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Introduction

This handbook is designed to provide you with important information that complements the material in the University's *Graduate Catalog* (<http://gradcatalog.uconn.edu/>). All University of Connecticut graduate students are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Code of Conduct regarding Academic Integrity in Graduate Education and Research that is included in the graduate catalog. Award of the degree attests to your broad mastery of subject matter relating to special education.

Please note that this handbook does not apply to students enrolled in the Teacher Certification Program for College Graduates (TCPCG). Students in TCPCG should contact <http://teachered.education.uconn.edu/programs/tcpcg/tcpcg/overview/> for the handbook specific to their program.

Mission Statement

The Master's Program in Educational Psychology with a concentration in Special Education is tailored for graduate students with specific professional goals in mind. Our commitment is to inspire and prepare professionals in special education to create and broaden opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Students are encouraged to develop their interests in educating learners at risk across a wide range of disabilities incorporating a lifespan perspective. The Master's Program does not prepare graduates for a special education teaching license in the state of Connecticut.

Getting Started

Although there is a core of required courses that masters students in special education complete, you will have an opportunity to work closely with your major advisor in developing a plan that is individualized based upon your experiences, professional goals and program focus.

Program Course of Study

There is no fixed requirement regarding number of credits, but the Graduate School requires a minimum of 24 credits of advanced course work. However, the special education concentration will require at least 30 credits, and your advisory committee may require you to take additional courses, depending upon your objectives and experience. You may also be advised to take some courses outside of the Department of Educational Psychology. While the following courses are generally included in a Plan of Study, exceptions can be negotiated between you and your advisory committee.

Course Listings

Required Courses (12-15 credits)

EPSY 5119: Policy, Law, and Ethics in Special Education

EPSY 5121: Developmental Foundations of Exceptionality

EPSY 5092: Practicum (3-6 credits)

EPSY 5601: Principles and Methods in Educational Research (or equivalent)

Additional Courses

EPSY 5108: Instruction for Students with Special Needs in the Mainstream

EPSY 5113: Beginning Reading Supports for Students with Learning Difficulties

EPSY 5114: Adolescent Reading Supports for Students with Learning Difficulties

EPSY 5115: Writing Supports for Students with Learning Difficulties

EPSY 5116: Individual Pupil Assessment

EPSY 5123: Instructional Strategies and Adaptations for Students with Special Learning Needs

EPSY 5140: Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities

EPSY 5141: Classroom and Behavior Management

EPSY 5142: Individualized Positive Behavior Supports

EPSY 5145: Issues in Postsecondary Disability Services

EPSY 5146: Advanced Topics in Secondary Transition

EPSY 5199: Investigation of Special Topics in Education (variable credit)

EPSY 5220: Introduction to Educational Technology

EPSY 5405: Applied Behavior Analysis

EPSY 5530: Theories of Learning, Cognition, and Instruction

EPSY 5710: Introduction to Gifted Education and Talent Development

Practicum/Fieldwork Opportunities

As you plan for a practicum that may include grant related and/or field-based activities, there are many possibilities to explore within the Department of Educational Psychology, across the University, and in the greater educational community beyond the campus. Your advisor is a source of information, and you are encouraged to network to identify areas of potential fieldwork.

Specific Areas of Interest

For information about specific areas of interest, please contact the following respective faculty.

Graduate Certificate in SWPBIS

Dr. Brandi Simonsen, Assoc. Professor

Phone: (860) 486-2763

E-mail: brandi.simonsen@uconn.edu

Specialization in Literacy Supports

Dr. Natalie Olinghouse, Assoc. Professor

Phone: (860) 486-6153

E-mail: natalie.olinghouse@uconn.edu

Graduate Certificate in Postsecondary Disability Services

Dr. Allison Lombardi, Asst. Professor

Phone: (860) 486-2213

E-mail: allison.lombardi@uconn.edu

General Studies in Special Education

Dr. Allison Lombardi, Asst. Professor

Phone: (860) 486-2213

E-mail: allison.lombardi@uconn.edu

Graduate Assistantships

You are encouraged to explore options with your major advisor as well as to network with other faculty and graduate students to learn about assistantships. Opportunities for graduate assistantships include positions with the Special Education Program and the Department of Educational Psychology, and various grant initiatives coordinated by faculty who are Principal Investigators of national, state, and local projects. A graduate assistantship position is not guaranteed if you are admitted into the Special Education MA program.

The Center for Behavioral Education & Research (CBER) is a signature organization that was developed by Dr. George Sugai in 2005. CBER specializes in quality research and teaching in the areas of positive behavior support, behavior disorders, literacy, school psychology, and special education. The purpose of CBER is to conduct and disseminate rigorous research that improves educational and social outcomes for all children and youth in schools. The Center for Behavior Education & Research supports graduate assistantships. For more information please visit www.cber.uconn.edu.

The Center on Postsecondary Education and Disability (CPED) has been a national leader in promoting access to postsecondary education for students with disabilities for over 15 years. CPED focuses on research and training to build the capacity of professionals and to enhance the field of postsecondary education and disability. This is achieved through graduate courses and degree programs, outreach, professional training and initiatives, conference, presentations, research, and information dissemination. The Center on Postsecondary Education and Disability supports graduate assistantships. For more information please visit www.cped.uconn.edu.

Program Procedures and Timelines

Admission

Applicants to the Master's Program come from a variety of backgrounds, including regular education, special education, and psychology. Admission to the Master's Program is based on a composite evaluation of an applicant's qualifications including leadership ability, and potential for making a creative contribution to the field. All students seeking the Master of Arts Degree in Educational Psychology with a concentration in Special Education must be formally admitted to the Master's Program in Education through the University Graduate School.

Deadlines for applications are **October 15th** for the Spring semester, and **February 15th** for the Fall semester. Specific criteria used in determining qualified applicants for the Master's Program are as follows:

- Undergraduate and/or graduate grade point average (ordinarily 3.0 or above on a 4-point scale.)
- 3 strong letters of recommendations
- Personal statement indicating:
 - Professional goals;
 - Area of interest based on specializations; and

- Explanation of experience with and demonstrated commitment to children and/or adults with disabilities or children at risk for failure.

Financial Aid

Financial aid may come from a variety of sources. Aid based on academic merit includes graduate assistantships and summer fellowships. Your advisor can provide suggestions for exploring these possibilities. Aid based on demonstrated financial need includes Federal Stafford Loans, Federal campus based aid, and University of Connecticut Tuition Remission Grants. Additional information and forms may be obtained from the Student Financial Aid Office, 233 Glenbrook Road Unit 4116, Storrs, CT 06269-4116, by calling (860) 486-2819, or via the Website at: <http://financialaid.uconn.edu/>.

Advising

The Graduate School requires the appointment of a major advisor and therefore every graduate student begins a course of study with a designated advisor, based upon the student's stated preference or a "match" between their research interests and faculty areas of expertise. At times, a change of major advisor may be warranted, particularly if a student's research interests evolve and incorporate areas of expertise of another faculty. If a change of major advisor is necessary, a Change of Advisor form, available from the Graduate Records Office, must be filed with the signatures of the former advisor and the new advisor.

Selection of an Advisory Committee should occur before you have completed 12 credits of coursework and are preparing an official Plan of Study. At least two associate advisors comprise the Committee, one of whom must be a graduate faculty member in your field of study.

The Plan of Study

As stated in the Graduate Catalog, in order to graduate with a Master's Degree, a student must have on file with the Graduate School a plan of study that is approved by both the advisement committee and by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Faculty Council. Forms for the plan of study can be obtained through the Graduate School website (www.grad.uconn.edu). The plan of study should be developed in conjunction with your major advisor, based upon previous coursework and professional goals.

The plan of study should be signed by the student and the advisory committee, and submitted to the Graduate School for approval. This plan of study should be submitted to the Graduate School, Unit 1152, in the Whetten Graduate Center no later than the beginning of the student's final semester before degree completion. Courses selected shall be consistent with the student's objectives and with the area of concentration for the degree. Plan of study differs between Plan A (with thesis) and Plan B (without thesis). Once a plan of study is approved by the Graduate School, the student and the advisory committee should reevaluate it regularly, and modify it, if appropriate. If a plan of study that is approved by the Graduate School must be changed, a request for change must be submitted to the Graduate School. The request must be on

the official form and bear the signatures of the advisory committee members and the student. For further questions regarding the Plan of Study please contact the graduate school.

Course Load and Registration

As you plan with your major advisor, the number of credits and course selection you undertake will evolve. Classification as a full-time student can occur in one of three ways: 1) enrollment in 9 or more credits; 2) enrollment in 6 or more credits while holding a graduate assistantship (50% or greater); or 3) enrollment in GRAD 5960: Full-Time Master's Research (formerly GRAD 396) or GRAD 5930: Full-Time Directed Studies (Master's Level) (formerly GRAD 397).

Students holding graduate assistantships must register for six or more credits per semester. Instructions for registration are available from the Graduate School Web Site (<http://www.grad.uconn.edu>). Two advance registration periods are available for the fall semester, one beginning in early April and the other beginning in mid-August. Similar periods for the spring semester occur in late October and early January. Depending on course selections, most students can register entirely online through the Student Access System accessible through the Registrar's Home Page (<http://www.registrar.uconn.edu>). Payment of fees and registration for courses must be completed on or before the 10th day of the semester.

Master's, doctoral, sixth year in education, and graduate certificate students must begin their programs with course work and must maintain registration continuously each semester thereafter (except summer sessions) until all requirements for the degree have been completed. Registration may be maintained either by taking course work for credit or by registering for one of the four non-credit Continuing Registration courses. These include Special Readings at the master's (GRAD 5998) or doctoral (GRAD 6998) level, Master's Thesis Preparation (GRAD 5950), and Doctoral Dissertation Preparation (GRAD 6950).

Plan A and Plan B Master's Degrees

The Master's Degree may be completed under one of two plans. You will determine your plan of study in conjunction with your advisory committee. Plan A emphasizes research, while Plan B requires comprehensive understanding of a general character. Plan A requires at least 15 credits of appropriate course work, as well as a minimum of nine GRAD 5950 (formerly GRAD 395) Master's Thesis Research credits must be listed and the writing of a thesis. The graduate school will automatically enroll you in the GRAD 5950 course. Plan B requires at least 30 credits of advanced course work in special education and a final examination. There is no thesis required under Plan B. The forms for Plan A and Plan B can be found online at <http://grad.uconn.edu/current-students/masters-degree-program/>

Plan A: The Master's Thesis

As described in the Graduate Catalog, the student's advisory committee must approve both the topic and the scope of the thesis. The completed thesis must represent an independent

investigation of a significant topic and make an important contribution to the field of special education. Specifications for the preparation, completion, and submission of the thesis can be obtained at the Graduate School or from the Graduate School website.

<http://grad.uconn.edu/current-students/masters-degree-program/>

Plan B: The Comprehensive Examination

Near the end of your plan of study, and not later than one year after the completion of courses, you must pass a comprehensive examination that is developed and administered by the faculty. The examination shall be comprehensive and designed to assess your mastery of the field of special education and your ability to integrate this knowledge. The comprehensive examination may be oral, written, or both, as determined by your advisory committee.

- Exam Criteria
 - Written Product: A written response in APA format to a multi-component question that encompasses the substantive content of the course.
 - Total Length of Individual Response: 6-10 pages plus references (APA format)
 - Time Period per written response: 1-2 weeks
 - Notes Used or Not (no human help): Completed independently with use of course or scholarly resources
 - Total Number of Responses: 3 questions
 - Total Exam Period: One Semester
 - Degree Conferment: Occurs three times per year (December, May, August).

- Exam Procedures:
 - Individual Faculty must decide pass/fail
 - Students may revise the written product one time with an additional one week to submit (based on comments from the examiner).

Procedures for the Masters Comprehensive Examination are suggested as follows (final decision in all matters rests with the advisor). It is the responsibility of the student to contact two to three (no less than two from the Special Education program) different professors to request examination questions. Professors will stipulate the final question and conditions of the examination. For example, a multi-component question might be offered regarding content of a course taken by the student to be answered in 6-10 pages plus references. Conditions may include time period for response, whether or not notes or other resources may be used, and/or other relevant conditions. Alternatively, a project-based assignment may be designed that demonstrates mastery of previously completed course material. The decision as to whether or not you pass the examination rests initially with the professor providing the question and then finally

with the advisor. The vote must be unanimous, and must take into account the opinions of other participating faculty members.

Immediately following the examination of all three questions, the major advisor shall report the results to you and send a report to the Graduate School. If you fail the examination (or any part of it), or if the committee believes the results are inconclusive, the committee has the option of requiring you to retake the examination in part or in full. Such a reexamination must take place within twelve months from the date of the first examination.

The Plan of Study (B) for the Master's Degree can be found at:

http://grad.uconn.edu/documents/newdoc/Master%27s_plan_B.pdf

APPENDIX A

Faculty

Biographical information for faculty in Special Education may be accessed via the Website for the Department of Educational Psychology at: <http://www.epsy.uconn.edu>

Michael D. Coyne, *Professor*

<http://education.uconn.edu/michael-d-coyne/>

Jennifer Freeman, *Assistant Professor*

<http://education.uconn.edu/jennifer-freeman/>

Devin Kearns, *Assistant Professor*

<http://education.uconn.edu/devin-kearns/>

Allison Lombardi, *Assistant Professor*

<http://education.uconn.edu/allison-lombardi/>

Joseph W. Madaus, *Professor*,

<http://education.uconn.edu/joseph-madaus/>

Natalie G. Olinghouse, *Associate Professor*

<http://education.uconn.edu/natalie-g-olinghouse/>

Brandi M Simonsen, *Associate Professor*

<http://education.uconn.edu/brandi-m-simonsen/>

George Sugai, *Professor*

<http://education.uconn.edu/george-sugai/>