

Special Education (MA)

This program is offered by the School of Education. It is available online and at the St. Louis main campus. The Emphasis in Specialized Approaches for Exceptional Learners is available online via asynchronous modality. The Emphasis in Applied Behavior Analysis is available online via asynchronous modality.

Program Description

The master of arts (MA) in special education provides practicing educators, related professionals and other qualified individuals opportunities to study and research special education practices and services. Current issues and emerging trends are explored on a global level, with a strong focus on social justice and ethical themes at the local, national and/or international level.

The program emphasizes developmentally oriented theory and research in the areas of cognitive and socio-emotional development, and students are expected to use this knowledge to design and promote evidence-based interventions and instructional practices to enhance pupil learning. Candidates explore opportunities for collaboration and advocacy within their educational settings that are designed to improve the quality of life of individuals with disabilities in general. The program recognizes the rapidly changing dimensions of special education and promotes the philosophy of integrated and inclusive learning experiences for all children and youth.

The program offers students opportunities to either seek a specialized approach for all types of exceptional learners or a concentrated learning experience by specializing in unique areas of study based on a specific population of exceptional learners. The emphasis areas are designed to provide flexibility within a structured sequence of coursework. Students may choose to complete specialized approaches for exceptional learners or concentrate in applied behavior analysis, mild/moderate disabilities, or specialized approaches to exceptional learners.

The master of arts in special education program does not lead to initial teacher certification in special education. For more information about initial teacher certification in special education (mild/moderate disabilities), please refer to the Teacher Certification section under the MAT with an emphasis in special education section of this catalog.

Learning Outcomes

Graduates of this program are able to:

- Use valid and reliable assessment practices to minimize bias.
- Use their knowledge of general and specialized curricula to improve programs, supports and services at classroom, school, community and system levels.
- Facilitate the continuous improvement of general and special education programs, supports and services at the classroom, school and system levels for individuals with exceptionalities.
- Conduct, evaluate and use inquiry to guide professional practice.
- Provide leadership to formulate goals, set and meet high professional expectations, advocate for effective policies and evidence-based practices, and create positive and productive work environments.
- Use foundational knowledge of the field and professional ethical principles and practice standards to inform special education practice, engage in lifelong learning, advance the profession, and perform leadership responsibilities to promote the success of professional colleagues and individuals with exceptionalities.

- Collaborate with stakeholders to improve programs, services and outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities and their families.

Program Curriculum

The MA special education majors are required to complete a minimum of 33 credit hours, 24 of which must be in special education. Students considering graduate study at the doctoral level are encouraged to complete six credit hours of field research and complete a thesis for a program total of 36 credit hours.

Required Coursework:

The following courses are required, with a minimum grade of B- in each course, for all special education majors:

Required Core Courses (18 hour)

- SPED 5270 Advocating for Persons with Disabilities (3 hours) or SPED 5903 Ethics and Professional Issues in Applied Behavior Analysis (3 hours)
- SPED 5318 Global Issues in Special Education (3 hours)
- SPED 5500 Socioemotional Development: Children with Special Needs (3 hours)
- SPED 5800 Applied Research Methods (3 hours) or SPED 5850 Single-Subject Research Design (3 hours)
- SPED 5880 Integrating Resources: Community, School and Family (3 hours)
- SPED 6000 Applied Field Research (3 hours) or SPED 6250 Thesis (for graduate students interested in doctoral studies) (6 hours)

Emphasis Specific Courses (15 hours)

Total: 33 credit hours

Emphasis in Applied Behavior Analysis

This emphasis is only available online.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a type of intervention that focuses on improving specific behaviors, such as academics and adaptive behavior. The emphasis in applied behavior analysis prepares candidates with the knowledge and concepts needed to engage in applied behavior analysis in schools, community agencies, residential centers and family settings to enhance the skills and abilities of persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder, significant disabilities and other developmental disabilities.

The emphasis is designed to prepare candidates with the coursework-based content knowledge and skills required to apply to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst® Examination offered through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB). Successful completion of the Webster University master of arts in special education with an emphasis in applied behavior analysis does not guarantee that the candidate will be approved to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst® Examination. Candidates who plan to apply for BCBA certification should carefully review the requirements, published by the BACB (www.bacb.com).

Students pursuing the ABA emphasis are expected to have an association, professional or voluntary, with community service providers, agencies or educational organizations which provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities and/or behavioral challenges, in order to fully benefit from the coursework.

The following coursework is required for an emphasis in applied behavior analysis:

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- SPED 5703 Functional Behavioral Assessment and Interventions (3 hours)
- SPED 5850 Single-Subject Research Design* (3 hours)
- SPED 5890 Introduction to Applied Behavior Analysis (3 hours)
- SPED 5900 Concepts and Principles of Behavior Analysis (3 hours)
- SPED 5901 Behavior Change Procedures (3 hours)
- SPED 5902 Supervision and Staff Performance (3 hours)
- SPED 5903 Ethics and Professional Issues in Applied Behavior Analysis* (3 hours)

*Core course requirement

Emphasis in Mild/Moderate Disabilities

This emphasis is available only at the St. Louis main campus.

The emphasis in mild/moderate disabilities is intended for certified educators who are interested in developing expertise in teaching students with mild/moderate (cross-categorical) disabilities. While the emphasis does not lead to an initial teacher certificate in mild/moderate disabilities, the program of study offers currently certified teachers an opportunity to acquire the foundational knowledge in preparation for an endorsement in mild/moderate disabilities: cross-categorical.

The following coursework is required for an emphasis in mild/moderate disabilities:

- READ 5190 Advanced Studies in Language Development and Acquisition (3 hours)
- SPED 5240 Psychoeducational Assessment (3 hours)
- SPED 5380 Methods for Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities I (3 hours)
- SPED 5381 Methods for Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities II (3 hours)

One course (3 hours) from the following or other advisor-approved graduate course pertinent to the student's program of study:

- READ 5235 Understanding Diverse Reading Profiles, including Dyslexia (3 hours)
- READ 5950 Diagnosis and Correction of Reading Problems (3 hours)
- SPED 5010 Differentiated Mathematics Instruction (3 hours)
- SPED 5050 Language Development (3 hours)
- SPED 5245 Counseling for Life's Transitions (3 hours)
- SPED 5250 Behavior Management for Children with Special Needs (3 hours)
- Additional course as approved by Advisor

Emphasis in Specialized Approaches for Exceptional Learners

This emphasis available online or at the St. Louis main campus.

The emphasis in specialized approaches for exceptional learners is intended for practicing educators, related professionals, advocates, paraprofessionals who are interested in developing expertise in working with, advocating for, or instructing students with special learning needs. While the emphasis does not lead to an initial teacher certificate, this program of study offers students an opportunity to develop specialized understanding of specific student populations and/or instructional approaches.

Five courses (15 hours) of coursework from the following, or other advisor-approved graduate courses pertinent to the student's program of study:

- EDIN 5620 Mindfulness (3 hours)
- EDIN 5622 Restorative Justice: Learning Communities (3 hours)
- READ 5190 Advanced Studies in Language Development and Acquisition (3 hours)
- SPED 5050 Language Development (3 hours)
- SPED 5220 Topics in Special Education (1-3 hours)
- SPED 5240 Psychoeducational Assessment (3 hours)
- SPED 5285 Understanding and Responding to Trauma in Schools (3 hours)
- SPED 5313 Augmentative and Alternative Communication for Students with SDD and Autism (3 hours)
- SPED 5413 Intensive Academic Intervention (3 hours)
- SPED 5701 Universal School-Wide PBIS (3 hours)
- SPED 5900 Concepts and Principles of Behavior Analysis (3 hours)
- Additional Courses as approved by Advisor

Admission

See the Admission section of this catalog for general admission requirements. Students interested in applying must submit their application online at www.webster.edu/apply. Transcripts should be sent from your institution electronically to transcripts@webster.edu. If this service is not available, send transcripts to:

Office of Admission
Webster University
470 E. Lockwood Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63119

Additional Requirements

Requirements for admission to the MA in special education program include:

- Receipt of all official transcripts.
- Final degree conferred GPA of 2.5 or higher.
- Prior to admission to the program, candidates are expected to have successfully completed, with a grade of B or better, a three-credit course in the Psychology of the Exceptional Students, or its equivalent. Those applicants who have not completed this requirement, prior to admission, will be required to successfully complete the course, or a similar overview course, in order to complete the graduation requirements for the MA in special education.