SPECIAL EDUCATION - DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The Special Education Doctorate Program is committed to preparing professionals in the areas of teaching, research, service, and leadership positions. All students within this program are trained to conduct independent research, become critical/independent thinkers, and embrace the notion of diversity. Upon completion of the doctorate the student will be able to inform policies that promote the well-being of all individuals with exceptionalities at the local, community, societal, and global levels. The Department of Special Education/Communication Disorders is pleased to offer two different, but equally rigorous, pathways (a Ph.D. or an Ed.D.). The two degrees can be differentiated in this way: a potential candidate seeks to drive educational change through either the use of existing research (Ed.D.) or the creation of new research (Ph.D.). Additionally, there are two areas of specialization: Bilingual/Multicultural Special Education and Autism Spectrum Disorders. A student may also choose to minor in a related area such as Communication Disorders and must work carefully with an advisor to plan a program of study if a minor is desired.

Admission

Doctoral admission is competitive. To maximize consideration for admittance, applications must be submitted by February 10 for admission in the following semester. Admissions decisions are made based on evaluation of the student's potential for success in research, teaching, and service to the profession. Requirements include the following:

1. Completed Graduate school admission application.
2. Letter of Intent that explains professional goals and area of research interest.
3. Complete transcripts from all post-secondary educational experiences, with notation of a bachelor's degree, a master's degree in a related field of study, and a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale.
4. Scores from the Graduate Record Examination.
5. Curriculum vitae or resume that includes at least 3 years prior (or continuing concurrent) direct and/or related teaching experience in an educational field.
6. Email addresses by which the graduate school application system will contact three individuals who can provide letters of professional recommendation.
7. Scholarly Writing Sample (10-15 page scholarly paper following APA guidelines about a current issue in the field of Special Education).
8. A letter of support from a faculty member indicating an interest in fulfilling the role of advisor.
9. For international students with English language testing requirements, TOEFL results of at least 79 IBT; 550 PBT or IELTS scores of at least 6.5.

Coursework

60 credit hours (42 credit hours in coursework and 18 credits of dissertation research) are the minimum credit hours required for either a Ph.D. or Ed.D. The required coursework is planned with the student's committee members who take into account the student's research interest, research design, availability of coursework, and independent research study(s) which occur under the direction of the advisor of record and/or a faculty member. Additional coursework is contingent and may be recommended by the Doctoral Qualifying Committee, the advisor of record, and the student. Coursework requirements follow:

Required core coursework:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 523</td>
<td>Advanced Curriculum for Diverse Exceptional Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 610</td>
<td>Current Issues in Special Education for Teaching in a Culturally Responsive Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 613</td>
<td>Current Research in Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 606</td>
<td>High Incidence Disabilities in a Diverse Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or SPED 607</td>
<td>Low Incidence Disabilities</td>
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Research Sequence (9 credits in quantitative research design/statistics based) 12+

Area of Research Interest (individually based on the student's area of interest) 18+

Dissertation 18+

Examinations

Students must pass a qualifying examination (during the first year of study), a Comprehensive Exam including written portfolio and oral elements (prior to beginning a dissertation), and a final dissertation defense. The doctoral handbook on the departmental website provides procedural and other details regarding each exam.

Dissertation

Every student working toward the doctoral degree will submit a dissertation embodying the results of original research. The dissertation is expected to demonstrate the student’s ability in independent investigation and to be a contribution to human knowledge. The dissertation shall display a mastery of the literature of the subject field and present an organized, coherent development of ideas with a clear exposition of results, and provide a critical discussion of the limits and validity of the student’s conclusions.