Graduate Programs in Special Education Handbook

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Accessibility notice:
Wayne State College is committed to providing information that is accessible to all users. If you experience difficulty accessing the information in this document or require it in an alternative format, please contact the Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership at 402-375-7389. We will work with you to provide the information or assistance you need in an accessible format.

MSE and Endorsement Programs in Special Education

This handbook is designed to assist faculty and graduate students in understanding the various components of graduate studies in special education.

Graduate studies in special education is an online program with field experience options designed for professionals and districts to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities and their families. The program offers four unique pathways for current educators or for anyone with a bachelor's degree seeking initial teaching certification in special education.

Master of Science (MSE) in Special Education:

- ***Special Education Advanced Study:*** For graduate students who currently hold a teaching certification in Special Education and are seeking advanced study in Special Education at the same endorsement level as their current certification.

- ***Special Education Generalist Additional Certification:*** For graduate students who hold a current teaching certification in an area other than Special Education and want to add a Special Education subject endorsement at either the K-8 and/or 6-12 level; or for graduate students who hold a current teaching certification in Special Education (K-8 or 6-12) and want to change it to a K-12 field endorsement.

- ***Special Education Generalist Initial Certification:*** Graduate students who do not currently hold a teaching certificate but wish to pursue initial certification as a Special Education Generalist will be required to meet all MSE program requirements plus all required benchmarks for becoming a teacher candidate before being allowed to advance beyond 15 hours on the MSE program. Initial certification requires completion of 100 hours of practicum experience plus one full semester (6-12 credit hours) of clinical practice. Students may choose either a subject endorsement (K-8 or 6-12) or the field endorsement (K-12).

Endorsement in Special Education:

- ***Special Education Generalist Additional Certification (non-degree seeking):*** For graduate students who hold a current teaching certification in an area other than Special Education and want to add a Special Education subject endorsement at either the K-8 and/or 6-12 level; or for graduate students who hold a current teaching certification in Special Education (K-8 or 6-12) and want to change it to a K-12 field endorsement.

Faculty Advisor Information

At the time of admission, the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences office assistant will assign the graduate student a faculty advisor whose function is to help in completing the program of study, render guidance and support whenever possible, and represent the graduate student in any matter pertinent to their graduate program. Advisors will be familiar with the courses and procedures, maintain a file on each advisee, and be available to the advisee through appointments or office hours.

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Program Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Performance Indicators (PIs)

SLO 1: Analyze literature to improve professional practices.
- PI 1.1: Connect research and content knowledge to professional practices.
- PI 1.2: Synthesize scholarly literature.
- PI 1.3: Formulate recommendations to improve future professional opportunities.
- PI 1.4: Reflect on life-long learning inquiry.

SLO 2: Develop learning environments that promote student achievement.
- PI 2.1: Adhere to ethical, legal, and professional standards.
- PI 2.2: Incorporate individual student differences throughout curricula design.
- PI 2.3: Evaluate instructional practices using differentiated approaches.
- PI 2.4: Distinguish how language, culture, and family background influence learning.

SLO 3: Cultivate professional relationships with all stakeholders.
- PI 3.1: Communicate complex ideas persuasively respecting multiple perspectives.
- PI 3.2: Lead collaborations with stakeholders.

SLO 4: Use evidence-based inclusive practices to develop meaningful learning experiences for students with special educational needs in accordance with relevant legislation.
- PI 4.1: Implement developmentally appropriate instructional strategies.
- PI 4.2: Assess student needs using multiple methods for informed decision making.
- PI 4.3: Incorporate the theory and elements of effective culturally responsive education.

Admission to the Program

All students admitted to graduate studies must also be admitted to the Special Education graduate program.

- Successful completion of a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution.
- Have a 2.75 or above undergraduate cumulative GPA and/or graduate transfer credits with a GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- Complete and submit the online **https://www.wsc.edu/admissions-application** including the following:
  - Certification History Form
  - Official Transcripts
  - Statement of Purpose **not applicable to non-degree seeking programs*

- References **not applicable to non-degree seeking programs*

- Upon admission to the graduate program for special education, graduate students receive access to a Graduate Advisee site in Canvas (the Learning Management System used by WSC for all special education graduate courses) containing information on the processes and procedures related to the graduate programs in special education.

Transfer Credit

A maximum of 18 graduate credits, subject to evaluation by the Dean of Education and Behavioral Sciences, may be transferred from another regionally accredited graduate institution and applied toward a degree. Credit that has been applied toward an earned degree will not be accepted except for courses that are part of the Core Requirements for an MSE in Special Education. In order for transfer credit to be considered, the final course grade must be a "B" or better.

Financial Aid

Financial Aid information may be obtained from the Financial Aid Office at WSC. Contact the Financial Aid Office at 402-375-7229 or by email at finaid@wsc.edu.

Communications

Information will be communicated to students via their WSC email. Therefore, students should check their WSC email regularly. Students should also set their Canvas notifications to be forwarded to their WSC email account daily as well.

Professional and Ethical Practices

Nebraska Educators are guided by Title 92, Chapter 27: Professional Practices. This applies to all persons holding administrative, teaching, or special services certificates. Violations of the standards are just cause for the suspension or revocation of a certificate or may result in an admonishment or reprimand by the Commissioner of Education. For more information refer to https://www.education.ne.gov/nderule/professional-practices-criteria/

Special Education teachers are also guided by the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) ethical principles and practice standards in ways that respect the diverse characteristics and needs of individuals with exceptionalities and their families. For more information refer to https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards/ethical-principles-and-practice-standards

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Preparation Standards

2020 Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Special Educators

2015 Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards

2024 Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Gifted Educators

Human Relations Training Standards

1. An awareness and understanding of the values, lifestyles, contributions, and history of a pluralistic society.
2. The ability to recognize and deal with dehumanizing biases, including, but not limited to, sexism, racism, prejudice, and discrimination, and an awareness of the impact such biases have on interpersonal relations.
3. The ability to translate knowledge of human relations into attitudes, skills, and techniques which result in favorable experiences for students.
4. The ability to recognize the ways in which dehumanizing biases may be reflected in instructional materials.
5. Respect for human dignity and individual rights.
6. The ability to relate effectively to other individuals and to groups in a pluralistic society other than the applicant's own.

Checklist for Continuance in Graduate Program

- Graduate students must maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 to continue in good standing. Graduate students who do not maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 will be placed on probation for the next six (6) credit hours. If a graduate student fails to raise their GPA to a 3.0, they may be removed from their program. Appeals should be directed to the Dean of the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences for guidelines and forms initiating the appeal.

- Before completing 9 credit hours, graduate students work with their advisor to complete the appropriate Program of Study form. Graduate students wishing to make changes to their Program of Study after it is filed will need their advisor's approval. Substantial changes may require a new Program of Study form as determined by the graduate student's advisor.

- Complete the Orientation Module and Acknowledgement Statement in the Canvas Graduate Advisee site.

- Complete the Entry Survey in Anthology Portfolio during the first semester. Graduate students will self-assess their current performance in relation to 10 InTASC standards, 3 CEC standards, and 4 Professional Dispositions.

- Submit Key Assessments in conjunction with each special education course in Anthology Portfolio.

- At approximately 15 credit hours, participate in a Progress Interview video conference with special education faculty to discuss professional growth within coursework and prepare for graduation / completion of the program.

- After the Progress Interview, complete mid-program online survey as provided by special education faculty for program evaluation purposes.

- Graduate students completing Field Experience **if applicable in your Program of Study*

- For graduate students enrolling in Practicum Field Experience (SPD 561 and/or SPD 562), complete the Practicum Placement Choice Form and Assumption of Risk Form in Anthology Portfolio.

- For graduate students completing the Clinical Practice Field Experience (SPD 658 and/or SPD 660) complete the required background check and the Application for Clinical Practice in Anthology Portfolio.

Failure to complete any of these requirements will result in a registration hold prohibiting the graduate student from enrolling in future courses until the applicable requirements have been met.

Course Rotation Schedule *(subject to change)*

Core courses

Course Number	Course name	When course is offered
EDU 603	Introduction to Educational Research and Design	Fall, Spring, May (8-week)
EDU 621	Education Program Orientation (online seminar)	Fall, Spring, June (5-week)
SPD 545	Assessment Guiding IEP Development	Fall
SPD 611	Organization & Administration of Special Education	Fall, Spring, July (5-week)
SPD 636	Social-Emotional Behavior	Spring

One-time online seminar for Initial Certification Only

Course Number	Course name	When course is offered
EDU 545	Preparing for Level 3	Fall, Spring

Content courses

Course number.	Course name	When course is offered
SPD 520	Best Practices in Special Education Methods	Fall
SPD 522	Teaching Exceptional Learners in Inclusive Classrooms	Fall
SPD 540	Program Design in Special Education	June (5-week)
SPD 560	Alternative Curriculum, Modifications, and Transitions	Spring
SPD 561	Practicum in Special Education (K-8)	Fall, Spring
SPD 562	Practicum in Special Education (6-12)	Fall, Spring
SPD 565	Differentiated Methodology	Spring
SPD 630	History & Characteristics of Exceptionalities	July (5-week)
SPD 652	Collaboration & Co-teaching	June (5-week)
SPD 658	Clinical Practice for Special Education K-8	Fall, Spring
SPD 660	Clinical Practice for Special Education 6-12	Fall, Spring

Grades and Course Numbers

No grade below a “C” (“C-” will not be accepted) in a WSC graduate-level course (500, 600, 700) will be accepted toward completion of a graduate studies in special education program. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 must be maintained. A student cannot elect to receive a S/NC grade for any of the courses in graduate studies for special education.

Academic Integrity

The Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership faculty considers any violation of academic integrity a serious offense and may result in dismissal from graduate programs in Special Education. Please refer to the WSC Academic Integrity Policy found at https://www.wsc.edu/catalog and within each course syllabus.

Violations of Academic Integrity come in many forms and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Plagiarism*
- Cheating
- Fabrication and falsification
- Facilitating violations of academic integrity

*Note on Self-Plagiarism / Double Assignments: The use of one assignment (e.g. lesson plan, research paper) to fulfill the requirements of more than one graded activity will be considered a violation of the WSC Academic Integrity Policy, unless the graduate student has received prior permission from the appropriate instructor(s).

Time Limit

Requirements for the degree must be met within ten (10) calendar years. Courses to be applied toward fulfilling the requirements of any graduate program, including any which may have been transferred from another institution, must have been completed within the ten (10) years immediately preceding the date of completion of requirements for the program.

For MSE SPD Advanced Studies:

After one year (12+ months) of completing coursework the student must reapply to WSC and the SPD graduate program and complete additional coursework as required in the current catalog.

For MSE SPD Generalist Additional Certification:

After one year (12+ months) of completing coursework the student must reapply to WSC and the SPD graduate program and complete additional coursework as required in the current catalog.

For MSE SPD Generalist Initial Certification:

Within one year (up to 12 months) of completing all other coursework the student is required to complete Clinical Practice.

After one year but before 5 years (1-4 years) of completing all other coursework the student must reapply to WSC and the SPD graduate program and complete additional coursework as required in the current catalog before completing their Clinical Practice.

After 5 years (5+ years) of completing all other coursework the student must reapply to WSC and the SPD graduate program and complete additional coursework as required in the current catalog including repeating SPD 561 and/or SPD 562 Practicum in SPD before completing their Clinical Practice.

Checklist for Completion of Program

- Submit an application for Graduation through your Wildcats Online no later than one full

semester before you intend to graduate. Instruction information can be found at https://www.wsc.edu/records-registration/graduation-application
**not applicable to non-degree seeking programs*

- Complete all required coursework per Program of Study.
- Have submitted all Key Assessments in Anthology Portfolio for all SPD coursework taken at WSC.
- Obtain a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA.
- Complete end-program online survey as provided by special education faculty for program evaluation purposes.

Certification

The Director of Education Services is the Certification Officer for WSC. Graduate students who are seeking initial certification or adding an endorsement through Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) must apply for certification at https://teach.education.ne.gov. Graduate students must request official transcripts to be sent to the NDE through Wildcats Online. The certification application process can take several weeks so graduate students should apply at least 6 weeks in advance. If a graduate student requests transcripts before completing their degree, chose "hold for degree completion" (even if non-degree seeking). The graduate student should contact the WSC Certification Officer, Brook Jech, at brjech1@wsc.edu or 402-375-7373 to process any special education endorsements for their teaching certificate.

Website Links to Graduate Programs in Special Education Documents

- Initial Certification Benchmarks at https://www.wsc.edu/downloads/file/2834/benchmarks-for-successful-advancement-in-educator-preparation-mse-special-education
- Programs of Study for MSE in Special Education at https://www.wsc.edu/special-education-masters-degree
- Program of Study for non-degree https://www.wsc.edu/graduate-programs/special-education-graduate-endorsement
- WSC Academic Catalog at https://www.wsc.edu/academics/course-catalog
- Graduate Admissions at https://www.wsc.edu/graduate-admissions