USF MA in CTE Program Q & A:

1. Who is this degree program for?

Applicants to our online MA program are practitioners in the field of Career and Technical Education (formerly vocational-technical education). As a matter of fact, we require some experience in the field to be admitted so that participants have some context of relevant experience in which to relate the course concepts and activities. Most applicants are instructors or teachers in middle schools, high schools, post-secondary technical centers or community colleges. Some, however, serve in support or leadership roles such career guidance, supervisors, directors, student support personnel, etc.

2. What are the admissions requirements?

In addition to the standard requirements of the university, the program requires relevant experience in the field of CTE or closely related field and an undergraduate GPA on all undergraduate coursework after being admitted to upper level status (e.g., junior) of 3.0. We can admit a limited number of those with a GPA between 2.5 and 3.0 as "exceptions". No letters of recommendation and no GRE score is required.

3. Do I have to come to the USF campus in Tampa?

You will be coming to the Tampa campus three times each year. The most important on-campus session is initial orientation on a Saturday in August of year one. Then we'll have a wrap-up session in December to bring the fall courses to closure and for orientation for the two Spring semester courses. Your third time on campus is a Friday evening and Saturday in mid April for a social activity, spring semester wrap up and summer semester course orientation. This cycle of three on-campus sessions is repeated during year two. These sessions are mandatory for several reasons. The initial session is key in providing a means for participants to get to know one another face-to-face, taking cohort photographs, establishing group cohesion as a cohort and exploring Blackboard and how to conduct online research. The remaining sessions are important to continue networking with fellow participants, interacting with faculty and guest speakers and sharing information.

4. Are there any face to face class meetings?

Other than our Saturday orientation sessions, no. You will have to manage your time and stay on schedule as you complete the online courses.

5. How much work do the online courses entail?

Overall, online learning requires about the same level of time and effort as face to face learning does. The main difference is that in online learning more time is spent productively engaged in reading, viewing, interacting, etc. rather than traveling to and from class.

6. Can I pursue this program while also pursuing another degree or graduate certificate program?

No, this definitely would not be advisable. We've had a few individuals try to do this while also working fulltime and we have found that there is just not enough time in the day to do either program justice. Like any educational endeavor, you'll get out of the program proportionately to what you are willing (and able) to put into it.
7. **What kinds of things will I be doing while enrolled in online courses?**

While each course is a bit different, you will typically be reading from a textbook and from online journal articles and reports. You'll be interacting with the instructor and fellow participants two or three days a week. Also, you'll be viewing Power Point presentations and streamed videos, occasionally listening to podcasts and conducting research on the Internet. Finally, you'll spend a considerable amount of time creating products and assignments that are relevant to your role as a CTE practitioner.

8. **Can I transfer in courses I've taken elsewhere?**

The USF College of Education allows a maximum of three transfer courses. These must be from an accredited institution, directly or indirectly relevant to the field of CTE and no older than five years upon graduation. In addition, we only accept graduate level courses that have not been used for earning a degree. These courses must also meet the same objectives of a course required from our program.

9. **Does this program lead to Florida certification as Local Director of Vocational Education?**

Although there is no "approved program" for Local Director, the coursework currently in the program leads to certification as Local Director except for the need for one additional course in school law, school finance, etc. which can be taken at most universities. Keep in mind that if you substitute courses or transfer courses into the program, these may not apply toward Local Director certification.

10. **Do I have to take two courses every semester?**

Although the program is planned as a two year, two courses per semester experience, if your family or work situation prevents you from taking a course during a particular semester, you can take it later with the next cohort.

11. **Is the program accredited?**

There is no accrediting body specifically for graduate programs in Career and Technical Education, however, USF is fully accredited through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

12. **Will my school district recognize this Masters degree for pay advancement?**

Although our MA in CTE is not a degree in any specific program area such as Business, Technology, Family & Consumer, etc. all Florida school districts we have had participants from recognize it for pay purposes. We have been requested, however, to send documentation to a few districts to clarify how the assignments, products, etc. participants create in the courses focus specifically on their program area so that the degree can be considered “in field”.

13. **When will I graduate?**

If you stay on schedule, you will graduate in mid August of your second year. If you miss a course (or courses) and have to pick it up later you can graduate in December or May.

14. **Is there a comprehensive written or oral examination at the end of the program?**

No, but you will be assembling a comprehensive portfolio near the end of the program documenting your work.
15. Is there a thesis required?

No, but we do require participants to complete a substantive “Practicum” project during their last semester that serves as a means of consolidating and integrating many of the course concepts and applying them to their local setting.

16. Is there a field-based component?

Yes, during one summer semester participants make formal workplace visits to identify new and emerging competencies today’s (and tomorrow’s) workers need so these can be woven into the participant’s instructional program. If you have access to a “Teachers in Industry” program, that can satisfy this requirement.

17. What if I’m not in a CTE classroom or lab?

We have a small percentage of participants who are not CTE instructors who have found it productive to use a particular CTE program they are familiar with or one that they have supervisory responsibility for as the context for completing course assignments and products when there is a focus on implementation in a classroom or lab setting.

18. What if I live or move out of state?

Our program is approved as a distance learning program through the Southern Regional Education Board Academic Common Market. Participants within the SREB region can apply through their state to participate in our program for Florida in-state tuition if a comparable online degree program is not available in their own state.

19. Can I juggle two courses a semester, work full time and stay involved with my family?

Although it is a “juggling act” to keep all these balls in the air, previous participants have demonstrated that it is doable. The key advantage of online learning is that it gives you great flexibility in when you complete the activities required for each course. You won’t have a lot of spare time during the two years you’re in the program but it will go by a lot more quickly than you can imagine!

20. What hardware and software do I need?

You’ll need a fairly up-to-date computer and common programs such as Word and Power Point. If you don’t own these you can purchase them at the student rate at the USF campus bookstore while you’re on campus for orientation. High speed internet service is highly recommended due to fairly large file sizes and media downloads you’ll be using. The money you’ll save in not buying a parking permit and not driving to and from class will offset this cost. When you log on to the USF online course website there is a test you can run to insure that your internet browser is fully compatible.

21. Is financial aid available?

There is some financial aid available, however, not as much as for undergraduate students. Go to http://www.grad.usf.edu/newsite/fellowships.asp and http://usfweb2.usf.edu/finaid/ to see if there are any programs or loans you think you might qualify for.
22. What’s the difference between a Plan I and Plan III MA program at USF?

In the College of Education we have three types of MA programs, two of which we offer in the CTE program. Plan I is for those who have a degree or have achieved teacher certification related to CTE; Plan III is for those who do not have a degree or certification related to CTE. Essentially, the only difference in the two degree programs is that Plan III must have two “foundations” courses and a research course, whereas the Plan I only requires one foundations and a research course. Foundations courses are those in Psychological or Sociological foundations that address concepts cutting across most disciplines and grade levels. We have an online course within the department, “Improving CTE Programs” that counts as the research course for both plans. A social foundations course is offered by the College of Education online for our MA students which serves as the one required foundations course for Plan I and one of the two for Plan III. The remaining foundations course for Plan III can be one of many including an online course in career development.