

## **Master of Education in Special Education Program Handbook**

### **Welcome**

Welcome to the Master of Education in Special Education program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. This program is designed to prepare professionals to provide evidence-based instruction and support to culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities. There are several different subplans within this degree that prepare scholars to work with a variety of different disability types, but the main focus of all programs is the same: to give professionals the skills and knowledge needed to support culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities in becoming independent, self-directed learners and citizens. Students in this program will have the opportunity to work with faculty who are engaged in active scholarship related to the needs of students with disabilities and who are recognized as experts in their field, and will also have the opportunity to complete clinical field experiences in schools to practice the application of the knowledge they are gaining.

The information in this handbook is designed to provide students with an overview of the major requirements of the Master of Education in Special Education program. Students are encouraged to review this handbook thoroughly to best prepare themselves for navigating their graduate education.

On behalf of the faculty in the Special Education program, welcome to our field! We very much look forward to working with you.

Joseph Morgan, Ph.D.  
Coordinator, Special Education Programs

### **Mission Statement(s)**

#### **Department of Educational and Clinical Studies**

The Department of Educational and Clinical Studies is designed and dedicated to prepare professionals for specialized services in schools, community agencies, and higher education settings. Our undergraduate and graduate students participate in coursework and clinical experiences that contain a solid theoretical and practical knowledge base in the areas of research design and implementation, teaching, and the provision of mandated services at the community, state, and national level. The faculty produces new knowledge concerning critical educational and clinical issues through original research and scholarly inquiry. We promote and embrace the concept of cultural diversity and we affirm our commitment to the ethical standards of our respective disciplines. The department will maintain professional accreditation in Counseling, Early Childhood, English Language Learner Programs, and Special Education. Through external funding (national and state grants), the creation of sustainable research labs, and publication of our research in ranked scholarly journals, department faculty contribute to the scientifically-based literature across all the professional areas represented in the department.

#### **Master of Education in Special Education**

The Master of Education in Special Education program in the Department of Educational and Clinical Studies prepares special education teacher, related service professionals, direct service providers, and other educational leaders to advocate for the specific needs of students with disabilities from birth to adulthood. The M.Ed. in Special Education program has nine subplans: (a) Applied Behavioral Analysis, (b) Autism, (c) Early Childhood Special Education, (d) Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, (e) Generalist – Mild Disabilities, (f) Gifted and Talented, (g) Intellectual Disabilities, (h)

Learning Disabilities, and (i) Other Professional Areas. All educational experiences are designed to support scholars in mastering the following learning outcomes:

- Scholars will (SW) understand the characteristics of students with specific disabilities and will use this understanding to develop rigorous, differentiated learning experiences (e.g., lesson plans, unit plans, assessment activities) aligned to the specific learning needs of students.
- SW understand the experiences and background of culturally and linguistically diverse students, as well as how their own cultural background mitigates the way they interact with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and will plan lesson activities and environments that are culturally responsive to students and their families.
- SW describe various methods of assessing student learning and social-emotional well being and will implement these assessment techniques, as well as engage in data-based decision making to make targeted instructional decisions to support student learning.
- SW understand the principles of behavior management (e.g., functional behavior assessment, positive behavior supports, development of classroom rules and procedures) and will implement positive behavior change strategies to support the behavior of students with disabilities in the school environment.
- SW understand the structure and framework of the general education curricula and environment and will make targeted, data-based instructional decisions to differentiate learning for students with disabilities, ensuring access to the general education curricula.
- SW define the criteria for identifying an evidence-based practices in special education and will design and implement lessons and interventions using evidence-based practices to support the academic achievement and social emotional well being of students with disabilities in the general education environment.
- SW understand the principles of effective collaboration with key stakeholders in the education of students with disabilities (e.g., parents, families, general education teachers, special education paraprofessionals, administrators) and will implement effective practices for engaging in collaboration.

### Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the UNLV Graduate Catalog, as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: [valarie.burke@unlv.edu](mailto:valarie.burke@unlv.edu) or [kendall.hartley@unlv.edu](mailto:kendall.hartley@unlv.edu).

### Department Graduate Faculty

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Faculty must hold either associate or full graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the [Graduate Faculty status web page](#).

### Program Information

#### Master of Education in Special Education

##### *Subplans*

- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Autism
- Early Childhood Special Education
- Emotional and Behavioral Disorders
- Generalist – Mild Disabilities
- Gifted and Talented Education
- Intellectual Disabilities
- Learning Disabilities

- Teaching English as a Second Language
- Other Professional Areas

Specific information about the Master of Education in Special Education program and its subplans can be found in the [Graduate College Catalog](#).

### Contact Information

<http://education.unlv.edu/ecs/>

#### *Department Chair*

Jane McCarthy, Ph.D.

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#### *Graduate Coordinator*

Cori More, Ph.D.

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#### *Special Education Program Coordinator*

Joseph Morgan, Ph.D.

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## Program Requirements

Program requirements regarding [admission](#), [coursework](#) and [culminating experience](#) are found in the graduate catalog.

### Advisory Committee Guidelines

Students in the Master of Education in Special Education program will be assigned an advisor in their particular area of interest upon admission to the program. Students are required to schedule a meeting with their advisor during their first semester of coursework. At that meeting, the advisor and the student will constitute the student's Advisory Committee. This committee is comprised of two other faculty members from the Department of Educational and Clinical Studies who have experience and knowledge about the student's area of interest, as well as a Graduate College Representative from outside of the department. The Advisory Committee will be responsible for scoring the written response portion of students' comprehensive exam at the conclusion of their program of study.

### Degree Program Benchmarks

Students in the Master of Education in Special Education program will be required to take a comprehensive exam at the conclusion of their program of study. The format of the comprehensive exam will be determined by the subplan the student is enrolled in and the student's Advisory Committee. For the subplans of Applied Behavior Analysis, Autism, Intellectual Disabilities, and Generalist – Mild Disabilities, this exam will be comprised of 100 multiple choice questions pulled from study guides prepared for each class in the program and one written response question. For the subplan of Early Childhood Special Education, this exam will be comprised of a series of written prompts that requires students to prepare a thorough, written review of the literature and course materials to answer the question.

Typically, this comprehensive exam will be taken during the student's final semester of coursework as it is Graduate College policy that students must be enrolled in courses to take their comprehensive

exam. Students will be notified of the comprehensive exam application by the Department of Educational and Clinical Studies at the beginning of each semester. Students are required to complete an online application for the comprehensive exam by the deadline indicated each semester. These applications will be reviewed by each student's advisor; upon review, the advisor will schedule a meeting with their students to approve the students' comprehensive exam application and to provide detailed information about the comprehensive exam process. **Students will not be eligible to take their comprehensive exams if they do not meet with their advisor for approval**

Comprehensive exams will cover all program coursework the student has completed throughout their specified program. Information from courses outside of the program will not be covered. Any student who does not pass a portion of his or her comprehensive exam will be notified immediately by his or her advisor and will have the opportunity to retest the failed portion **two weeks** following the original comprehensive exam date in the same semester. If a student fails a second time, they will have the opportunity to complete a single retake of all portions of their comprehensive exam in the subsequent semester. Students will have to reapply for this retake and meet again with their advisor. If the student fails to apply for comprehensive exams in the semester immediately following their initial failure, they will forfeit their opportunity to take comprehensive exams and their final degree will not be conferred. If the student fails this retake, they will not complete program requirements and their final degree will not be conferred.

### **Initial Licensure Degree Program Benchmarks**

For students seeking initial licensure in a specific special education program, there are several testing requirements that must be met at specific points throughout their degree program. These testing requirements align with Nevada Department of Education requirements for teaching licensure.

#### *Praxis Core or California Basic Educational Skills Test*

Prior to the completion of 12 credit hours of coursework, students enrolled in initial licensure degree programs must pass either the Praxis Core or California Basic Educational Skills Test. These tests are comprised of an assessment of reading, math, and writing; students must pass all three sections of the same test. **No combinations of tests will be accepted (e.g, Reading and Math in Praxis Core and Writing in CBEST).** Evidence of passing scores on these assessments must be provided to the student's advisor by the completion of 12 hours; no field experiences can be completed without verification of passing scores on one of these assessments. If students have not provided evidence of passing scores on these assessments prior to the completion of 12 hours, they will not be allowed to continue with coursework until these assessments have been provided. Students should review the [Nevada Department of Education](#) testing requirements website for additional information.

#### *Praxis II: Principles of Learning and Teaching and Praxis II: Special Education Core Knowledge and Applications*

Prior enrolling in student teaching or fieldwork at the end of a student's program of study, students must provide evidence that they have **taken** both the Praxis II: Principles of Learning and Teaching (either K-6 or 7-12 based on the students' desired teaching level) and the Praxis II: Special Education Core Knowledge and Applications. At the time of application for student teaching or fieldwork, students do not have to submit passing scores on either of these tests. They only have to provide evidence that they have taken both of these tests. Both of these tests are required for licensure in the state of Nevada; students should review the [Nevada Department of Education](#) testing requirements website for additional information.

#### *Nevada School Law, Nevada Constitution, and US Constitution Tests*

Although not required for the Master of Education in Special Education program, it is important to note that students must also take and pass either coursework or a test on Nevada School Law, the Nevada Constitution, and the US Constitution in order to be eligible for licensure in the state of Nevada. There are courses available that fulfill this requirement, as well as tests administered through the University of Nevada, Reno. More information about these testing requirements can be found on the [Nevada Department of Education](#) testing requirements website.

### *Clinical Field Experience Requirement*

For students seeking initial licensure in special education (including students who are already licensed in an area other than special education), the state of Nevada requires students to complete a culminating clinical field experience. For students enrolled in the Generalist – Mild Disabilities subplan, students will enroll in student teaching (EDSP 491) and in the student teaching seminar (EDSP 492) after the completion of their Master of Education in Special Education program. For students enrolled in the Autism or Intellectual Disabilities subplans, students will enroll in the fieldwork section aligned to their specific program (ESP 720). When enrolled in ESP 720, students are required to attend a two-hour fieldwork seminar held weekly. Students can complete fieldwork after they have finished all coursework required for licensure; fieldwork can be completed as a part of the Master's degree program or following its completion. **Students must complete their clinical field experience within one year of the completion of their program of study.** If students fail to complete their clinical field experience within one year, they will be required to take 15 hours of additional coursework in the special education program prior to the completion of their clinical field experience. **There are no exceptions to this policy.**

In order to complete a clinical field experience, students must apply by March 1 for summer or fall placement and by October 1 for spring placement. Students must also be fingerprinted by these deadlines in order to be placed on a school campus. Additional information on the clinical field experience requirements can be found on the [College of Education Advising and Field Placement Center's](#) website.

Students will work with the Field Experience Coordinator to secure a clinical field experience placement. Students will be assigned a Mentor Teacher in their specific field of study, as well as a University Supervisor who will provide mentoring and support. Students will work under the direction of their Mentor Teacher for 16 weeks and will be observed by both the Mentor Teacher and the University Supervisor to determine satisfactory progress in the clinical field experience. This placement can not be for pay (e.g., a long-term substitute, paraprofessional).

Students must earn a B or higher in their clinical field experience to move forward with licensure; students who do not earn a B in their first field experience placement will be allowed to repeat their clinical field experience **one time** in the subsequent semester. If the student is not successful in their second attempt at their clinical field experience, they will not be allowed to complete the field experience criteria. If a student is administratively removed from their clinical field experience for any reason that violates the university or school district code of ethics, they will not be allowed to repeat their clinical field experience.

Students are required to give a 20-minute presentation at the conclusion of their clinical field experience to the Field Experience Assessment Team. Specific parameters of this presentation are provided in the seminar attached to the field experience. The Field Experience Assessment Team will review this presentation and all observations from the clinical field experience in order to determine the final field experience grade.

### *Alternative Route to Licensure and Alternative Route to Certification*

Students who are enrolled in an Alternative Route to Licensure (ARL) or Alternative Route to Certification (ARC) program through an approved ARL or ARC provider will be allowed to complete their clinical field experience in their licensed teaching placement. The Coordinator of Special Education will meet with ARL and ARC candidates during their final semester of licensure coursework to discuss the clinical field experience program. Students will be allowed to indicate their desire to participate in the clinical field experience program at this time. Students enrolled in ARL or ARC programs must complete their clinical field experience in the semester directly following the completion of their coursework (e.g., fall field experience for spring graduates, spring field experience for fall graduates). Students who do not elect to complete the clinical field experience the semester immediately following the completion of their coursework will be ineligible to complete the field

experience in their classroom; rules and procedures for the traditional clinical field experience will apply.

Students in ARL or ARC programs must provide copies of their last three (3) evaluations from their district administrator showing satisfactory progress in their employment prior to the approval of their ARL or ARC field experience placement. These copies must be provided to the Coordinator of Special Education by the date indicated each semester. Students in an ARL or ARC program will still be assigned a University Mentor to observe them and they still must attend a weekly seminar. For more information on ARL or ARC field experience options, students should contact the Joseph Morgan, Coordinator of Special Education Programs, at [joseph.morgan@unlv.edu](mailto:joseph.morgan@unlv.edu).

## Program Timeline

### *Semester One*

- Schedule meeting with advisor
- Establish Advisory Committee
- Complete Program of Study
- Review Graduate College Handbook
- Sign Master of Education in Special Education Policy Agreement

### *Semester Two/Semester Three*

- Schedule to take either the Praxis Core or CBEST (initial licensure only)
- Submit passing Praxis Core or CBEST scores to advisor prior to the completion of 12 credit hours

### *Final Semester*

- Complete comprehensive exam application by date indicated
- Meet with advisor to verify comprehensive exam application
- Take comprehensive exams
- Complete field experience application by date indicated (initial licensure/licensure in special education only)
- Complete fingerprinting process
- Submit last three evaluations to Special Education Program Coordinator (ARL/ARC candidates only)
- Schedule to take Praxis II in Principles of Learning and Teaching and provide evidence that the test has been taken (initial licensure only)
- Schedule to take Praxis II in Special Education Content Knowledge and Applications and provide evidence the test has been taken (initial licensure/licensure in special education only)

### *Semester(s) Following Final Semester*

- Complete clinical field experience requirement (within one year for initial licensure/licensure in special education; within one semester for ARL/ARC candidates)
- Complete Field Experience Assessment Team presentation

## Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in the graduate catalog. Students in the Master of Education in Special Education program are also required to follow the [Council for Exceptional Children's Special Education Professional Ethical Principles and Standards](#).

## Annual Review Procedures

Each spring term, graduate students are required to complete the Graduate Student Annual Review survey. This survey will be sent by the Graduate College to the student's Rebelmail account. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress while setting goals for the year ahead.

## Discipline Resources

### American Psychological Association (APA) Writing Style

Scholarship in the Master of Education in Special Education program follows the APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition Publication Manual. All students in this program are encouraged to purchase an APA manual to structure their written assignments. Students can find additional information about the APA writing style on the [APA Style](#) website.

### Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

The main professional organization in the field of special education is the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). The purpose of CEC is to improve the success of individuals with exceptionalities through advocacy, standards, and professional development. There are several divisions within CEC that are focused on specific exceptionalities. Students are encouraged to become members of CEC and its associated divisions to expand their professional understanding and practice. Additional information about [CEC](#) can be found on their website.

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas has a Student Council for Exceptional Children chapter; the UNLV SCEC is the only recognized affiliate of CEC in the state of Nevada. The SCEC chapter at UNLV focuses on providing professional development and research support to inservice and preservice professionals in special education, as well as financial support to students at UNLV to attend the annual CEC conference. Additional information about SCEC can be found [here](#).

### Major Journals in Special Education

There are many discipline-specific journals available to students in the Master of Education in Special Education program, as well as some top journals that cover information related to special education more globally. Students are encouraged to work with their advisor and faculty in their specific area of interest to identify appropriate journals for their program. A list of top journals in special education as identified by Google Scholar can be found [here](#).

### Conferences in Special Education

Each year, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) holds an annual conference that highlights research and policy focused on the education of students with disabilities. Students are encouraged to attend. Additionally, each division of CEC and other disability-specific conferences are available. Students are encouraged to work with their advisor and faculty in their specific area of interest to identify other conferences that may be available for their attendance and professional development.

## University Resources

### Academic Success Center

The goal of the Academic Success Center is to help students do well academically and complete their studies on time. They offer or will refer you to such programs and resources as tutoring, advising, skills testing, career exploration and more. They guide students every step of the way to the many established resources created to ensure they complete their educational goals. Learn more about the programs and services the center currently offers.

### Alumni Association

With an alumni base 90,000 strong, the UNLV Alumni Association offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

### Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Registrar's Office, the commencement office is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College.

### Office of Diversity Initiatives

The vision of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's diversity mission: *to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment*. This Office also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

#### Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The DRC is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

#### Office of International Student and Scholars

International Students and Scholars (ISS) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

#### Jean Nidetch Women's Center

The Jean Nidetch Women's Center is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

#### UNLV Libraries

UNLV Libraries has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

#### Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The Graduate & Professional Student Association serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

#### Office of Student Conduct

The Office of Student Conduct is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Conduct collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the *UNLV Student Code of Conduct* by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

#### Office of Veteran Services



The UNLV Office of Veteran Services is staffed with veterans and GI Bill-experienced staff to assist more than 1,000 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

**The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office**

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

**Writing Center**

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the Online Writing Lab (OWL) page.

**University Policies and Procedures**

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jeanne Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)
- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Catalog](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Degree Progression Policies & Procedures](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

*Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.*

**Handbook Information**

This handbook will be reviewed annually by the Special Education Program Coordinator in conjunction with program faculty to ensure accuracy of information. Students will be notified of any changes made.

Last revised	Revised by	Changes summary
August 29, 2015	Joseph Morgan	

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