

Special Education

*Master of Arts
Master of Education
Doctor of Philosophy
Doctor of Education*

For More Information

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URL: <https://education.utexas.edu/departments/special-education>

Facilities for Graduate Work

The University has an array of facilities that offer outstanding opportunities for research and study. Students may work with individual faculty members, many of whom have obtained external funding for research, development, training, and model demonstration projects involving the Texas Education Agency and school districts throughout Texas. In addition, students may work cooperatively with faculty members affiliated with the Assistive and Instructional Technology Laboratory, the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, and the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts. The Perry-Castañeda Library contains extensive holdings in special education and related fields. Students also have access through the [University Libraries website](#) to electronic databases, journals, and books related to special education. The College of Education's Learning Technology Center provides access to a wide range of hardware and software useful for instructional development and for research. Practicum and internship opportunities are provided by a number of local schools, state facilities, and community agencies.

Areas of Study

The Department of Special Education offers master's degrees in two areas of specialization: autism and developmental disabilities; and early childhood special education. The doctoral degree is offered in four areas of specialization: autism and developmental disabilities; early childhood special education; learning disabilities and behavioral disorders; and equity and diversity in special education. Graduate study prepares students for leadership roles in fields that serve children, youth, adults with disabilities, and their families. Students may also complete coursework to fulfill requirements for certification as a behavior analyst. Although there is considerable overlap between degree and certification requirements, additional courses beyond the degree plan are usually necessary.

Master's degree program. The master's degree prepares students to provide behavior analysis, or special education services to individuals with disabilities and their families. Through coursework and field-based experiences, students acquire knowledge and skills in the areas of disabilities, advocacy, collaboration, instruction and assessment, and professional standards of legal and ethical practice, and in the socio-cultural, linguistic, economic, and technological contexts in which services are provided.

Doctoral degree program. The doctoral program prepares students to assume leadership positions in institutions of higher education and in

local, state, and national agencies that provide services to individuals with disabilities and their families. The core areas of study focus on advocacy, leadership roles as members of the profession, standards of legal and ethical professional practice, and developing programs and services and/or conducting research that contribute to the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families. Students also develop the foundation for ongoing professional development and an appreciation of the socio-cultural, linguistic, economic, and technological contexts that shape the development and delivery of services.

Areas of Specialization

Autism and developmental disabilities provides opportunities for students to develop skills in designing, implementing, and evaluating educational interventions for people with autism and developmental disabilities.

Early childhood special education focuses on the development of early intervention programs for children from birth through six years of age, reflecting a family-centered philosophy and application of the most recent theoretical concepts in natural and inclusive settings.

Learning disabilities and behavioral disorders is a doctoral area of specialization that provides advanced coursework in contemporary trends and issues in learning disabilities and behavioral disorders. Students learn ways to conduct theoretically-driven research that addresses important issues pertinent to the major field including developing, implementing, and evaluating instructional and behavioral interventions and exploring the impact of assistive technologies on learning. Students participate in research-based experiences that help prepare them for instructional and/or leadership roles, and for conducting independent empirically-based research in the major field.

Equity and diversity in special education is a doctoral area of specialization that focuses on critical issues, knowledge, and skills related to the complex relationships between culture, race and ethnicity, language, and disability. This specialization is designed to prepare students for leadership roles in the provision of culturally and linguistically responsive educational services for exceptional children and youth from diverse backgrounds.

Graduate Studies Committee

The following faculty members served on the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) in the spring 2025 semester.

Doris Luft Baker
Diane P Bryant
Nathan Clemens
North A Cooc
Christian Doabler
Terry S Falcomata
Lauren Hazledine Hampton

Mark F O'Reilly
Peng Peng
Sarah Rannells Powell
Natasha M Strassfeld
Jessica R Toste
Sharon Vaughn