



Master's Degree Handbook

May 2023

Department Faculty

Sharon Darling, Ph.D.	sdarlin4@fau.edu
Charles Dukes, Ed.D., Ph.D.	cdukes@fau.edu
Lisa Finnegan, Ph.D.	lfinnegan@fau.edu
James Forgan, Ph.D.	jforgan@fau.edu
Katie Miller, Ph.D.	millerk@fau.edu
Rangasamy Ramasamy, Ph.D.	rramasam@fau.edu
Jack Scott, Ph.D.	jscott@fau.edu

Welcome to your Master's program!

The Department of Special Education (DSE) at Florida Atlantic University (FAU) offers a fully online Master's in Special Education (M.Ed.) that is carefully crafted to meet the needs of a variety of professionals seeking to expand their knowledge of the field of special education. Our focus is on preparing highly qualified professional educators and personnel to work with special populations.

The Master's program is a fully online 36-39 credit-graduate degree program that provides students with the knowledge and skills for working with students with disabilities. Full-time students may complete this degree program within 16-24 months. The intensive, fast-track special education coursework is designed to allow teachers, administrators, or related field personnel to specialize in a variety of special education fields. Students completing our Master's in Special Education complete courses comprising (a) Special Education Core, (b) Research and Statistics Core, and (c) courses in one or more of four concentration areas. Concentration areas are Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), or Special Education Intervention Specialist.

The Special Education Core includes courses designed to broaden understanding of the interventions and strategies for working with populations with specific learning or behavioral needs. The Research and Statistics Core provides a foundation for examining, designing, and understanding educational research. Concentration areas offer preparation in a specific area(s) of study or preparation for a specific teaching endorsement or certification area. For example, a concentration in Applied Behavior Analysis prepares students for the certification exam administered by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board; a concentration in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) prepares teachers to work with students with ASD and related disorders; a concentration in Early Childhood Special Education prepares students for the Pre-Kindergarten Disability teaching endorsement and for the Infant Toddler Development Specialist certificate; and the Special Education Intervention Specialist concentration is designed to deepen knowledge of special education intervention strategies. This concentration is appropriate for individuals who wish to earn a Master's degree while gaining the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective special education teacher.

Teaching Certification

Upon program completion, students have the option of seeking teacher certification/endorsement in ASD, ESE K-12, Pre-K Disabilities (PreK-Grade 3); Early Intervention Infant Toddler Developmental Specialist training (ITDS); or preparation for the Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) exam.

Students in the Master's degree program who have not previously earned Special Education teaching certification may wish to pursue certification through the Florida Department of Education. *Teaching certification is not linked to the Department of Special Education Master's degree at FAU.* Given the various and changing routes to teaching certification in Florida, students who wish to gain teaching certification will have numerous options, and are advised to seek the most current information from the Florida Department of Education Bureau of Teacher Certification (at <https://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/>)

Program Entry

Department of Special Education Orientation ("Master's Boot Camp")

Once admitted to the DSE Master's degree program, students are to contact their Department faculty advisor and complete the "Master's Boot Camp," which is our online Master's Orientation Training. The training is a self-study module, conducted via Canvas, FAU's web-based learning management system. "Master's Boot Camp" is intended to orient students to varied aspects of graduate education and to our department. After receiving a letter of acceptance into the program, students can access the site at <http://canvas.fau.edu>. Log-in using your FAU credentials and the site will show as a pending course in your course list: *Department of Special Education: Welcome to Graduate School*. Upon completion of the "Master's Bootcamp" modules and assessments, students should print the grade report and bring it to the first advising appointment with their Department of Special Education faculty advisor.

"Getting Programmed"

In order to formalize admission to the degree program, students must "get programmed." This means meeting with their department faculty advisor and completing the *Department of Special Education's Master's Degree Information and Planning Sheet*. This, in turn, will help the student to complete and submit the electronic FAU Graduate College Plan of Study. These documents will

Florida Atlantic University
Department of Special Education
Master's Degree Handbook

detail the scope and sequence of courses required for the degree. The department's planning sheet, combined with the Graduate College Plan of Study will minimize the chance of confusion as a student makes progress toward the degree. The programming meeting will cover additional information on program options, requirements, etc. Department planning sheets and course rotations are available here:
<https://www.fau.edu/education/academicdepartments/ese/forms-resources/>

Graduate College Electronic Program of Study (POS)

All degree-seeking graduate students should have an approved Plan of Study (POS) on file with the Graduate College no later than half-way through their required coursework. Newly admitted students will have access to their Plan of Study following the successful completion of their first semester. Students must have an approved Plan of Study on file with the Graduate College prior to the term in which they intend to graduate. Learn more about how to submit your POS at: <https://www.fau.edu/graduate/degree-completion/plan-of-study/>

Program Changes

As a student progresses in a Master's degree program, changes to the degree plan can be made if necessary. Changes should be made in consultation with the student's faculty advisor, and a change form (Graduate College Revision to Existing Plan of Study - **Form 9**) should be completed and submitted to the Department of Special Education. Form 9 and all Graduate College forms can be found here: <http://www.fau.edu/graduate/forms-and-procedures/index.php>

Coursework & Ethical/ Professional Conduct

Course Rotation and Completion

Graduate courses in the Master's degree program are offered on a rotation that allows students to plan their programs several semesters in advance. For timely completion of their degree program, it is imperative that students remain in sequence and complete courses as planned. Department planning course rotations for each concentration area are available here:
<https://www.fau.edu/education/academicdepartments/ese/forms-resources/>.

All Master's courses are offered fully. Though online, there is still variation in delivery format (e.g., synchronous, asynchronous, semester-long, and fast-track). Do pay close attention to the course delivery mode when registering

Florida Atlantic University
Department of Special Education
Master's Degree Handbook

for courses. When progressing full-time (approximately 9 credits per semester), students are able to complete this degree program within 16-24 months. If students intend to progress less than full-time, or fail to complete courses in sequence, the degree will take significantly longer to complete.

To help assure successful progress toward your degree, you should become familiar with this handbook, bookmark and review the FAU University Catalog (at <https://www.fau.edu/registrar/university-catalog/>), and meet regularly with your faculty advisor and other faculty members.

Ongoing Evaluation

Students in our degree program are expected to adhere to ethical and professional conduct. As such, students must commit deserved time and energy to their studies and professional development. The faculty evaluates students' professional development based on their course performance, professional and ethical conduct in course discussions, and electronic communications. Students who demonstrate behavior inconsistent with the behavior or qualities necessary for success may be advised to reconsider their career and degree decisions. *It is essential to note that problems with student performance and deportment may disqualify a student from continuing in the degree program.*

Critical Assignments and Florida Educator Accomplished Practices

Critical Assignments (Cas) are embedded into many of the graduate courses in the Master's degree. These assignments are intended to allow students to demonstrate proficiency in department, state, and professional personnel preparation competencies (e.g. Florida DOE Educator Accomplished Practices (EAPs), CAEP competencies, ITDS competencies). Due to the nature of these assignments, students must pass the CA in order to receive a passing grade in these courses.

Department of Special Education Policy on Critical Assignments

Graduate students must earn a **minimum grade of 83%** of the points allotted for a Critical Assignment to receive a minimum grade of B in a course. In other words, a student cannot "pass" the course with a B without successfully completing the Critical Assignment.

Remediation Policy for Critical Assignments:

If a student is passing the course with a B grade but has *failed* to pass the Critical Assignment with a minimum of 83% of the possible points, the student will receive an "INC" in the course until the Critical Assignment is successfully redone. Only one attempt is allowed. The conditions and time frame for the resubmission of the assignment will be determined by the instructor. However, the second attempt must be completed within one semester. **Upon successful completion of the re-submitted assignment,** the "INC" will be changed to a grade for the course and the student may continue in the SPECIAL EDUCATION sequence of courses. The original points earned for the initial attempt at the Critical Assignment will be used to calculate the final grade in the course. **If the resubmitted Critical Assignment is not successfully passed,** the grade for the course will be B- or below based upon the total points earned.

If a student is not passing the course with a grade of B or better and has *failed* to pass the Critical Assignment with a minimum of 83% of the possible points, the student will **not** be allowed to resubmit the Critical Assignment. The student will need to repeat the course **and** the Critical Assignment.

Degree Completion Requirements

To complete the Master's degree in Special Education, each student must:

1. meet all College and University graduation requirements.
2. earn grades of B or higher in **all** courses (Students must repeat any courses in which a grade of B- or below is earned. A course may only be repeated once.).
3. maintain continuous enrollment in the University (1 credit per academic year). FAU requires a re-application (forms and fees) to the University if there is a break in enrollment.
4. complete the required number of hours as specified on the student's Program of Study (POS).

Degree Costs and Financial Assistance

Tuition and Fees

Florida Atlantic University
Department of Special Education
Master's Degree Handbook

The tuition costs at FAU are among the lowest in the nation, thus students are able to earn their Master's degree for less than \$14K in tuition costs. Full details about tuition rates can be found at: <https://www.fau.edu/controllers-office/student-services/tuition-breakdown/>. The Department has a limited number of competitive graduate research assistantships (GRA) available to assist with tuition costs. Contact the department to learn more.

Financial Assistance

Students in all stages of their academic careers may be eligible for financial aid. While the process is roughly the same for each kind of student, sometimes there are unique requirements. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with an FAU Financial Aid Advisor to get more information on loans, grants, and scholarships to help finance their Master's program. FAU's Office of Financial Assistance is there to assist you and help you navigate through the financial aid process. Learn more at: <https://www.fau.edu/finaid/>

The College of Education also awards scholarships at both the departmental and college levels each year. Many of the scholarships are possible through the generous gifts of alumni, friends, and faculty. Learn more at: <https://www.fau.edu/education/students/scholarships/>.

Further Assistance

If you need assistance regarding matters in Special education, contact the Department at (561) 297-3280 or Ellen Ismalon, department secretary at 561-297-3284.

Appendix A

Program Admission Requirements

Admission Requirements

Applicants to the Department of Special Education are required to follow the procedures for graduate admissions. Forms, policies, and procedures for the FAU Graduate College can be found at the following website:

<http://wise.fau.edu/graduate/>.

Domestic applicants must:

1. meet College and University requirements;
2. hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education;
3. have earned an undergraduate Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0. If GPA is below 3.0, applicants may submit one letter of recommendation from an employer in an education-related field or a current/former university instructor; and
4. provide a personal statement not exceeding three double-spaced pages, indicating the applicant's reasons for pursuing a Master's degree and career goals.

International applicants must:

1. meet College and University requirements;
2. hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education;
3. have earned an undergraduate Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0. If GPA is below 3.0, applicants may submit one letter of recommendation from an employer in an education-related field or a current/former university instructor; and
4. provide a personal statement not exceeding three double-spaced pages, indicating the applicant's reasons for pursuing a Master's degree and career goals.
5. have attained a TOEFL score of 500 or IB of 61; IELTS 6.0; Duolingo 90