

Special Education (MA)

This program is offered by the School of Education. It is available online (asynchronous).

Program Description

The MA in Special Education program emphasizes a developmentally oriented approach to special education, integrating advanced theory and research in learning processes and emotional well-being. This empowers students to design and implement inclusive, evidence-based interventions and teaching strategies that enhance learning for all students, regardless of background or ability. Candidates from around the world are encouraged to explore opportunities for collaboration and advocacy within their educational systems, with a shared goal of improving the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and ensuring equitable access to education globally. Recognizing the dynamic and evolving field of special education, the program is dedicated to fostering integrated, inclusive learning environments that support the unique and diverse needs of every child and youth. Whether you are seeking to innovate in your community or contribute to international efforts, this program equips you to make a lasting impact in the field of special education.

The MA in Special Education program does not lead to initial teacher certification in special education. For more information about initial teacher certification in special education (mild/moderate disabilities), please refer to the Teacher Certification section under the MAT with an Emphasis in Special Education section of this catalog.

Learning Outcomes

Graduates of this program are able to:

- Use valid and reliable assessment practices to minimize bias.
- Use their knowledge of general and specialized curricula to improve programs, supports and services at classroom, school, community and system levels.
- Facilitate the continuous improvement of general and special education programs, supports and services at the classroom, school and system levels for individuals with exceptionalities.
- Conduct, evaluate and use inquiry to guide professional practice.
- Provide leadership to formulate goals, set and meet high professional expectations, advocate for effective policies and evidence-based practices, and create positive and productive work environments.
- Use foundational knowledge of the field and professional ethical principles and practice standards to inform special education practice, engage in lifelong learning, advance the profession, and perform leadership responsibilities to promote the success of professional colleagues and individuals with exceptionalities.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to improve programs, services and outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities and their families.

Program Curriculum

Required Core Courses (21 hour)

- CMAT 5015 Inclusive Practices and Methods for Teaching English Learners (3 hours)
- SPED 5245 Counseling for Life's Transitions (3 hours)
- SPED 5275 Reflective Teaching and Mentoring (3 hours)
- SPED 5318 Global Issues in Special Education (3 hours)
- SPED 5800 Applied Research Methods (3 hours)

- SPED 5880 Integrating Resources: Community, School and Family (3 hours)
- SPED 6000 Applied Field Research (3 hours)
or SPED 6250 Thesis (for graduate students interested in doctoral studies) (6 hours)

Emphasis Specific Courses (12 hours)

Total: 33-36 credit hours

Emphasis in Severe Developmental Disabilities and Autism

This emphasis is available online.

The Emphasis in Severe Developmental Disabilities and Autism offers a concentrated program of study in the assessment and instruction of children and youth with severe developmental disabilities and autism. The program builds on the knowledge base of special educators who are already qualified to teach students with mild and moderate disabilities and extends the capabilities of special educators to provide individualized and appropriate educational opportunities and resources to all children.

Completion of the MA in Special Education with an Emphasis in Severe Developmental Disabilities and Autism qualifies those who already hold initial teacher certification in Mild/Moderate Cross-categorical Disabilities (K-12) in the State of Missouri to apply for Severe Development Disabilities (K-12) add-on certification through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

The following coursework is required for an emphasis in severe developmental disabilities and autism (12 hours):

- SPED 5311 Assessment of Functional Skills for Students with Severe Developmental Disabilities and Autism (3 hours)
- SPED 5312 Curriculum and Methods of Teaching Students with Severe Developmental Disabilities and Autism (3 hours)
- SPED 5313 Augmentative and Alternative Communication for Students with SSD and Autism (3 hours)
- SPED 5090 Special Education Practicum: Severe Developmental Disabilities (3 hours)

Emphasis in Trauma-Informed and Inclusive Practices

This emphasis is available online.

The Emphasis in Trauma-Informed and Inclusive Practices offers a concentrated program of study designed for educators, administrators, and advocates who aspire to create equitable and supportive learning environments for all students, particularly those impacted by trauma, adversity, and exceptionalities. This program emphasizes the integration of trauma-informed practices with inclusive education strategies, equipping graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities and those from marginalized backgrounds. Our holistic approach aims to create equitable and supportive learning environments for all students.

The following coursework is required for an emphasis in trauma-informed and inclusive practices (12 hours):

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- SPED 5250 Behavior Management for Children with Special Needs (3 hours)
or EDIN 5622 Restorative Justice: Learning Communities (3 hours)
- SPED 5285 Understanding and Responding to Trauma in Schools (3 hours)
- SPED 5290 Co-Teaching and Collaborative Practices for the 21st Century Classroom (3 hours)
or EDIN 5620 Mindfulness (3 hours)
- SPED 5700 Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (3 hours)

Admission

See the Admission section of this catalog for general admission requirements. Students interested in applying must submit their application online at www.webster.edu/apply. Transcripts should be sent from your institution electronically to transcripts@webster.edu. If this service is not available, send transcripts to:

Office of Admission
Webster University
470 E. Lockwood Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63119

Additional Requirements

Requirements for admission to the MA in special education program include:

- Receipt of all official transcripts.
- Final degree conferred GPA of 2.5 or higher.
- Prior to admission to the program, candidates are expected to have successfully completed, with a grade of B or better, a three-credit course in the Psychology of the Exceptional Students, or its equivalent. Those applicants who have not completed this requirement, prior to admission, will be required to successfully complete the course, or a similar overview course, in order to complete the graduation requirements for the MA in special education.