

## **Child Development/Early Childhood Education Master of Science (MS) Handbook/Procedures**

The central focus of the child development master's program is promoting child development in a variety of contexts including families, schools, childcare, and early intervention programs.

Students in this program will have opportunities to:

- Study child development in context
- Learn to implement, evaluate, and improve family-centered programs
- Gain experience in providing developmentally appropriate, inclusive experiences for young children
- Work with leading researchers in the field
- Learn about emergent curriculum, teacher observation/documentation, and environments that support young children as scientists, naturalists, and artists
- Take courses in applied fields of developmental psychology, special education, teacher education, and family sciences
- Develop professionally through conference presentations, networking, analyzing data, interning with agency and state policy makers, and publishing papers

### **Degree Requirements**

#### **Course Requirements**

***Prerequisite Course:*** Educational Psychology 859 or equivalent undergraduate or graduate statistics course is required. The student's advisor, in consultation with their master's committee, determines equivalency.

#### ***Required Courses:***

- CYAF 865 Research Design & Methods<sup>1</sup>
- Applied Experience in the Field (CYAF 897A, 897D, 898, 800A/801A)
- CYAF 972 Theories of Human Development and Family Relations
- EDPS 860 Applications of Selected Advanced Statistics, or PSYC 941 Research Methods and Data Analysis, or equivalent
- CYAF 899 Master's Thesis or CYAF 996 Scholarly Practice and Discovery

***Content Area Courses:*** Students choose a minimum of 12 credits from the following content courses. Additional courses from the Department or outside the Department may be added to the 3 elective credits, with the consent of the advisor. Students wishing to add a specialization to their master's degree could consider adding a minor.

- CYAF 874 Assessment in Early Childhood
- CYAF 876 Cognitive Processes in Children/EDPS 961 Cognitive Development
- CYAF 881 Child Illness and the Family
- CYAF 888 Child and Family Policy

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<sup>1</sup> CYAF Research for Practitioners may also be an option determined in consultation with adviser and contingent upon Master's Option selection.

- CYAF 890A Workshop Seminar: Early Childhood
- CYAF 893 Special Topics in Contemporary Family Issues
- CYAF 961 Seminar in Parent/Child Relations
- CYAF 970 Advanced Early Childhood Education
- CYAF 971 Seminar in Child Development
- CYAF 973 Social Processes in Children

### **Completion Requirements**

Students in consultation with their adviser will complete one of the Master's options. Below is guidance for understanding the purpose of the options. See <https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/policies/academic-program-requirements/#masters> for more information.

**Option A** is intended for those who are preparing for careers in research and scholarly work or additional academic pursuits beyond the master's degree. Under Option I, a student must earn a minimum of 30 semesters of credit and present a master's thesis equivalent to 6 to 10 semester hours. At least 8 credit hours, in addition to the thesis, must be earned in courses open exclusively to graduate students (900 level or 800 level without 400 or lower counterparts). See guidance regarding thesis in the doctoral graduate student handbook.

**Option B** permits the substitution of more intensive work in advanced courses for the thesis or minor with the addition of a scholarly project. Under Option B, at least 18 credit hours must be earned in courses open exclusively to graduate students (900 level or 800 level without 400 or lower counterparts). Per the Office of Graduate Studies and CYAF department guidelines, the following parameters apply to Option B:

- Student must complete a Scholarly Practice and Discovery project: CYAF 996 Scholarly Practice and Discovery (minimum 3; maximum 6 hours). Sample projects include:
  - Development of research-based online resources to support early childhood educators
  - Development of research-based early childhood Extension curriculum
  - Research-based strategies to promote self-regulation during toddlerhood
  - Evidence-based reflective practice in early childhood teacher education: Implementation and reflection
  - Development of research-based guidebook to enhance early childhood educators' capacity to work with children who have disabilities
  - Coaching portfolio
- The major advisor, in consultation with student, determines appropriateness of the scholarly project.
- A committee of three is selected by student in consultation with advisor, to consider and accept their pre-proposal, provide guidance in project development, participate in the sharing of the project, and evaluate and approve the completed project.
- The student's project includes a focused review of literature, incorporates theoretical framework for the work encompassed in the project, and provides practical and research-based guidance or implications for the field of child development/early childhood education.

### **Additional Procedures**

### **Memorandum of Courses**

All master's students must complete a memorandum of courses (MOC) (<https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/Masters-Memorandum.pdf>) to be approved by the main adviser, the student's master's committee, and the department graduate chair. If students are seeking a minor, the graduate chair from the minor department also needs to complete the form. Per the Office of Graduate Studies this ***must be filed prior to completion of over one-half of required coursework***. Please carefully review the Master's degree milestones set by the Office of Graduate Studies (<https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/academics/degrees/masters>). Students should complete the MOC with their adviser and get it approved by their committee prior to submitting the form to the graduate chair.

### **Master's Committees**

For both Options I & III, a committee of three faculty members (including the student's adviser) must be convened and give approval prior to the start of the thesis or project. Committees should be created in consultation with the adviser and include faculty with expertise relevant to the student's thesis or project.

### **Conducting Human Subjects Research for Master's Thesis or Project**

IRB approval must be given for all research involving new data collection ***prior to participant recruitment and data collection***. Research activities involving human subjects or live vertebrate animals may not be conducted at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) unless the research activities have been reviewed and approved by the appropriate board or committee. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviews projects involving human subject research and the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) reviews the use of animals in research. These reviews are in accordance with Federal regulations and UNL assurance documents to the Office for Protections from Research Risks (OPRR). Note that the IRB and IACUC will not review projects already in progress; approval must be secured prior to the initiation of the research.