



Educator Preparation Program Guide for Students

SPECIAL EDUCATION

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Program Description

The Special Education Program is one of four Graduate concentrations that comprise the Student Development Department. The Special Education program offers a Master of Education (M.Ed), a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS), and a Doctorate in Education (Ed.D.) through the School of Education. An undergraduate degree in Special Education is not offered. The Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities (PreK-8; 5-12) and Administrator of Special Education licenses are available as part of a degree program. The Special Education programs are committed to evidence-based assessment, interventions, and administrative practices that promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education curriculum. The Special Education program believes that students with disabilities should be afforded the same opportunities as all students, regardless of their disability. The purpose of the Special Education program is to provide educators with the knowledge and skills they need to develop high quality service delivery systems for educating students with disabilities. The program meets the standards of NCATE and the Council for Exceptional Children.

Who May Apply

Students applying to the M.Ed./CAGS in Special Education program and the Teacher of Student's with Moderate Disabilities (PreK-8, 5-12) licensure program are required to hold a bachelor's degree in liberal arts or sciences. The graduate school requires an undergraduate GPA of at least 2.75 but the program gives priority to those students with an undergraduate GPA of 3.0; when applicable, a graduate GPA of 3.0. Applications must include a strong personal statement and references from both professors and employers, preferably in special education or a related area. All applicants interested in special education are encouraged to apply. While previous teaching experience is not necessary, it is highly valued, as is licensure in general and special education. Applicants from Massachusetts must also demonstrate that they have passed the Communications and Literacy Skills Test portion of the Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL) either prior to admission or in their first semester as a graduate student. Those applicants who

have not passed the Communications and Literacy Skills Test portion of the MTEL may be admitted on a provisional basis. In addition to the MTEL CSLT, students must pass the General Curriculum multi-subject sub-test, General Curriculum math sub-test and the Foundations of Reading test before beginning practicum. See Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary website for substitutions to the General Curriculum sub-test requirements.

Qualifications for the CAGS/Ed.D. in Special Education and the Administrator of Special Education licensure program include a 3.0 undergraduate GPA and 3.5 graduate GPA. A background (degree or license) in special education or a related area, experience teaching in the field of special education in the U.S., strong references from both professors and employers, preferably in special education or a related area, and interest in pursuing research related to special education administration is required. Students admitted to this program must demonstrate that they have met the Core NCATE/CEC Competencies for Special Education.

Getting Started

Applicants should have teaching experience in a general education classroom or special education setting. See the criteria listed above.

Admission Process and Criteria

Initial application forms are available from the Graduate School at the University of Massachusetts. For the M.Ed., CAGS, and Ed.D., applicants must submit a personal statement to be prepared by the applicant with this form. Applicants are encouraged to clearly present a description of past and present experiences and future goals and objectives as they relate to their desire to be admitted to the Special Education program and for teaching students with disabilities or administering their programs. Those applicants applying for the Ed.D. must provide an in-depth, detailed statement of their areas of research interests. In addition to content, the personal statement is reviewed for its clarity of writing and for the applicant's ability to present ideas in a coherent and logical fashion. Applications also include letters of reference and official transcripts. Those applying for the Ed.D. must also submit scores from the GRE taken within the last ten years. Students are admitted

to the fall semester only. Applications for fall admission are due by January 15th prior to the fall semester. Applications are reviewed by faculty and evaluated on the basis of undergraduate GPA, letters of reference, strong personal statements, and prior teaching and professional experience related to teaching students with disabilities in public schools. Under certain conditions, students may be asked to come to campus for an interview.

Course of Study

All students applying to Special Education are invited to enroll for a degree only in the program, but not for licensure only. A Master's of Education (M.Ed.) degree or a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS) follow a course of study that leads to an endorsement for a Massachusetts license as a Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities (PreK-8 or 5-12) as the two are inter-woven. Students are required to complete the required course of study that consists of 36-42 credits. In order to graduate with a licensure endorsement, students must complete both coursework and a 300-hour practicum. Students taking 9 credits per semester typically complete the program in two years.

A doctoral degree (Ed.D.) and CAGS program is also offered to students seeking advanced study and research in Special Education in the areas of assessment, academic interventions, transition, and administration. Those applicants seeking a license as a Special Education Administrator pursue either the CAGS or Ed.D. Please contact the Concentration Coordinator for more information.

Advising

Students accepted into the program are assigned a faculty member in the program as their advisor. Successful applicants will receive a letter notifying them of their acceptance and identifying their advisor. Students are to meet with their advisor as soon as possible when they arrive on campus.

Career Opportunities and Job Placement

Graduates of the program are actively sought by school districts in the Commonwealth and across the nation. Graduates are fully prepared to serve schools, state, and federal education agencies as teachers, administrators, diagnosticians, consultants, collaborators, interventionists, negotiators, mediators, and managers.

Program Specific Information

The program competencies are based on the professional guidelines of the International Council of Exceptional Children (CEC).

For further information, please contact:

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LICENSURE INFORMATION AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL): The MTEL is required for licensure by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The test has two parts: the Communication and Literacy Skills (C&LS) test and the Subject area test(s). The University's policy is that:

- Undergraduates must achieve a passing score on the C&LS test as a pre-requisite for admission.
- Post-baccalaureate and graduate students must achieve a passing score on the C&LS test in their first semester of study.
- All students must pass the Subject test(s) (if one has been developed for that licensure field) before enrolling in the practicum.

Licensure Application Process: The Educator Licensure Office (ELO) in the School of Education coordinates the licensure application process for all University Educator Preparation program students who have completed all licensing requirements. The ELO provides information to guide students in using the Electronic Licensure and Recruitment system (ELAR), a system in which students apply for educator licenses online. The ELAR system requires a student to apply for his/her license online (including the payment of license fees) and send an official copy of his/her transcript to the ELO in Room 130 Furcolo Hall (being sure that the transcript includes the "Institutional Recommendation for Teacher Licensure"). After individuals have applied online, the ELO endorses/recommends candidates for licensure via ELAR. The University Licensure Officer also assists students in completing applications for licensure in other states, as necessary.

Career and Job Search Assistance: The School of Education, in collaboration with Career Services, sponsors a Job Fair for prospective educators. The Job Fair draws school districts from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont and New Hampshire. In addition, Career Services provides information and registration for the Massachusetts Educational Recruiting Consortium (MERC), a recruitment fair attended by school districts from across the nation.

The University of Massachusetts Amherst prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, gender, sexual preference, age, marital status, national origin, mental or physical handicap, political belief or affiliation, membership or non-membership in any organization, or veteran status, in any aspect of the admission or treatment of students or in employment.