

Doctor of Philosophy Education with a Concentration in Special Education (PhD)

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The Doctor of Philosophy is the degree most often desired for those who wish to become faculty in colleges and universities and those who aspire to senior administrative roles in institutions and agencies. The PhD in education with a concentration in special education is intended to prepare individuals for administrative and faculty positions and to provide students with the skills to carry out scholarly research, lead organizations, and create new research.

The PhD in education with a concentration in special education is designed to address the acute shortage of doctoral level special education personnel in the Commonwealth and across the nation. Program graduates will be prepared as content experts in pre-referral intervention and early intervention to assume positions of leadership as special education faculty at the university and college level. Additionally, graduates of the special education program will have the professional research skills to work with school systems to address the diverse learning needs and behavior challenges associated with the education of students with special needs and those students at risk. Program graduates will attain a degree of proficiency in research and writing that will prepare them to make contributions to the professional literature of special education and related disciplines.

The curriculum described below contains elements that will provide research expertise, administrative skills and experience, and the ability to serve the nation's colleges, universities, and agencies providing special education services.

Admissions

Entrance Criteria

In order to be considered for admission into the Old Dominion University PhD in Education: Special Education Concentration program (special education PhD program) a candidate must include the following information in the application:

1. Proof of a completed master's degree in special education or an equivalent degree in a related discipline from a program that is accredited by an appropriate specialized accrediting agency or from a regionally accredited institution of higher education. Transcripts from universities outside the United States must be accompanied by a global credit evaluation from an accredited agency. A minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.60 (on a 4.0 scale) overall for the master's degree and in the major area of study in the master's degree is expected;
2. Acceptable scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE): 156 [550] on the verbal portion and no less than a 4.5 on the writing sample. Applicants whose first language is not English must submit a current score for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) according to the standards established by Old Dominion University;
3. A minimum of three years teaching experience in a pre-K – 12 setting with students with disabilities;
4. A 500-800-word statement of academic and professional goals. This statement must describe the applicant's research agenda to meet his/her academic and professional goals;
5. A professional curriculum vitae;
6. Three letters of reference from individuals capable of commenting on the applicant's readiness for advanced graduate study. At least two of these letters must be from academic sources. If a non-academic letter of reference is necessary, it should be from a professional source; and

7. Evidence of prior course work in statistics and in theories of learning. If this requirement is not met, a student may be admitted, and additional course work will be added to the candidate's program of study.

Admissions Process

Admission to the special education PhD program occurs during the spring semester to ensure a fall semester start. Admission to the program is competitive, with the number of applications expected to exceed the number of available openings. In order to enhance the experience of the students and to increase the efficiency by which courses are offered, a cohort of 10 students will be admitted each year. This limited number of students is necessary to ensure that there is an adequate number of full-time faculty to serve the students through advising and other duties, particularly when the cohorts reach the dissertation stage of the program. Applicants must submit the application package, including the online graduate student application and all related materials no later than February 1 of the admission cycle year.

Once the application deadline has passed, complete application packages will be initially reviewed by the special education PhD program admissions committee. Following the preliminary review of complete applications, the admissions committee will invite eligible applicants to participate in a two-part interview, including a formal interview with the special education PhD program faculty and a one-hour, proctored spontaneous writing session during which applicants will compose a spontaneous response to a question regarding special education policy and procedure in the United States.

Curriculum Requirements

Program Requirements

The PhD in education with a concentration in special education is comprised of courses totaling a minimum of 60 academic credit hours beyond the master's degree. The curriculum includes a content concentration totaling 24 credit hours, an introductory core of nine hours, a research component including 15 credit hours, and the dissertation, which will include a minimum of 12 hours. The dissertation will often include more than 12 credit hours depending on the length of time necessary for completion. Students entering the program may also need to complete one introductory statistics course if they have not had such a course or cannot demonstrate competency at a satisfactory level. Students who enter the PhD program with a master's degree in an academic field that is unrelated to special education and/or who have not completed courses to develop competency in specified areas may need to complete additional prerequisite course work.

Prerequisite Course work		3
FOUN 722	Introduction to Applied Statistics and Data Analysis	
Speciality Core		15
SPED 803	Scholarly Writing for Doctoral Students	
SPED 820	Curriculum and Instruction: Research Into Practice	
SPED 821	Critical Issues I: Readings in Special Education and Professional Writing	
SPED 822	Critical Issues II: Research and Professional Writing	
SPED 893	Professional Seminar: Teaching, Research, and Service	
Research Core		15
FOUN 822	Applied Linear Models in Educational Research	
FOUN 812	Research Design and Analysis	
FOUN 813	Program Evaluation in Education	
TLCI 814	Qualitative Research Design in Education	
SPED 830	Single Subject Research	
Special Education Concentration		12
SPED 802	Cognitive Processes and Learning Strategies for Students with Special Needs	

SPED 807	Advanced Instructional Procedures in Special Education	
SPED 897	Independent Study: Teaching in Special Education	
SPED 868	Internship: Research in Special Education	
Electives *		6
Candidacy Examination		
Written Candidacy Examination		
Oral Candidacy Examination		
Dissertation		
SPED 899	Dissertation	12
Total Credit Hours		63

* Students must take 6 credit hours as electives with approval of the Graduate Program Director or PhD Coordinator. The electives must be graduate courses at the 700 or 800 level. Electives may be taken in other areas in the College of Education (e.g., educational leadership, higher education, instructional design and technology) or in other colleges with the approval of the appropriate college official.

Due to changing University requirements, national accreditation standards, and Commonwealth licensure regulations, the programs in the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies are under constant revision. Any changes resulting from these factors supersede the program requirements described in the catalog. Students are encouraged to obtain current program information from their advisors and the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies website at <http://www.odu.edu/education> (<http://www.odu.edu/education/>).

Additional Requirements

Continuance

Students must:

1. maintain a grade point average of 3.00 overall;
2. complete the CITI Responsible Conduct of Research training modules.
See <https://www.odu.edu/impact/responsible-conduct-of-training> (<https://www.odu.edu/impact/responsible-conduct-of-training/>).
3. complete an annual continuance review;
4. complete a one-time written continuance evaluation; and
5. successfully complete all competencies relative to their program of study.

Exit

In order to complete the program, students must fully complete the curriculum below and all requirements noted elsewhere in the University catalog for graduate students and within the PhD in Education Handbook. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain these materials and comply with all requirements.

Practicum Experiences Policy

A student may participate in a course with a practicum experience if he/she has been admitted into an approved teacher education program. In addition, candidates must meet the GPA for their individual programs, professional education courses, and minimum grade requirements, along with any other course prerequisites.