional Dispositions**

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/>

## Class Schedule – Summer 2021

<b>Class Session</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Homework</b>
Jun 1	<b>Introduction</b> – Review syllabus; set expectations; build relationships; discuss policy interests; select policy topics; discuss current education policy hot topics.	McLaughlin et al. (2016); Honig, Chapter 1
Jun 3	The Lifecycle of Public Policy	Mason (2016)
Jun 8	Complexity and Policy Implementation	Honig, Cpt. 1;
Jun 10	Federalism: Policy Implementation	Ward & Tierney (2018); Ferguson (2017)
Jun 15	Local and micro-contextual factors; Co-construction	Honig, Cpt. 6; Deas (2018)
Jun 17	Communities of Practice	Honig, Cpt. 2; Viennet & Pont (2017)
Jun 22	The Roles of Cognition, Language, & Politics	Honig, Cpts. 3, 4, 5 (excerpts)
Jun 24	TBD – Reserved to cover missed material	TBD
Jun 29	Organizational Learning	Honig, Cpt. 7; Rigby et al. (2016)
Jul 1	Student Presentations	No readings
Jul 6	Critical Policy Analysis Approach	Honig, Chapter 8; Pak & Desimone (2019)
Jul 8	Economic Approach	Honig, Chapter 9; Dingle-Swanson (2007)
Jul 13	The Role of Social Capital	Honig, Chapter 10; Coburn et al., (2016)
Jul 15	Individual Paper Consultations	No Readings
Jul 20	Looking Forward	Honig, Chapter 11
Jul 22	Student Presentations	No Readings

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

### Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

### GMU Policies and Resources for Students

#### *Policies*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).

- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursesupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

**For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/>.**

## Mid-Term: White Paper and Presentation

### Description and Expectations:

1. *White Paper Topic* – A white paper is a concise statement of a position on a given topic. Students will choose any education policy as a topic for their white paper and advocate for a particular position on that topic. The topic may be an existing policy proposal, an idea for a policy, or a currently implemented policy that needs to be amended or re-authorized. *Note: Some white papers advocate for a policy's abolition. However, because this course is about policy implementation, you must select a policy you want implemented.*
2. *White Paper Purpose* – The purpose of any white paper is to convince a policy-maker to take a position on a policy. Therefore, the purpose of this assignment is to convince a hypothetical policymaker or policy influencer to accept your position about an education policy and explain how it should be implemented.
3. *White Paper Research* – Research for this paper will consist of at least 6 peer-reviewed articles relevant to the policy topic and policy implementation.
4. *White Paper Organization* (approximately 6-8 pages total, not including references)\*
  - a. Executive Summary – Identify the audience; briefly describe the policy landscape, how the policy expects to solve a problem, and how the policy will be implemented. Your thesis should argue how the policy's implementation will be key to its success. **(2 pages maximum – this matters)!**
  - b. Policy Problem – Describe the policy you want to promote and the problem it hopes to solve in detail. Describe the policy actors and their roles. Discuss the significance of the problem. (Approximately 2 pages).
  - c. Policy Implementation – What are the varying opinions and perspectives of the policy and how it should be implemented? Who should be accountable? Who are the competing stakeholders? And how will implementation be carried out and evaluated? (Approximately 2 pages).
  - d. Recommendations – What are at least three recommendations to policy makers on how to implement this policy successfully? Consider competing stakeholders and how to address varying opinions. Make it easy for the policy maker to approve your ideas. (Approximately 2 pages).
  - e. References – Cite at least 6 peer-reviewed articles that support your thesis and implementation recommendations.
5. *White Paper Presentation* – Students will present their policy ideas to the class during a class session to be determined on the course calendar..
  - a. Format – PowerPoint, visually effective, 15 minutes.
  - b. Audience – Mock policy-makers or influencers as identified by you as being vital to the policy's adoption and implementation. This is a hypothetical meeting where you will have the chance to get your policy considered by those who have the power to implement it.
  - c. Content – Define the policy's purpose, the problem it aims to solve, and how it should be implemented and why.
  - d. Research – Demonstrate how the research supports implementation effectiveness.
  - e. Visuals – Use pictures, graphs, flow charts, or other visuals. Keep type size to 24pts or above. Do not write full sentences on slides.

f. Question and Answer Session – Reserve 2 minutes for Q&A.

### Mid-Term: White Paper Rubric

Paper Section & Points (30 points total)	Expectations for Full Credit
Executive Summary (5 points)	The Executive Summary is a clear and <b>concise</b> summary of the entire report. Refer to example Executive Summaries reviewed in class for guidance. NOTE: This is the only time where page length matters – keep it short and to the point.
Policy Problem (5 points)	This section concisely describes the education problem and outlines the origins of the policy idea. The paper defines the policy actors, their roles, significance of the problem, and your firm opinion that the policy will successfully solve the problem.
Policy Implementation (5 points)	The author elaborates on how policy implementation will be vital to its success, citing at least eight peer-reviewed sources that demonstrate the importance of implementation and a theoretical foundation for the way implementation should proceed (i.e., complexity theory, co-construction). This section will outline the policy implementation context and potential challenges to successful implementation.
Recommendations (5 points)	Based on the above section, the author will make at least three suggestions for the way this policy should be implemented. The author will consider varying opinions and competing stakeholders, and demonstrate his/her suggestions will resolve the conditions and challenges presented in the above section.
Research (5 points)	The research used in this paper effectively supports the theoretical framework and importance of the implementation process being recommended. The research will be of high quality, appropriate to the points being supported, and cited correctly throughout the paper.
Clarity & Effort (5 points)	The author's style will be clear, concise, and persuasive. APA will be followed throughout with minimal grammar and/or spelling errors. Authors will use active voice.

### Mid-term: White Paper Presentation Rubric

Presentation Section & Points (20 points total)	Expectations for Full Credit
Clarity & Preparation (5 points)	The presenter was clearly prepared and practiced. The presentation was efficient, progressed smoothly, followed directions, and remained within the time limit. The presenter was articulate.
Visual Effectiveness (5 points)	The PowerPoint was not too wordy. Visuals were used to effectively explain the situation and support the thesis. The slide order made sense.
Persuasive (5 points)	The presentation effectively persuaded the audience (policy makers and other stakeholders) that the policy and the way it is implemented will solve the education problem.
Overall Knowledge (5 points)	The presenter convinced the audience that they had a solid knowledge base of the problem and policy solution. He/she understood the various challenges to successful implementation and had cogent answers to questions.

### Final Policy Paper and Presentation

## Description and Expectations:

1. *Research Paper Overview*: Unlike the white paper, the audience for this paper is academia, not policy-makers or policy influencers. This research paper will demonstrate your understanding of a specific policy topic and how it is/was implemented, or how its implementation failed.
2. *Policy Topic* – You must select a real policy under discussion at some level of government. While it does not matter at what point the policy is in the policy life cycle, the more fully formed the policy idea, the easier it will be to find research.
3. *Policy Research* – Students are expected to conduct research on the policy so that they become intimately familiar with the policy itself. Key points to understand from your research include:
  - a. What are the key components of the policy?
  - b. What are the policy origins?
  - c. What is the problem the policy is trying to address?
  - d. Where is the policy in the policy life cycle?
  - e. How has it been implemented? Or, if it has not yet been implemented yet, what is the implementation plan?
  - f. Who does the policy target?
  - g. Who is accountable for implementation?
  - h. How will implementation be measured?
  - i. How will the policy be evaluated? Or, has the policy been evaluated and if so what are the results of the evaluation?
  - j. How do different groups feel about the policy? *Groups might include political parties, politicians, teacher unions/groups, policy wonks, states, superintendent associations, or other stakeholder groups such as parent groups or independent education organizations.*
  - k. **Your Opinion!**: This will become your thesis. What is your opinion about the policy's implementation? What have been the implementation effects or impacts? Or, what do you predict the effects to be? How could the implementation process have been improved? Or, how could the implementation plan be improved? This piece is key and should demonstrate your deep reflection and passion about this particular issue. Also, be careful to ensure that your thesis is about policy implementation and not simply your opinion of the policy.
  - l. Track your sources!
4. *Paper Organization* (approximately 8-11 pages total, not including references)
  - a. Introduction – Briefly describe the policy, briefly describe the problem, explain where in it is in the policy life cycle, and briefly explain your position (opinion) of the policy's implementation situation. This is your thesis statement. (Approximately 2 pages).
  - b. Policy Description – Go into full details about the policy, it's origins, it's components, how it will address the problem, who it targets, and briefly introduced the implementation plan (you'll go into more details about this later). (Approximately 2 pages).
  - c. Policy Reactions – Discuss the policy actors and how they feel about the policy.



- d. Policy Implementation – Go into detail about the policy implementation plan. How will actors be held accountable? How will the policy be evaluated? (Approximately 2 pages).
  - e. Opinion – What is your opinion of the effectiveness of this policy? What should happen next? (Approximately 2 pages).
  - f. References – APA style. See me if you have questions about how to cite sources.
5. *Policy Presentation* – Your presentation will simply present the findings of the paper.
- a. Format – PowerPoint, visually effective, 15-20 minutes.
  - b. Audience – Academia (the professor and your classmates).
  - c. Organize the slide deck by paper sections: Introduction, Description, etc.
  - d. Opinion – state your opinion up front and continue to reference it throughout the presentation. This is your thesis.
  - e. Research – Provide an overview of the research you used to understand the policy and form your opinion of it.
  - f. Visuals – Use pictures, graphs, flow charts, or other visuals. Keep type size to 24pts or above. Do not write full sentences on slides.
  - g. Question and Answer Session – Avoid any interactive or participatory exercises during the presentation. Instead, have a guided Q&A session at the end: Don't simply ask if there are any questions. Guide a discussion using your own questions.

### Final Policy Paper Rubric

Paper Section & Points (30 points total)	Expectations for Full Credit
Introduction (5 points)	The introduction is a concise description of the policy situation. It successfully outlines the purpose of the paper and offers a cogent thesis expressing a firm opinion about the policy's implementation situation. The writing is clear and grammatically correct.
Description (5 points)	This section effectively and clearly describes the policy in full by explaining the landscape and context for the policy's existence. The author provide a full analysis of the problem, policy origins, targets, and brief overview of the implementation plan. The writing is clear and grammatically correct.
Reactions (5 points)	The author clearly represents stakeholder positions completely and fairly; targets of the policy are clearly identified; other actors are also clearly identified and their roles explained. Statements toward the end of this section should connect back to the thesis. The writing is clear and grammatically correct.
Implementation (5 points)	The author outlines every aspect of the implementation plan; discusses accountability, policy evaluation, and discusses the implementation situation. The implementation situation should be described in detail and include all contextual factors. Statements toward the end of this section should connect back to your thesis. The writing is clear and grammatically correct.
Opinion/Thesis (5 points)	The opinion section is used to bring all the research evidence together to support your thesis. The thesis expresses a firm opinion about the policy implementation situation and how implementation impacts the success or failure of the policy. The writing is clear and grammatically correct.
Research (5 points)	Use of sound research practices are evident throughout the paper. The articles selected support your thesis and other points. Everything other than common knowledge is cited correctly. The References section contains no errors in APA format.

## Final Policy Presentation Rubric

<b>Presentation Section &amp; Points (20 points total)</b>	<b>Expectations for Full Credit</b>
Clarity & Preparation (5 points)	The presenter was clearly prepared and well practiced. The presentation was efficient, progressed smoothly, followed directions, and remained within the time limit.
Visual Effectiveness (5 points)	The PowerPoint was not too wordy. Visuals were used to effectively explain the situation or support the thesis. The slide order made sense.
Discussion (5 points)	The presenter led an effective question and answer session using well thought through discussion questions. Discussion was enhanced with follow up questions and points. Discussion points were rooted in research.
Thesis Support (5 points)	The presentation referenced research evidence to support the thesis. The thesis and the research support were mentioned and clarified throughout the presentation.