



## Frequently Asked Questions – Noyce Science MTF Program

**Q: During this program, are participants paying for credit hours? If so, how much are courses per credit hour?**

**A:** If selected to become a Noyce MTF, one must commit to teaching full-time for 5 years. For each of these 5 years, one would receive \$10,000 as a “salary supplement” each year, for a total of \$50,000. Out of these funds, one would pay for the tuition and fees for the Ed.S. degree.

The current rate of graduate in-state tuition is \$341 per credit hour, so 60 credit hours = \$20,460 + fees. However, UNL is providing a 20% discount on up to 52 credit hours. Teachers can also apply to the state annually in the spring for professional development funds (which has been \$3,000 per year), if they are enrolled in a graduate program. If one applied for all 5 years for the \$3,000 from NDE, then that’s \$15,000. <https://www.education.ne.gov/educatorprep/eetp-current-teachers/>

We also will review graduate coursework from your master’s degree and allow up to 24 credit hours to be put toward the 60 credit hours, which is another way to decrease the cost of the program.

[https://studentaccounts.unl.edu/graduate-tuition#ay\\_res\\_block](https://studentaccounts.unl.edu/graduate-tuition#ay_res_block)

**Q: Are there any forgivable loans available?**

**A:** Teachers can apply to the state annually in the spring for professional development funds (which has typically been \$3,000 per year), if they are enrolled in a graduate program. This loan forgiveness program is called EETP: <https://www.education.ne.gov/educatorprep/eetp-current-teachers/>

Schools can also use part of their federal COVID-19 funds for “upskilling” teachers, which means teachers could ask their districts to pay for graduate coursework. It would be a district-by-district decision to do this and would likely only cover the first year, but it may be options for some teachers.

**Q: What is the difference between the two degrees?**

**A:** You can choose to apply for either the Ed.S. degree (60 credit hours) or the Ed.D. degree (90 credit hours) program in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education. Up to 24 credit hours from a master’s degree can be reviewed for possible transfer credit toward either of these programs. Very basically, the Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) degree is only 60 credit hours (with up to 24 credit hours from previous MA/MS degree(s)) and is most of the coursework that one would take for an Ed.D. While there will be a leadership project and report, it does not require a formal dissertation (or a comprehensive exam that the Ed.D. also has). People who want to work at a district office as a science curriculum specialist would benefit from earning the Ed.S. degree.

The Ed.S. degree focuses on science education with a certificate in education leadership. An Ed.D. requires more coursework in research methods and a minimum of 12 credit hours for designing, carrying out a research project, and writing a dissertation with a defense. The Ed.D. dissertation is



practitioner-oriented and therefore students in this program need to have a setting in which to do this type of research.

Usually only full-time graduate students enroll in the Ph.D. program, as it is designed for people who want to be future faculty in higher education and there are critical mentoring and apprenticeship aspects of this program (e.g., research assistantships, teaching internships, writing for conferences and publication) that require full-time status.

**Q: How old can transfer credits be?**

**A:** Any transfer coursework within the last 10 years can be considered for transfer credit hours by the end of the program. Students can transfer in credits older than 10 years from their master's degree program into the Ed.S. pending the supervisory committee's approval.

Therefore, as time goes on, the oldest coursework would start to drop off if courses are older than 10 years and approval requests would need to be made. Then, one would need to pick up more credit hours to replace the ones that cannot be kept.

If one decides to do an Ed.D., this is a 90 credit hours minimum program option (12 of which are required for the dissertation project), but with the same possibility to transfer up to 24 credit hours.

**Q: If I don't have credit hours to bring into the program, how would that affect my ability to earn the Ed.S. or Ed.D.?**

**A:** You can still apply to the program. It is not required that you have transfer graduate credit hours.

**Q: My master's degree is in curriculum and instruction. Would that degree meet the requirements?**

**A:** The NSF Noyce program guidelines allow for people to complete a master's degree, if an applicant doesn't already have one, within the first year of becoming a Noyce MTF. If you have already earned one, you have met the master's degree requirement. An MS/MA in curriculum and instruction is fine. NSF prefers to see that teachers also have strong science content knowledge, which could be a BS or an MS in an area of science.

**Q: What qualifies as a high-need school?**

**A:** We promised NSF we would give priority to teachers who teach in high-need/Title I schools, and this translates into middle schools with at least 50% FRL and high schools with at least 40% FRL. Nebraska's overall average has been around 45% FRL for many years. This is more of a guideline than the other minimums. In short, if your school meets these more specific guidelines you can reasonably apply to be considered for a Noyce MTF.

In private schools, it is usually harder to find out this rate because of not having to report to the state. Talk with your school's administration to find out what could be submitted for evidence of meeting this definition of high-need.



**Q: What if my school is not high-need?**

**A:** There is an opportunity to apply for just the graduate program itself and pursue an Ed.S. (or Ed.D.) degree as a practitioner-scholar to advance your professional knowledge. This academic program is a unique opportunity to be in a cohort of just science teachers to pursue an advanced graduate degree of this type.

There will also be a second cohort of MTFs and other interested students that starts in January 2023.

**Q: What if I'm not selected as an MTF? Can I still participate in the degree program?**

**A:** There is an opportunity to apply for just the graduate program itself and pursue an Ed.S. (or Ed.D.) degree as a practitioner-scholar to advance your professional knowledge. This academic program is a unique opportunity to be in a cohort of just science teachers to pursue an advanced graduate degree of this type.

There will also be a second cohort of MTFs and other interested students that starts in January 2023.

You can start in January as a non-degree student and then apply to the Ed.S. or Ed.D. program for the February 1 deadline (or in the year after with Cohort 2).

Alternate funding can be applied for in the spring for NDE EETP funding that is available to Nebraska teachers who are enrolled in a graduate program. <https://www.education.ne.gov/educatorprep/eetp-current-teachers/>

**Q: What is the timeline for the program?**

**A:** The start date of the program for Cohort 1 will be January 2022 and Cohort 2 will start in January 2023. The graduate degree program, National Board Certification, and professional development strand activities are designed to stretch across the required 5 years of service.

**Q: What is the workload/course-load for this program?**

**A:** There will be about 15 credit hours of academic coursework each year (1-2 courses each fall, spring, and summer). Courses during the school year will be in the evening and on synchronous Zoom to support teachers across Nebraska. Some summer courses may be in-person at UNL and most will be scheduled for during the day.

**Q: What are the required components of the fellowship?**

**A:** There are several components to the program. First, an advanced graduate degree (either the Educational Specialist degree (60 credit hours) focusing on science education with a minor in education



leadership, or the Ed.D. (see more info on this degree in other answers). Second, we will be requiring the Noyce MTFs to do National Board Certification. The grant will fund PD support workshops for this purpose. However, we will also open it up for others who are just interested in doing this certification, and for that they need to have taught for a minimum of 3 years. Finally, the science teachers who are selected to be Noyce MTFs will be required to design equity-focused teacher-leadership projects and work with us, NATS, and NDE to strengthen the existing Nebraska science teacher network and professional development opportunities.

**Q: What if I quit teaching before completing 5 years of full-time teaching?**

**A:** If an MTF stops teaching at any point before the 5 years of required service is completed, for example after 3 years, then they have to repay half of the Noyce funding. The service is not complete until 5 years of classroom teaching is finished.