

# SPECIAL EDUCATION, PH.D.

The Ph.D. program in the Department of Special Education (SPED) is a noncategorical terminal degree, suiting the interests of the student and the expertise of the faculty. Our philosophy is that doctoral students and faculty often learn together; therefore, many interests in the special education field can be accommodated in SPED. The doctoral program prepares researchers and future university faculty in the following subfields of exceptionalities:

- Autism spectrum disorders
- Behavior disorders and prevention
- Early childhood special education/early intervention
- Gifted and talented/creativity/twice-exceptionality
- High incidence disability
- Learning disabilities
- Severe disabilities
- Transition

The Ph.D. degree in special education requires more extensive contact with and immersion in the university culture than does the online Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree (e.g., 18 coursework hours and 24 hours of dissertation research; residency requirement, extensive interaction, dialogue, and work with faculty on research projects; and expectations that students disseminate their research at conferences or in publications). The Ph.D. program emphasizes the development of theoretical thinking and knowledge development in the field of special education through the development of strong research skills. Ideal graduates are those who cannot only provide a detailed critique of existing research in their areas of expertise but also contribute to the research knowledge. Prospective applicants should pay attention to the distinctions between the Ph.D. and Ed.D. degrees. It is important to note that students cannot switch between the Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs after admission.

## Admissions

Doctoral students are admitted throughout the year, to start in the Fall, Spring, or Summer. Applicants can begin the process at any time. Funding opportunities are available upon admission by application.

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

- A recent (within the last five years) GRE score of 300 (verbal + quantitative) or higher.
- A master's degree in special education (or a related area) that has been awarded prior to initial enrollment in our PhD program.
- Three years of appropriate experience (defined as three years of work in agencies serving children and youth, one year of which must have been spent in direct, full-time interaction with exceptional children).
- A demonstrated commitment to a scholarly career in special education.
- A successful interview with faculty members.

Other application requirements include the following:

- Three letters of professional and academic **reference** (as described in and as part of the Graduate School Application Process).
- A convincing, written rationale as to why they wish to pursue this degree, how its focus/purposes are consistent with their career goals, and how they plan to meet the on-campus residency requirement.

This **purpose statement** must address the following: (1) the student's rationale for applying for the Ph.D.; (2) a statement regarding career and professional goals; and (3) a statement of how the student's rationale and career goals are consistent with the purpose of the Ph.D. degree as articulated by the Department and Program.

- To assess an applicant's writing ability, an academic or professional **writing sample** (authored within the last year) is required. Examples include a professional article, a paper written for a class assignment, or a professional blog entry.
- A **curriculum vitae** is required.

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

## Curricular Requirements

A minimum of 66 semester credit hours beyond the master's degree is required for completion of the Ph.D. program, but highly recommended additional research courses would extend the hours. These 66 hours consist of the following courses: 24 hours of special education courses; 12 hours of educational foundations courses; 12 hours of research courses; and 18 dissertation hours.

Code and Title	Hours
<b>Educational Foundations courses</b>	<b>12</b>
Select from the following courses:	
BCE 513 Career Development	
BCE 522 Indiv & Group Appraisal	
BCE 653 Intro Play Therapy	
BEF 507 Sociology Of Education	
BEF 534 Multicultural Education	
BEF 577 Readings Critical Sociology Ed	
BEF 607 Readings In Soc Of Ed	
BEF 639 Educ Theory And Policy	
BEF 644 Phil Science Rel Ed Res	
BEF 667 Multicult Soc Ed Leadership	
BEP 505 Motivation and Self-Regulation	
BEP 550 Life Span Development	
BEP 500 Adv Educational Psych	
BEP 561 Social Cult Basis Behav	
CAT 531 Computer Based Instruction	
or an advisor-approved foundations course	
<b>Educational Research courses</b>	<b>12</b>
Select from the following courses:	
BER 540 Statistical Methods In Educ	
BER 555 Measure & Eval: Social & Behav	
BER 558 Psychometric Theory	
BER 600 Survey of Educational Research	
BER 631 Inqry As Interp: Qual I	
BER 660 Eval I:Theory & Practice	
or an advisor-approved BER course	
<b>Special Education courses (24 hours)</b>	
SPE 600 Doctoral Seminar Spe (usually taken in the first semester)	3
SPE 601 Sem Col Teachg In Spe	3

SPE 612	Readg Research In Spe (Pre-Dissertation Study; e.g., pilot study; practice data collection; IRB submission)	3
SPE 630	Pro Sem A	3
SPE 631	Pro Sem B	3
SPE 632	Grant Writing	3
The remaining Special Education coursework may come from the following SPE courses or other courses on campus closely linked to special education.		6
SPE 606	Topical Seminar In Spe (Behavior Management)	
SPE 606	Topical Seminar In Spe (Special Topics)	
SPE 609	Practicum In Spe (teaching a course, with faculty guidance, or other field experience; can be taken more than once)	
SPE 611	Ind Study In Spe (may be taken up to four times)	
SPE 616	Adv. Professional Development (deliver PD, with faculty guidance, such as training early intervention or special education personnel in practices and models)	
SPE 617	SPE Leadership	
SPE 621, SPE 623, or SPE 681: Issues in Exceptionality for ECSE, collaborative/non-categorical, gifted		
SPE 622, SPE 624, or SPE 682: Advanced Curriculum Workshop for ECSE, collaborative/non-categorical, gifted		
<b>Dissertation Research</b>		<b>18</b>
SPE 699	Dissertation Research	

**Total Hours** **66**

Most of the doctoral seminars are taught every 2 years, to ensure sufficient enrollment.

## Transfer Credit

Graduate School information on Transfer Credit.

## Doctoral Plan of Study

Graduate School information on the Doctoral Plan of Study can be found here.

## Comprehensive Exams

A comprehensive exam designed to assess the breadth and depth of a student's knowledge and skills is administered twice each academic year.

Graduate School information on Comprehensive Exams.

## Admission to Candidacy Requirements

Admission to candidacy requires: 1) the completion of all required coursework outside of dissertation hours (SPE 699) with a GPA of at least 3.00 and 2) successfully passing comprehensive examinations. 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 Doctoral Research Hours Registration

Graduate School information on Continuous Doctoral Research Hours Registration.

## Dissertation Requirements

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.

### Acquisition of Financial Support:

All students in good standing in the Special Education PhD program may apply to be supported by a graduate research assistantship (GRA) funded through their department, a graduate teaching assistantship (GTA) funded by the Department, or a fellowship or training grant (when available). Non-conditional admitted students will have priority over those with conditional admissions. Both GRA and GTA types of assistantships provide an equivalent stipend and benefits along with paid tuition and fees. Fellowships and training grants will have varying stipend and recruitment packages as are required by the funding agency. Financial support may be available through the first four years in the program for PhD students who meet performance expectations and who do not meet any Conditions for Termination of Financial Support (see below). Students will be informed of impending financial support termination at least one semester prior to the support termination date except in the special cases noted under Conditions for Termination of Financial Support.

### Performance Expectations for Continuing Financial Support:

- The student must be in good academic standing in the Special Education PhD program.
- The student must remain clear of all infractions outlined under Conditions for Termination of Financial Support
- The student must complete all mandatory annual training and abide by all rules and policies held by The University of Alabama, College of Education, and Department of Special Education

- Graduate teaching assistants must adequately perform all duties assigned to them in a timely manner as defined by the instructor of record or their designee for all courses to which the student is assigned teaching, grading, and/or laboratory preparative responsibilities.

#### **Conditions for Termination of Financial Support:**

Students who meet one or more of the following criteria will be subject to termination of financial support pending Department of Special Education review. Depending upon the severity of the infraction or the extent of non-compliance, the Department Chair and Graduate Director—with input from the Graduate Committee—will recommend immediate termination of financial support, termination of financial support at the end of the current semester, or termination of financial support (partial or full) at the end of the following semester.

- *Dereliction of duty.* Dereliction of duty includes but is not limited to: failure to comply with all UA safety and interpersonal conduct policies; absence from scheduled obligations without prior notification to the instructor of record or designee (for teaching assistants) or the research advisor (for research assistants); or failure to satisfactorily complete all activities associated with the funded position as defined by the instructor of record or designee (for teaching assistants) or by the research advisor (for research assistants) and the student's departmental memorandum of appointment.
- *Resolved finding of Academic Misconduct.* Penalties, including potential loss of financial support, will be determined with guidance from the UA Graduate School.
- *Loss of good academic standing.* Students not in good academic standing have one probationary academic semester after notification of their change in academic status to return to good academic standing—with the non-passing grade exception noted below. Financial support will be terminated if good academic standing is not restored by the end of the probationary academic semester. Students who earn more than two grades of 'C' or at least one grade of 'D' or 'F' in graduate courses will have a compulsory academic performance review by the Graduate Committee. This review will determine whether the student should continue to receive financial support and/or be dismissed from the program at the end of the semester in which the non-passing grade is earned or at the end of the following semester. A decision will be rendered prior to the end of the semester in which a third 'C' and/or a 'D' or 'F' grade is reported.
- *Delinquent Annual Review.* Students who neglect to complete the required departmental annual review