
**MASTER'S PROGRAM IN
SPECIAL EDUCATION
STUDENT HANDBOOK**

Department of Educational
Psychology

College of Education and
Human Development

Texas A&M University

Master's Program in Special Education Handbook

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 online Master's of Education (M. Ed.) program, 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 Studies and Professional Studies (OGAPS). More information about the OGAPS can be found at <http://ogs.tamu.edu/>.

We (SPED) currently offer an M.Ed.* in Special Education consisting of 36 semester credit hours and a 21 semester credit hour graduate certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis for qualified individuals. Faculty expertise in SPED includes the following: Autism, Behavioral Disorders, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, Severe Disabilities, Reading, and Transition. More information about faculty expertise is available at <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 the field of Special Education. Thus, the application process is competitive and the program is rigorous.

*A Master's of Science (M.S.) in Special Education is also available and may be discussed with an advisor for students interested in a thesis option. Attaining the M.S. requires the successful completion of a master's thesis in addition to the standard coursework.

Mission Statement of the Special Education Master's Program

The Master's of Education program in Special Education at Texas A&M University prepares the highest quality professionals to meet the diverse educational and behavioral needs of students with disabilities. We prepare leaders, expert-level practitioners, and advocates in educational fields. Our greater goal is to enhance equity by improving the quality of education and treatment services for children and youth with disabilities including their families.

Purpose of the Special Education Master's Program

The purpose of this program is to prepare expert-leaders who are well-equipped to implement high quality academic and behavioral interventions and programming for students with disabilities in the state, nation, and world.

Special Education Master's Program Philosophy

Our training encompasses the knowledge and skills for effectively meeting the needs of students classified as having disabilities as well as those identified as "low-performing" and "at-risk". Our faculty supports the premises of FAPE (free appropriate public education) and LRE (least restrictive environment) across a continuum of placements including the integration of individuals with disabilities with their typically-developing peers in inclusive settings (e.g., schools, community, and employment settings) with well-trained professionals. We require our Master's students to have an understanding of, and respect for, the ethnic and cultural diversity of the students and families with whom they may work and the communities they represent. We

share a commitment to teaching empirically-supported best practice interventions and methods in the identification, assessment, instructional programming, and progress evaluation of students with disabilities. Further, we strive to contribute to [Texas A&M's Vision](#), whereby we support transformational education, discovery and innovation, and impact on our state, nation and world. We further embrace the cohort as part of the university community.

We believe that graduates from our Master's in Special Education Program will encounter increasing changes and challenges in the field of special education. As a result, we teach problem solving, critical thinking, data analysis, collaboration, and communication skills as part of the leadership and professional development of our Master's students. Graduates from our online Master's program often gain admission to prestigious doctoral programs; acquire director, supervisory or other leadership positions in school districts, advocacy organizations, and state government; and advise or create non-profit organizations for the betterment of individuals with disabilities. While in the program, students can expect to interact with national scholars; learn the most current technological methodological, legal, and topical issues related to the education of individuals with disabilities. Students may also have the opportunity to engage in scholarly activities as desired and available. Coursework includes two courses on reading and literacy, two for behavior management and analysis, Leadership in ABA, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, Transition, Single Case Research, Multicultural and Bilingual Special Education,, Ethics and Professional Conduct, Consultation in SPED, and Assessment.

SPED Masters – Who Should Apply?

The SPED Master's program is an online, distance program intended for individuals with a solid background in education, behavior, disability, or related fields. A teaching certificate is not required, but teaching or clinical experience working with individuals with disabilities is highly desirable. We are also seeking individuals with a commitment to work in the field or pursue additional graduate training after receiving a degree. Additionally, our program works best for professionals who are self-motivated and can manage the rigor of a 36 credit hour, two-year fully online master's program. Successful graduates of our program have been general educators, special educators, behavior coaches, administrators, counselors, and therapists.

Strong applicants are those who have:

- Significant work with persons with disabilities (outside of family members)
- Significant work with culturally and linguistically diverse groups
- Interest and/or experience in Applied Behavior Analysis
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What Can You Do with this Degree?

- Develop experience in Autism and single case research.
- Be prepared to implement academic and behavioral interventions and programming.
- Complete coursework toward the BCBA.
- Become competitive for doctoral level admissions and funding.
- Gain advanced skills and marketability.

The M.Ed. Special Education is currently offered completely online.

The online Master's program consists of 36 hours (or 12 courses) designed to lead to a Master's degree in Special Education at the end of a two-year program of study. The courses are taken sequentially starting in Summer and ending in Spring. Incorporated into the program also are the necessary coursework for those who wish to go further and apply for BCBA certification. The following table represents the recommended program of study for the online master's degree program. Please note that deviations from this program are discouraged and may be prohibited. Acceptance to the program and your confirmation indicates that changes in scheduling for convenience, or non-medical or non-emergency reasons are generally not approved.

**Special Education Online Master's Degree
Recommended Program of Study**

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

Semester	Courses	
Year One Summer I	SPED 604	Introduction to Applied Behavior Analysis* (5-weeks, June-July)
Year One Summer II	SPED 632	Transition Education and Services for Individuals with Disabilities (5-weeks, July-August)
Year One Fall	SPED 699 SPED 630	Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis * Early Literacy for Students with Disabilities
Year One Spring	SPED 617 SPED 601	Adolescent Literacy Across the Content Areas for Students with Disabilities Assessment in School Settings*
Year Two Summer I	SPED 628	Consultation in Special Education (5-weeks, June-July)
Year Two Summer II	SPED 642	Prevention, Support, and Intervention for Students with Problem Behaviors * (5-weeks, July-August)
Year Two Fall	SPED 602 SPED 611	Ethics and Professional Conduct in Special Education and Applied Behavior Analysis* Multicultural and Bilingual Special Education
Year Two Spring	EPSY 630 SPED 605	Single-Case Experimental Research Design* Leadership in Applied Behavior Analysis*

* Coursework required for students seeking certification as a Board Certified Behavior Analysts® and the ABA graduate certificate. Additional requirements are necessary and information may be found at www.bacb.com.

Program of Study Notes:

- Courses are online and primarily synchronous. However, there may be courses that are asynchronous in nature (no live weekly meeting) with assignments due at appropriate times to support learning and progress toward educational goals.
- During synchronous class sessions, you will need to join via a desktop or laptop computer. A phone platform will not allow full functionality and will not fulfill this technical requirement
- Courses are held online and in the evening, typically starting at 5:30pm
- All SPED M.Ed. students start the program during the first summer session (Summer I). The first course in the program takes place over 5-weeks.
- Students progress through the program as a cohort. Should a student have a situation arise where a pause in the program is needed, the student is expected to present their request in writing to the Program Coordinator, faculty advisor, and their academic advisor. Breaks or pauses in the program will be evaluated and decided on a case by case basis.
- Courses are offered sequentially.
- Year one courses are prerequisites for year two.
- The entire online Master's of Education degree requires 36 credits. Each course is 3 credits.
- Course syllabi are available online through Howdy.
- Online education is not independent study.
- Students are expected to 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 the Summer typically meet at least twice per week for 3 hours each day in the evenings with many asynchronous classes.
- Courses identified with an asterisk (*) are associated with the ABA Certificate. Students participating in the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) graduate certificate option only (not the entire Master's degree) would take only these seven courses. Access to the other courses requires admission to the Master's program. The ABA graduate certificate is explained below.

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 Canvas and Zoom. 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 outside of Graduate classification, however, this is a graduate course and should not be taken without the recommendation of your advisor. Prerequisite: Graduate classification.

SPED 632 (3 credits) Transition Education and Services for Individuals with Disabilities

Current issues and practices related to the transition of students from school to adulthood; foundations of lifelong transitions; assessment of post-school goals and identification of effective transition services to promote employment, postsecondary education, and community living; partnerships with parents and service providers.

Prerequisite: Graduate classification.

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.

Prerequisites: SPED 604; Graduate classification.

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

Teaches measurement, design, implementation, and analysis skills to conduct research with single-subject design; review and summarize the quality of single-case literature, plan and implement AB designs.

Prerequisites: SPED 602; SPED 642; Graduate classification.

SPED 617 (3 credits) Adolescent Literacy Across the Content Areas for Students with Disabilities

Research-based strategies to teach reading and writing to 4th through 12th grade students with disabilities and other diverse instructional needs. The emphasis is on content area issues and strategies, as well as on assessment, motivation, interventions, and other current issues.

Prerequisites: SPED 630; Graduate Classification.

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 628 (3 credits) Consultation in Special Education

Rationale, strategies, procedures and resources for providing consultation as systematic problem-solving to school procedures, and resources for improving services for children with disabilities, and those who are at-risk of school failure.

Prerequisite: Graduate classification.

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

This course provides learners with engaging and effective management strategies needed to support individuals who exhibit challenging and/or 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: SPED 604; SPED 699, SPED 601; Graduate classification. Approval of department head.

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

Focus on ethical and professional conduct required for special educators and behavior analysts; information required for certified behavior analysts; ethics required by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board; highly relevant for those working with children or adults with disabilities in any capacity.

Prerequisites: SPED 604; SPED 699; Graduate classification.

SPED 611: Multicultural and Bilingual Special Education

This course provides learners with multicultural perspectives in special education; culturally responsive teaching; methods for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners in special education; bilingual special education; language acquisition, learning disabilities and language differences.

Prerequisite: Graduate classification.

SPED 630 (3 credits) Early Literacy for Students with Disabilities

Research-based strategies for teaching beginning reading and writing to pre-K through 4th grade students with disabilities, with an emphasis on current issues, assessment, prevention, and intervention.

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.

Prerequisites: SPED 602; SPED 642; Graduate Classification.

The Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Graduate Certificate

Approximately one in every 59 children in Texas 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 et al., 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 above)

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 Emotional and 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 for more information.

CERTIFICATION:



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



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 or contact the academic advisor by emailing 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.

Information for Current Students

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Handbook

Upon receipt of this handbook, if you have any questions concerning the program, contact the program coordinator or your advisor. In addition, you are expected to acknowledge that you have received, read, and understood the contents of this handbook. Please follow [this link](#) to submit your acknowledgement.

Prior Graduate Course Work and Waivers

Waiving a course requires the consent of the Program Chair, with the 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) 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) 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 SPED program Master's Committee Chair, Dr. Marcia Montague is also available to answer relevant questions about the Master's degree (mmontague@tamu.edu). Individuals who are admitted to the program are assigned a temporary advisor. The faculty advisor is available to assist students in all program and professional advising.

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

Submission of Additional Curriculum Request form for the ABA Certificate

All SPED Master's students, through following the required program sequence, will complete the coursework required for the Applied Behavior Analysis Certificate from TAMU. This Certificate will be included on your transcript at graduation, 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: Christina Presley at cmpresley@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).

Filing the Degree Plan

Please file your program of studies with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) in June of your first year by logging on to the OGAPS webpage.

- All courses are identified in your handbook.
- Identify the “chair” of your committee using either the assigned temporary advisor or any of the faculty with graduate status teaching in the master’s program. A chair is someone who advises the student in the program of study and any research or scholarship activities. Special Education faculty members and their research interests are listed on our webpage.

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. 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 maintains 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. (Student Rules 12.3 and 12.5)

2) 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.

3) Professional behavior. Students have an obligation and expectation to behave in a professional manner. Professional behavior includes timeliness (e.g., completion of tasks by the due dates; being on time for class, meetings, or practicum 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.

4) Online program expectations. Because the Online SPED Master's degree and ABA graduate transcribed certificate programs are 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>

5) 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.

6) E-folio Presentation. A professional e-folio presentation is required for graduation. 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:

1. Functional Behavior Assessment - SPED 601: Assessment in School Settings (Spring, Year 1)

2. Behavior Intervention Plan Project - SPED 642: Prevention, Support, and Intervention for Students with Emotional and Behavior Problems (Summer II, Year 2)
3. Supervision Feedback Project - SPED 605: Leadership in Applied Behavior Analysis (Spring, Year 2)
4. Research-based Single Case 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.

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.

8) Attendance. Attendance is the student's responsibility and is essential for successful course completion. You are expected to arrive on time and actively participate in each synchronous class session (live meetings) for the duration of the session. Attendance and participation are monitored and should take place in a manner that is both appropriate and free from distractions (ie., crying children, co-workers, etc.). A laptop or desktop computer should be used to access synchronous class meetings. **Cell phones do not allow adequate course access; cell phones are not allowed as a means to join a synchronous class session.**

You must have high speed internet access, a webcam, speakers, and a microphone for each synchronous session. If you cannot attend a synchronous class, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor ahead of time and provide satisfactory documentation of the reason for the absence. Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (See Rule 24). Section 7.4.2 indicates that, "The instructor is under

no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence” (see <https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>).

The student is responsible for providing satisfactory documentation to the instructor to substantiate the reason for an absence. Additionally, assignments are to be completed and submitted on time. For any university excused absence, you will be expected to turn in any class work as assigned by the instructor by the time indicated. Make-up exams and projects will be up to the discretion of the instructor and will be permitted only with prior approval (at least 24 hours prior) in the case of a documented emergency (e.g., doctor’s note specifying the days of your illness that correspond with the due dates of the assignment). Makeup work is contingent on university-approved excuse.

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) 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). 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>