



University of Colorado
Denver

School of Education & Human Development

Special Education

Graduate Student Program Handbook

Master of Arts (MA) in Special Education

MA in Special Education with Endorsement in Special Education Generalist (Ages 5-21)

Added Endorsement: Special Education Generalist (Ages 5-21)

Updated Fall 2024

Special Education Graduate Student Program Handbook

Updated Fall 2024

This handbook applies to students in the following programs:

- **Master of Arts (MA) in Special Education**
- **MA in Special Education with Endorsement in Special Education Generalist (Ages 5-21)**
- **Added Endorsement: Special Education Generalist (Ages 5-21)**

Your successful experience in the Special Education graduate program is important to us. This handbook is a tool to ensure you maintain academic progress according to SEHD and University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver) policies and procedures. In addition to this handbook, students should refer to the School of Education and Human Development (SEHD) *Student Policy Handbook*, available on the [SEHD Current Student Resources website](#). **The Policy handbook includes information on registration, Financial Aid, grades, graduation, and other topics that relate to students in all SEHD MA, EdS, and Graduate licenses, endorsements, and certificate programs.**

The student assumes full responsibility for meeting all basic requirements for the degree, as well as the specific requirements outlined by their program.

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SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW

As a member institution of the [National Network for Educational Renewal](#) (NNER), faculty in the University of Colorado Denver's School of Education and Human Development (SEHD) have committed to foster the nation's youth with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective participation in a social and political democracy; to ensure that the young have access to knowledge required for satisfying and living responsible lives; to develop educators who nurture the learning and well-being of every student; and to ensure competence in, and commitment to, serving as stewards of schools. To achieve these ideals, individuals choosing the CU Denver program will be expected to demonstrate knowledge and competencies in the following areas:

- *Cultural, Ethnic, Linguistic, Sexual, Age, Religious and Ability Differences.* We strongly believe in inclusive practices that honor diversity as we design and support differentiated educational programs to meet the needs of all learners.
- *Creating Equitable Student Access to Learning Opportunities.* We are committed to ongoing improvements and enrichments that foster school equity for all learners.
- *Research-based Approaches.* We emphasize the collective research and development efforts that span best practices for learners with disabilities from direct instruction (systematic, teacher-led approach) to indirect instruction (learner strives to make meaning from environmental experiences).
- *Transition Planning for Lifelong Learning.* Teachers learn to plan for transitions from neonatal units to home to preschool, kindergarten, elementary, middle, secondary, and eventually to adult life as they help learners develop self-advocacy skills.
- *Standards-based Curriculum.* Students are encouraged to reference the development of curriculum and instruction to state standards and to skills that will generalize to the domains of education, community, family and vocation.
- *Positive Behavior Supports.* Students learn to implement proactive strategies that prevent behavioral challenges. Individualized and whole group planning focus on environmental accommodations as well as prevention strategies. Teacher candidates are also encouraged to teach developmentally appropriate pro-social skills.
- *Family-School Partnerships.* Interaction between family members and school personnel promotes family leadership in developing individualized educational plans and individualized family service plans.
- *Ecological Approaches to Assessment.* Teachers determine student needs through assessments that acknowledge linguistic, cultural, ethnic and economic differences among learners, as well as intra-learner characteristics in cognitive, affective, communicative and physical domains.
- *Consultation & Collaboration Skills.* In order to work effectively with families, other educators, members of the trans-disciplinary team, paraprofessionals, and community agency representatives, special educators learn to function effectively as team members and collaborators.
- *Systematic, Data-Driven Instruction.* Decisions about how to teach are based on the careful and consistent assessment of instructional outcomes for individual learners. Refinements to the teaching process are based on student performance.

- *Leadership for School Renewal.* We emphasize the students' responsibility to uphold the principles of social justice and democracy and encourage leadership for school renewal.

The faculty in the Special Education program developed the following values to guide the learning experiences in our courses across programs of study. Our vision is that each graduate will acquire the awareness, knowledge, skills, and dispositions that align and promote our core values as follows:

- Moving from medical model to socio-cultural and socio-political understandings of disability.
- Acknowledgement of historical bias of racism/oppression directly and its disproportionate impact on students who are culturally linguistically diverse.
- Deconstructing deficit perspectives to promote strengths-based approaches and learning environments to support student's growth and learning throughout life.
- Valuing diversity as a resource rather than at-risk.
- Inclusion for all.
- Teacher as researcher (consumer and skeptic of research as well as skills to conduct).
- Understand different types of research, what is research versus literature.
- Data-based decision making to guide instruction, pre-referral, and programming.
- Developing mindful reflective practitioners for social justice.

Faculty in the University of Colorado Denver's Special Education program emphasize the development of reflective practitioners through trans-disciplinary training. The Special Education faculty foster reflective inquiry about teaching and learning, as well as the development of the skills and dispositions necessary to work effectively in elementary and secondary classrooms. Our Special Education conceptual framework addresses the complexity within our field while also emphasizing the values that we, as a faculty, share. Through rigorous course work, advanced study candidates are challenged in each course to translate these ideals into reality in schools through a variety of reflective experiences and activities. Reflection and inquiry provide an informed and integrated basis for advocating for all learners. Through this process, University of Colorado Denver advanced study candidates will develop the ability to:

- Integrate theory and practice
- Guide students to construct their own knowledge
- Understand the contextual nature of learning
- Collaborate with students, teacher, administrators, parents, policy makers and the community at large
- Engage in meaningful inquiry endeavors.

CURRICULUM

Special Education students may pursue the following program options:

Master of Arts (MA) Degree in Special Education

Students may pursue a stand-alone Master's degree in the field of Special Education. This program option does not lead to licensure or endorsement as a special education teacher or director and is most often pursued by licensed teachers. Therefore, if you are seeking endorsement or licensure, please see other program plans of study (<https://education.ucdenver.edu/>). Students pursuing a Master's degree must complete a minimum of thirty semester (30) hours including a focus on special education content. Program length and a personalized plan of study are crafted through consultation with your Faculty Advisor.

MA Degree with Special Education Generalist Endorsement (Ages 5-21 years)

The added endorsement in Special Education Generalist plus MA is designed for currently licensed teachers seeking career advancement and the expertise needed to work effectively with students with special needs and from diverse backgrounds. The program is fully accredited by the Colorado Department of Education and guided by the [Council for Exceptional Children's Professional Preparation Standards](#).

Students will complete a minimum of 30 semester hours, which might include an internship as part of the program plan of study. Upon admission, the Special Education faculty **may require an additional math course** and/or an Internship (elementary & secondary level in special education) on the job or through our professional development schools. Admitted students will receive that information upon acceptance into the program.

Students who hold a CO license in anything other than Elementary or Secondary Education (English, Math, Science, or Social Studies) may be required to complete additional coursework in elementary or secondary literacy, mathematics content and methods, and human development. Special Education faculty will review transcripts to make that determination for completion of the program.

Special Education Generalist Endorsement (only)

The added endorsement as a Special Education Generalist is designed for currently licensed teachers seeking career advancement and the expertise needed to work effectively with students with special needs and from diverse backgrounds. The program is fully accredited by the Colorado Department of Education and guided by the [Council for Exceptional Children's Professional Preparation Standards](#).

Students will complete 21-29 credit hours, which might include an internship as part of the program plan of study. Upon admission, the Special Education faculty **may require an additional math course** and/or Internship (elementary & secondary level in special education) on the job or through our professional development schools. Admitted students will receive that information upon acceptance into the program. Courses can be taken in either a traditional on-campus format hybrid, or online.

Students who hold a CO license in anything other than Elementary or Secondary Education (English, Math, Science, or Social Studies) may be required to complete additional coursework

in elementary or secondary literacy, mathematics content and methods, and human development. Special Education faculty will review transcripts to make that determination for completion of the program.

MA Special Education

This degree plan does not include a license or an endorsement.

Students are responsible for reviewing the Special Education Resources website regularly, including the **SPED Handbook** and **SPED course rotation**: <https://education.ucdenver.edu/academic-services/student-resources/graduate/special-education>
 SPED courses may be offered in online, hybrid, remote, or face-to-face formats. Most SPED courses are fully online or remote. SPED course formats can vary by semester and some courses are offered only once per year. The MA Special Education does not require a comprehensive exam or thesis.

In consultation with the approval from your Faculty Advisor, select 3 courses (9 semester hours) of graduate-level SPED coursework and 5 courses (15 semester hours) from the [Thematic Course Categories](#) (or any graduate-level School of Education & Human Development coursework 5000-level or higher with Faculty Advisor approval). Finally, take a research RSEM course (3 hours) and complete SPED 5401 Advanced Seminar in Special Education which fulfills the capstone requirement (3 hours.)

Note: It is advisable to reach out to your Faculty Advisor at the beginning of your program (to answer initial questions) and to check in with them at the middle/end of your program (to confirm your progress).

Degree Components	Courses	Credits	Semester Completed
Choose 3 courses (9 semester hour credits) SPED coursework, 5000-level or higher <i>Use this planning document to write in proposed/completed coursework</i> BAMA students – please do not repeat courses that you have already taken as an undergrad			
SPED Core	SPED _____; Course Title:	3	
	SPED _____; Course Title:	3	
	SPED _____; Course Title:	3	
Choose 5 courses (15 semester hours) from the Thematic Course Categories: https://education.ucdenver.edu/academic-services/student-resources/thematic-course-categories or any graduate-level SEHD courses 5000-level or higher with Faculty Advisor approval			
Course 1		3	
Course 2		3	
Course 3		3	
Course 4		3	
Course 5		3	
Research Course	RSEM 5080 Research in Schools OR <i>Faculty Advisor approval for any graduate-level RSEM course 5000-level or higher</i>	3	
Capstone Course	SPED 5401 Advanced Seminar in Special Education (<i>to be taken in your final Spring semester</i>)	3	
Total Credit Hours		30 minimum	

MA Special Education with Special Education Generalist (Ages 5-21) Endorsement

The MA Special Education with Special Education Generalist Endorsement is designed for currently licensed teachers seeking career advancement and to provide the expertise needed to work effectively with students with special needs and diverse backgrounds. The program is fully accredited by the Colorado Department of Education and guided by the [Council for Exceptional Children's Professional Preparation Standards](#).

CU Denver provides approved program recommendation, but endorsement is granted by the state of Colorado. State requirements vary and may include teaching experience and exams in addition to a valid teaching credential. Students should consult with the Colorado Department of Education (http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/licensure_authorization_landing) or if you're applying for endorsement in another state, see <https://education.ucdenver.edu/academic-services/student-resources/teacher-licensure>

Students are responsible for reviewing the CU Denver Special Education Resources website regularly, including the Handbook and SPED course rotation: <https://education.ucdenver.edu/academic-services/student-resources/graduate/special-education>
SPED Courses may be offered in online, hybrid, remote, or face-to-face formats. Most SPED courses are fully online or remote. SPED course formats can vary by semester and some courses are offered only once per year.

Note: It is advisable to reach out to your Faculty Advisor at the beginning of your program (to answer initial questions) and to check in with them at the middle/end of your program (to confirm your progress).

Courses	Credits	Semester Completed
A) Special Education (21-26 hours - <i>Complete in any order unless otherwise noted</i>)		
SPED 5030: Frameworks for Understanding (dis)Ability in Contemporary Classrooms <i>If SPED 4030 or 5030 was completed via a different SEHD program, substitute with any SEHD course 5000-level or higher with Faculty Advisor approval</i>	3	
SPED 5740: Intersections of Literacy, Culture, & Exceptionality	3	
SPED 5010: Intentional Interventions for Exceptional Learners	3	
SPED 5151: Slashing Stigmas: Promoting Positive Behaviors	3	
SPED 5300: Family, Professional, and Community Collaboration	3	
SPED 5780: Literacy Intervention for Exceptional Learners	3	
SPED 5140: Assessment: Inquiry, Instruction, & Intervention (<i>take after completion of at least 9 semester hours of SPED coursework</i>)	3	
If internship is required (<i>based upon faculty review from your admission application of your teaching experience & classroom placements</i>): SPED 5932: Internship & Site Seminar (2 credits, ~128 Hours or 16 days); SPED 5933: Internship & Site Seminar (3 credits, ~192 Hours or 24 days)	(2-5)	
B) Advanced Study (9 hours – <i>Complete towards the end of the program</i>)		
SPED 5500: Transition and Secondary Issues in Special Education	3	
RSEM 5080: Research in Schools OR advisor approval for any other 5000-level RSEM course	3	
SPED 5401: Advanced Seminar (<i>to be taken in your final Spring semester</i>)	3	
Additional pre-requisite courses, if necessary (<i>based upon faculty review from your admission application of your teaching experience & classroom placements</i>)	varies	
Total Credit Hours		30-35

Special Education Generalist Endorsement, Ages 5-21

This course plan does NOT lead to a Master's degree

The MA Special Education with Special Education Generalist Endorsement is designed for currently licensed teachers seeking career advancement and to provide the expertise needed to work effectively with students with special needs and diverse backgrounds. The program is fully accredited by the Colorado Department of Education and guided by the [Council for Exceptional Children's Professional Preparation Standards](#).

CU Denver provides approved program recommendation, but endorsement is granted by the state of Colorado. State requirements vary and may include teaching experience and exams in addition to a valid teaching credential. Students should consult with the Colorado Department of Education (http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/licensure_authorization_landing) or if you're applying for endorsement in another state, see <https://education.ucdenver.edu/academic-services/student-resources/teacher-licensure>

Students are responsible for reviewing the CU Denver Special Education Resources website regularly, including the Handbook and SPED course rotation: <https://education.ucdenver.edu/academic-services/student-resources/graduate/special-education>

SPED Courses may be offered in online, hybrid, remote, or face-to-face formats. Most SPED courses are fully online or remote. SPED course formats can vary by semester and some courses are offered only once per year.

Courses - complete in any order unless otherwise noted	Credits	Semester Completed
SPED 5030: Frameworks for Understanding (dis)Ability in Contemporary Classrooms <i>(waived if SPED 4030 or SPED 5030 already completed via a different SEHD program)</i>	3	
SPED 5740: Intersections of Literacy, Culture, & Exceptionality	3	
SPED 5010: Intentional Interventions for Exceptional Learners	3	
SPED 5151: Slashing Stigmas: Promoting Positive Behaviors	3	
SPED 5300: Family, Professional, and Community Collaboration	3	
SPED 5780: Literacy Interventions for Exceptional Learners	3	
SPED 5140: Assessment: Inquiry, Instruction, & Intervention <i>(take after completion of at least 9 semester hours of SPED coursework)</i>	3	
SPED 5500: Transition and Secondary Issues in Special Education	3	
If internship is required <i>(based upon faculty review from your admission application of your teaching experience & classroom placements):</i> SPED 5932: Internship & Site Seminar (2 credits, ~128 Hours or 16 days); SPED 5933: Internship & Site Seminar (3 credits, ~192 Hours or 24 days)	(2-5)	
Additional pre-requisite courses, if necessary <i>(based upon faculty review from your admission application of your teaching experience & classroom placements):</i>	varies	
Total Credit Hours		21-29

INTERNSHIPS (ADDED ENDORSEMENT)

Internships may be required Upon Special Education Faculty Recommendation

If you're required to complete SPED 5923 and/or SPED 5933 internships, the Praxis Exam - 5354 "Special Education Core Knowledge & Applications" must be passed prior to final internship. Information about preparing for the PRAXIS 5354 can be found at <https://praxis.ets.org/test/5354.html>. A Study Guide for the Exam is available through SEHD Student Success Center: sehdsuccesscenter@ucdenver.edu. If the special education candidate has not passed the appropriate content exam AND submitted passing scores within 20 days of the final semester of internships beginning, the candidate will have to delay their final semester of internships and connected courses until the exam has been passed. Please be aware that the exam is offered a few times per year and requires advance registration. Also be aware that it typically takes 4-6 weeks to receive the results. Please see the table below for more detailed information. If you need accommodations for the exam, please request those immediately from ETS. CU Denver Disability Resources & Services can support you as you navigate accommodations: <https://www.ucdenver.edu/offices/disability-resources-and-services>

Licensure	SPED 5932	SPED 5933	Location	Internship Assessment
Added Endorsement (with or w/o MA)	2 credits (128 hours/16 days)	3 credits (192 hours/24 days)	PDS On the Job	TLIC/QRC/Prof Dispositions

Students may be required to experience one internship at Elementary (K-5) and Secondary (6-12) Levels, for a total of 2 internships.

Students must apply for internship placements, either on-the-job or in a CU Denver partner professional development school (PDS). The application documents can be found here under "Internship Documents & Forms":

<https://education.ucdenver.edu/academic-services/student-resources/graduate/special-education>

For internship placements with CU Denver partner professional development schools, the [Special Education Internship Request Form](#) must be submitted by the deadline - April 1st for Fall Internship, October 15th for Spring Internship.

TEMPORARY EDUCATOR ELIGIBILITY (TEE)

TEE provides licensed teachers the opportunity to work in a Special Education classroom while they earn the added endorsement to their license. Please see the CDE web site for full information and forms at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/auth>

CONTENT LICENSURE EXAM POLICY

Information about the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Praxis requirements for the Special Education Generalist Endorsement, can be found on this page by scrolling down to “Special Education Generalist (ages 5-21)”:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/endorsementrequirements>

For the Special Education Generalist Endorsement, CDE requires passing scores on **each Praxis** content exam below:

- **PRAXIS 5354 “Special Education Core Knowledge & Applications”**
- **PRAXIS 5901 “Three Subject Bundle—Mathematics, Social Studies and Science” series** (as outlined below; may be waived with a *valid* Colorado teacher license/elementary endorsement)
 - Science 5905 - *or 5005 also accepted (same exam, different number)*
 - Social Studies 5904 – *or 5004 also accepted (same exam, different number)*
 - Mathematics 5903 – *or 5003 also accepted (same exam, different number)*
- **PRAXIS 5205 “Teaching Reading: Elementary”**

Information about Praxis exams can be found at <https://praxis.ets.org/>

REGISTRATION

CU Denver offers students a completely automated system to register for classes. UCDAccess will tell you when you may register. As a student, you are responsible for knowing the deadlines, rules, regulations, course loads, prerequisites and policies of the university, as well as those of the SEHD. Visit the Registrar’s website for further information, deadlines, policies and instructions on how to register: <https://www.ucdenver.edu/registrar>

PREPARING FOR SUCCESS IN ON-LINE & HYBRID LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

In order to accommodate the working teacher, the SPED program utilizes innovative online and hybrid learning environments for many courses. When taking online/hybrid courses, please consider the following characteristics of the successful on-line student:

- Self-directed, independent learner.
- Does not need face to face contact (with either the professor or peers) for success.
- Reads and comprehends written instructions well.
- Consistently demonstrates the ability to advocate for self whenever there is a question, concern or frustration.
- Strong long range planning skills.
- Effective time management skills.
- Does not procrastinate.
- Committed to reading the materials without the weekly accountability of an on-campus class.
- Competent skill level with computer technology – or willing to seek out sources of information to learn.
- Has consistent, dependable access to a computer with online capability and email access.

As with any university course, the time expectation for outside work is two hours for every hour spent in class. In a traditional on-campus 3 credit course the student attends a three-hour class once per week and then is expected to spend at least six hours (2 hours for each of those 3 hours in class) working on assignments and other course-related activities. An online class has similar expectations. Students in an online or hybrid course have interactive online learning activities to take the place of the three hours spent in class. The major assignments are the same. For a 3-credit online class, you should expect to spend approximately nine hours per week. In other words, the expectations for time for the online section are the same (it just looks a bit different). Please note for every special education course that is offered in an online format, it is also offered in a traditional face-to-face format.

What to expect from an online environment:

- Group work
- Possibility of a Zoom conference call with professor/classmates
- Involvement in class/small group dialogs
- Integration of innovative technologies to reinforce learning

If you struggle with any part of the online format, please discuss this with your instructor immediately and utilize the Success Center to support you. Canvas tutorial is available <https://guides.instructure.com/m/89727/l/1119803-introduction>

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS) is committed to providing equal opportunities and fostering the personal growth and development of students with disabilities. The DRS staff strives to meet the needs of a large and diverse community of students with disabilities. They are available to provide assistance and to arrange for reasonable accommodations that will address specific educational needs. It is the student's responsibility to initially seek out services.

Office of Disability Resources and Services
Student Commons Building, Suite 2116
303-315-3510, disabilityresources@ucdenver.edu

<https://www.ucdenver.edu/offices/disability-resources-and-services>

STUDENT COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

The University of Colorado Denver has a chapter of Student Council for Exceptional Children that meets monthly. This professional organization is an advocacy group for children with exceptionalities. The organization provides leadership and networking opportunities, professional development, and community involvement. Each year the students utilize university funds to attend the [Courage to Risk Conference](#) in Colorado Springs (Jan/Feb) at the Broadmoor. Students will have an opportunity to get involved with the [{Colorado} Council for Exceptional Children](#).

GRADING POLICY

A **“B-” grade or above is required in all required courses and internships with a cumulative SPED program GPA of 3.0 or higher.** Courses in which a student receives a grade below “B-” will not be counted toward the endorsement or degree and will need to be retaken.

TIME LIMIT

There is a 7-year time limit to finish all program requirements. Courses older than 7 years are expired and no longer applicable to the program. Students can request a time extension if their time will extend beyond the 7-year limit for their program. To request a time extension, complete the “request for time extension” form found [here](#) and submit to the Faculty Advisor. To utilize courses taken before the 7-year time limit, program faculty may require a validation process for the student to validate they are still current in their knowledge from an expired course.”

COMPLETING THE PROGRAM: ENDORSEMENT, COMPS REQUIREMENTS

Endorsement through CDE

Once you have completed your program in the School of Education & Human Development, you will need to assemble documents to apply for your Special Education Generalist endorsement through the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Instructions for applying for your endorsement through CDE can be found at <https://education.ucdenver.edu/academic-services/student-resources/teacher-licensure>

As you come to the completion of your SPED program, endorsement students will need to complete the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) endorsement application. Please review the instructions for applying here:

<https://education.ucdenver.edu/academic-services/student-resources/teacher-licensure>

Special Education MA COMPS

The Special Education course **SPED 5401: Advanced Seminar in Special Education** fulfills the university requirement for MA COMPS/Comprehensive Exam. MA (Master of Arts) students should enroll in this class in their final spring semester.

CHECKLIST FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Date Completed	Steps
	Identify which course plan of study you will be using
	Complete the plan of study by entering in proposed semester dates for taking courses
	Plan when you will take the Praxis Exam(s): Date(s) Planned: _____
	Introduce yourself (ask questions) to your Faculty Advisor (insert name)_____
	Introduce yourself (ask questions) to your staff Academic Advisor (insert name)_____
	Update your Course Plan each semester (check in with advisors as needed)
	Get involved with Student Council for Exceptional Children (ask your advisor/professors about when it meets).
	<p>Optional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get support from the SEHD Success Center • Get services from Disability Resources & Services • Apply for a scholarship • Apply for an internship (if part of your course plan)
	Apply for graduation and/or endorsement completion through UCDAccess
	Apply for endorsement with CDE. Instructions found here .

CONTACTS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Academic Services Manager

Rebecca Schell, 303-315-4978

Rebecca.schell@ucdenver.edu

SEHD Academic Services Center

Lawrence Street Center, 1380 Lawrence Street, Suite 701

303.315.6300

SEHDacademicservices@ucdenver.edu

Special Education Program Resources:

<https://education.ucdenver.edu/academic-services/student-resources/graduate/special-education>

Special Education Faculty

<https://education.ucdenver.edu/about-us/faculty-directory/-in-category/categories/sehd/program-areas/special-education>