2016 Procedures and Requirements

Special Education
# PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS
## FOR THE SPECIAL EDUCATION GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM
Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Welcome to the Graduate Certificate Program in Special Education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. We are pleased you have chosen to join our graduate community of learners dedicated to optimizing the social and educational outcomes of persons with disabilities and their families.

Collectively, the faculty members in Special Education have knowledge and experience that reflect a full range of ages (Birth to 21 years) and disabilities. Furthermore, the faculty members include researchers who are nationally recognized for their work in critical issues impacting quality education for students with disabilities and instructors who have received recognition for their outstanding teaching qualities. Our aim is to help you gain the knowledge and expertise in this graduate program that will help you take leadership roles in your community, modeling and advocating for quality education and community opportunities for all students with disabilities and their families. A listing of the faculty and associated areas of expertise and contact information is available on the Department website http://cehs.unl.edu/secd/secd-faculty-and-staff/.

This manual of Procedures and Requirements for the Graduate Certificate Program in Special Education is intended as a quick resource for graduate students in the Special Education program. The manual does not replace the information available to students in the UNL Graduate Bulletin http://bulletin.unl.edu or the Department website http://cehs.unl.edu/barkley/index.shtml.

DEPARTMENT CONTACTS

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GRADUATE CERTIFICATES AT UNL

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln and its Graduate College offer Graduate Certificates in many departments and areas of focus. The Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders (SECD) has three Graduate Certificate programs in Special Education:

- Early Childhood Special Education (12 cr.)
- Sensory Disabilities (12 cr.)
- Behavior Specialist (18 cr.)

Graduate Certificate programs are primarily for students seeking a professional credential, rather than an academic degree. These short programs of 12-18 credits can enhance professional marketability and act as a gateway or starting point to a degree or desired teaching endorsement. A Graduate Certificate in Special Education from UNL is NOT equivalent to a teaching credential but will reflect a portion of the requirements needed for a specified Nebraska Department of Education teaching endorsement. Students are advised to meet with an advisor to clarify what additional courses and/or field experiences will be needed to acquire the desired teaching endorsement. No other application is necessary to pursue the teaching endorsement.

Students who begin study for a Graduate Certificate program, can apply at a later date for admission to the Masters Degree program in Special Education. This must be completed prior to the student completing 17 graduate credits, if he/she wants those credits considered for the degree requirements. Additional application materials for the Master’s Degree program will include a) SECD Degree application form, and b) scores from a completed Graduate Record Exam (GRE). Applications for Masters Degree in Special Education are reviewed once annually, following the January 15 deadline.

See application to degree program in Special Education
http://cehs.unl.edu/secd/programs/special-education/

ADMISSION STATUS

There is no specified deadline for applications to the Graduate Certificate programs in Special Education. The SECD Division of Special Education’s Graduate Admission Committee reviews applications for a Graduate Certificate program year round, once all required application materials are received and the application is submitted in UNL’s website: GAMES; students can expect to be contacted in writing within 3-4 weeks of the review. The Committee determines the admission status of applicants. Applicants are accepted as a Graduate Certificate Candidate or denied admission; there is no “provisional admission” status for the Graduate Certificate program. Requirements for admission vary slightly by each program; at a minimum, all require an application form and three letters of recommendation regarding the applicant’s ability to successfully complete and benefit from graduate courses. Applicants with a Masters degree in Special Education will have requirement for the submission of letters of recommendation waived.

FULL-TIME vs. PART-TIME STATUS

Because the courses for a Graduate Certificate in Special Education are relatively few in number, and often not available every semester, students generally enroll on a part-time basis,
taking 3-6 credits a semester. However, if students are pursing a teaching endorsement as a complement to the Graduate Certificate, they could enroll on a full-time basis, taking 9-12 credits a semester and enrolling in endorsement-required courses simultaneously with Certificate courses.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Department Fellowships
Prospective, newly admitted, or currently enrolled graduate students in the Department of Special Education & Communication Disorders are encouraged to apply for Departmental Fellowships. The Fellowships are one-time awards (like undergraduate scholarships), varying in dollar amount, with no work requirement. Fellowships may be available for part-time as well as full-time students. Annual deadline for application submission is April 20th.

Application:  [http://cehs.unl.edu/barkley/aid/index.shtml](http://cehs.unl.edu/barkley/aid/index.shtml). Students pursuing Graduate Certificates are considered non-degree students and therefore generally not eligible for financial aid loans.

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM ADVISOR

Assignment and Role of Advisors
Each student is assigned an academic advisor upon admission to the Graduate Certificate program in Special Education. The advisor will be a full-time faculty member in the department’s Division of Special Education and will be familiar with the Certificate program in which the student is interested. Students should meet with an advisor prior to application to the program and/or meet with the assigned advisor immediately upon learning of admission to the program, in order to outline a sequence of required courses. The advisor acts as academic guide, professional mentor and advocate while students move through their program of studies. The academic advisor signs off on the completion of Certificate courses, to be filed with the Graduate College.

Change in Advisor
Students may request, and have considered, a change in advisor by contacting the SECD Graduate Faculty Chairperson, in writing, with a rationale for the change.

CHANGE IN PROGRAM OF STUDY

The Graduate Certificate programs are approved programs of study with the UNL Graduate College. The set of specified courses for each Certificate therefore, can **NOT** be changed, nor include substitute or transfer courses.

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to complete all required courses in order to receive the Graduate Certificate. There is no timeframe specified for completion. If an admitted graduate student does not register for courses for any three consecutive terms (i.e., Spring-Summer-Fall) they are considered “Inactive”. They must reactivate their program status by completing the Office of Graduate Studies online application. (No re-application form is needed to reenter the SECD department program).  [www.unl.edu/gradstudies](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies)
Acceptable Academic Performance
Each student must maintain a GPA of 3.0 while pursuing the Graduate Certificate in Special Education. No class with a letter grade below B- can be used towards the Certificate.

Research Requirement
There is no requirement for a research or statistics course in the Graduate Certificate programs.

Fieldwork/Practicum
Students in the Graduate Certificate Program in Special Education are required to demonstrate competence in working with persons with disabilities. Applied assignments in individual courses may require fieldwork with specific populations, settings and/or activities, as outlined by the instructor. These experiences are guided as well by accreditation standards outlined by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Core Standards (2012). Course-related field experiences may be completed “on-the-job” if the setting and population are appropriate and approved by the instructor; instructors will help find appropriate practicum placements for unemployed students or students not working with the specified population/setting. Criminal background checks will be required for any courses with assigned field experiences.

Examination
There is no required exit examination for the students completing a Graduate Certificate program in Special Education.

Completion Notice
Students are required to notify their advisor in writing during the semester they are completing their final Certificate course. The advisor will notify Graduate College, once final passing grades are submitted, that the student has met all requirements for a specified Graduate Certificate in Special Education. Students will receive a Graduate Certificate for the specified area of study and mention of the Graduate Certificate will be included on the student’s UNL transcript.

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM
TERMINATION CONDITIONS

Academic Termination
If a student, during the course of his/her Graduate Certificate program, receives a letter grade below B- in the Certificate-required courses, the Graduate Certificate program may be terminated. All non-degree Certificate/Endorsement students must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. NOTE: In order to register for Sped 897 student-teaching credits, the Endorsement student must have earned at least a C+ in all required Endorsement courses not required as part of the Graduate Certificate.

Professional Ethics Termination
Graduate Students in Special Education are expected to abide by both the UNL Student Code of Conduct  http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code/three.shtml  that outlines behaviors of misconduct and the CEC Professional Ethics Principles  http://www.cec.sped.org/Standards/Ethical-Principles-and-Practice-Standards outlining how to show respect for diverse characteristics and needs of person with exceptionalities and their families.

Students will be dismissed from the Special Education program should they demonstrate unethical behaviors while enrolled at UNL. If a student demonstrates professionally inappropriate or unstable personal-social behavior in the classroom or fieldwork, the student
may be asked to confer with the Graduate Governance Committee, Department Chairperson and/or a counselor to determine the degree to which the student can be expected to continue their enrollment in the graduate program. Repeated incidences without change may be cause for termination from the program.

**Termination Appeals Procedures**

Students may petition the Special Education Graduate Governance Committee’s decision to terminate the student from the Graduate Certificate program. Petition letters outlining the reasons for poor performance and a plan for improvement may be directed c/o Department Graduate Secretary.

General appeal procedures for any academic termination matters, as well as any appeals associated with fellowships and assistantships, are available in the most recent edition of the UNL Graduate Studies Bulletin. [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/bulletin](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/bulletin)

Reports for department violations of the accreditation standards outlined by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) can be submitted to CEC Standards Office by mail, 2900 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000, Arlington, VA 22202-3557.

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**University of Nebraska-Lincoln Non-Discrimination Policy:**

It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln not to discriminate on the basis of sex, age, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, veteran’s status, national or ethnic origin or sexual orientation in its educational programs, admissions policies, employment policies, financial aid, or other school-administered programs. This policy is enforced by federal law under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Inquiries regarding compliance with these statutes may be directed to Equity, Access and Diversity Programs, 128 Canfield Administration Building, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, P.O. Box 880437, Lincoln, NE 68588-0437, (402) 472-3417.