

# SPECIAL EDUCATION, ED.D.

The Doctor of Education (EdD) program in special education at The University of Alabama is designed to prepare educational leaders who will work to provide a direct educational benefit to the lives of children and youth with disabilities and their families. Graduates will likely work as administrators but they could also be teacher trainers or executive directors of nonprofit organizations.

The program is delivered online and designed to prepare students for leadership roles in special education.

## Admissions

In addition to the minimum Graduate School admission requirements, to be considered for regular admission an application must include:

- An earned master's degree in special education (or a related area)
- Three years of appropriate experience, defined as three years of teaching experience (that will be accompanied by teaching certification).
- An interview
- Three letters of recommendation
- Responses to two program-specific questions:
  - In one page, please describe what is meant by evidence-based practices.
  - In three to five pages, please list some of these evidence-based practices and describe their role in contemporary gifted education or special education (select the area of program application). Please also discuss why you think there is a gap in implementing these practices.

Graduate faculty members individually evaluate and collectively discuss admission applications.

*A composite GRE score of 300 or better is required for all candidates, irrespective of degree program, who are seeking an appointment as a college-sponsored Graduate Assistant.*

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

## Curricular Requirements

A minimum of 72 semester credit hours beyond the master's degree is required for completion of the Ed.D. program. These 72 hours consist of the following required courses: 36 hours of special education courses, 12 hours of educational foundations courses, 12 hours of research courses, and 12 dissertation hours.

Code and Title	Hours
<b>Educational Foundations courses (or as advisor approved)</b>	<b>12</b>
BEF 534 Multicultural Education	
BEF 577 Readings in Critical Sociology of Education	
BEF 607 Readings In Soc Of Ed	
BEF 639 Educ Theory And Policy	
BEF 640 Studies History Of Education	
BEF 644 Phil Science Rel Ed Res	
BEF 667 Multicult Soc Ed Leadershp	
BEP 500 Adv Educational Psych	
BEP 505 Motivation and Self-Regulation	
BEP 550 Life Span Development	
BEP 561 Social Cult Basis Behavr	

BCE 513 Career Development	
BCE 522 Indiv & Group Appraisal	
BCE 653 Intro Play Therapy	
CAT 531 Computer Based Instruction	
<b>Educational Research courses (or other advisor approved BER course)</b>	<b>12</b>
BER 540 Statistical Methods In Educ (if no previous statistics course. Otherwise another BER course should be taken.)	
BER 555 Measure & Eval: Social & Behav	
BER 600 Survey of Educational Research	
BER 660 Eval I:Theory & Practice	
<b>Special Education and core courses (24 hours)</b>	
SPE 593 Intro Severe/Profound Disabili	3
SPE 600 Doctoral Seminar Spe	3
SPE 597 Transition In Special Ed	3
SPE 606 Topical Seminar In Spe	3
SPE 613 Consult Proc Spe Progs	3
SPE 616 Adv. Professional Development	3
SPE 617 SPE Leadership	3
BCE 542 Med Aspects	3
<b>Cohorts for Areas of Emphasis:</b>	<b>12</b>
Select 4 courses from ONE of the following cohorts of elective courses as your area of emphasis. Once you take the first course in a cohort, you are part of that cohort and will take all courses in that cohort.	
Collaborative Special Education Cohort	
SPE 590 Intro Mild Disabilities	
SPE 602 Seminar Research Spe	
SPE 611 Ind Study In Spe	
SPE 623 Issues in Collaborative Education	
SPE 624 Adv. Curr. Workshop: Collab.	
Gifted Education Cohort	
SPE 581 Psy Gift Tal Chld Yth	
SPE 582 Teach Gifted And Taltd	
SPE 583 Creative Prob Solving	
SPE 584 Spec Populatn Gift Educ	
SPE 585 Teaching Thinking Skills	
SPE 611 Ind Study In Spe	
SPE 681 Issues In Gifted Educ	
Autism Cohort	
SPE 502 Adv Behav Mgt Spec Educt	
SPE 504 Intro to Assistive Technology	
SPE 520 Early Language and Literacy	
SPE 531 Intro to ASD	
SPE 532 EBP for Ind ASD	
SPE 533 Assessing Behavior Change	
SPE 611 Ind Study In Spe	
Leadership and Special Education Cohort	
AEL 608 Educ Fin Theory/Pract	
AEL 619 Politics Of Education	

AEL 630	School Partnerships	
AEL 650	Organizational Theory	
AEL 661	Major Issues and Trends	
AEL 664	Ed Policy/Dynamics of Change	
AEL 671	Survey Instructnl Superv (Leadership and Special Education Cohort)	
AEL 682	Lead & Org/Theory & Appl	
SPE 611	Ind Study In Spe	
<b>Dissertation hours</b>		<b>12</b>
SPE 699	Dissertation Research	
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>72</b>

## Transfer Credit

A student holding an earned, in-field master's degree and working in the field or a related field since earning the degree may request approval for up to 1/2 coursework hours of credit to be applied to the EdD. To do this, the student must have earned at least a "B" overall graduate GPA from the awarding institution. If approved for transfer, these hours would count toward the minimum 48 coursework hours required for the EdD degree.

Graduate School information on Transfer Credit.

## Doctoral Plan of Study Requirement

Graduate School information on the Doctoral Plan of Study.

## Comprehensive Exams

Students may take comprehensive examinations as late as the last semester of coursework. Students should notify their chair as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester if they intend to take comprehensive examinations in order to solicit questions from the committee members. Dates for comprehensive examinations are announced at the beginning of each semester. Students must be registered for at least one hour in order to take comprehensive examinations per Graduate School policy.

The dissertation committee will write the comprehensive examination questions for the student in view of the course of study as well as the anticipated dissertation study. Comprehensive examinations will be delivered via Blackboard. Students have 10 consecutive days to complete their questions. The comprehensive examinations are open book and open note. Students may not consult with other students or faculty members outside of their committee when completing their comprehensive examinations. Comprehensive examination responses are subject to evaluation for plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty as outlined in the code of student conduct.

If a student fails or comprehensive examinations, they must wait until the next semester before taking it again. A student may only retake their comprehensive examinations once. If a student fails or comprehensive examination twice, they will be terminated from the program.

Graduate School information on Comprehensive Exams.

## Admission to Candidacy Requirements

After approval of the dissertation proposal and the completion of comprehensive examinations, the student is eligible for admission to candidacy for the degree. Once a student has met the requirements for admission to candidacy for a doctoral degree, doctoral students must pursue completion of the dissertation without interruption by enrolling each semester for at least 3 hours of dissertation research.

Graduate School information on Admission to Candidacy.

## Continuous Enrollment Policy

Graduate School information on Continuous Enrollment.

## Dissertation Requirements

### Selecting a chair

Upon admission to the program, the student will be assigned an advisor. This advisor may or may not become the chair of the dissertation study. In selecting a chair, it is highly recommended that the student has had past interactions with this faculty member sufficient to discern their work style and interests. Throughout their coursework, students will have the opportunity to interact with many faculty members. If a student wants to work with a particular faculty member that they may not have had the opportunity to interact with through coursework, the student may want to reach out to this faculty member indicating interest in their work and ask to be involved in some way. Please note that no faculty member is required to serve or chair your dissertation committee. Individual faculty will evaluate your grades in their courses as part of the determination whether to serve at all on your dissertation committee. You should generally not expect a faculty member to serve on your committee if you receive a grade below a "B" in their course, some faculty members may even require an a grade of "A" for consideration. Based on a student's research interests and past interactions with faculty members, the student should contact a potential chair begin by e-mail to begin this discussion.

In this e-mail, the student should describe their potential research idea(s) for a dissertation study. This email should be limited to approximately one paragraph. A faculty member may respond that they are unable to chair any additional students at this time. They may also respond that that the student's research interests are not sufficiently aligned with theirs. Please note that both faculty members and students have academic freedom, so they must both come to an agreement when it comes to the dissertation study. For some students, the selection of a chair may be obvious, but for other students it may require more flexibility in terms of what their dissertation study will be. Finally, it is important to be open to faculty members honing and reshaping research ideas for the dissertation study. Faculty members understand the time and effort entailed to complete a dissertation study. We want the dissertation study to be a success.

### Selecting committee members

After selecting your chair and discussing potential research ideas, your chair will have suggestions as to who should serve on your dissertation committee. For your dissertation study, you will need at least three faculty members plus one outside member for total of four members. This committee would include your chair to serve on your committee per graduate school policy for EdDs.

One of these committee members is typically a methodologist, who is a person who has demonstrated expertise in the methodology used in the dissertation study. This person might or might not be on the SPEMA faculty. As mentioned above, another member of the committee is an outside member of the committee. This person will be a faculty member in another department, outside of the department. In taking courses with a non-SPE prefix, please think about the selection of the outside member.

### The dissertation at a distance

Each student will complete a dissertation while enrolled in SPE 699 Dissertation Research hours. Students are not permitted to enroll in SPE 699 hours until after having successfully passed their comprehensive

examination. In selecting the dissertation topic, both faculty and students have academic freedom. Faculty members will guide students to dissertation topics aligned with their mutual interests and that can be executed at a distance. There are generally five categories of research studies that can be well executed at a distance:

1. Studies with existing or archival publicly-available data. Students can access many publicly available data sets relevant to special education. Publicly-available data sets include but are not limited to:
  - a. National Center for Education Statistics
    - i. Early Childhood Longitudinal Study
    - ii. High School Longitudinal Study
    - iii. National Household Education Study
    - iv. School Survey on Crime and Safety
  - b. Office of Civil Rights Data Collection
  - c. IDEA Part B data
  - d. National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH)
  - e. National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs (can be merged with NSCH)
  - f. CDC Survey of Pathways to Diagnosis and Services
  - g. National Survey of the Diagnosis and Treatment of ADHD and Tourette Syndrome
2. Studies with existing or archival data from your state or local education agency. Students will most likely need approval from your agency to use data belonging to the agency.
3. Studies using online survey techniques. The University of Alabama provides access to Qualtrics free of charge to faculty and students. This is the perfect tool for students to design an online survey.
4. Historical studies using archival collections or from papers held in private collections.
5. Qualitative studies using such data as policy documents, interviews, and focus groups.

Other categories of research studies could work for a dissertation at a distance as well. Ultimately, your chair needs to be comfortable supervising your dissertation study at a distance and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approving studies with human subjects needs to be willing to approve this study with the understanding that faculty supervision would be at a distance. For instance, the IRB may not approve a study involving an intensive intervention, where it would be impossible for a faculty member being at a distance to supervise the research process. Students need to consider dissertation studies, where faculty supervision at a distance is appropriate.

## Dissertation Proposal

Once the student and the chair have agreed upon a dissertation topic, the student should begin to write the dissertation proposal. The dissertation proposal is the first three chapters of the dissertation study. This document is written in future tense that is as it is what the student proposes to do for the dissertation. After the dissertation is completed in its entirety, the student will then need to change the tense of the proposal accordingly. In Chapter 1, the student will write an introduction to the dissertation study. In Chapter 2, the student will provide a complete review of the literature related to the dissertation topic. In Chapter 3, the student will provide the methodology that will be utilized for the proposed study. The student will need to follow all formatting guidelines per the Graduate School requirements. Students must adhere to the most recent edition of APA style. The student and the chair will determine the process for developing the dissertation proposal. The chair may request one chapter at a time, a complete draft of the dissertation proposal, or some

other approach. Students should discuss this with their chair before proceeding.

Once the chair and the student have agreed upon a draft of the proposal, the student will provide this agreed-upon draft to all committee members. The student will also ask committee member members for their availability in the next two to three weeks to meet online via videoconferencing to discuss the dissertation proposal. According to the Graduate Catalog, "the written dissertation proposal must be provided to members of the committee at least 10 working days prior to the proposal meeting." The student should not under any circumstances send a draft of a proposal or ask the committee members to meet to discuss your proposal without the chair and the student agreeing on this step. When meeting with the committee via videoconferencing, the student will give a 30- to 45-minute slide presentation summarizing the dissertation proposal. After the presentation, the committee members will ask questions regarding the proposal. The student should take the feedback constructively and be prepared to have revisions requested by the committee members.

After the presentation and discussion have ended on the proposal, the committee members will meet without the student present. The committee members will discuss whether the student has passed, passed with revisions, or failed. Students who fail at the dissertation proposal stage will need to write a new proposal or discontinue in the program. Once students have passed the dissertation proposal stage, they are permitted to carry out their dissertation study pending any IRB approval needed. Students may not submit the dissertation study to the IRB before passing the proposal stage.

## Dissertation Formatting

The dissertation study will follow *APA Publication Manual* for the reporting of references and statistics unless otherwise specified by the Graduate School. The most recent edition of the manual should be used. The Graduate School provides a manual to guide students on the preparation and formatting of the dissertation study, which can be found here on their website.

## IRB approval

The student will work with the chair to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the dissertation study, if human subjects will be involved. The purpose of the University of Alabama's IRB is to ensure the safe and ethical treatment of humans as subjects in research, public service, and training programs. In accordance with federal and university regulations, it is required that the IRB review all research involving human subjects conducted at or sponsored by the University of Alabama regardless of the funding source. The University of Alabama's IRB has a moral duty and obligation to protect human subjects prior to the commencement of any research study and to discontinue any protocol upon notification of irregular activity warranting such action.

The time it takes to obtain IRB approval varies considerably by the study submitted. Students may not start the recruitment nor collection of any human subjects data before IRB approval. Please note that archival data requires IRB approval, though typically exempt, unless specified otherwise. After the student has obtained IRB approval, the collection of human subjects data may begin. Students should retain a copy of the IRB approval once received.

## Appointment of Doctoral Dissertation Committee

As indicated in the Graduate Catalog, the graduate dean's approval of the proposed dissertation committee is required. This approval is expected

to be obtained before significant progress is made on the dissertation—typically just before or just after the dissertation proposal meeting.

### **Dissertation Defense**

After completing dissertation study as proposed at the proposal meeting, the student will write the final two chapters of the dissertation. Chapter 4 contains the results of the dissertation study while Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the dissertation study. Again, the student and the chair will work together to develop an agreed upon draft of the entire dissertation study. Once the student and the chair are both satisfied with the draft of the entire dissertation study, then the student may contact the committee members and inform and ask their availability to set a date to defend the dissertation as well as provide the agreed upon draft. Again, the student will ask committee member for their availability in the next two to three weeks to meet online via zoom to discuss the dissertation and provide the defense. Per the Graduate Catalog, at least 10 working days is required. According to the Graduate Catalog, virtual participation is permitted for online programs and specifically states:

For online and hybrid programs that handle oral examinations in an online setting, all committee members as well as the student may participate virtually in the oral examination. However, these programs must fully adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Technical Requirements section above for any oral examination involving the entire committee.

In scheduling the dissertation defense, students should be mindful of Graduate School deadlines. The student will present a 45 minute to one hour long presentation summarizing the entire dissertation. Given Chapters 1 through 3 have already been presented at the proposal meeting, the student should focus the dissertation defense presentation more on Chapters 4 and 5. After the student presents, the committee members will ask questions. Students should respond as best as they can and take the feedback constructively. Revisions to some degree are typical but should be much less than the revisions requested during the proposal stage. The dissertation document should reflect a close to final piece of work.

According to the Graduate Catalog, at least 10 working days before defending the dissertation, **the student** must arrange to send an abstract of the dissertation to all faculty in the College of Education along with an invitation to attend the defense that indicates time and place of the defense. The chair will help with this, but the student should prompt him or her to ensure at least 10 working days.

According to the Graduate Catalog, it is the responsibility of the student to submit to the Office of the Graduate School, six weeks prior to graduation, two copies of the dissertation and the abstract in the final, approved form. Further changes or corrections might be suggested by the Graduate School at this time, and these must be completed or reconciled before graduation.

Students will be required to submit their dissertation document via Blackboard to check the originality of their document via iThenticate, TurnItIn, or similar service provided. The chair will evaluate the results accordingly.

Graduate School information on Dissertation Requirements.

### **Time Limit for Degree Completion**

Graduate School information on Time Limits.

### **Academic Misconduct Information**

Graduate School information on Academic Misconduct.

### **Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information**

Graduate School information on Withdrawals and Leave of Absence information .

### **Academic Grievances Information**

Graduate School information on Academic Grievances.

### **Grades and Academic Standing**

Graduate School information on Grades and Academic Standing.

### **Graduate School Deadlines**

Information on Graduate School Deadlines.

### **Application for Graduation**

Information on the Application for Graduation.