




Graduate Programs in Special Education Handbook

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Wayne State College
School of Education and Behavioral Sciences
1111 Main Street
Benthack Hall 111
Wayne, NE 68787
402-375-7389

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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 for 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 add the other subject endorsement level. Total credit hours vary based on current level of certification and level of Special Education subject endorsement desired.
- **Special Education for 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 (12 credit hours) of clinical practice which includes participation in all on-campus seminars. Field Endorsement level is K-12.

Endorsement in Special Education:

- **Special Education Subject Endorsement (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 add the other subject endorsement level. Total credit hours vary based on current level of certification and level of Special Education subject endorsement desired.

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.

Dr. Kristina Nelsen
Associate Professor

Benthack 205-M

402-375-7386

KrNelse1@wsc.edu

Dr. Leigh Scruggs
Associate Professor

Benthack 205-L

402-375-7011

LeScrug1@wsc.edu

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 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 the 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 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](#)

[Advanced Special Education Preparation](#)

Initial Gifted Educator Preparation Standards

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.
- Complete the Application for Final Scholarly Artifact – Comprehensive Exam

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

- Graduate students completing Field Experience **if applicable in your Program of Study*
 - For graduate students enrolling in Practicum Field Experience (SPD 561), 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 626	Advanced Educational Psychology	Fall, July (5-week)
EDU 627	Currents Issues and Trends in Education	Fall, June (5-week)
EDU 658	Fundamentals of Curriculum Development PK- 16	Spring, July (5-week)

One time online seminars

Course Number	Course name	When course is offered
EDU 621	Education Program Orientation (0-credit, 1 time online seminar)	Fall, Spring, June (5-week)
EDU 525	Preparing for Level 2	Fall, Spring
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 545	Assessment Guiding IEP Development	Fall
SPD 561	Practicum in Special Education	Fall, Spring
SPD 565	Differentiated Methodology	Spring
SPD 611	Organization and Administration of Special Education	Spring, June (5-week), July (5-week)
SPD 630	History & Characteristics of Exceptionalities	July (5-week)
SPD 636	Social-Emotional Behavior	Spring
SPD 652	Collaboration & Co-teaching	June (5-week)
SPD 658	Clinical Practice for Special Education K-6	Fall, Spring
SPD 660	Clinical Practice for Special Education 7-12	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 course receiving an S/NC grade cannot be used in graduate studies for special education (aside from SPD 658 Clinical Practice K-6 & SPD 660 Clinical Practice 7-12).

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 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. There are additional time limits for completing the Final Scholarly Artifact Requirement and Clinical Practice once all coursework is completed.

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/info/20039/records_and_registration/133/graduation_requirements.
**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 an approved Final Scholarly Artifact – Comprehensive Exam.
 - Upload the final artifact documents into Anthology Portfolio after receiving approval.
- Complete end-program online survey as provided by special education faculty for program evaluation purposes.

Final Scholarly Artifact - Comprehensive Exam

A graduate level scholarly artifact is a graduation requirement for the Master of Science in Education (MSE) degree. For the MSE in Special Education the graduate scholarly artifact is the comprehensive exam which demonstrates the graduate student's ability to meet all of the

following criteria: (1) knowledge of research and the skills of inquiry, (2) depth of thought, organization, competence in the discipline, and the ability to reflect on practice, and (3) writing proficiency at the graduate level.

Graduate students must submit their Final Scholarly Artifact – Comprehensive Exam application to their advisor when the graduate student nears completion of 24 credit hours. Graduate students will receive an email from their advisor when their application is approved with next steps to access the Comprehensive Exam through Canvas.

Minimum requirements are as follows:

- 15-20 pages of content
- correct use of current APA documentation
- reference page that reflects a broad awareness and understanding of research appropriate for graduate study

A typical comprehensive examination provides the MSE candidate with the opportunity to demonstrate a thorough understanding of evidence-based research and practical application of material covered throughout the graduate level coursework.

Comprehensive exams are conducted three (3) times during the year (October, March, and June) through Canvas. The graduate student is presented with six (6) research prompts related to specific graduate level coursework and chooses four (4) of the prompts to address for their comprehensive exam. The research prompts are available on a specified Friday with completed responses submitted to Canvas by the second following Monday at 11:00 p.m. The graduate student has approximately eleven days to develop their responses to their chosen four (4) prompts and submit the exam in Canvas.

Scoring the Comprehensive Exam

Comprehensive Exams are evaluated by two faculty members in the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences. Graduate students must submit the entire Comprehensive Exam when rewriting any portion. The graduate student will be given only one (1) opportunity to resubmit within an allotted time frame. The results of the Final Scholarly Artifact requirement must be placed on file with the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences office 28 calendar days prior to the anticipated date of graduation.

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>