Master’s Degree Handbook

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Welcome to the Master’s Degree program in Exceptional Student Education! The Department of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) offers a 36-credit (minimum) Master of Education degree that is comprised of (a) College of Education Core courses, (b) ESE Department Core courses, (c) an area of concentration, and (d) an individualized culminating experience. To help assure successful progress toward your degree, you should become familiar with this handbook, bookmark and review the FAU University Catalog (at http://www.fau.edu/registrar/universitycatalog/welcome.php), and meet regularly with your advisor and other faculty members.

Currently there are six concentration areas in the ESE master’s degree program. These areas include courses designed to broaden teachers’ knowledge of ESE strategies and promote professional development. Some concentration areas offer preparation in a new area of study or an additional teaching endorsement. For example, the concentration in Early Childhood prepares students for the Pre-Kindergarten Disability teaching endorsement and for the Infant Toddler Development Specialist certificate. The Gifted Education concentration area prepares students for an add-on teaching endorsement in gifted education. A concentration in Applied Behavior Analysis prepares students for the certification exam administered by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. Another concentration area, Instructional Practices in ESE, is designed for students who do not have a bachelor’s degree in special education. This concentration is appropriate for individuals who wish to earn a master’s degree while gaining the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective ESE teacher. Coursework is paired with field experiences so that students will gain the opportunity to link their subject knowledge to sound pedagogy and practice. (NOTE: Teachers with Florida teaching certification in elementary, secondary, or special education but no previous degree in special education also take the Instructional Practices in ESE concentration area.)

Each student in the M.Ed. degree program completes the degree with a culminating experience. For students who already have a bachelor’s degree in special education, the culminating experience will include a field project, an internship, or a master’s thesis. For students in the Instructional Practices in ESE concentration, the culminating activity is a full-time teaching internship (6 credits) during which students gain valuable hands-on experience and contacts with school district personnel.
Admissions Requirements

Applicants to the Department of Exceptional Student Education are required to follow the procedures for graduate admissions. Forms, policies, and procedures for the FAU Graduate College can be found at the following website: http://wise.fau.edu/graduate/applynow.php

Any applicant seeking admission to the M.Ed. program in Exceptional Student Education must:

1. hold a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution of high education;

2. earn acceptable scores on either the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Miller Analogy Test (MAT). For applicants with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 2.5 from the last 60 semester hours of undergraduate work, a minimum GRE score of 1000 is required (combining scores from any 2 of the 3 sub-scales -- Verbal, Quantitative, Analytic). For applicants with minimum GPA of 3.0 from the last 60 semester hours of undergraduate work, a minimum GRE score of 800 is required. For applicants using the MAT, an acceptable score is a score in the 50th percentile for intended Education majors.

3. show at least 3 credits of special education coursework (e.g., EEX 2010, 2091, or 5051) on the transcript as a pre-requisite. Students with no previous ESE college coursework must take an introductory pre-requisite in addition to COE and Department core, and concentration area.

“Getting Programmed”

As soon as a student is accepted into the ESE master’s degree program, the student should “get programmed.” This involves meeting with a faculty advisor and completing the ESE Department’s Master’s Degree Information and Planning Sheet. This, in turn will help the student and advisor in filling out the FAU Graduate College Plan of Study (Form 6) that indicates the courses required for the degree. Directions and blank forms can be found at:
The Department’s Information and Planning Sheet, combined with the Graduate College Plan of Study will minimize the chance of confusion as a student makes progress toward the degree. Additional information on program options, internships, practica, teaching endorsement, field work requirements, etc. will be covered during the programming meeting.

As a student progresses in a Master’s degree program, changes to the degree plan can be made if necessary. These changes should be made in consultation with the student’s faculty advisor, and a change form (Graduate College Revision to Existing Plan of Study – Form 9) should be completed and submitted to the ESE Department. A copy of the Department’s Master’s Degree Information and Planning Sheet is available from your advisor or from the ESE Department. For a current copy of the Graduate College Plan of Study (Form 6) and the Graduate College Revision to Existing Plan of Study (Form 9) please refer to the link provided earlier in this section.

Course Rotation

Graduate courses in the Master’s Degree program are offered on a rotation that allows students to plan their programs several semesters in advance. Graduate courses in the ESE core and in various concentration areas are offered in two ways. Face to face courses are primarily offered at the Boca Raton campus. Other ESE courses are offered through a variety of online formats and do not require campus visits. College of Education core courses (i.e., Educational Research, Educational Statistics) are offered frequently on every campus, as well as on-line. Students should consult a faculty advisor or the ESE Department regarding the master’s course rotation. Students can also consult the ESE Department home page at http://www.coe.fau.edu/ese/ for the ESE graduate course rotation.

The capstone course for the master's degree includes an internship, master’s thesis, or field project. Students should consult their faculty advisor prior to registering for any of the capstone experiences. Completion of these activities requires students to identify, synthesize, and demonstrate best practices during a field-based culminating activity. If students are not successful in the internship, thesis, or field project, they may be required to repeat the culminating experience using specific guidelines described in a Professional Development Plan.

Ongoing Evaluation

To complete the ESE program, students must commit a great deal of time and energy to their studies and to their professional development. The faculty evaluates students’ professional development based upon their classroom performance, field-based experiences, and demonstration of qualities necessary in successful teaching. In addition to effective teaching skills, personal qualities
shown by research to be important to teaching include organization, punctuality, enthusiasm, clarity of presentation, and knowledge of subject matter. Students who demonstrate behavior inconsistent with the behavior or qualities necessary for success may be advised to reconsider their career and degree decisions. It is essential to note that problems with student performance and deportment may disqualify a student from participation in field-based experiences, and consequently stop progression through a master’s degree program in ESE.

**Critical Assignments and Florida Educator Accomplished Practices**

The Florida Department of Education has identified a set of Educator Accomplished Practices (EAPs) expected for graduates of teacher education programs. The EAPs, part of the accreditation process for all Colleges of Education in Florida, are built into many ESE graduate courses. In these courses, each EAP is assessed by a Critical Assignment.

**ESE Department Policy on CRITICAL ASSIGNMENTS**

Graduate students must earn a **minimum grade of 83%** of the points allotted for a Critical Assignment to receive a minimum grade of B in a course. In other words, a student cannot “pass” the course with a B without successfully completing the Critical Assignment.

**Remediation Policy for Critical Assignments:**

If a student is passing the course with a B grade, but has failed to pass the Critical Assignment with a minimum of 83% of the possible points, the student will receive an “INC” in the course until the Critical Assignment is successfully redone. Only one attempt is allowed. The conditions and time frame for the resubmission of the assignment will be determined by the instructor. However, the second attempt must be completed within one semester. **Upon successful completion of the re-submitted assignment,** the “INC” will be changed to a grade for the course and the student may continue in the ESE sequence of courses. The original points earned for the initial attempt at the Critical Assignment will be used to calculate the final grade in the course. **If the resubmitted Critical Assignment is not successfully passed,** the grade for the course will be B- or below based upon the total points earned.

If a student is not passing the course with a grade of B or better, and has failed to pass the Critical Assignment with a minimum of 83% of the possible points, the student will not be allowed to resubmit the Critical Assignment. The student will need to repeat the course and the Critical Assignment.
Degree Completion Requirement

To complete the master’s degree in ESE, each student must:

1. meet all College and University graduation requirements;

2. earn grades of B or higher in all courses (Students must repeat any courses in which a grade of B- or below is earned. A course may only be repeated once.);

3. maintain continuous enrollment in the University (1 credit per academic year). FAU requires a re-application (forms and fees) to the University if there is a break in enrollment;

4. complete the culminating activity (Internship for the concentration area in Instructional Practices in ESE; Internship, Thesis, or Field Project for other concentration areas);

5. complete the required number of hours as specified on the student’s advising sheets.

6. demonstrate competence in the FAU College of Education Behavioral Indicators which are linked to our NCATE conceptual framework, and the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices.

Additional Note for Students in the Instructional Practices in ESE Concentration Area

Students in the Master’s Degree program who have not previously earned ESE teaching certification may wish to pursue certification through the Florida Department of Education. Teaching certification is not linked to the ESE Master’s Degree at FAU. Given the numerous and changing routes to teaching certification in Florida, students who wish to gain teaching certification will have numerous options, and are advised to seek the most current information from the Florida Department of Education Bureau of Teacher Certification at 1(800) 445-6739 or visit www.fldoe.org.

Security Clearance Requirements

Quality teacher education programs require students to practice effective teaching techniques and to integrate these skills into their conceptual development. To complete the field experience portion of any class, a student must be fingerprinted for security clearance purposes. Each school district in the FAU service area has a different process for getting fingerprinted and obtaining a security clearance. Students must visit the web site, http://www.coe.fau.edu/OASS/contact.htm under the Field Experience link for the
process used in each district and the fees charged by each district for fingerprinting. Field experiences may be completed in any FAU partner district.

At FAU, field work is an integral part of the master's program. If you are not able to obtain security clearance, then you will not be able to complete the field work assignments. This will make it impossible for you to complete the program and earn a Master’s Degree in ESE. Questions relating to security clearance and the process in specific counties can be answered by the Office for Academic and Student Services (OASS). For Broward and Dade County inquiries, call OASS at the Davie campus (954) 236-1028. For Hendry, Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie County inquiries, contact OASS on the Boca Raton campus at (561) 297-3570.

Financial Aid

Students who are enrolled in the ESE master’s degree may be eligible for the Critical Teacher Shortage Tuition Reimbursement Program sponsored by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). Information regarding this program is available on the FDOE homepage at: [http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/](http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/). See Florida Public School Employee Programs for more details. A toll free number is also available at 1-888-827-2004.

Additional information regarding financial aid is available at: [http://www.teachinflorida.com](http://www.teachinflorida.com). Students are strongly encouraged to meet with an FAU Financial Aid Advisor to get more information on loans, grants and scholarships to help finance their master’s program. They may also find more information related to financial aid at [http://www.fau.edu/finaid/](http://www.fau.edu/finaid/).

For Further Assistance

If you need assistance regarding transcripts, admissions, field experiences, and security clearance for schools, contact the Office of Academic and Student Services:

- Boca Campus 561 - 297 - 3570
- Davie Campus 954 - 236 - 1028
- John D. MacArthur Campus 561 - 799 - 8627
- Treasure Coast Campus 772 - 873 - 3353

If you need assistance regarding matters in Exceptional Student Education, contact the Department at (561) 297-3280.

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