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**APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS  
(ABA) CERTIFICATE HANDBOOK**

Department of Educational  
Psychology

College of Education and  
Human Development

Texas A&M University

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## **Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Certificate Handbook**

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The Special Education Program (SPED) functions within the Department of Educational Psychology (EPSY) and the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) at Texas A&M University. This handbook contains information for current and prospective students regarding the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Certificate, as well as information required by legal statute or the policies of Texas A&M University. Graduate students in the College are subject to the administrative control of the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS). More information about the OGAPS can be found at <http://ogs.tamu.edu/>.

We (SPED) currently offer an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Certificate consisting of 21 credit hours. Our course program and fieldwork supervision is approved by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), Inc. ® and would allow you to sit for the BCBA examination. Our faculty members have expertise in Applied Behavior Analysis, for information about faculty expertise see: <http://sped.tamu.edu/>. The department is consistently ranked as a top national program by *U.S. News and World Report* and has some of the most prominent national and international scholars in special education. Thus, the application process is competitive and the certificate program is rigorous.

### **The ABA Certificate is currently offered completely online.**

Approximately one in every 59 children in the United States has an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Without early intervention, the cost to care for a person with autism over his or her lifetime is about \$3.6 million (Cakir, Frye, & Walker, 2020). A Texas A&M University transcribed certificate identifies individuals with specialized professional preparation at the graduate level in evidence-based interventions to improve the quality of life for individuals with ASD and others with challenging behaviors, as well as a framework for providing instruction to others with developmental disabilities. Texas A&M University supplies greatly needed professionals to challenge current proliferation of unproven or even dangerous interventions. Teachers who are unable to critically evaluate the research are susceptible to such practices.

This certificate relies on applied behavior analysis (ABA) practices and techniques rooted in ABA (e.g., Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports), which have been repeatedly demonstrated to be effective with many students with ASD (Loiacono & Allen, 2008) and others with challenging behaviors. The courses, which comprise this certificate, are specifically designed to cover content recommended by professional organizations and guided by the National Competencies for Teachers of Children with ASD; the Council for Exceptional for Exceptional Children (CEC) Standards for Professional Practice; and recommendations by the CEC, the Autism Society of America (ASA), and the Network of Autism Training and Technical Assistance Programs (NATTAP).

Required Courses: 21 semester credit hours (see course program and descriptions below)

EPSY 630 (3 credits): Single-Case Experimental Design

SPED 601 (3 credits): Assessment in School Settings

SPED 602 (3 credits): Ethics and Professional Conduct in SPED and ABA

SPED 604 (3 credits): Introduction to Applied Behavior Analysis

SPED 605 (3 credits): Leadership in Applied Behavior Analysis

SPED 642 (3 credits): Prevention, Support, and Intervention for Students with Behavior Problems

SPED 699 (3 credits): Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis

*Taking these seven courses will lead to a TAMU ABA graduate certificate, but will not lead to BCBA® certification without additional requirements. Those interested in national BCBA certification should visit [www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com) for more information.*

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### CERTIFICATION:



Pass rate data for the BCBA exam may be found on the BACB website

**Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Certificate  
Program of Study**

See <http://registrar.tamu.edu/General/Calendar.aspx> for academic calendar dates

Semester	Courses	
Year One Summer I (5 weeks, May-June)	SPED 604	Introduction to Applied Behavior Analysis
Year One Fall	SPED 699	Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis
Year One Spring	SPED 601	Assessment in School Settings
Year Two Summer II	SPED 642	Prevention, Support, and Intervention for Students with Emotional and Behavior Problems (5-weeks, July-August)
Year Two Fall	SPED 602	Ethics and Professional Conduct in Special Education and Applied Behavior Analysis
Year Two Spring	EPSY 630	Single Case Research
	SPED 605	Leadership in Applied Behavior Analysis

**Program of Study Notes:**

- Courses are online; you will need to join via a desktop or laptop computer.
- Courses are in the evening, typically starting at 5:30pm.
- All students in the certificate track start in the second summer session.
- Students progress through the program with a cohort of students seeking a M.Ed. in SPED.
- Courses are offered sequentially and year one courses are prerequisites for year two.
- The entire ABA Certificate requires 21 credits; each course is 3 credits.
- Course syllabi are available online via Howdy.
- Online education is not independent study. Check syllabi for meeting time expectations.
- Courses during *Fall* and *Spring* semesters are usually offered from 5:30-8:30 PM. Each 3-hour class meets for up to 3 hours online per week.
- Students participating in online courses should expect to be online participating in course activities during the 5:30-8:30 PM time slot.
- Courses during *Summer* typically meet 3 times per week for 3 hours each day in the evenings with many asynchronous classes.

**SPED 601 (3 credits): Assessment in School Settings\***

Formal and informal assessment; state assessment and alternatives; techniques used with students with disabilities; using data to make educational decisions.

Prerequisites: SPED 604; SPED 699; Graduate classification; Approval of instructor.

**SPED 604: Introduction to Applied Behavior Analysis\***

The purpose of this course is to provide educators with an introduction to applied behavior analysis. Graduate students will be provided (a) an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of ABA, (b) principles and procedures of ABA, and (c) an introduction to data collection, assessment of behavior, and individualized interventions within an educational context.

Emphasis will be placed on the application of ABA principles in multiple contexts to provide behavioral support to a diverse range of students. Course content through lectures, articles, discussions, and practice activities is delivered through Blackboard Collaborate and e-Campus.

It will be each student's responsibility to participate in these activities and demonstrate mastery of the course content. There are no prerequisites for this course, although it is a graduate course and should not be taken without the recommendation of your advisor.

Prerequisite: Graduate classification.

**SPED 605: Leadership in Applied Behavior Analysis\***

Provide learners with literature and evidence-based practices for effective leadership and supervision in the field of applied behavior analysis (ABA); review the theoretical underpinnings of ABA as they relate to supervision and training of staff, specifically those involving behavior-change procedures; master best practices in personnel supervision and management; practice supervision-based skills such as evaluation, behavior-skills training, and performance feedback.

Prerequisite: SPED 602; SPED 642; Graduate Classification.

**SPED 642 (3 credits): Prevention, Support, and Intervention for Students with Behavior Problems**

Effective management of challenging and severe behavior problems in education, clinic and community settings using prevention, targeted programming and individual interventions; includes methods for observing, assessing and analyzing challenging and severe behaviors.

Prerequisites: Graduate classification and approval of department head.

**SPED 699 (3 credits): Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis**

This course provides a rigorous repertoire of knowledge *and* skill in behavior analysis. This course is a comprehensive and contemporary description of applied behavior analysis. The principles and paradigms of theoretical and experimental aspects of behavior analysis require this course and the accompanying lab or field experience in which to apply them. It is not sufficient to be able to merely espouse theory if one cannot apply it successfully and ethically in the environments in which it is needed. Prerequisite: Graduate classification, SPED 604.

**EPSY 630 (3 credits): Single-Case Research**

Provides skills to conduct research with N=1 designs in the area of special education, school counseling and school psychology. Skills are applied for use in functional assessments, individual interventions, and evidence based practices. Students are required to demonstrate competency through projects and presentations. Prerequisites: Graduate classification.

**SPED 602 (3 credits): Ethical and Professional Conduct in SPED and ABA**

This course focuses on the ethical and professional conduct required for special educators and behavior analysts. This course is intended to provide students with information required for those preparing to become and who are certified behavior analysts and will cover ethics content required by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. This information is also highly relevant to individuals who work with children or adults with disabilities in any capacity, including teachers, community service providers, and therapists. Prerequisites: Graduate classification.

**Information for Applicants****Admission and Application Process**

Applications are reviewed by the Master's committee each Spring for Summer admission. Grants, scholarships, and fellowships are sometimes available and the nomination for this process is secondary to admission to the program. For more information about available grants, see [sped.tamu.edu](http://sped.tamu.edu) or contact the academic advisor by emailing [epsyadvisor@tamu.edu](mailto:epsyadvisor@tamu.edu). Strong candidates for our program have outstanding academic skills and preparation, experience teaching or working with individuals with disabilities, strong communication and analytic abilities, and potential for leadership in the field through teaching, service, or research. The application process is competitive; individuals with exceptional experiences and skills are encouraged to apply.

**Suggestions for Applicants**

- Seek letters of recommendation from supervisors and/or former university instructors who can speak to your experiences with individuals with disabilities, your leadership potential, and your ability to succeed in graduate courses.
- Use the candidate statement to highlight your accomplishments and also to demonstrate your written communication skills and academic writing abilities; revise and edit your writing samples thoroughly.
- Begin the application process in advance to ensure completion by the application deadline.

**Administrative Issues**

The TAMU Graduate Student Handbook may be found here:

[http://ogs.tamu.edu/ogs-help-center/tutorial/graduate\\_student\\_handbook](http://ogs.tamu.edu/ogs-help-center/tutorial/graduate_student_handbook).

## **Information for Current Students**

### **Prior Graduate Course Work and Waivers**

Waiving a course requires the consent of the Program Chair, with advisement and recommendation from the student's chair or temporary advisor and the instructor of the course. The procedure for this includes a written request by the student to the advisor with attached documentation such as prior course syllabi, syllabi for the course requested to be waived, and any relevant capstone requirements. In addition, faculty may require examination or competency demonstration prior to evaluating the course for waiver. Students may not receive transfer credit for courses that have previously been applied toward a degree. Undergraduate courses or courses for initial certification are not transferable. In most cases, transfer credits are limited to no more than 6 semester hours.

### **From the Offices of the Dean of Student Life: Title IX Haven Training**

This training is required by all students at A&M.

If you have not completed Part 1 of the training, complete Part 1 of the training. This training only needs to be done once and there will be a hold on class registration until it is completed. You may do this by clicking on the appropriate link below. When you log into the training, you will be leaving the Texas A&M University network. You will be logging into a web service hosted by EverFi on behalf of the Offices of the Dean of Student Life at Texas A&M University. [Sexual Assault Prevention Training – Graduate and Professional](#)

### **Research Involving Human Subjects**

Any research conducted with human subjects must be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Texas A&M University. All students should take the online training and receive the certificate prior to conducting research with human participants, including applied, classroom research. The training and additional IRB information may be found at this URL: <http://researchcompliance.tamu.edu/irb>.

### **Advising**

The EPSY department has a full-time academic advisor ([epsyadvisor@tamu.edu](mailto:epsyadvisor@tamu.edu)) who is available to guide the application process and to answer any questions about the program or provide assistance in locating the appropriate staff or faculty member who might answer questions. The EPSY advisor and the EPSY website ([epsy.tamu.edu](http://epsy.tamu.edu)) are also sources of information regarding financial aid, deadlines, & registration information including drop/add/q-drop or in-absentia registration. The EPSY advisor is also available for any questions regarding student records, transcripts, grade changes, or variable credit course sign ups (i.e., 485, 685, 683, etc.) and departmental or program procedures.

The ABA Certificate Program Coordinator, Dr. Erinn Whiteside, is also available to answer relevant questions about the ABA graduate certificate ([erinnwhiteside@tamu.edu](mailto:erinnwhiteside@tamu.edu)).

### **Submission of Additional Curriculum Request Form for the ABA Certificate**

The Applied Behavior Analysis Certificate from TAMU will be included on your transcript, provided that you successfully complete the required coursework and submit an "Additional

Curriculum Request Form” by established deadlines. Complete this form during your first semester of coursework. Once complete, send it to the EPSY graduate advisor: Sally Kallina at [skallina@tamu.edu](mailto:skallina@tamu.edu)

Please note: Receipt of the TAMU Graduate Transcribed Certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis does not constitute national certification. The Behavior Analyst Certification Board, Inc.® has verified this course sequence toward the coursework requirements for eligibility to take the Board Certified Behavior Analyst® (Option 1) Examination. Applicants will need to meet additional requirements before they can be deemed eligible to take the examination (See requirements at [www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com)).

### **Email**

Upon admission into the University, students will receive a Texas A&M official email address in the format of “NetID@email.tamu.edu.” While some students prefer their personal email or school district generated email, University student rules and policies explicitly state that it is the student’s responsibility to maintain and monitor their Texas A&M email address. Official correspondence from the University and the Department will be sent to official Texas A&M email addresses, and failure to properly monitor that account may result in missing important information and deadlines. Failure to monitor the official Texas A&M email is not an acceptable excuse for missed deadlines or requirements, and resulting holds or fees will not be lifted for this reason alone.

### **Expectations of Students**

Students are held to the standards of the Student Rules at TAMU (<http://student-rules.tamu.edu/>) and the standards of the Office of Graduate Studies at TAMU. The TAMU Graduate Student Handbook is available at the following website: [http://ogs.tamu.edu/ogs-help-center/tutorial/graduate\\_student\\_handbook](http://ogs.tamu.edu/ogs-help-center/tutorial/graduate_student_handbook). Further, students in the SPED program are expected to maintain high levels of performance in the following areas:

**1) Academic performance.** The expectation for academic performance is that the student maintain a grade point average and continuous enrollment to meet the requirements set for good academic standing (3.0; Student Rules 10.4.3 and as stated in the Graduate Catalog). Although not required in all courses to the same extent, it is expected that students will demonstrate the ability to communicate their knowledge through papers, articles, reports, and other forms of written expression. Graduate students are expected to complete tasks with minimal assistance or support although faculty members are available for mentoring and guidance. The University procedures will be followed in cases where students are placed on probation due to GPRs below 3.0.

**2) E-folio Presentation.** A professional e-folio presentation is required for completion of the ABA Graduate Certificate. This portfolio of work allows for you to demonstrate competency in applying knowledge and skills of applied behavior analysis through a series of three or more practical applications in several courses, across the program. The professional e-folio development process begins early in your program and should be updated regularly. Following



completion of assignments that demonstrate competency in ABA, review feedback from faculty. Make needed updates and revisions and post the products to your e-folio site. Your site must contain, at a minimum, the following products:

- Culminating Activity - SPED 699: Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis (Fall, Year 1)
- Intervention Assignment - SPED 642: Prevention, Support, and Intervention for Students with Behavior Problems (Summer II, Year 2)
- Single Case Research Study - EPSY 630: Single Case Research (Spring, Year 2)

A recorded 5-10 minute presentation over your e-folio products is shared with faculty at the end of year 2, prior to graduation. A team of reviewers that include faculty members will review your e-Folio site and presentation for demonstration of competency in ABA.

**3) Ethical behavior.** Students will behave in accordance with professional ethical standards. They are also expected to adhere to the Aggie Honor Code, as promulgated by Texas A&M University. Students are required to be familiar with the TAMU Honor Code policies, which are found at this URL: [aggiehonor.tamu.edu](http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu).

**4) Professional behavior.** Students have an obligation and expectation to behave in a professional manner. Professional behavior includes timeliness (e.g., completion of tasks by due dates; being on time for class, meetings, or practica settings; completion of course requirements in designated time frames), accepting constructive feedback from faculty or other supervisors, and behaving in a manner that is supportive of others and not disruptive to the learning process (e.g., turning off cell phones in class or meetings). Further, this expectation extends to students' use of text messaging, emailing, instant messaging, cell phones, and other social network communications including, but not limited to internet communications using message boards, blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. Such professional behavior is exemplified by forming respectful relationships with faculty, staff, other students, other professionals in the community, and consumers.

**5) Online program expectations.** Because the ABA graduate transcribed certificate program is exclusively offered online, students must have continuous access to the required technology and high-speed internet access and must become proficient in the use of online course management systems and other online tools (such as Centra, MediaMatrix) that are used in the program. In addition, our program requires students to have access to a microphone and camera. It is each student's responsibility to work with the appropriate "Help Desks" to resolve any difficulties and to solve personal computing problems. The current program requirements are found here: <http://epsy.tamu.edu/degrees-and-programs/graduate-degree-programs/online-masters-special-education/technology>

**6) Continuous program progress.** Because of the professional nature of the training program, it is critical that students progress at a rate that is consistent with program guidelines. Grades of "Incomplete" are the rare exception and are given only under extraordinary circumstances, at the discretion of the instructor. Based on TAMU Student Rules (10.5), an incomplete can only be given if the student is making adequate progress in the course, but not able to complete specific requirements.

**7) Cell phone usage.** In 2017, Texas lawmakers passed legislation that bans the use of a wireless communication device for electronic messaging while operating a motor vehicle. Texting, reading messages, writing messages, etc. is prohibited while driving in Texas.

<https://www.txdot.gov/driver/laws/cellphones.html>

Consistent with this legislation, and out of an abundance of caution for the safety of students in our Master's and ABA Certificate programs at Texas A&M University, the following program policy has been put in place.

SPED Master's and ABA Certificate students participating in online course activities (including Blackboard Collaborate sessions, discussion board participation, etc.) must engage in these activities while in a location that allows for the student's full participation and attention. Engagement in course activities while driving a motor vehicle is not permitted.

Further, participation in class activities via a cell phone can inhibit the level of Collaborate functions and student participation. For this reason, across all courses in the program, it is the expectation of faculty that students will not utilize their cell phones for class participation. Participation via a laptop or desktop computer is expected.

### **Student Probation**

Students who fail to meet any of the "Expectations of Students" listed above will not meet program expectations. Failure to maintain expectations in one or more of these areas will result in consideration for placement on probation by an ad hoc committee of a minimum of three members of the SPED graduate faculty. The student will be notified of the program's concerns in writing. The student will be given a maximum of two weeks to explain his or her circumstances to the committee members prior to this meeting to respond to the faculty complaint in writing or via web conferencing. After faculty evaluation of the student, the following actions are available to the faculty:

- a. The complaint may be dismissed after considering the student's evidence;
- b. A plan for remediation of the problem that is agreed to by the student and the faculty may be implemented;
- c. The student may be placed on formal probation during the program. Such probation would include a written list of behaviors that must be displayed by the student during the probationary period and a description of sanctions to occur if the requirements of the probationary period are not met. Such a probation plan will include a specific time frame in which these behaviors must occur; or
- d. The committee may recommend that the student be dismissed from the program.

The sanctions listed above do not have to be applied in any particular order, however, fairness in determining sanction(s) appropriate to the student problem is the goal. Additional university and departmental expectations and procedures serve as a general guide as well.

### **Student Grievance Process**

In addition to the grievance procedures established by the University, the Department of Educational Psychology has developed, a process known as the Student Advocate. This process (described below) is available for students who disagree with and wish to challenge a faculty member's actions related to the student's participation in EPSY programs.

An EPSY faculty member selected by the Department Head assumes the Student Advocate position. Contact the EPSY office, or the graduate advisor ([epsyadvisor@tamu.edu](mailto:epsyadvisor@tamu.edu)) for the name of the current Student Advocate/Ombudsperson. In the event of a conflict of interest between a student and the current Ombudsperson, an alternate faculty member may fill this role. There is also an Ombudsperson at the College level, as well as one at the Office of Graduate Studies. The following policies were derived by the Student Advocate in consultation with EPSY faculty, students and the department head.

Graduate and Undergraduate Grievance Advisory Committees have been established. Each committee is made up of one faculty member and two students. The purpose of these committees is threefold:

- 1) To advise the Student Advocate concerning policy and issues related to faculty/student relations in EPSY,
- 2) To forward possible student concerns to the Student Advocate, and
- 3) To aid in the resolution of student concerns when requested by the Student Advocate.

Pre-condition to Student's Initiation of the Grievance Process:

Students are encouraged to meet with and attempt to resolve problems with the faculty member. If students have met with the faculty member and the problem has not been resolved, they should contact the Student Advocate or a member of the Grievance Advisory Committee.

OR:

If students do not choose to meet with the faculty due to the nature of the problem or the faculty member, they also may directly contact the Student Advocate or a member of the Grievance Advisory Committee and initiate the grievance process.

Overview of Grievance Process:

A student who has a faculty-student concern and who has addressed the preconditions for initiation of the grievance process is encouraged to meet with the Student Advocate or Department Ombudsperson. However, a student may choose to meet first with other EPSY faculty member(s). The name and contact information for the current Student Advocate and Department Ombudsperson may be obtained via the Graduate Advisor or by calling the EPSY office at 979-845-1831.

Depending upon the nature of the student's concern, the Student Advocate or Ombudsperson may consult with the identified faculty member, the program coordinator or the department head. At the discretion of the department head, the student's concern may be communicated to the CEHD Dean's office. When there is a discussion of a particular faculty-student concern, maintaining anonymity of the student may not be possible.

Resolution of a student's concern may occur as a result of the following:

- 1) Student's dialogue with the faculty member, a Grievance Advisory Committee member, the Department Ombudsperson, or the Student Advocate.
- 2) Student Advocate or Ombudsperson's consultation with the Grievance Advisory Committee and/or discussions with the faculty member.
- 3) Student Advocate or Ombudsperson's discussion of the student's concern with the program coordinator or the department head. As a result of these discussions, the Student Advocate and/or the department head may confer with the faculty member.
- 4) Pending the outcome of the above-mentioned #3, or the nature of the student's concern, the department head and/or student may enter into discussion with the CEHD Dean's office and appropriate University committees and administrators.

### **Tuition and Fees**

Tuition and Fees are collected each semester. Information on the cost of attendance can be viewed or calculated by going to:

<http://financialaid.tamu.edu/Graduate/Cost-of-Attendance#0-CollegeStationGraduateStudents>

### **Financial Assistance**

Financial assistance is available through the Department of Student Financial Aid ([financialaid.tamu.edu](http://financialaid.tamu.edu)). Students are encouraged to take the initiative to seek out assistantships with individual faculty members and to advise the Academic Advising office if they are looking for an assistantship.

Financial aid programs for graduate students include the Robert T. Stafford Loan (formerly the Guaranteed Student Loan), the Perkins Loan (similar to the Stafford Loan), the Hinson-Hazelwood Loan, College Work Study, the Texas Public Education Grant and the State Student Incentive Grant. To be considered for all forms of aid available to graduate students, a student must file either the Financial Aid Form (FAF) or the Family Financial Statement (FFS).

Additionally, there are loans available directly through the University:

### **Short Term Loans**

These loans are made to provide assistance to students who experience temporary financial difficulty in relation to educationally related difficulties, relocation expenses for graduating students, emergency medical expenses, rent, food and other bills. The amount of the loan, terms, and conditions vary according to the designated purpose. Generally, loans must be repaid (with 10% simple interest) within a prescribed payment period of 3 to 9 months.

### **Emergency Tuition and Required Fees Loan Program**

All students enrolled at least one-half time and making satisfactory academic progress who can demonstrate financial need are eligible. Graduate students must have a 3.0 GPA and the loan must be repaid (with a 5% interest rate) within 90 days (within 30 days during the summer).

### **Little Loans**

Cannot exceed \$50 and must be repaid within 30 days. Each loan is subject to a service charge.

**Installment Plan**

Tuition, required fees, room and board may be paid in installments during the Fall and Spring semesters. This plan must be requested at the time of registration, and a \$15 service charge is added to the fees.

Please contact the Department of Student Financial Aid for further information and/or forms. The Financial Aid website is: <https://financialaid.tamu.edu>.

**Professional Organizations**

As a graduate student at TAMU, you are strongly encouraged to join relevant professional organizations. Provided below are a few recommended organizations:

- Council for Exceptional Children  
The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is widely respected as the most active organization in the world serving all exceptional children who have disabilities and those who are gifted. It is a network of 53,000 professional members from every state and province who are involved in all aspects of special education. <https://www.cec.sped.org/>
- American Educational Research Association Founded in 1916, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) works to advance knowledge, scholarly inquiry, and research related to education. AERA has over 150 special interest groups, including one on special education research. <http://www.aera.net/>
- Association for Behavior Analysis International The Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) is a key organization for individuals interested in understanding, teaching, and applying behavior analysis. <https://www.abainternational.org/welcome.aspx>