



Sacred Heart  
UNIVERSITY

A GRADUATE DEGREE  
THAT MEETS YOUR NEEDS:

**THE ULTIMATE GUIDE  
TO UNDERSTANDING  
HYBRID PROGRAMS**

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You're ready to start graduate school — but there's a lot of options, and you're not sure which type of program makes the most sense for you.

### **You're not alone.**

Many students who are excited to return to graduate school don't know where to start, and all the options you see when you browse graduate school websites can add to your (understandable) confusion. In this resource, we'll explore the different options for returning to graduate school, and discuss why a hybrid program may be the best fit for your needs.

## WHAT'S A HYBRID PROGRAM?

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A hybrid program combines traditional, in-classroom learning with online education. Many students who value the in-classroom experience of a traditional program find that pursuing such a degree is impossible for them as they also work to advance their careers. It can be hard to dedicate yourself to attending graduate school full- or part-time while you're also working, especially when you factor in a commute to campus.

At the graduate level ([as opposed to your undergraduate degree](#)), your classes are likely to be small in size and more discussion-based. Depending on your degree, you may need to participate in a practicum or internship experience, which may need to be completed in person as opposed to online. As you browse through different hybrid programs, [consider reaching out to an admission counselor](#) to ask about any specific experiential requirements associated with the program to ensure that it is a good fit for your schedule.

A hybrid program can take some getting used to, but many students find that it provides them with the best of both worlds: face-to-face interaction and the convenience of online learning. Now, let's take a look at how a hybrid program actually works.

## HOW DOES THIS ACTUALLY WORK?

### EXPLORING DIFFERENT HYBRID STRUCTURES

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All hybrid programs have an online component and an in-person component, but the actual structure of the program can take several different formats. Here, we'll look at some different program options, allowing you to decide which of these structures would best meet your needs.

#### **Part-Time**

As you're searching for the best hybrid graduate degrees, consider looking into a part-time program. When going to school part-time, you'll be able to focus on work and other responsibilities, while still earning a graduate degree.

Discuss the specific requirements with an admission counselor, as some part-time, low-residency graduate programs allow you to choose how many classes you take each semester, while others have a prescribed course of study that you'll need to follow. Some options, such as the [Master's in Business Analytics at SHU](#), allow you to choose between part-time or full-time hybrid study options.

## Full-Time

If you're ready to take on a full course load, you'll be able to earn your degree quickly. Even though you're completing much of the coursework on your own time, you'll still take a full set of classes each semester, often totaling 9 credits or more. This is different from a part-time program that allows you to take a lighter course load or even choose how many classes you'd like to take each semester.

SHU's [Master of Public Health \(MPH\)](#) program is the perfect example of a hybrid MPH program that allows students to do some of their work online while still enjoying face-to-face interaction with their classmates and professors. Many students find that a full-time hybrid program offers the best of both worlds — flexibility and a quick degree completion timeline.

## Accelerated Programs

If you're ready to put in hard work over a short time, an accelerated program may be a good fit for you. Accelerated programs include a full course of graduate study in a condensed period of time. While these programs are hard work, they can be a great way to save money and put your career on the fast track to success. Take, for example, [Sacred Heart's Master of Science in Industrial/Organizational Psychology](#). This accelerated program can be completed in one calendar year through a mix of course delivery models.

While it's possible to work while also going through an accelerated program, it may be difficult. Talk with your admission counselor before beginning an accelerated program to get a good idea of the amount of time you'll need to dedicate to your studies each week.

### Evening and Weekend Classes

For busy professionals who work full-time, consider earning a degree that is offered through evening and weekend classes. These classes can be online or in-person and, depending on your program, may require you to travel to campus for one or more classes.

Evening and weekend classes can be the perfect way for busy professionals to network, enjoy in-person instruction, and connect with others in their field while still experiencing the convenience of a hybrid program. At [SHU, the Master of Business Administration program](#) offers night class options for professionals who spend their days working hard to further their business careers.

### Low Residency

Some hybrid programs allow students to complete the vast majority of their coursework online and only require them to come to campus once a month or once a year. These types of hybrid programs can be ideal for students who live far from campus, or for students who have busy careers with non-traditional schedules (such as those in the medical field). If you

do work a non-traditional schedule, you may want to speak with your supervisor before committing to the program to ensure that you're able to attend the monthly or annual in-person meetings.

Sacred Heart's [Doctor of Nursing Practice-Family Nurse Practitioner \(DNP-FNP\)](#), [Doctor of Business Administration \(DBA\) in Finance](#), and [Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership](#) are low-residency programs that can be completed through a full or part-time schedule. Additionally, the hybrid coursework only requires students to come to campus an average of six days per semester — a perfect solution for busy professionals.

## THE BOTTOM LINE: CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROGRAM STYLE FOR YOU

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As you consider the type of program that makes the most sense for your needs, it's **key to decide whether a hybrid program is a good fit for your schedule, personality, and motivational style**. An in-person program gives you the chance to talk with your professor face-to-face on a regular basis, while a fully online program allows you to enjoy the convenience of working on your own time. **When you're choosing a hybrid program, you're getting the best of both worlds in your graduate education.**

As with any graduate degree program, there are positives and negatives to learning through a hybrid format. Let's take a look at some of the pros and cons of a hybrid graduate education:

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability to form connections in-person</li><li>• No need to regularly travel to campus</li><li>• Complete work on your own time</li><li>• Continue in your career while earning your graduate education</li><li>• Can attend to family and social responsibilities</li><li>• Opportunity to collaborate with faculty in-person</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work-life balance can be hard to manage</li><li>• Being online at required times may not line up with your schedule</li><li>• Traveling to campus can be taxing or inconvenient</li></ul>

Of course, it's up to each student to decide if a hybrid program is the right fit for them. At SHU, our admission counselors will work with you to help you decide which of our degree options makes the most sense for your schedule and career goals. We're here to work with you, every step of the way.

As you consider earning a hybrid degree, we know that you probably have several questions, such as *is a hybrid graduate program the best fit for me? And am I making the right choice or should I pursue a more traditional education route?*

To find these answers, here are six questions you should ask yourself to help you determine if this type of program is the right fit for you:

**01** Do I have the self-discipline to work on my own schedule, while still submitting my assignments on time?

**02** Is my work schedule consistent enough for me to carve out regular time to study?

**03** Can I make the time to travel to and from campus for in-person learning sessions?

**04** Am I able to focus well at home or do I have the ability to go to a library/coffee shop to get my work done?

**05** Does my employer understand that I will not be available to work when I'm studying or attending class? And are they okay with it?

**06** Do my responsibilities outside of work allow me the time to complete a hybrid program?

Attending any graduate program will have its challenges, but it's important to decide whether you'll be able to work through these challenges. Think carefully about whether a hybrid program is a good fit for you, and talk to others in your life about the support you're going to need in order to succeed as you take on this new challenge.

As you embark on this journey, it's important to set yourself up for success in a hybrid graduate program. Having the support of your employer, professors, classmates, and family will go a long way in helping you to work through your degree while maintaining a low-stress level and to meet the exciting new challenges that will arise.

Assembling a graduate school "toolkit" will ensure that you're prepared to handle whatever graduate school throws your way. As you begin your hybrid program, be sure that you have the following:



### **Support from your family**

Talk with your loved ones about what you'll need to succeed, whether that's time at night to study, understanding when you need to spend the day on campus, or quiet time to participate in class discussions via video chat.



### **A space to work**

While it can be tempting to just work from anywhere, having a dedicated space to study and to attend class can go a long way in helping you focus. Your study area doesn't need to be anything extravagant — a small desk with the tools you need (notebook, computer and charger, pens, and pencils) can go a long way in helping you to feel like you're in class, even when you're at home.



### **An understanding of how your study group will work**

As you get started with your hybrid program, it's a good idea to form a study group with others in your class. Setting up guidelines on how your study group will work is key. Decide when you'll regularly meet and whether you'll communicate through text, video calls, an online group chat, etc.



### **A solid schedule**

Don't assume that you'll be able to get your schoolwork done during the downtime in your workday. Set aside time each week to study and assume that things will come up from time to time. Having a set study time as well as "emergency" study time (there to use just in case you need it) each week can help to ensure your success.



### **Support from your employer**

Be sure to let your employer know that you're starting graduate school (unless you're working toward a career change that you'd rather keep private). When you let your employer know that you're starting graduate school, they'll be more understanding of any changes in your schedule, and may even give you information about tuition reimbursement.

While researching graduate programs can be helpful in deciding whether a hybrid program is a good fit for you, hearing directly from students who are in the throes of a hybrid graduate program can give you invaluable insight.

Here, we'll talk with Brianne, Jena, and Stephanie, three Sacred Heart students who worked their way through hybrid graduate programs.



## BRIANNE LAURIA, MS IN ACCOUNTING

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### **What drew you to the hybrid format (over other learning formats)?**

Initially, I did not think a hybrid format was the right choice for me. However, the more I learned about the program, as opposed to other learning formats, it seemed like a great opportunity. This type of environment allows each student to have flexibility within their schedule. The program lets students not only achieve their master's degree but also work full or part-time and in the case of MSA students, study for the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam.

This ability for individualized studies drew me to the program because I was allowed to continue as a division I athlete while studying for my CPA exam and working toward my master's degree.

## **What was the experience in your hybrid program? How were you supported?**

My experience in the hybrid program was extremely successful. I felt constantly supported by the professors as well as my fellow peers. The professors were all readily available to answer all my questions and concerns. They were extremely committed to developing close-knit relationships with each of their students. They provided each course with a structured schedule where the expectations for each assignment were clear.

The program also provides the students with a choice of concentrations which, in my experience, is extremely helpful because it allows for a narrower focus and a more individualized program.

## **What is the #1 piece of advice you would give to a student considering a hybrid graduate degree?**

If I had to give one piece of advice to a student considering a hybrid graduate degree, it would be to stay organized and on top of the assignments. This type of learning environment requires an individual to be diligent with their work because there is not a constant “in-person” reminder. My advice to stay organized would be to establish a routine schedule and always stay ahead with your required work.

## JENA HOOK, MS INDUSTRIAL/ ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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### **What drew you to the hybrid format (over other learning formats)?**

Being a full-time employee, it was important to me that I found a master's program that would honor my commitments to my professional work while completing coursework. The hybrid format allows for flexibility in student's schedules, giving students the autonomy to determine the structure that is conducive to their priorities. I felt like the hybrid format allowed me to successfully manage my time while juggling the coursework as well as my personal workload.



## **What was your experience in your hybrid program? How were you supported?**

I feel that the hybrid program allowed me to develop a weekly cadence that allowed me to meet my deadlines. Additionally, given the flexibility to work full-time during the program, I feel that my classmates were able to bring real-world knowledge and experience into the classroom lectures expanding our conversations and building into the curriculum.

I felt as though my professors have a true understanding of my priorities and honored them while designing the curriculum. Oftentimes, being full-time employees themselves, my professors empathized with my duties outside of the classroom.

## **What is the #1 piece of advice you would give to a student considering a hybrid graduate degree?**

One of the most important things to consider when applying for a hybrid graduate degree is how you will design your personal schedule. In order to succeed in this structure, I feel it is important for students to understand their personal work ethic and time management skills to balance their competing priorities. Hybrid graduate degrees serve as a great opportunity to learn in an academic setting while simultaneously applying this knowledge in a real-world environment.

## STEPHANIE FIORE, FNP-DNP

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### **What drew you to the hybrid format (over other learning formats)?**

As a full-time nurse, my priority when searching for a graduate program was flexibility. I wanted to make sure the program would be manageable while working a full-time schedule. That being said, I also personally benefit from in-classroom learning so a 100% online course was not something I was looking for. SHU's hybrid program offers the best of both worlds so I can learn online while working AND have classroom time with professors.

## **What was the experience in your hybrid program? How were you supported?**

The hybrid program provided me the flexibility I require to fit both work and school into my schedule. While most assignments were completed online, professors were still able and willing to meet on campus (pre-COVID) and via Zoom (COVID-era). When I needed help with the online assignments, I used on-campus office hours and scheduled Zoom meetings at my convenience. This further displays the flexibility of the program and its faculty.

## **What is the #1 piece of advice you would give to a student considering a hybrid graduate degree?**

One piece of advice I would give to students considering SHU and/or a hybrid degree is how time management is a major factor when studying for a graduate degree. Graduate-level material requires diligent attention and in-depth analysis — a process that takes time. If the level of information is paired with multiple classroom days and a full-time work schedule, it might be too cumbersome, and students could potentially burn out or even drop out.

At Sacred Heart University, we offer several hybrid programs to meet the needs of your busy life. Some of our best online and hybrid graduate programs include:



## MASTER'S IN ACCOUNTING



When you choose the [Master of Science in Accounting program at SHU](#), you'll have two concentration options: forensic accounting and business analysis and reporting. With forensic accounting, you'll get to put your investigative skills to work, exploring topics such as money laundering and contract disputes. The business analysis and reporting concentration is perfect for those who think with numbers: tax issues and data visualization are tackled here. Graduates of this program have a 100% job placement rate, and often become CPAs, internal auditors, financial planners, and more.

Students can complete this program in as little as one year, full-time. The program is offered in a unique hybrid format that supports full-time employment by blending online courses with monthly Saturday seminars on campus from 9 AM to 5 PM.



## MASTER'S IN JOURNALISM & MEDIA PRODUCTION

Passionate about storytelling and media? [SHU's Journalism & Media Production program](#) may be a good fit for you. You'll learn about the intersection of media and culture, ethics in media, and you'll develop your own digital portfolio, allowing you to share your new skills with your current or future employers.

Courses in the program are offered in six, eight-week segments. Depending on the schedule that makes the most sense for them, students have two program completion options: they can finish their degree in one year by taking classes two nights a week, or in two years by taking classes one night a week.





## MASTER'S IN BUSINESS ANALYTICS

Want to learn how to move businesses forward? [SHU's Business Analytics program](#) will allow you to do exactly that. This master's program allows students to take complex data and transform it into recommendations that take businesses to the next level. Students emerge from this program proficient in Python, Tableau, and PowerBI, and are ready to work with companies in any industry to help them utilize their data to create growth.

The hybrid format allows students to start at multiple times during the year. Students who enroll in the program, participate in both online courses and select on-campus Saturdays.



A hybrid degree requires a support team that is ready on all fronts. At Sacred Heart University, we are proud to help you get started on the right path with hands-on support from our team of admission professionals. If you're ready to get started with your graduate education, our team is excited to get to know you!

You can request more information about your program of interest, or you can schedule a call to discuss how one of our hybrid programs might meet your needs. Whatever program you need to reach your career goals, we'll help you find a degree that's a great fit.

[\*\*Request More Information\*\*](#)[\*\*Schedule A Call\*\*](#)[\*\*Apply Now\*\*](#)