

Doctoral Program in General Special Education

Department of Educational Psychology
University of Connecticut ~ Neag School of Education
249 Glenbrook Road, Unit 2064 ~ Storrs, CT 06269-2064
<http://www.epsy.uconn.edu/>

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Introduction

The Doctoral Program in General Special Education is an individualized program, preparing students for a variety of leadership positions in higher education or in educational or community agencies at the national, state, and local levels. We are committed to fostering communities where individual and cultural difference are respected and acknowledged. Applicants from underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply. Areas of faculty interest are described on the last page of this brochure.

Mission Statement

Our commitment is to inspire and prepare professionals in special education to create and broaden opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Students are encouraged to develop their interests in educating learners at risk across a wide range of disabilities incorporating a lifespan perspective. The Doctoral Program is designed to enhance independent thinking and leadership qualities through an individualized program embedded in a thorough knowledge of theory and the existing literature and culminating in active research to guide, direct, and inform the field.

Doctoral Program Coursework

Applicants for the Doctoral Program enter with a variety of experiences. Upon admission, they develop a Plan of Study with their advisory committee. Plans of Study are individualized, based upon the student's training, goals, and personal objectives in pursuing this degree. A

residency period of at least two consecutive semesters or, with approval, one semester and a contiguous summer, is required. A variety of practicum experiences are offered in the areas of teacher education, technical assistance, consulting, postsecondary learning disabilities services, and research. For an illustration of the competencies and outcomes included in the Doctoral Program in Special Education, see the *Doctoral Plan of Action* in the *Handbook for Doctoral Students in Special Education* (available at <http://www.education.uconn.edu/departments/epsy/SPED%20assets/phdhandbook.PDF>)

Following completion of courses, students submit to their Doctoral Advisory Committee and orally defend 1) an integrative paper in an area of interest (this satisfies the requirement for the General Examination); 2) a 12-page proposal for the doctoral dissertation; and 3) a doctoral dissertation on an original empirical study that may be quantitative or qualitative in nature.

Recommended Plan of Study

Although these courses are generally included in a Plan of Study, exceptions can be negotiated between a student and his/her advisory committee. There is no fixed requirement regarding number of credits. Credits from other institutions, as well as non-matriculated credits, can be included in the Doctoral Plan, as long as they are post-Master's credits. There is a seven-year limit for completion of the Ph.D.

Doctoral Seminars (12 credits)

EPSY 6194: Four doctoral seminars are required.

These are designed for in-depth exploration and discussion of current issues in special education such as law and policy, adults with disabilities, positive behavior support, and the preparation of special educators.

Research Methods (9 credits)

EPSY 5605: Quantitative Research Methods I
(3 credits)

EPSY 5607: Quantitative Research Methods II
(3 credits)

EPSY 6601: Methods and Techniques of
Educational Research (3 credits)

Highly Recommended

EDCI 6000: Qualitative Methods of Educational
Research (3 credits)

Dissertation Research (At least 15 credits required)

GRAD 6950: Doctoral Dissertation Research

Internship (Recommended)

EPSY 6499: Doctoral Practicum (3 or 6 credits)

Area of Emphasis

A minimum of 12 credits (can include independent study) provides an opportunity to develop expertise in a specialty area such as teacher education, effective instructional strategies, positive behavior support, and postsecondary disability support services.

Related Area

The Graduate School requires either foreign language proficiency or six (6) credits in a “related area” (typically in a different department). This can be applied toward the 12 “Area of Emphasis” credits, where appropriate.

Candidate Admission Criteria

Doctoral applicants come from a variety of backgrounds, including special education, school psychology, counseling, adult services, and services for students with disabilities.

Admission to the Doctoral Program is based on a composite evaluation of academic background, experience, standardized test scores, research interests, leadership ability, and potential for creatively contributing to the field.

Deadlines for applications are October 31st for the Spring semester and February 15th for the Fall and summer sessions. Specific criteria used in determining qualified applicants are as follows:

- a. ***Academic Background.*** In addition to meeting the basic graduate admission requirements for all doctoral candidates as outlined in the *Graduate Catalog* (available at http://catalog.grad.uconn.edu/documents/grad_catalog_0910.pdf), applicants should ordinarily present a strong academic record at both the undergraduate and master’s level as evidenced by an undergraduate GPA above 3.0 (on a 4.0-point scale), strong letters of support from persons qualified to assess potential for doctoral study, and a background in special education or related fields at either the undergraduate or master’s level.
- b. ***Experience.*** Previous experiences in working with children, adolescents, or adults with disabilities are highly desirable. The length and nature of experiences with individuals with disabilities are considered as evidence of serious commitment to this field.
- c. ***Research Interests.*** Applicants for the Doctoral Program should articulate their research interests since the intent of the degree is to provide persons of outstanding ability the opportunity to become contributors in a scholarly field. The statement should also outline the applicant’s professional goals and clarify why a research degree is required to obtain these goals. *Applicants should demonstrate that this research interest is a match to the work of a member of the special education faculty.*
- d. ***Standardized Test Scores.*** Applicants are required to submit current scores (i.e., within a 5-year period) on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). While considerable weight is attached to the GRE scores, each application is considered in the broadest way. *Ordinarily, combined verbal and quantitative scores are expected to be over 1,200.* Applicants with disabilities are encouraged to request necessary accommodations when taking the GRE.

- e. **Personal Qualities.** Personal qualities are considered in terms of an applicant's potential for future leadership and scholarly contributions to the field. This potential is determined through interviews, letters of recommendation, and (whenever possible) previous writings.
- f. **Professional Writing Sample.** Applicants are encouraged to submit samples of recent professional writing (e.g., course paper, publications, reports). These samples should provide evidence of the potential for scholarship and research.

Applicant Procedures

To request or download an application, visit the Graduate School's website at <http://www.grad.uconn.edu/applications.html>. To review Financial Aid information, visit http://www.grad.uconn.edu/financial_aid.html.

You are strongly encouraged to contact faculty members for preliminary discussions (see section on *Faculty and Their Areas of Expertise*). Indicate your intended area of specialization as well as your goals in pursuing a research degree. A complete resume of your academic background and professionally related experiences is helpful. Please note that initial advisor selections are considered provisional, and students may seek to change advisors at any time.

Sources of Financial Assistance

Funding is often available through University and Neag School of Education graduate assistantships and pre-doctoral fellowships. *Stipends for graduate assistantships range from approximately \$19,000-\$22,000 for the academic year*, and tuition remission and full medical benefits are offered. Financial assistance for part-time work and work-study opportunities is often available. Funds may also be available through various federal or state grants. Contact your designated advisor for information about assistantships.

Resources

The University of Connecticut **Center on Postsecondary Education and Disability** (CPED) is committed to promoting equal educational opportunity for adolescents and adults with disabilities. Its primary emphases are research and

training. Projects of interest to students in special education include the Universal Design for Instruction project (www.udl.uconn.edu). Visit the CPED web site at <http://www.cped.uconn.edu>

The University of Connecticut **A.J. Pappanikou Center for Developmental Disabilities: A University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service** is located in Farmington, CT adjacent to the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. It provides: 1) interdisciplinary preparation of students and fellows; 2) continuing education for individuals who serve people with developmental disabilities and their families; 3) community and family education, technical assistance, and model demonstration activities; and 4) applied research and policy analysis. This Center for Excellence represents a collaboration of deans in various schools on campus. As such there are multiple opportunities for student involvement within the core age areas of early childhood, school age, adults, and older adults. Projects that focus on technology, curriculum, inclusion, family support, employment, child care, social competence, service coordination and case management, and medically complex children are currently funded and offer opportunities for both internships and graduate assistantships. Visit the Pappanikou Center's web site at <http://www.uconnucedd.org/>

Some Special Education faculty are members of the **Center for Behavioral Education and Research (CBER)**, which conducts and disseminates rigorous research that improves educational and social outcomes for all children and youth in schools. Areas of interest include design of instruction, literacy, learning strategies, positive behavior support, applied behavior analysis, evidence-based practices, organizational and system change, and academic and behavioral assessment and evaluation. Learn more at www.cber.org

The University offers wireless Internet access, and many of the libraries' licensed research databases and electronic journals can be accessed remotely by students. Graduate students can apply for various types of financial support available through the Graduate School for dissertation research and travel. For detailed information, visit the Graduate School's web site at http://www.grad.uconn.edu/financial_aid.html

The *Handbook for Doctoral Students in Special Education* contains useful details about topics relating to program outcomes and student competencies, program procedures and timelines,

and brief resumes for faculty. Program graduates and currently enrolled doctoral students are available to discuss their experiences in the Program. Please contact Dr. Joseph Madaus (joseph.madaus@uconn.edu) for information about obtaining the *Handbook*, or download it from the Special Education Program website at <http://www.education.uconn.edu/departments/epsy/SPED%20assets/phdhandbook.PDF>

Faculty and Their Areas of Expertise

✓ *Michael P. Alfano, Ph.D., Teacher Education, Assessment*, (860) 486-1903; (860) 570-9283. E-mail: michael.alfano@uconn.edu

✓ *Mary Beth Bruder, Ph.D., Early Intervention for Children at Risk or with Disabilities, Children with Severe Disabilities, Inclusive Education Models, Interdisciplinary Training Models, Family Centered Practices, Research Design*, (860) 679-1505. E-mail: bruder@nso1.uchc.edu

✓ *Michael D. Coyne, Ph.D., Literacy and Beginning Reading, Curriculum and Instruction for Students with Diverse Learning Needs, Systems Approach to Instructional Change, Learning Disabilities*, (860) 486-8326. E-mail: michael.coyne@uconn.edu

✓ *Michael N. Faggella-Luby, Ph.D., Learning Disabilities, Literacy, Secondary Education*, (860) 486-6855. E-mail: michael.faggella-luby@uconn.edu

✓ *Joseph W. Madaus, Ph.D., Adults with Learning Disabilities, Postsecondary LD Programs, Assessment of Adolescents and Adults with Learning Disabilities*, (860) 486-2785. E-mail: joseph.madaus@uconn.edu

✓ *Natalie G. Olinghouse, Ph.D., Writing Development and Disabilities, Reading-Writing Connections, Assessment, Learning*

Disabilities (860) 486-6153. E-mail: natalie.olinghouse@uconn.edu

✓ *Brandi M. Simonsen, Ph.D., Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Behavior Disorders, Classroom and Behavior Management*, (860) 486-2763. E-mail: brandi.simonsen@uconn.edu

✓ *George Sugai, Ph.D., Behavior Disorders, Positive Behavior Support, Applied Behavior Analysis, Classroom and Behavior Management, School-Wide Discipline, System and Organizational Change*, (860) 486-0289. E-mail: george.sugai@uconn.edu

The University of Connecticut Doctoral Program in General Special Education has an interest in students from traditionally under-represented groups who are encouraged to apply.

This publication is available in alternate formats upon request. Please contact:

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