



Master's Degree Handbook

January, 2019

Department Faculty

Michael P. Brady, Ph.D.	Department Chair	561-297-3280
Elisa Cruz-Torres, Ed.D.		561-297-4575
Sharon Darling, Ph.D.		561-297-0807
Mary Lou Duffy, Ph.D.		561-799-8715
Charles Dukes, Ed.D.		561-297-1081
Lisa Finnegan, Ph.D.		561-297-3287
James Forgan, Ph.D.		561-799-8636
Peggy Goldstein, Ed.D.		954-236-1042
Lawrence A. Heiser, Ph.D.		561-297-0941
Brianna Joseph, Ed.D.		561-297-3280
Kelly Kearney, Ed.D.		561-297-6286
Katie Miller, Ph.D.		561-297-0241
Nguyen, Neal, Ph.D.		954-236-1288
Rangasamy Ramasamy, Ph.D.		561-297-3091
Jack Scott, Ph.D.		561-799-8582
Cynthia Wilson, Ph.D.		954-236-1006

Florida Atlantic University
Exceptional Student Education
Master of Education Degree
January, 2019

Welcome to the Master's Degree program in Exceptional Student Education! The Department of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) offers a 36-credit (minimum) Master of Education degree that is comprised of (a) College of Education Core courses, (b) ESE Department Core courses, (c) an area of concentration, and (d) an individualized culminating experience. To help assure successful progress toward your degree, you should become familiar with this handbook, bookmark and review the FAU University Catalog (at <http://www.fau.edu/registrar/universitycatalog/welcome.php>), and meet regularly with your ESE faculty advisor and other faculty members.

Currently there are six concentration areas in the ESE master's degree program. These areas include courses designed to broaden teachers' knowledge of ESE strategies and promote professional development. Some concentration areas offer preparation in a new area of study or an additional teaching endorsement. For example, the concentration in **Early Childhood** prepares students for the Pre-Kindergarten Disability teaching endorsement and for the Infant Toddler Development Specialist certificate. The **Gifted Education** concentration area prepares students for an add-on teaching endorsement in gifted education. A concentration in **Applied Behavior Analysis** prepares students for the certification exam administered by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. Another concentration area, **Instructional Practices in ESE**, is designed for students who do not have a bachelor's degree in special education. 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 ESE teacher. Coursework is paired with field experiences so that students will gain the opportunity to link their subject knowledge to sound pedagogy and practice. (NOTE 1: Teachers with Florida teaching certification in elementary, secondary, or special education *but no previous degree in special education* also take the *Instructional Practices in ESE* concentration area. NOTE 2: Graduates of the FAU BECE program who have at least one year employed as the ESE teacher of record may select a different concentration area.)

Each student in the M.Ed. degree program completes the degree with a culminating experience. For students who already have a bachelor's degree in special education, the culminating experience will include a field project, an internship, or a master's thesis. For students in the *Instructional Practices in ESE* concentration, the culminating activity is a full-time teaching internship (3 credits) during which students gain valuable hands-on experience and contacts with school district personnel.



The Master's program in Exceptional Student Education prepares students to work with individuals with a variety of learning and behavioral disabilities. Program requirements support the CAEP conceptual framework of producing professionals who are informed, ethical, and capable in their roles as teachers and decision-makers.

Admissions Requirements

Applicants to the Department of Exceptional Student 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/>.

Any applicant seeking admission to the M.Ed. program in Exceptional Student Education must:

1. hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education;
2. earn acceptable scores on either the *Graduate Record Exam (GRE)* **or** the *Miller Analogy Test (MAT)*, along with a GPA of 3.0 during the last 60 credit hours of university coursework. Acceptable scores for the GRE means a Scaled Score of at least 144 on the Verbal Reasoning portion of the exam, and 142 on the Quantitative Reasoning portion of the exam. For applicants using the MAT, an acceptable score is a score in the 50th percentile for intended Education majors. The Department will not accept GRE and MAT scores older than 8 years. [NOTE: *Graduates of the FAU bachelor's degree in the ESE Honor's-in-the-Major are not required to take the GRE or MAT for admission to the ESE master's degree program.*]
3. show at least 3 credits of special education coursework (e.g., EEX 2010, 2091, or 5051) on the transcript as a pre-requisite. Students with no previous ESE college coursework must take an introductory pre-requisite *in addition to* COE and Department core, and concentration area.

ESE Department Boot Camp

Once students have been accepted into the ESE Master's degree program, students should 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 Exceptional Student Education: Welcome to Graduate School.

Once you have completed the “Master’s Bootcamp” modules and assessments, students should print the grade report and bring it to the first advising appointment with their ESE faculty advisor.

“Getting Programmed”

As soon as a student is accepted into the ESE master’s degree program, the student should “get programmed.” This involves meeting with a faculty advisor and completing the ESE Department’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* that indicates the courses required for the degree. Directions and blank forms can be found at: <http://www.fau.edu/graduate/forms-and-procedures/index.php>

The Department’s *Information and Planning Sheet*, combined with the *Graduate College Plan of Study* will minimize the chance of confusion as a student makes progress toward the degree. Additional information on program options, internships, practica, teaching endorsement, field work requirements, etc. will be covered during the programming meeting.

As a student progresses in a Master’s degree program, changes to the degree plan can be made if necessary. These 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 ESE Department. A copy of the Department’s *Master’s Degree Information and Planning Sheet* is available from your advisor or from the ESE Department. For a current copy of the *Graduate College Plan of Study* and the *Graduate College Revision to Existing Plan of Study (Form 9)* please refer to the link provided earlier in this section.

Course Rotation

Graduate courses in the Master’s Degree program are offered on a rotation that allows students to plan their programs several semesters in advance. Graduate courses in the ESE core and in various concentration areas are offered in two ways. Face to face courses are primarily offered at the Boca Raton campus. Other ESE courses are offered through a variety of online formats and do not require campus visits. College of Education core courses (i.e., Educational Research, Educational Statistics) are offered frequently on every campus, as well

as on-line. Students should consult a faculty advisor or the ESE Department regarding the master's course rotation. Students can also consult the ESE Department home page at <http://www.fau.edu/education/academicdepartments/ease/documents/masterscourserotation.pdf> for the ESE graduate course rotation.

The capstone course for the master's degree includes an internship, master's thesis, or field project. Students should consult their faculty advisor prior to registering for any of the capstone experiences. Completion of these activities requires students to identify, synthesize, and demonstrate best practices during a field-based culminating activity. If students are not successful in the internship, thesis, or field project, they may be required to repeat the culminating experience using specific guidelines described in a Professional Development Plan.

Graduate Students Who Want to Take Undergraduate Classes

Due to a recent change in University policy, graduate students can no longer apply any undergraduate classes to count toward a required graduate class for a graduate degree. The simplest way to remember this is to avoid showing an undergraduate class on the Program of Studies unless the class is a pre-requisite (in the Pre-Requisite text box). As a pre-requisite, a class is not counted toward the required number of credits for the degree.

Ongoing Evaluation

To complete the ESE program, students must commit a great deal of time and energy to their studies and to their professional development. The faculty evaluates students' professional development based upon their classroom performance, field-based experiences, and demonstration of qualities necessary in successful teaching. In addition to effective teaching skills, personal qualities shown by research to be important to teaching include organization, punctuality, enthusiasm, clarity of presentation, and knowledge of subject matter. 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 participation in field-based experiences, and consequently stop progression through a master's degree program in ESE.*

Critical Assignments and Florida Educator Accomplished Practices

The Florida Department of Education has identified a set of Educator Accomplished Practices (EAPs) expected for graduates of teacher education programs. The EAPs, part of the accreditation process for all Colleges of Education in Florida, are built into many ESE graduate courses. In these courses, each EAP is assessed by a Critical Assignment.

ESE Department 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 ESE 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 Requirement

To complete the master’s degree in ESE, 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 culminating activity (Internship for the concentration area in *Instructional Practices in ESE*; Internship, Thesis, or Field Project for other concentration areas);

5. complete the required number of hours as specified on the student's Program of Study (POS);
6. demonstrate competence in the FAU College of Education Behavioral Indicators which are linked to our CAEP conceptual framework, and the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices.

Additional Note for Students in the Instructional Practices in ESE Concentration Area

Students in the Master's Degree program who have not previously earned ESE teaching certification may wish to pursue certification through the Florida Department of Education. *Teaching certification is not linked to the ESE 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 1(800) 445-6739 or visit www.fldoe.org.

Security Clearance Requirements

Quality teacher education programs require students to practice effective teaching techniques and to integrate these skills into their conceptual development. To complete the field experience portion of any class, a student must be fingerprinted for security clearance purposes. Each school district in the FAU service area has a different process for getting fingerprinted and obtaining a security clearance. Students must visit the web site: <http://www.coe.fau.edu/students/oass/fieldexperience/SecurityClearance.php> under the Field Experience link for the process used in each district and the fees charged by each district for fingerprinting. Field experiences may be completed in any FAU partner district.

At FAU, field work is an integral part of the master's program. If you are not able to obtain security clearance, then you will not be able to complete the field work assignments. This will make it impossible for you to complete the program and earn a Master's Degree in ESE. Questions relating to security clearance and the process in specific counties can be answered by the Office for Academic and Student Services (OASS). For Broward and Dade County inquiries, call OASS at the Davie campus (954) 236-1022. For Hendry, Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and St. Lucie County inquiries, contact OASS at 561-799-8627. For Palm Beach County placements, contact OASS on the Boca Raton campus at (561) 297-2991.

Financial Aid

Students who are enrolled in the ESE master's degree may be eligible for the Critical Teacher Shortage Tuition Reimbursement Program sponsored by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). Information regarding this program is available on the FDOE homepage at: <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/>. See Florida Public School Employee Programs for more details. A toll-free number is also available at 1-800-366-3475.

Additional information regarding financial aid is available at: <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/SAPHome/SAPHome?url=home>. 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. They may also find more information related to financial aid at <http://www.fau.edu/finaid/>.

For Further Assistance

If you need assistance regarding transcripts, admissions, field experiences, and security clearance for schools, contact the Office of Academic and Student Services:

Boca Campus	561 - 297 - 3570
Davie Campus	954 - 236 - 1022
John D. MacArthur Campus	561 - 799 - 8627

If you need assistance regarding matters in Exceptional Student Education, contact the Department at (561) 297-3280.

Denise Prescott (senior secretary)	561 - 297 - 3280
Ellen Ismalon (secretary)	561 - 297 - 3284

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