

# MASTER'S DEGREE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

## PROGRAM HANDBOOK



**Department of Communication  
Sciences and Special Education**

*Mary Frances Early College of Education*

**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

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## The Mary Frances Early College of Education at the University of Georgia

As the first chartered state university in the country in 1785, the University of Georgia has a long and distinguished history in the development and dissemination of the nation's intellectual, cultural, and environmental heritage.

The College of Education, founded in 1908, is an integral part of today's University. Perennially ranked among the nation's top research-extensive institutes, the College continues to be a center for innovative research, teaching, and service projects of local, national, and international interest.

In February 2020, the UGA College of Education was officially named in honor of Mary Frances Early, UGA's first African American graduate and a pioneering music educator who played an integral role in the campaign for racial equality in Georgia and across the South. Through this naming, we commemorate Early's indelible impact at UGA as well as her distinguished career in music education.

One of the largest and most diverse institutions of its kind in the nation, the College offers more than a dozen undergraduate majors and approximately 90 graduate programs leading to careers as educators, counselors, psychologists, administrators, researchers, and educational and health-related specialists.

### Special Education Mission

The mission of the Special Education program is to prepare highly skilled teachers and teacher-educators, as well as to provide leadership to the field of special education at local, state, national, and international levels to assist individuals with disabilities in acquiring greater independence in an increasingly diverse, technological, and literacy-intensive global community.

Philosophically, research-based theory and practice are the foundation of the program's preparation of teachers and teacher-educators, as well as related service and leadership personnel. The Special Education Program is committed to the preparation of personnel who celebrate and foster diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The special education faculty manage multi-million dollar external grant awards that support research, teacher education, and professional development. Collaboration with inter- and intra-university units, area schools, and other educational agencies helps maintain the program's quality.

The graduate faculty in the Special Education program are known internationally, nationally, and regionally as researchers, educators, and clinicians. All are active researchers and instructors, and all maintain active collaborations with multiple professional colleagues within and beyond UGA. All are committed to the

importance of evidence-based, student-centered, and outcomes-focused education and to the future of research and teaching in the field.

## Degrees

This section describes the master's degrees offered in the Special Education program. Within each degree, students choose to specialize in one of the following areas of emphasis:

- Adapted Curriculum/Autism
- Birth Through Kindergarten/Preschool Special Education
- General Curriculum

Descriptions of each area of emphasis are in the next section. Information regarding specialist and doctoral degrees are housed in separate handbooks.

### Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.)

The M.A.T. in Special Education offers individualized preparation for highly qualified students who have completed undergraduate programs in fields other than education. This program is appropriate for individuals who do not have a current teaching certificate and who want to pursue an initial teaching certificate in special education. The M.A.T. stresses field-based learning and experiences while offering ample opportunities to participate in teaching, research, and service. Basic requirements include a core of courses and field-based competencies within one of the three Areas of Emphasis.

Although each student's program of study is individualized to reflect previous experiences and individualized interests, all M.A.T. students are expected to complete a minimum of 36 credit hours. Students complete a minimum of 9 hours of practicum as well as a 3-credit hour internship in student teaching as part of the program of study. Students also complete a comprehensive exam and other products at their advisor's discretion (e.g., Applied Project, Capstone Project). In addition to the Master's degree requirements required in the program of study, M.A.T. students must complete a semester of student teaching and take the GACE Assessments.

### Master of Education (M.Ed.)

The M.Ed. in Special Education offers advanced preparation for students who have already completed an undergraduate degree in education and have a teaching certificate. It is an advanced program of study focused on the study of research methods and findings that allow students to become skilled consumers of research and be able to apply the methods in their own classrooms. Individual programs of study are customized to a student's background and goals, but basic requirements include a core of courses related to an identified Area of Emphasis as well as

applied research methods and project courses.

### **Master of Arts in Education (M.A.)**

The M.A. in Special Education is focused on applied research and evidence-based instruction and provides students the opportunity to participate in mentored research through the completion of an applied project as well as a master's thesis. The program of study is designed by the faculty advisor.

Students can use the M.A. to specialize in one of the three Areas of Emphasis. This program does not lead to a degree that is required for teacher certification; therefore, graduates of this program are not eligible for teaching certification.

### **Areas of Emphasis**

#### **Adapted Curriculum/Autism: P-12 (AC)**

The Adapted Curriculum/Autism emphasis is intended for those who wish to work with students with moderate, severe, and profound intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, multiple disabilities, and other students with extensive support needs. Training in this emphasis area will prepare teachers to work with students in an adapted curriculum setting, meaning they do not follow the typical general (academic) curriculum implemented in most classrooms. The curriculum may include teaching functional academics, lifelong personal and social skills, vocational skills, recreational and leisure skills, and community involvement. The curriculum emphasizes training in behavior management, systematic instruction, and communication.

#### **Birth through Kindergarten/Preschool Special Education (B-K)**

The Birth Through Kindergarten/Preschool Special Education emphasis is intended for those interested in developing strong expertise in working with young children with and without disabilities. Students in the B-K emphasis area will be prepared to work with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with and without disabilities in a variety of settings, and kindergarteners in the general education classroom. This emphasis area promotes developmentally appropriate inclusive and collaborative teaching practices. Our graduates specialize in providing engaging instruction and support to young children and their families.

#### **General Curriculum: P-12 (GC)**

An emphasis in General Curriculum is intended for those interested in teaching students with high-incidence disabilities (learning disabilities, emotional-behavioral disorders, mild intellectual disability, high-functioning autism, speech language impairment, other health impairment such as attention-deficit

hyperactivity disorder). Candidates will gain the knowledge and skills needed to provide intensive, explicit instruction to support student success in the general curriculum. Training in this emphasis area prepares teachers to work in collaboration, inclusion, or resource models.

## Programs of Study

Below are links to the most current programs of study (as of the date of this document). Programs of study do change and adapt. It is the student's responsibility to ensure they are working on the most accurate and up-to-date program of study.

### M.A.T.

- [M.A.T. in Special Education \(Adapted Curriculum and Autism\)](#)
- [M.A.T. in Special Education \(Birth Through Kindergarten/Preschool Special Education\)](#)
- [M.A.T. in Special Education \(General Curriculum - Online\)](#)

### M.Ed.

- [M.Ed. in Special Education \(Adapted Curriculum and Autism\)](#)
- [M.Ed. in Special Education \(Birth Through Kindergarten/Preschool Special Education\)](#)
- [M.Ed. in Special Education \(General Curriculum - Online\)](#)

### M.A.

- The program of study for the M.A. in Special Education is developed by the student's faculty advisor.

## Departmental Policies

### Faculty Advisor

The Special Education program is proud to maintain an atmosphere of mentoring between its students and faculty. Upon acceptance to the program, consideration of students' research interests and educational background, as well as a proposed program of study, will be used to assign students to a faculty advisor. This assignment, however, is not binding and can be changed should a student's interests change throughout their time at the University. Both the initial advisor assignment and changes are based on the availability of the advisor to accept another student. If a student is interested in switching advisors, it is their responsibility to identify a new advisor, contact that advisor via email and see if they have availability.

The advisor is an excellent resource for students throughout their graduate career. They will assist in scheduling classes each semester and planning an

individualized program of study. It is highly likely that a student's advisor will also be one of their professors, which helps to foster a supportive, personalized relationship. As the faculty at the University strive to develop ties with their graduate students, they are readily available to answer questions, problem-solve, and help make students' experiences as rewarding as possible.

It is the student's responsibility to contact their advisor at least once a semester to set up an advising appointment. It is also recommended that students regularly contact their advisor to ensure that they are kept informed of important matters as well as pertinent program and Graduate School deadlines.

### **Graduate Coordinator, Graduate Program Administrator, and Program Coordinator**

The Graduate Coordinator is an appointed member of the Graduate Program Faculty who serves as the liaison between the department and the Graduate School with the delegated authority of the department head. It is the responsibility of the Graduate Coordinator to implement all policies and procedures of the Graduate Council pertaining to graduate education at the UGA. The Graduate Coordinator works in conjunction with the Graduate Program Administrator in the department to ensure that policies and procedures unique to the department are followed.

The Graduate Coordinator and the Graduate Program Administrator work collaboratively to:

- Make recommendations concerning admission to Graduate School.
- Make recommendations for Graduate School assistantships, dissertation completion awards, scholarships, etc. and assist in rating other applications for these competitions.
- Maintain current records on all departmental graduate students.
- Keep graduate students and faculty informed of deadlines, dates, and policies of the Graduate School.
- Recommend appointment of Advisory Committees for Master of Arts, Master of Science, and doctoral students.
- Notify the Graduate School of the date, time, and place of Oral Preliminary Exams and Final Defenses of Doctoral Dissertations.
- Make recommendations on all petitions submitted by a student in the program to the Appeals Committee of the Graduate Council.
- Countersign with the major professor on all requests for Degree Objective Changes, Programs of Study, Recommended Changes in Programs of Study, Requests for Transfer Credit, and Applications for Admissions to Candidacy

It is the student's responsibility to read and (if required) respond to emails from the Graduate Coordinator or the Graduate Program Administrator. It is recommended that students regularly check email and listserv subscriptions to ensure that they are kept informed of important matters as well as pertinent



program and Graduate School deadlines.

## **Grades and Progress in the Program**

Master's students must earn a grade of C or higher in all programs of study courses. Students who earn less than a C will be allowed to repeat the course once. In the event a student does not achieve a grade of C or higher during the second enrollment, they may petition the graduate faculty. Graduate faculty may, after consultation with the instructor of the class, recommend that the student be terminated from the graduate program or recommend an alternative means of demonstrating mastery of the content taught in the course in question.

Master's students must also maintain a minimum cumulative graduate course average of 3.0. Students with a cumulative graduate course GPA below 3.0 for two consecutive terms are placed on academic probation by the Graduate School. They then must make a 3.0 or higher GPA (in graduate courses) every succeeding semester until the cumulative graduate GPA is 3.0 or above. If they make below a 3.0 semester graduate GPA while on probation, they are dismissed. When students repeat a graduate course, the last grade will be utilized to calculate the cumulative graduate GPA that is used for probation, dismissal, admission to candidacy and graduation. Grades of S, U, I, and V will not be used in calculating the cumulative graduate average. However, when a grade of I converts to F, this may result in an action of probation or dismissal for the semester in which the conversion takes place, even if the student is not registered for the semester in which it converted. Additional information about Probation and Dismissal can be found [here](#).

Students in the M.A.T. in Special Education must meet additional requirements, which are outlined in [Addendum II: M.A.T. Special Education Student Requirements](#). These include (but are not limited to) the use of transition points to measure students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions as they progress through the program of study.

## **Program Exit Requirements**

The Special Education program expects a great deal of academic rigor from its students. Therefore, in addition to the successful completion of students' individual programs of study, each degree program has specific exit requirements that must be completed before a student may be recommended for a graduate degree from UGA. All graduate and advanced degree-seeking students have a culminating requirement related to research, and these requirements are specific to each program.

## **Applied Project**

Some M.Ed. programs require students to complete an applied project as part of

EDSE 7650. Students may consult with faculty from their program of study when determining a topic for their project. Students will complete asynchronous coursework, review recorded presentations, and may meet synchronously throughout the semester. Students will complete a paper and a presentation. The date and format (online or in-person) of presentations will be determined by the instructor of record and will be advertised to the program faculty. The instructor of record will determine whether the student met the requirements of the course and determine a final grade. Applied projects will not include committee members.

The applied project requires M.Ed. students to evaluate an empirically validated intervention with at least one child participant or an alternative non-direct intervention project, which requires approval from the student's major advisor and instructor of record. M.Ed. students are required to secure permission from the parent or guardian of the child participant(s). The letter should describe the project, including the procedures and the project duration. M.Ed. students who are currently teaching will identify participants from their caseload. If an M.Ed. student is not a classroom teacher or paraprofessional while enrolled in EDSE 7650, they will be required to complete their project in the context of tutoring in a home or community setting (e.g., library). Tutoring may not take place in a school setting. M.Ed. students who opt to complete their project in the context of tutoring should not be paid during the context of the project

### **Comprehensive Examinations**

All M.A.T and some M.Ed. programs require students to complete comprehensive exams during the second half of their final semester of enrollment. The exact examination period will be announced at or near the beginning of the semester, and students will have 3 days (72 hours) to complete the examination. Students will be enrolled in a comprehensive exam course on eLC by the Program Administrative Assistant (M.A.T.) or Graduate Program Administrator (M.Ed.) at the start of the semester in which they plan to graduate. On the eLC site, students will be able to review the comprehensive exam requirements, including grading criteria, and submit their completed comprehensive exam. Comprehensive exams will be reviewed and graded by a program faculty member or a committee of faculty members designated by the program coordinator. After grading, program faculty will communicate with students whether they passed or if remediation is necessary.

The Program Coordinator or a designated faculty member will sign the Report of Final Examination form and submit the form to the Program Administrative Assistant (M.A.T.) or Graduate Program Administrator (M.Ed.), who will submit the form to the Graduate School by the University deadline.

### **Financial Aid**

Students in need of financial assistance during their graduate studies at the University of Georgia have several possible avenues for funding from the academic institution.

### **Assistantships**

Some financial aid may be provided in the form of graduate assistantships, which carry a stipend. Such assistantships are awarded annually on a competitive basis to qualified graduate students requiring part-time teaching, research, or other academic duties defined by the department and are awarded on a one-third basis or higher. Assistantships also require the individual to be enrolled as a full-time student with a course load of at least 12 graduate credit hours in the fall and spring and 9 graduate credit hours in the summer. Assistantships can be awarded either as a [Graduate School Assistantship](#) or a [COE/Departmental Assistantship](#).

### **Scholarships and Fellowships**

The second avenue for potential funding includes scholarships and fellowships. These awards may be based on academic achievement, teaching, and/ or financial need. [Scholarships and fellowships](#) originate as sources both internal to the University and external from private and government sponsorships.

### **Awards**

Students may be eligible for award funding through UGA, the Graduate School, the Mary Frances Early College of Education, and the Department of Communication Sciences and Special Education.

### **Student Loans**

The student may individually apply for Government and Private Student Loans to fund their graduate studies. More information regarding this option may be found through UGA's [Office of Student Financial Aid](#).

## **Graduate School Policies**

The UGA Graduate School has a number of policies and regulations to which all students must subscribe. Students are responsible for acquainting themselves with and following these policies throughout their tenure in the graduate program. The policies can be found [here](#).

### **Graduate Enrollment Policy**

Graduate students must register for a minimum of 3 hours of credit during any semester in which they use University facilities and/or staff time. A student who holds an assistantship must register for a minimum of 12 hours of graduate credit

in the fall and spring semesters and 9 hours of graduate credit during the summer semester.

**Minimum Enrollment.** All enrolled students pursuing graduate degrees at the University of Georgia must maintain minimum continuous enrollment from matriculation until completion of all degree requirements. Continuous enrollment is defined as registering for a minimum of three (3) graduate or professional course credits in at least two semesters per academic year (Fall, Spring, Summer), including the 3 hours of graduate credit that is required for registration during the semester in which degree requirements are complete, until the degree is attained or status as a degree-seeking graduate student is terminated. Doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy and thesis-writing master's students who have satisfactorily completed all required courses (exclusive of 7000 and 7300) will be allowed to register at a rate equivalent to the prevailing in-state tuition rate. This policy specifies a minimum for maintaining status as a degree-seeking graduate student only. It does not supersede the minimum enrollment requirements of other programs, offices, or agencies.

### **Degree Time Limits**

All Graduate School requirements for a master's degree must fall within a six-year time limit beginning with the first registration for graduate courses listed on the program of study and ending with the final semester of the sixth year.

### **Leave of Absence**

A leave of absence provides a mechanism for students experiencing unusual circumstances to be exempt temporarily from the graduate continuous enrollment policy. A leave of absence requires approval of the Graduate Program Coordinator and the Dean of Graduate School. A leave of absence will be granted only for good cause such as serious medical and health-related issues, major financial and employment issues; pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy and recovery therefrom, adoption or fostering of a child, child care, elder care, and other significant family issues; and other major personal circumstances that interfere with the ability to undertake graduate study. An approved leave of absence stands in lieu of registering for the minimum of 3 credits for each semester for which the leave of absence is granted. During a leave of absence, students may not use UGA facilities, resources, or services designed or intended only for enrolled students; receive a graduate assistantship, fellowship, or financial aid from the University; or take any UGA courses related to their program of study. The amount of time approved for leave of absence will not count toward time limits governing a graduate degree.

**Student Responsibility.** It is the student's responsibility to apply for a leave of

absence in timely fashion. An approved leave of absence does not exempt students from the enrollment requirements of other programs, offices, and agencies such as the Veterans Administration, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and federal financial aid programs. Eligibility for certain types of financial aid, including graduate assistantships, requires enrollment for more credits than the Continuous Enrollment Policy.

**Deadlines.** A student may apply for a leave of absence before or during any semester in which they are not registered for courses. Application for a Leave of absence must be received by the Graduate School Office of Enrolled Student Services on or before the last day of classes for the semester for which it is requested. A leave of absence will not be granted retroactively after the end of a semester.

**Limits.** A student may request a leave of absence for one semester, two consecutive semesters, or three consecutive semesters (Summer semester included). There is a 12-month limit for any one request of leave of absence. A student may submit multiple requests for a leave of absence subject to a 3 semester limit.

### Change in Grades

A grade in a course recorded by the Registrar cannot be changed except in the following circumstances:

1. A symbol of I not removed after three semesters (counting summer school as one semester) becomes an F (or U for a course graded S/U).
2. Any grade will be changed upon a written statement by the instructor that the grade was a factual error. All grade changes are subject to approval by the instructor's department head and the student's Dean's Office.

### Name and Address Changes

Current students can update their address information in Athena.

Students needing to make changes to their names as listed on their academic records will need to present the appropriate documentation to the Office of the Registrar. Additional information can be found [here](#).

### Residence

The residence requirements for each degree program can be found on the webpages listed below:

- [M.A.T.](#)
- [M.Ed.](#)
- [M.A.](#)

## GradFIRST Seminar

Students enrolled in the M.A. are required to complete the GradFIRST seminar (GRSC7001). The GradFIRST seminar is intended to supplement discipline-specific graduate training with focused professional development and networking opportunities with faculty and other graduate students across UGA's campuses. GradFIRST seminars are 1-credit courses (GRSC 7001) taught by UGA graduate program faculty.

This seminar will be required in the first year at UGA to support student transition to graduate studies. Graduate coordinators and/or other advisors will assist incoming graduate students in selecting the appropriate GRSC 7001 section for their needs via information that will be available on the GradFIRST website.

To track completion of GRSC 7001, graduate students will be required to list the course on their program of study form (G138) in GradStatus. Students who matriculated prior to Fall 2022 or are enrolled in programs exempt from the GradFIRST requirement should record their exemption status.

More information on the GradFIRST seminar series is available at <http://grad.uga.edu/gradfirst>.

*\*Please note that as of the posting of this handbook, the M.A.T and M.Ed. programs in Special Education do not require the GradFIRST Seminar. This is due to being non-thesis programs and may include required practicums/student teaching*

## Required Procedures for Graduation

### Graduate School Forms

Master's students must complete the following forms, as applicable to their degree, through Grad Status by the date designated by the graduate school:

- Advisory Committee (All Graduate Students as of Fall 2024)
- Final Program of Study (All Graduate Students)
- Approval Form for Master's Thesis and Final Oral Examination (MS/MA Only)
- Report of Final Examination

These forms are managed and submitted through Grad Status:

<https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms> with the exception of the Advisory Committee form, which is submitted through Slate. It is the responsibility of the student to submit forms by the [Graduate School's posted deadlines](#).

### Apply for Graduation



Any student scheduled to graduate MUST apply for graduation\* through the Graduate School and submit all necessary forms in the semester of the anticipated graduation date. Deadlines are in effect for these requirements, and it is the responsibility of the student to be aware of these deadlines. Applications must be filed no later than Friday of the second full week (the first full week for summer) of classes in the semester of the anticipated graduation date.

*\*Please note that applying for graduation through the Graduate School is different from registering for Commencement. See instructions here: [Graduation Application Instructions](#)*

Graduate students expecting to graduate should consult the Graduate Bulletin for information regarding graduation requirements. Graduate students should also contact the graduate coordinator's office in their academic department or email [gradinfo@uga.edu](mailto:gradinfo@uga.edu) for questions regarding graduation requirements.

### **Late Filing of Graduation Forms**

A graduate student who misses a graduation deadline by failing to file the application for graduation, advisory committee form or completed Program of Study form will have the option of paying a single fee of \$50 for late processing of all required forms. A Late Filing for Graduation form, all required graduation forms and late fee payment must be submitted to the Graduate School, Office of Enrolled Student Services within 45 calendar days of the original deadline. After the 45-day late period, no students will be added to the commencement roster for the current semester without special approval.

### **Graduation Ceremonies**

Formal commencement and convocation exercises are held in May and December. Graduate students graduating in the Summer will be given the opportunity to participate in the December graduate ceremony. Candidates for degrees are urged to participate in graduation exercises, but they are not required to attend.

Detailed information, including ceremony dates, can be found at:  
<http://www.reg.uga.edu/graduation/future-dates>

Commencement information can be found at: <https://commencement.uga.edu/>

### **Departmental Appeals Procedures**

University of Georgia students have the right to appeal certain academic decisions. The appeals process starts at the unit responsible for the decision (ex. grades will start with the department that offered the course). For most appeals, an unfavorable ruling at one level can be appealed to the successive level. All appeals

are heard by the Appeals Committee of the Graduate Council. The full appeals policy is located at: <https://policy.uga.edu/policies/#/programs/Skqcrwu06>

## Grades

Any student, undergraduate or graduate, who believes that they received an incorrect or unfair grade due to factual error, improper or unprofessional bias, or evaluation different from the stated course objectives/criteria or other public criteria, may appeal the grade. Grades are appealed within the department and college in which they are earned, not in the department and college in which the student's major resides. Exception: Grade appeals, when a grade of I (Incomplete) has lapsed to a grade of F, must go directly to the UGA Educational Affairs Committee. Please note that all grade appeals must be initiated within one calendar year from the end of the term in which the grade was recorded.

Appeal route:

1. Instructor
2. Department Head\*
3. Dean's Office
4. Graduate School
5. UGA Educational Affairs Committee\*
6. UGA President
7. Board of Regents

\*Prior to review at each of these levels, the faculty member who assigned the student's final grade will receive a copy of the student's letter of appeal and be given the opportunity to provide a response for those reviewing the appeal.

## Departmental Curriculum Requirements

Graduate curriculum requirements are available in each student's major department. Although academic advising is required of all students every semester, students are ultimately responsible for their knowledge of these requirements, their course registration, and their progress toward degrees. However, occasionally, it may be appropriate for a department or college to waive one or more of its requirements for students on a case-by-case basis as it sees fit, most often when there are extenuating circumstances. Any student who feels they are deserving of a waiver of department or college requirements has the right to appeal.

Appeal route:

1. Department Head
2. Dean's Office



3. Graduate School
4. UGA Educational Affairs Committee
5. UGA President
6. Board of Regents

## Other Appeals

The following appeals must go directly to the UGA Educational Affairs Committee:

1. Board of Regents' requirements
2. Learning support
3. Learning disabilities
4. Grade appeals, when grade of I (Incomplete) has lapsed to F
5. Accuracy of student records
6. Posthumous degrees

## Additional Student Policies

Additional UGA policies with which students are expected to be familiar and adhere to:

- Grievance Policy found at [https://legal.uga.edu/grievance\\_and\\_disciplinary\\_review\\_policy](https://legal.uga.edu/grievance_and_disciplinary_review_policy)
- Academic Honesty Policy found at <https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/>
- Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy <https://eoo.uga.edu/policies-resources/ndah-policy/>
- Responsible Conduct in Research policy found at <https://research.uga.edu/integrity-support/>
- Probation and Dismissal found at <https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/policies-procedures/academics/probation-and-dismissal/>

## Useful Campus Links

- Academic Calendars: <http://www.reg.uga.edu/calendars>
- ATHENA: <https://athena.uga.edu/>
- Athens Transit: <http://www.athenstransit.com/>
- Bookstore: <http://www.bkstr.com/georgiastore/home>
- Campus Life/Student Affairs: <http://www.uga.edu/campuslife/>

- Career Center: <http://www.career.uga.edu/>
- Computer Support: <http://eits.uga.edu/cts/>
- Disability Resource Center: <http://drc.uga.edu/>
- eLC: <https://uga.view.usg.edu/>
- Family and Graduate Housing: <https://housing.uga.edu/register/>
- Financial Counseling & Coaching (Formerly ASPIRE):  
<https://www.fcs.uga.edu/loveandmoneycenter>
- Graduate Student Association: <https://gsa.uga.edu/>
- Interactive Campus map:  
<https://usg.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=10832e7927124404a7119df52872af84>
- International Student Life: <https://isl.uga.edu/>
- Meal Plan: <https://dining.uga.edu/>
- Miller Learning Center: <http://mlc.uga.edu/>
- Office of Global Engagement (Study Abroad and Immigration Services):  
<https://globalengagement.uga.edu/>
- Office of the Bursar & Treasury Services: <https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/>
- Office of the Registrar: <https://reg.uga.edu/>
- Parking: <https://tps.uga.edu/parking/>
- Ramsey Student Center – Recreational Sports:  
<http://www.recsports.uga.edu/>
- Student Health Insurance: [https://hr.uga.edu/students/students\\_home/](https://hr.uga.edu/students/students_home/)
- Tate Student Center: <http://tate.uga.edu/>
- Technology Lending: <https://www.libs.uga.edu/mlc/techlending>
- UGA Football: <https://georgiadogs.com/sports/football/schedule>
- UGA Libraries: <https://www.libs.uga.edu/>

- UGA OneCard: <https://tate.uga.edu/ugacard/>
- UGA Transit: <https://tps.uga.edu/>
- UGA Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): <https://caps.uga.edu/>
- University Health Center: <https://healthcenter.uga.edu/>
- Writing Center: <https://www.english.uga.edu/jill-and-marvin-willis-center-writing>

## Addendum I: UGA Institutional Review Board Guidance on Class Projects

Class projects or assignments involving human subjects are generally conducted for education or training solely to fulfill a course requirement; as such, an element of the definition of research—the intent to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge—is lacking, so these activities do not meet the regulatory definition of research. Most student class projects or assignments, therefore, will not require the submission of an IRB application for review and approval. If a class project or activity is a systematic investigation (including research development, testing and evaluation) designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge, it meets the definition of research and will require IRB review and approval.

Thesis and dissertation projects are usually conducted to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge and, therefore, meet the definition of research. If these projects involve human subjects, IRB review and approval will be required. For more information, see [Section 5.0 of Policy and Procedure: Determination of Human Subjects Research](#).

### Faculty and Student Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Faculty or Course Instructor to determine whether a class project involving human participants is outside the purview of the IRB, and to contact the Human Subjects Office if assistance in making this determination is needed.

As with any instructional activity, the Faculty or Course Instructor assumes responsibility for the conduct and oversight of these class projects or activities. It is expected that these activities will uphold the principles of ethical treatment and respect and ensure the safety and protection of the individuals who will be involved in these projects. This includes:

1. Discussing the general principles of ethical research with human subjects with the class prior to the initiation of the project. This can be supplemented by the completion of the CITI IRB training by the students who will conduct the projects. This training is available at: <https://gear.ovpr.uga.edu/applications-and-databases/uga-citi-login-portal/>
2. Reviewing student research plans and monitoring research activities to ensure that human participants are protected.
3. At a minimum, students conducting the research inform participants of the voluntary nature of participation and employ measures to protect privacy and confidentiality, if applicable.
4. If research will be conducted outside of UGA, ensuring that there are appropriate permissions or authorizations from the external sites for the conduct of the project.

Finally, Instructors must convey to students that the data may not be used or shared beyond the circumstances described below:

1. In the classroom;
2. If the project involves gathering data from or about a company, agency, or organization, the data/results are shared only with that company, agency, or organization; and/or
3. Presentations of project results at Departmental, Interdepartmental, College, or University seminars or similar venue designed to exhibit coursework or to continue the learning process.

### **Disclosure to Participants**

All students conducting projects under this policy should disclose important information to the participants. If an Informed Consent Document or Consent Cover Letter is used, the following will be included:

1. The student identifies him/herself as a UGA student who is performing the activity to fulfill a course requirement, and the course is specifically identified.
2. The name and contact information for the Course Instructor or Supervising Faculty Member to contact for questions is provided.
3. The persons who have access to the individual data and/or summarized results are specified (e.g., Instructor only, Company/Agency/Organization).
4. Participants are informed that their participation is completely voluntary, that they do not have to participate in the study if they don't want to, and that they can stop participating at any time.
5. The disclosure should not state that the project has been approved by the UGA IRB.

### **Future Use of Data**

It is very important that careful consideration be given to the possibility of any publication, presentation, or use of any collected data for future research studies. Retroactive approval cannot be granted for studies conducted without IRB approval. For example, if a class project was conducted without IRB approval and resulted in unexpected but important findings or data, those findings or data may not be presented at a national meeting or used in a future project or research study.

### **Questions**

Please contact the Human Research Protection Program Office (706-542-3199 or [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu)) for any questions or assistance.

## Addendum II: M.A.T. in Special Education Student Requirements

### Retention and Meeting Program Objectives

Students admitted to the Special Education Program M.A.T. program must adhere to all regulations attached to the program, College, and University. In addition to academic evaluation, students will also be evaluated on professional practices each semester by program faculty. Students must be successful and make satisfactory progress in all aspects of the Special Education program in order to remain in the program.

### Retention in the Special Education Program

Retention in the program is not automatic. Some students may not be allowed to continue in the program even though they may have completed the initial coursework successfully.

**Program Transition Points.** All M.A.T. programs (GC, AC, and BK) use three transition points to measure a candidate's knowledge, skills, and dispositions as progress is made through the program of study. These transition points represent defined benchmarks at which candidate progress will be monitored and communicated to the candidate. The purpose of the transition points is to provide direction toward the timely and successful completion of the program of study. Failure to make satisfactory progress at one transition point can result in the development of an academic support plan geared to redirect the candidate toward successful program completion. Failure to make satisfactory progress at a second transition point can result in dismissal from the program.

Transition Point #1	Transition Point #2	Transition Point #3
Grade of “B-” or higher in EDSE 6070E	Grade of “B-” or higher in EDSE 7440E	Grade of “B-” or higher in EDSE 7460E
Course Notes		
EDSE 6070E: Behavior Management in Special Education Settings: Classroom and behavior management program design based on the principles and procedures of applied behavior analysis. Emphasis is on proactive strategies that promote learning and prosocial behavior.	EDSE 7440E: Practicum in Special Education (Practicum A): Its purpose is to introduce candidates to the classroom environment and expose them to effective instructional and behavior management strategies as well as best practice around managing the mandates of IDEA.	EDSE 7460E: Internship in Special Education: Requires candidates to attend and actively participate in a P-12 or BK classroom that serves students in their emphasis area.

Falling below these minimum academic requirements will trigger an automatic review, and the student will be designated as being on academic probation with the Special Education Program. The details of that probation will be determined within the review process. Students must meet with their faculty advisor and other involved faculty, and a performance improvement plan for academics will be developed by that team. Probationary status for grades means that students will have a defined amount of time to bring their GPA back up to the minimum requirements. Failure to show progress and proficiency will result in the student not being allowed entry into more advanced level courses and/or in dismissal from the program.

An exception to the review process would occur if two or more failing grades are earned in required program courses in the candidate's M.A.T. program of study. In that event, the candidate will be dismissed from the program.

Students with a cumulative graduate course average below 3.0 will receive a warning letter from the Graduate School explaining the probation procedure. If a student's graduate course average is below 3.0 for two consecutive terms, the Graduate School will place the student on academic probation. The student must maintain a 3.0 graduate course average each semester while on probation. Probation status ends when the student's cumulative graduate course average reaches at least 3.0. If the semester graduate course average drops below 3.0 while on probation, the student will be dismissed from the Graduate School.

**Prerequisite teaching skills.** Students must be proficient in prerequisite teaching skills by the time they are registering for student teaching by earning a B- or higher in all practica classes leading to student teaching. While students might start the program at various levels of ability, it is expected that by the completion of the fall semester of the MAT program of study, students will be proficient in teaching criteria as evaluated by school-based cooperating teachers and by university supervisors.

**3. Professional conduct.** Students must exhibit professional conduct at all times. These behaviors are expected in all settings including, but not limited to:

- A. the field-based classroom placement setting;
- B. the university classroom;
- C. interactions with field-based personnel, students, and parents;
- D. interactions with university faculty;
- E. interactions with peers.

Additionally, students must fulfill professional requirements such as turning in paperwork in a timely manner. Students with areas of need will be advised, and if required, a performance improvement plan will be developed. Performance improvement plans identify cause/reason for the sanction, corrective actions to be



completed by the student to have the sanction removed, and the timeline by which the corrective actions must be completed. If a student's professional conduct is judged by faculty to be inappropriate despite advising and a support plan, the student will be dismissed from the program.

In exceptional cases, if the candidate is found guilty of a major violation of UGA's student code of conduct or civil/criminal law, the candidate will be automatically dismissed.

## **Professional Expectations of Students**

The Special Education Program in the Mary Frances Early College of Education evaluates interns on professional behavior as described below. These behaviors must be demonstrated through attitudes, behaviors and relationships that will be observed by mentor teachers, university supervisors, and other program faculty members.

### **General Dispositions**

**Attendance/Punctuality:** All teacher candidates will work their mentor's daily schedule, following the district's teacher work calendar. Candidate evaluation includes attendance and punctuality. Some districts will require you to attend staff meetings, appropriate extracurricular activities, district board meetings, open houses, and in-service days. Your attendance at these functions demonstrates a professional attitude and commitment.

**Absences:** Absences are generally unacceptable. We expect 100% attendance during the internship semester. If an unavoidable absence situation does arise, you must communicate with your University Supervisor and Mentor Teacher in advance for approval. Unavoidable absences, such as illness, must be communicated as soon as possible. Interns must communicate the absence ahead of time when possible or the day-of, at the latest, to the following people:

- University Supervisor
- Mentor Teacher

All absences must be noted on their time log. Candidates must receive approval from their University Supervisor prior to planning absences.

**Preparation for Field Experience Absences.** Lesson plans must be ready for your mentor teacher. Collaborate with your mentor to determine the preferred format for the lesson. Remember that the mentor AND students are counting on you to provide the curriculum so students can continue to learn.

**Professional Dress:** Interns are evaluated on dressing professionally and appropriately. For example, when in schools, men should wear collared shirts with



slacks; women should wear slacks or skirts. Jeans are not acceptable attire for men or women. Your dress is an important way for you to distinguish yourself from the students in the schools. In addition, you should always wear your official University of Georgia nametag or host school ID if one has been provided. You may experience casual dress from school professionals during your observations and field experiences, but you must remember that you represent the University of Georgia and are held to the standards set by the university. Your University Supervisor is available to discuss any questions you may have about appropriate dress during your placement.

**Demeanor/Attitude:** A positive and professional disposition toward your work, both on campus and in school placements, must be observed during student teaching and will be a factor in evaluations. When in school placements, become a part of the school community by introducing yourself to school administration, faculty, support staff and students. Maintain a professional and positive attitude toward students, faculty, support personnel, administration, parents, and the community. Become familiar with school policies and practices, and work in a manner consistent with them. Become thoroughly acquainted with school and classroom facilities, and learn the procedures used by the mentor teacher, including acquiring instructional materials available in the school and the school district. Finally, become familiar with the community and its relationship to the educational program. Understanding the context of your students is critical for teachers.

**Communication:** Practice appropriate communication skills with peers, professors and school personnel. Your prior coursework has prepared you for this. Whether working with peers, professors, teachers or any other personnel, ask specific questions when you have them, be positive, be open to constructive feedback, and be tactful. Interns must make themselves available for joint meetings with their mentor, supervisor, and/or Program Coordinator as necessary during their classroom placement. UGA email and/or eLC email will serve as your official email throughout your program and placement experience, and the expectation is that candidates will be checking those email accounts on each day that the University is open for business. Candidates are expected to respond to emails within 48 hours of their receipt (*a 24-hour period is considered professional.*) Also, always notify your university supervisor, mentor or coordinator of potential issues that may hinder a successful experience.

**Social Media and Student Pictures:** Teacher candidates are NOT to post pictures of students to the internet or social media (e.g., TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, etc.). School districts obtain media releases before posting pictures of children and take on the liability of any images used. As a candidate, you are not permitted to take on that liability and/or to use student images for social media or any other publication; candidates should refrain from taking any

photos or video. Video images are used in some field experience observations but require waivers and are not disseminated. Video Release Forms in both English and Spanish will be distributed by program instructors and supervisors.

**Theory in Practice:** Practice and apply to your student teaching experience the academic and pedagogical standards learned throughout your coursework in the teacher education program. Reflect on how these standards apply to you and the mentor teacher(s). In summary, candidates in this teacher education program are expected to always demonstrate the following professional dispositions:

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Initiative
- Reliability
- Planning for contingencies
- Tact and judgment with peers, students, instructors, and social media
- Collegiality
- Ability to receive feedback positively—you are still learning
- Desire to improve own teaching performance
- Reflective practice
- Commitment to the profession
- Desire to help students learn
- Sensitivity to diverse learners with diverse needs

**Deadline and Due Dates:** Ensure that you comply with the guidelines for submission of required paperwork and assignments that are related to placement, program completion, graduation, and certification. **Professional and Ethical Conduct Agreement (PECA)**

Any violation of these codes may result in a Performance Review and/or dismissal from the program and/or Mary Frances Early College of Education.

## **Review Process**

Students who are admitted to the program will be subject to a review process. There are two types of review:

1. **Semester Review:** A general, semester review of progress in the program. This review generally occurs during the advisement appointment, in a broad faculty review of the cohort, and/or needed during the semester.
2. **Professional Performance Review:** Occurs when there are concerns about professional behaviors, performance in the field settings, and/or academic performance. A called review is typically initiated by a faculty member and/or advisor of the student.

In either type of review, semester or professional performance, a Professional Improvement Plan (PIP) can be developed at the time of the review.

A Professional Improvement Plan (PIP) is developed to assist the student in making appropriate progress. It is developed with the student, and a follow-up review is scheduled. The support plan can be one of two types, **a growth plan**, or **a probation contract**.

A **growth plan** is individually developed to assist the student in developing and/or refining professional skills and/or professional practices. A review date is included in the plan. If the student makes expected progress, the plan should be considered complete. If growth is not made, the student may be in danger of not making adequate progress or failing the course.

A **probation contract** is individually developed to assist the student in consistently producing professional skills and/or demonstrating professional practices and will also place the student on probation status with the program. A student may be placed on a probation contract immediately without a growth plan if concerns about compromised professional behaviors and/or if performance in the field settings, and/or academic performance are significant enough to adversely impact the student, peers, faculty, or those in the field settings. Additionally, probation contracts will go into effect when students do not make adequate academic progress as defined earlier in [Retention in the Special Education Program](#).

While on the probation contract, the student is expected to fulfill the terms of the contract. Review of progress will be at the time as indicated in the contract. If the expected progress is completed, the plan would typically be considered complete. If the expected progress is not completed, then two actions will be considered. One action is extending the probation. The student will continue to be on probation status. The other action is that the student will be terminated from the program. Either action can occur depending on how well progress has or has not been made by the student.

## **Dismissal Process**

Dismissal from the program occurs when remediation efforts have been unsuccessful, professional conduct has been compromised, the student has violated University of Georgia code of conduct or program policies, or if there is an adverse event ruled on by the ethics unit of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Students have a right to appeal the dismissal using the established college and university appeals process. Information on additional procedures are available from your advisor.

Dismissal from the program includes a letter written to the student with cause or reason of this sanction. Copies are sent to the program advisor, program

coordinator, and department head regarding dismissal from the program. Depending on the concern, the concern might be referred to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Students may appeal the dismissal using established college and university procedures.

## Handbook Acknowledgement Form

By signing this form, I acknowledge that:

- I have read and understand the information in this handbook, including the requirements for the master's degree programs in special education and the UGA Graduate School's policies and procedures.
- I agree to comply with these requirements, policies, and procedures during my period of enrollment in at UGA.
- I understand that if I do not meet a deadline assigned by the Department of Communication Sciences and Special Education or the UGA Graduate School, I am responsible for the repercussions.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to regularly communicate with my advisor and seek clarification if I have any questions or concerns about my program of study or the graduation requirements.

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*Student Name (Print/Type)*

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*Student Signature*

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*Date (MM/DD/YYYY)*

Please sign and return this form via email to the [CSSE Graduate Program Administrator \(csseadmin@uga.edu\)](mailto:csseadmin@uga.edu). It will be documented in the student's official file.

Graduate Handbook Version Date: \_\_\_\_\_