Procedures for the
Master of Arts (MA)
in Special Education

Effective
January 22, 2008

Revised
April 28, 2016
Special Education Program

Department of Special Education

Important Telephone Numbers & Email Addresses

Chair, Department of Special Education
Ruth Luckasson, J.D. 277-6510  ruthl@unm.edu

Department Administrator
Audrea Padilla 277-6915  anp@unm.edu

Academic Advisor
Della Gallegos-Atencio 277-5018  dgalle06@unm.edu

Administrative Assistant
Teresa Tobin-Esdale 277-1499  ttobinesdale@unm.edu

Program Coordinator, Special Education
Liz Keefe, Ph.D. 277-1587  lkeefe@unm.edu

Special Education Concentration I. Intellectual Disability and Severe Disabilities: Studies in Educational Equity for Diverse Exceptional Learners
Concentration I Faculty:
Melanie Brawley-Wigren, Ph.D. 277-3961  brawley001@unm.edu
Susan Copeland, Ph.D. 277-0628  susanrc@unm.edu
Megan Griffin, Ph.D. 277-6652  griffinm@unm.edu
Erin Jarry, Ph.D. 277-0731  ejarry@unm.edu
Liz Keefe, Ph.D. 277-1587  lkeefe@unm.edu
Ruth Luckasson, J.D. 277-6510  ruthl@unm.edu
Veronica Moore, Ph.D. 277-4462  vmoore@unm.edu
Cathy Qi, Ph.D. 277-4452  hqi@unm.edu
Julia Scherba de Valenzuela, Ph.D.* 277-1406  devalenz@unm.edu
Clare Stott, Ph.D. 277-1499  clareks@unm.edu

Special Education Concentration II. Learning and Behavioral Exceptionalities: Studies in Instruction, Curriculum, Collaboration and Transition of Diverse Learners
Concentration II Faculty:
Mary Brindle, Ph.D. 277-2167  mbrindle@unm.edu
Yen Kim Pham, Ph.D. 277-7967  ykp@unm.edu
Loretta Serna, Ph.D. 277-0119  rett@unm.edu
Trish Steinbrecher, Ph.D.* 277-7454  trishs@unm.edu

* Coordinator
Applied Behavior Analysis Graduate Certificate
Susan Copeland, Ph.D.        277-0628  susanrc@unm.edu
Megan Griffin, Ph.D.*       277-6652  griffinm@unm.edu
Megan Martins, Ph.D.        272-2586  mmartins@unm.edu

Autism Spectrum Disorder Graduate Certificate
Cathy Qi, Ph.D.*             277-4452  hqi@unm.edu

Educational Diagnostician Graduate Certificate
Margo Collier, Ph.D.*        277-7243  collierm@unm.edu
Lance Alarcon, J.D.         277-1241  alarcon1@unm.edu

* Coordinator
Contents

Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 1
Application Procedures .......................................................................................................... 1
  Application File .................................................................................................................. 1
  Priority Application Due Date ......................................................................................... 2
  Responsibility for file completion .................................................................................... 2
  Criteria for Consideration ............................................................................................... 2
  Desired Qualifications ..................................................................................................... 3
  Readmission ..................................................................................................................... 4
  Deferment ........................................................................................................................ 4
  Leave of Absence ............................................................................................................ 4
  Inactive Status ................................................................................................................ 4
Program of Studies ............................................................................................................. 5
  Committee on Studies .................................................................................................... 5
    Major Faculty Advisor .................................................................................................. 5
    Committee on Studies .................................................................................................. 5
Program Requirements ...................................................................................................... 6
  Number of hours ............................................................................................................. 6
  Minimum Program Requirements .................................................................................... 6
  Minor ............................................................................................................................... 6
  Credit hours with a single professor ............................................................................. 6
  Problem Course Credit .................................................................................................. 6
  Transfer Credit .............................................................................................................. 6
  Transfer from another University .................................................................................. 7
  Non-Degree Credit ......................................................................................................... 7
Academic Progress and Standing ...................................................................................... 7
  GPA Requirement ......................................................................................................... 7
  Academic Honesty ......................................................................................................... 7
  Dismissal from Program ................................................................................................. 7
Preparing for Graduation .................................................................................................... 8
  Comprehensive Examinations ......................................................................................... 9
    Eligibility for Comprehensive Examinations .............................................................. 9
    Examination Committee ............................................................................................ 9
    Preparing for the Written Comprehensive Examination ............................................ 9
    Conducting the Written Comprehensive Examination .............................................10
    Scoring & Evaluation of Comprehensive Examinations ............................................10
    Report of Results .......................................................................................................11
MA Project ............................................................................................................................11
Appendix: MA Plus Licensure

Submission of Reports to the Office of Graduate Studies

Student Grievance Procedures

Thesis

Proposal

Proposal Hearing

Results of Hearing

IRB Approval

Conducting the Project

Writing the Project

Preventing for Final Examination and Project Defense

The Final Examination and Defense of the Completed Project

Results of Final Examination and Completed Project Defense

Final Copy

Thesis Credit

Thesis Hours

Thesis Committee

Thesis Proposal

Thesis Content

Proposal Approval

IRB Approval

Proposal Hearing

Conduct of the Thesis

Writing the Thesis

Thesis Credit Hours

Final Examination for Thesis

Electronic Submission of the Master’s Thesis

Practicum

Practicum Eligibility

Practicum Placement

Policy Statement in regards to SPCD 504 Practicum

Special Education Licensure Testing Requirements
Introduction

The Special Education Program at the University of New Mexico (UNM) offers graduate work leading to the Master of Arts (MA) to qualified students. The MA student may choose from two concentrations:

- Concentration I, Intellectual Disability and Severe Disabilities: Studies in Educational Equity for Diverse Exceptional Learners (which includes intellectual disability, severe disabilities, autism, severe psychiatric disabilities, intensive communication needs, cultural and linguistic diversity, and inclusive education); and
- Concentration II, Learning and Behavioral Exceptionalities: Studies in Instruction, Curriculum, Collaboration, and Transition of Diverse Learners (which includes learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, and secondary transition).

The MA degree program can also lead to teacher licensure in special education if the student requests that option early in the program. For more information about licensure, please see the appendix.

Application Procedures

All applicants for the Master of Arts (MA) must complete an online application packet www.unm.edu/apply/. Please read the instructions that appear throughout the application pages to ensure your application is completed correctly. Applicants may be requested to complete a personal interview with a member of the Special Education faculty at the option of the Program.

Application File

Application for admission requires the following documents be uploaded to the online application:

1. Complete Graduate Application
   This form must be completed and uploaded. A $50 non-refundable application fee must be paid with credit or debit card online as part of the Graduate application. Applicants who are reapplying or applying for readmission will be required to submit a new application form, transcripts (if more than two years old) and the $50 application fee. Students requesting admission will be notified of the action taken on their application by the Special Education Program.

2. Transcripts
   Students should upload transcripts consistent with the online application requirements. An unofficial and official transcript must be submitted. DO NOT OPEN THE OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT ENVELOPE.

3. Letter of Intent
   The letter of intent is the vehicle by which the applicant communicates with the Program. The letter should include information about the applicant’s career goals, relevant experiences, reasons for applying to UNM, and any other information that the applicant feels is pertinent to the application. This letter is submitted through the online application process. UNM’s Office of
Graduate Studies (OGS) has provided suggestions for completing a letter of intent that would be useful to applications: http://grad.unm.edu/resources/gs-forms/letter-of-intent.html.

4. Letters of Recommendation
Applicants to the Special Education Program must obtain current letters of recommendation online for completion of their files. Applicants provide contact information for three recommenders and automated requests are sent to the provided email addresses. Individuals who need alternate forms for recommendation letters should contact the Graduate Academic Advisor. Three letters of recommendation must be on file. These letters should include one letter from a person qualified to comment on the applicant’s ability to do graduate work and one letter from a person qualified to comment on the applicant’s teaching ability or his or her work with individuals with disabilities. The third letter may be from either of the above categories.

5. Special Education Department Application Form
All students must complete this form in its entirety. This form is submitted directly to the Special Education Program Academic Advisor.

6. Other
The applicant is encouraged to provide any other information that will assist the program faculty in determining the applicant’s ability and dispositions to complete graduate work and to work with individuals with exceptionalities. Information may include evidence of talents, honors earned, samples of writing, or other material indicating that the applicant is qualified for master’s study.

Priority Application Due Date
The Special Education Department has rolling admissions and accepts applications year round. However, for best consideration, applications should submit their completed applications by:
- Summer and Fall Admissions: February 28
- Spring Admission: September 30

Responsibility for file completion
Applicants are totally responsible for completing their files. Care should be taken to see that information is addressed correctly and sent to the proper office. Information sent to the Special Education Program should be addressed to the Academic Advisor. Avoid addressing information to an individual faculty member. The program is not required to inform the applicant of missing information.

Criteria for Consideration
In order to be considered for acceptance for UNM Graduate Studies in Special Education, the following are required:
- A complete application file that includes all items listed under Application File (see above)
- A Bachelor’s Degree from an accredited college or university with
- A minimum G.P.A. of 3.2 overall or a minimum GPA of 3.2 for the last 60 hours of undergraduate course work
In order to be accepted, it is necessary for a regular graduate faculty member to be willing to serve as an advisor to a student. Faculty are limited in the number of students they may advise.

It is not required that applicants hold teacher licensure or certification before being admitted.

**Desired Qualifications**

Admission to the Special Education program is competitive. The faculty of the Special Education Program carefully evaluates applicants to the program. The faculty will use professional judgment in selecting applicants who are best qualified and show promise of becoming competent special education professionals. The faculty base their acceptance or rejection of any student on the faculty’s professional knowledge, expertise, and professional judgment. An applicant’s letter of intent is considered an important part of the file. Applicants’ background, experience, commitment to persons with exceptionalities, dispositions, and writing abilities are assessed and evaluated. Desired qualifications include the following knowledge, skills, and experience and are consistent with the missions of the College of Education and the Special Education Program.

1. **Scholarship**
   Several factors are considered as part of scholarship, including past academic achievement during the undergraduate program and Post-BA course work. The program considers consistency of grades, courses taken, standardized test scores, and overall quality of the transcript. Other aspects of scholarship include awards, honors, GRE scores (not required), and other professional accomplishments.

2. **Experience**
   Applicants with teaching or other relevant experience with individuals with disabilities will be given preference in the application process.

3. **Compatibility of applicant’s goals to program resources**
   Since special education is a very broad field with many specialties, the program does not always have the resources to meet every applicant’s individual needs. If an applicant’s career goals are not compatible with the Program resources, the student may be rejected and/or advised to apply to another Program or university.

4. **Responsiveness to a range of diversity**
   Part of the mission of the College of Education at UNM and part of the mission of the Special Education Program is to prepare teachers to work with students who represent a wide range of diversity. The Special Education Program values responsiveness to the impact of diverse factors, such as differences due to:
   - Disability
   - Socioeconomic Level
   - Gender
   - Sexual Orientation
   - Societal Risk Factors
   - Language
   - Race/Ethnicity
   - Religious Affiliation
   - Health Status
Responsiveness to diversity can be demonstrated in various ways. For example, a student may demonstrate a high level of proficiency in two languages or specialized knowledge for working with bilingual students.

5. Professional activity
Part of a special educator’s role is to be active professionally. Professional activity includes membership and participation in professional organizations. Applicants should make a point of describing memberships, offices, and activities in professional activities in their letters of intent.

6. Dispositions
Applicants should demonstrate dispositions that are consistent with those of a professional special educator. These include caring, advocacy, inquisitiveness, reflection-in-action, communication, collaboration, and ethical behavior.

Readmission
University policies and guidelines are enforced by the Office of Admissions and apply to students in the Special Education Program. A student who fails to enroll for course work for the academic semester in which they have been admitted is considered to be inactive and must reapply for admission.

Deferment
Offers of admission are made only for the semester for which the student has applied. If a student has been admitted and cannot attend during that academic semester, the student may request deferment in order to typically begin studies the following semester. This written request must be submitted by Friday of the third week of classes of the semester of admission to the Special Education Program along with the OGS Deferral Request Form.

Leave of Absence
Students should notify the department in writing when they anticipate an emergency need for a leave of absence and should provide a letter explaining the extenuating circumstances. Once a leave of absence has been approved, the student is required to apply for readmission for the next semester. An application for a leave of absence is required before each semester, if more than one semester is needed. If a student is granted the Leave, the semesters missed will not count against the 7-year time limit to complete the Master’s degree. Without an approved leave of absence, those semesters missed are counted as part of the 7-year time limit.

Inactive Status
The Office of Admissions enforces policy created by the university. The university does not allow students to miss three or more semesters. If the student misses two semesters, but resumes course work within the third semester, a student does not have to reapply to the program. If not enrolled within the published registration deadline of the third semester, including summer sessions, the student must apply for readmission to the program (see The Graduate Program – Three Semester Rule in the University Catalog at catalog.unm.edu).

If the inactive status is three consecutive semesters or less, readmission requires the following:

1. A GPA of at least 3.2 in previous UNM Special Education graduate courses.
2. No more than three hours of “C” course work in UNM Special Education graduate courses.
3. Recommendation of a special education faculty member.

If a student has been inactive for three or less consecutive semesters and does not meet the criteria listed above, the following procedures may be used upon request of the student. (These procedures may also be initiated by any regular graduate faculty member raising a substantive concern about readmission.)

1. A committee of at least three faculty members will interview the student, interview other pertinent faculty members, and review appropriate documents.
2. This committee will determine action on the application.
3. The committee’s recommendations for conditions may include but not be limited to:
   - retaking specified courses to improve grades;
   - selecting and requiring specified courses to demonstrate academic ability;
   - demonstrating competencies in specified areas;

Notification of Action on the Application
New applicants and students reapplying will be notified formally by the Office of Admissions of the action taken on the application. This notification normally will occur between four to six weeks after the published priority application due date. Reasons for non-admission will be given at that time. Questions about admission decisions should be directed to the Coordinator of Special Education.

Program of Studies
Committee on Studies
The Major Faculty Advisor and Committee on Studies are responsible for the design of a student’s Program of Studies. Courses taken without the approval of the Major Faculty Advisor might not be counted toward the degree.

Major Faculty Advisor
The student’s Major Faculty Advisor will assist in the design of the Program of Studies, and in the selection of the other members of the Committee on Studies. The student may indicate a preference for Major Faculty Advisor on the Special Education Application Form. Upon admission, the student will be assigned a major faculty advisor by the Coordinator of the relevant concentration based on student preference and faculty availability within the concentration of the student’s choice.

Students may request a change of advisor at any time. In order to change advisors a student must obtain permission from the proposed new Major Faculty advisor, and notify the previous Major Faculty Advisor. A Change of Advisor Request form must be filed with the Special Education Program Academic Advisor to document the change.

Committee on Studies
The Committee on Studies is responsible for approving the academic program of the student. The Committee on Studies will consist of the Major Faculty Advisor and at least two other full-time graduate faculty, one of whom must be a member of the Special Education Program. The
third member may be a member of either the faculty of the Special Education Program or any other Program in the University. Additional committee members may be appointed in accordance with UNM policy. The composition of the Committee on Studies must be approved by the Major Faculty Advisor, Concentration Coordinator, Department Chair, and the Office of Graduate Studies.

**Program Requirements**

**Number of hours**
The MA in Special Education requires a minimum of 36 graduate credit hours. At least 18 credit hours must be from courses numbered 500 or above. At least 24 hours must be in Special Education. The program may include up to 12 hours of graduate course work taken in Non-degree status or transferred from another university. The Committee on Studies must approve the hours to be transferred. All credit hours for the MA must be completed within a 7-year time period.

**Minimum Program Requirements**
In addition to courses required by the Concentration, the Program of Studies must include at least one research methods, research design, or statistics course.

**Minor**
A minor consists of 12 hours in a content area outside of Special Education. No minor is required for the Master’s degree. Typically, students in Special Education at UNM do not take a minor. Students who are interested in a minor should work with their Major Faculty Advisor from Special Education and an advisor from the desired minor field.

**Credit hours with a single professor**
The Special Education Program follows university policy in the number of credit hours allowed with a single professor. No more than half the graduate program’s minimum required course credit hours, not including Thesis/Project credit, may be taken with a single faculty member.

**Problem Course Credit**
A Program of Studies may not include more than a total of nine hours of graduate credit in independent study (SPCD 591, SPCD 595, SPCD 598).

**Transfer Credit**
Credit may be transferred to a degree program with the following restrictions. A total of 12 semester hours of transfer credit including non-degree, extension, and credits from another university or college may be included in the Program of Studies for the Master’s degree. Course work over seven years old cannot be included in the Program of Studies. The following restrictions apply to requests for transfer of credits from another program, college or university. Transfer credit will be accepted only on the approval of the student’s Major Faculty Advisor, the Committee on Studies, and the Office of Graduate Studies. All transfer credit must have a grade B or better. In addition:

1. Students must submit a course syllabus or prospectus that describes the objectives and competencies covered in the course.
2. The course must include competencies required by the Special Education Program, College of Education, and the Public Education Department.

Transfer from another University
Special Education restricts transfer hours to no more than 12 semester hours of graduate credit from another accredited university, upon approval of the Major Faculty Advisor and the Committee on Studies. The credit must have been taken for graduate credit, and must have a grade of B or better.

Non-Degree Credit
Up to 12 hours of graduate credit taken at UNM while the student had non-degree status may be transferred to the program of studies upon approval of the Major Faculty advisor and the Committee on Studies. With approval of the Faculty advisor and the Committee on Studies, non-degree courses may be transferred only when a grade of B or better was earned. Students who complete graduate coursework prior to their undergraduate degree completion may not double-count credit hours used to meet undergraduate graduation requirements.

Academic Progress and Standing
GPA Requirement
In order to continue in the MA Program, candidates must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher. A student’s coursework may include no more than a total of 6 hours of coursework graded C, C+ or CR.

Academic Honesty
Students are expected to demonstrate ethical, professional behavior in all aspects of their MA experience. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will not be tolerated. It is the responsibility of students to avoid practices that may be considered acts of academic dishonesty. UNM’s policy, as found in the UNM Pathfinder is as follows:

Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or otherwise fails to meet the standards. Any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in course work may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or the course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or without the University; and nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filing out applications or other University records.

Dismissal from Program
The Office of Graduate Studies, the Department of Special Education, and the student’s Major Faculty Advisor monitor and review academic progress of students in the Master of Arts Program. Action for dismissal may be initiated for any of the following:

1. A student does not maintain the required cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.
2. A student’s GPA falls below 3.0 in Special Education graduate courses.
3. A student’s behavior, dispositions, or performance is inconsistent with continued graduate study or entrance into the profession of Special Education.

When the issue of dismissal is raised, the student’s Major Faculty Advisor will inform the student of the situation. The student will also be informed in writing by the Office of Graduate Studies. The matter may be referred for program review to a committee composed of three regular graduate faculty members from the Special Education Program. The Coordinator of the Concentration in which the student is enrolled will appoint this committee.

The program review committee will review appropriate documents, may interview the student, and then submit recommendations to the Concentration Coordinator, Program faculty, and, as appropriate, to the student. These recommendations will be made in writing. Final decision about dismissal will be made by the Program faculty. This decision will be conveyed in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies and to the student.

If a student wishes to contest the decision of the Program faculty, he/she must follow the grievance procedures outlined in the University of New Mexico Pathfinder under Student Grievance Procedure, sections 2.3.1-2.3.7.

Preparing for Graduation

Each student is required to complete and file a Program of Studies at least one semester prior to the anticipated completion of degree requirements. Due dates for the Program of Studies (along with any required final product forms) are:

- September 15th for Spring Graduation
- February 15th for Summer Graduation
- June 15th for Fall Graduation

The Program of Studies form can be obtained and completed via the web, www.unm.edu/grad. The site includes an index to all of the forms that are available on the web. It is the student’s responsibility to complete and print the Program of Studies form and to submit it to the Academic Advisor in the Special Education Office for processing. Graduate Studies requires that the Program of Studies form be typed and not hand written.

Students should submit their signed Program of Studies form to the Academic Advisor. The Department will secure the signatures of the student’s Major Faculty Advisor, the Program Coordinator, and the Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies. Completion of the Program of Studies is the responsibility of the student. Any changes in course work must be made by the student with approval of the student’s Major Faculty Advisor. The Office of Graduate Studies must be notified in writing of any changes.

University policy requires that students must be enrolled during the semester that they complete degree requirements, even if for only one credit hour. Completion of the Master of Arts requires that students complete a final product. The decision about which option to choose rests with the student, the Major Faculty Advisor, and the Committee on Studies. This final product may be one of two types:
Plan I – Thesis

Plan II – Comprehensive Examination or Master’s Project

The majority of students opt to complete comprehensive examinations as both the Thesis and Master’s Project often extend a student’s graduation timeline. Students who wish to complete a Thesis or Master’s Project must have approval from their Major Faculty advisor and Committee on Studies prior to commencing those efforts.

Comprehensive Examinations
The written comprehensive examinations are designed to test the student’s knowledge of the research, technology, theories, philosophies, methodologies, and instructional materials in the field of special education. The examination will be given each fall and spring. Summer comprehensive exams are offered only for Concentration II students and students should be advised that faculty may opt not to serve on a Committee of Studies for summer comprehensive exams. The dates of the exam will be announced by letter one month before the exam.

Eligibility for Comprehensive Examinations
Students are eligible to take the comprehensive examination when at least 30 hours of the Program of Studies have been or will be completed by the comprehensive exam date or during the semester when all coursework is to be completed. The student must submit a signed Application for Comprehensive Examination form, and must submit the Program of Studies to the Special Education Academic Advisor at the same time. Current submission deadlines for the Application for Comprehensive Examination form are September 15th for Spring, February 15th for Summer (Concentration II only), and June 15th for Fall. The Committee on Studies may not be changed after the examinations are taken.

Examination Committee
The examination committee is composed of the Student’s Committee on Studies which has a minimum of three members. The Major Faculty Advisor and at least one committee member must be full-time graduate faculty from the Special Education Program. All committee members must have graduate approval. As soon as possible in the term preceding the comprehensive exam, the student meets with the Major Faculty Advisor to discuss the selection of Examination Committee members. The student then asks potential committee members if they are willing to serve on the Student’s Committee on Studies, completes the Application for Comprehensive Exam form, obtains each Committee on Studies faculty member’s signature, obtains the Major Faculty Advisor’s signature to approve the Committee on Studies, and submits the form to the Special Education program Academic Advisor no later than the specified submission deadlines.

Preparing for the Written Comprehensive Examination
The Major Faculty Advisor is responsible for the allocations of time among the committee members. Typically the Major Faculty Advisor writes two hours of questions and each member writes one hour of questions. Students are expected to independently complete the comprehensive examination and adhere to the university standards for academic honesty (see Academic Honesty). If a student is determined by committee members to have engaged in academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism) on any portion of the comprehensive examination, the
student will receive a score of 0.0, fail the comprehensive examination, and be dismissed from the M.A. program. Students who are assigned a question for a planned comprehensive exam and later postpone the exam to a subsequent semester will need to solicit a new question from their Major Faculty Advisor and their Committee of Studies.

Students are responsible for contacting their Major Faculty Advisor and Committee of Studies to discuss comprehensive examination questions prior to the comprehensive examination date. The earliest students may request questions are:

- 11/1 for Spring comprehensive exams
- 4/1 for Fall comprehensive exams
- 2/1 for Summer comprehensive exams

Faculty may choose to provide questions at a later date.

**Conducting the Written Comprehensive Examination**
The written comprehensive examination is held at the university for no more than four hours unless the student is determined to require extended time by the Accessibility Resource Center. Individual committee members typically assign a question or provide a bank of two-three questions prior to the comprehensive examination date. The student completes research and preliminary preparation for responding to the questions prior to the comprehensive examination date. On the day of the comprehensive examination, the student (using only those materials authorized by the faculty member) writes the responses to the questions during the self-paced 4-hour time limit in an examination room monitored by the Special Education Program Academic Advisor or designee. Students will respond to on-site comprehensive examination questions by handwriting responses in a Blue Book provided by the Program or using a computer in a proctored lab setting. Students should be mindful that they are prepared to complete all questions within the required time period and that they need to allocate their writing time as appropriate to each question. Students with appropriate authorization from the Accessibility Resource Center may complete the on-site comprehensive examination in a different setting and/or under different conditions.

**Scoring & Evaluation of Comprehensive Examinations**
Each committee member uses the UNM Special Education Program Comprehensive Examination Rubric to score the completed individual examination question she/he assigned. Scores from 0-4.0 are assigned:

- 3.7 - 4.0 Distinction
- 3.0 - 3.6 Pass
- 2.5 - 2.9 Pass with Conditions
- 0.0 - 2.4 Fail

The Major Faculty Advisor directs the final review of the comprehensive examination for each student. When a student receives a pass with conditions on any one question, regardless of the total score, the Major Faculty Advisor and committee member(s) who gave the score collaborate to determine how the student will fulfill the requirement of the individual question (e.g., require that the student retake the question, take additional coursework, or complete other options). If a student fails any question, the student will be required to retake comprehensive exams. This may
be one question or all questions depending on the recommendation of the Faculty Advisor and Committee on Studies. A student who receives a pass with conditions on or fails any individual question must complete the requirements determined by the Major Faculty Advisor and committee member(s) who scored that question on or before the next scheduled examination date. Students who receive a pass with conditions or fail any question will not be allowed to graduate until these requirements are met.

The Major Faculty Advisor uses the following point guidelines to assign a final evaluation of a student’s comprehensive examination:

**Distinction.** Distinction may be assigned when the student’s total score is 14.8 or above and no question is below 3.5.

**Pass.** Pass will be assigned when the total score equals 12 to 14.9 and no question is below 2.5.

**Pass With Conditions.** Pass with conditions is assigned for total scores between 10.0 and 11.9. The criteria for successful completion of the condition(s) must be given to the student in writing with the notification of results. The written notification will include a timeline for completion as well as consequences for failure to complete conditions.

**Fail.** Total scores of 9.9 or lower constitute a failing score. In this event the student may register to re-take the examination at the next scheduled examination time and must re-take the examination within 12 months of the first failed examination. A second failure results in dismissal from the program.

**Report of Results**
Within 10 working days of the comprehensive examination date, the committee members will score and return the student’s examinations to the Special Education Program Academic Advisor who will send a letter relating results to the student.

**MA Project**
MA Projects are broad in scope, but should have a research-based, pragmatic focus. This focus may include, but is not limited to the following: service to persons with disabilities, development of a support service, professional development, development of instructional materials, validation of instructional materials, and classroom research. The method of presentation of this project also may deviate from the typical written document (e.g., use of various audio-visual materials) but should reflect a Master’s level, scholarly product.

**Project Committee**
The Committee on Studies will serve as the Project Committee. The Major Faculty Advisor and at least one committee member must be full-time graduate faculty from the Special Education Program.
Proposal
The project proposal should be prepared in consultation with the project committee and the Major Faculty Advisor.

Proposal Hearing
The candidate is responsible for scheduling a formal hearing with the Committee on Studies. The Special Education Academic Advisor must be notified of the scheduled date three weeks prior to the date of the defense. The hearing will be announced to the department faculty at least two weeks in advance. Copies of the proposal will be made available to the Committee on Studies at least two weeks before the scheduled hearing.

Results of Hearing
At the conclusion of the hearing the candidate and observers will be excused. The committee will meet in private to consider the merits of the project. The committee may take the following actions by submitting the Report of Results of Project Hearing Form:

*Approval of proposal as written.*

*Approval with changes.* Required changes will be provided in writing to the candidate within five days of the hearing.

*Disapproval of the proposal.* If the proposal is not approved, the committee will specify the reasons in writing. This report must be transmitted to the student orally immediately following the hearing and in writing within 10 working days following the hearing. If the proposal is not approved, the candidate and the committee should meet as soon as practical to begin working on a new proposal. The same procedures are in effect for the second proposal. One copy of the approved proposal and one copy of the report of the MA project proposal hearing will be placed in the candidate’s program file.

IRB Approval
If the MA Project involves an intervention on or data collection from human subjects, the candidate is responsible for securing IRB approval and following all university requirements to protect their participants. Students should not pursue IRB approval until after the proposal has been approved by their Committee on Studies. More information about this process and the required forms can be found at UNM’s Institutional Review Board webpage.

Conducting the Project
The candidate should work closely with the Major Faculty Advisor while conducting the project. Change requests should be submitted in writing to the committee. All changes or deviations from the proposal must be approved and initialed. Minor changes may be approved by the major faculty advisor, while major changes require the approval of the full committee.

Writing the Project
The project must be written using the most recent edition of the style manual of the American Psychological Association (APA).
Preparing for Final Examination and Project Defense
Upon completion of the project, copies of the final product must be distributed (or made available) to members of the project committee and department faculty at least two weeks prior to the final examination and project defense.

The Final Examination and Defense of the Completed Project
The candidate is responsible for the scheduling of the final examination and defense of the project. The examination and defense will be scheduled for a period of not less than one hour and no more than two hours. The candidate will coordinate with the Special Education Program Academic Advisor to schedule a time and place for the examination. It is the candidate’s responsibility to schedule a time when all committee members can attend.

At least two weeks before the final examination, the Special Education Program will announce the examination to the Office of Graduate Studies, and to the Department of Special Education faculty.

The Major Faculty Advisor will preside at the project defense. The format of the defense is the responsibility of the committee and should be communicated to the candidate prior to the examination. This communication is the responsibility of the major faculty advisor.

The Major Faculty Advisor of the committee will reserve at least 30 minutes for questions and comments from the committee members. Other invited observers may, with the approval of the committee, ask questions during this period. The major faculty advisor will retain authority to rule on the appropriateness of questions from non-committee faculty. Questions should relate to the content and subject of the thesis.

Results of Final Examination and Completed Project Defense
At the conclusion of the final examination of project defense, the committee will vote on the action to be taken on the project and the final examination. The following grades may be given:

Pass with distinction.

Pass.

Pass with conditions. Conditions may include major or minor changes in the final product, supervised readings, independent study or additional course work. The criteria for meeting those conditions will be transmitted orally to the candidate immediately after the examination is completed. A written report will be transmitted within 10 working days by the committee chairperson.

Fail. A fail grade will be recorded when the student’s knowledge of the field of special education as expressed in the project activities are deemed to be inadequate to meet the standards for an MA in special education. When a vote for fail is taken, the reasons for that decision will be transmitted immediately by the full committee to the candidate, and a written report will be transmitted within 10 working days. Candidates may reschedule
an examination in accordance with policies of the Office of Graduate Studies, which are listed in the applicable graduate catalog available at catalog.unm.edu.

Final Copy
One copy of the approved product will be filed with the Department of Special Education. Each committee member shall receive a copy of the product.

Thesis
Thesis Credit
Students selecting the thesis option may enroll for thesis after meeting these criteria:
- At least 24 semester hours of the program of studies have been completed or during the semester.
- A Program of Studies has been filed with the Office of Graduate Studies.
- A thesis committee has been formed.

Thesis Hours
A total of at least six hours of thesis credit must be included in the Program of Studies. No more than six hours of Thesis credit may be taken during any one semester.

Thesis Committee
The thesis committee is composed of the Committee on Studies. The student’s Major Faculty Advisor and at least one committee member must be full-time graduate faculty from the Special Education Program.

Thesis Proposal
During the semester of the first enrollment in thesis, the candidate will prepare a thesis proposal with the assistance of the Major Faculty Advisor. The proposal will include the following:
  a. Introduction
  b. Rationale for the study
  c. Statement of the problem
  d. Review of relevant research (literature)
  e. Research question and/or hypothesis
  f. Description of the research sample
  g. Procedures and design
  h. Data analysis procedures
  i. Appropriate references
  j. Appendices that include any measurement instrument or materials to be used in the thesis

Thesis Content
The thesis topic should be relevant to the field of special education. The thesis in special education is a research activity and should be of accepted research methodology. The design and research methodology should be appropriate to the research question.
Proposal Approval
After the proposal is completed, the candidate must submit a copy to each committee member for review at least two weeks prior to the proposal hearing.

IRB Approval
If the Thesis involves an intervention on or data collection from human subjects, the candidate is responsible for securing IRB approval and following all university requirements to protect their participants. Students should not pursue IRB approval until after the proposal has been approved by their thesis committee. More information about this process and the required forms can be found at UNM’s Institutional Review Board webpage.

Proposal Hearing
The candidate is responsible for scheduling a formal hearing with the thesis committee. At least two weeks before the hearing, it will be announced to the following: a) The Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies; b) The Dean of the College of Education; and c) the Faculty of the Special Education Program.

The hearing will be scheduled for at least one hour, and no more than two hours. The Major Faculty Advisor will conduct the hearing and will allocate approximately equivalent amounts of time to each committee member to examine the candidate on the contents of the written proposal. At the discretion of the major faculty advisor, non-committee members may be allowed to ask questions.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the committee will consider the merits of the proposal in private. The committee may take one of the following actions:

Approve the proposal as written.

Approval of the proposal with changes. Recommendations for change will be given to the student in writing within 10 working days after the hearing. The committee may wait to sign the approval until the changes have been made or may sign the approval and charge the chairperson with the responsibility for incorporating such changes.

Disapproval of the proposal. If the proposal is not approved, the committee must specify the reasons. The report must be transmitted orally to the candidate immediately following the hearing and in writing within 10 working days following the hearing.

If the proposal is not approved, the candidate should meet with the committee as soon as practical to begin work on a new proposal. One copy of the approved and initialed proposal and one copy of the Report of Thesis Proposal Hearing will be placed in the candidate’s program file.

Conduct of the Thesis
The candidate should work very closely with the major faculty advisor in the conduct of the thesis. All changes should be requested in writing, and approved by the major faculty advisor.
Minor changes can be approved by the major faculty advisor while major changes will need the approval of the full committee.

Writing the Thesis
The thesis must be written using the most recent edition of the style manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). All style and format requirements of the Office of the Graduate Studies must be met.

Thesis Credit Hours
Students enrolled for thesis credit will receive a grade of PR (progress) provided that during the course of the semester the student has exhibited substantial progress. Substantial progress is defined as a body of written material submitted for review, or intensive interaction with the chairperson that bears promise of project completion. Students not making substantial progress shall receive a grade of NC (No Credit). The accumulation of three NC’s shall be grounds for dismissal from the program in accordance the Office of Graduate Studies’ policy.

Final Examination for Thesis

Preparation for Final Examination for Thesis
Upon completion of the Thesis, copies of the final product must be distributed (or made available) to members of the Thesis Committee at least two weeks prior to the Final Examination for Thesis. The Thesis Committee must approve presenting the Thesis before the Final Examination for Thesis.

Scheduling the Final Examination for Thesis
The candidate is responsible for scheduling the final examination. The Special Education program’s Academic Advisor must be notified of the scheduled date three weeks prior to the date of the examination. The Academic Advisor will notify the Office of Graduate Studies of the scheduled date.

Conducting the Final Examination for Thesis
The final examination will be scheduled for at least one hour and not more than two hours. All members of the graduate faculty of the Special Education will be invited. The major faculty advisor will preside at the final examination. At least 45 minutes will be allocated to the committee members, with each member being allowed approximately 15 minutes to examine the candidate. The major faculty advisor will reserve 15 minutes for questions from other departmental faculty members. The major faculty advisor will retain authority to rule on the appropriateness of questions from non-committee faculty. Questions should relate to the content and subject of the thesis.

Results of the Final Examination
Following the oral examination, the candidate and any other faculty or guests will be excused from the meeting room while the committee meets privately to determine the results of the examination. Four results are possible:

Pass with distinction.
Pass.

Pass with conditions. If this action is taken, the conditions must be given to the candidate orally by the full committee immediately following the exam. A written report of the conditions must be given within 10 working days by the committee chairperson.

Fail. Reasons for failure must be given immediately following the examination by the full committee with a written report to be delivered to the student by the committee chairperson within 10 working days. If a failure is determined, the candidate may schedule a second examination according to applicable policies of the graduate school.

Electronic Submission of the Master’s Thesis
The student must submit the final thesis to the Dean of Graduate Studies within 90 days of passing the final examination for the thesis. If the thesis is not submitted within that time, the student must schedule and complete a second final examination for the thesis.

Student Grievance Procedures
Problems involving students and the graduate program should be addressed with the Coordinator of the Concentration in which the student is enrolled. The Coordinator will attempt to reach an agreement or solution.

In the event that the Concentration Coordinator is unable to design a solution acceptable to all parties, the matter will be referred to the Special Education Program Coordinator and Department Chair.

In the event that the Program Coordinator and Department Chair are unable to resolve the issue, a formal grievance petition will be referred to the Associate Dean of the College of Education of the University of New Mexico. (See also sections 2.3.1-2.3.7 in the University of New Mexico Pathfinder).

Submission of Reports to the Office of Graduate Studies
The Major Faculty Advisor and the Special Education Program Academic Advisor shall be responsible for submitting all reports to the Graduate School.
Appendix: MA Plus Licensure

Students may complete licensure coursework in conjunction with their MA in Special Education. The MA in Special Education plus Licensure will typically require nine additional hours of coursework that will not apply to the MA program. Students who currently have licensure in general education may only need to complete special education licensure coursework without practicum pending their Major Faculty Advisor’s recommendation. Students without licensure in any area are required to successfully complete the practicum.

Practicum

All students completing a Master’s degree with licensure, shall complete a supervised practicum experience with individuals with exceptionalities. This practicum, as with other licensure coursework, does not count towards the MA degree. It is highly recommended that all practicum students have at least one semester of courses that introduce lesson planning (SPCD 503 or SPCD 552) and assessment (SPCD 517 or SPCD 527) prior to enrolling in the practicum.

Practicum Eligibility

Students who wish to complete SPCD 504 must contact the practicum coordinator one semester prior to the semester in which they wish to enroll in SPCD 504. The following requirements must be satisfied prior to registration for the course:

1. Student must provide proof of passing scores on the NMTA or NES Essential Basic Skills Subtests I, II, & III. Please note, we can no longer allow students to register for the class on the basis of proof of registration for the tests.
2. Student must have a completed background check less than two years old on file with Field Services.
3. Student must provide proof of liability insurance to Field Services.
4. Student must register with the Field Service Portal (FSP) on the College of Education site.

It is recommended that students who wish to enroll in practicum begin efforts towards meeting these requirements at least two months prior to the first day of the practicum course.

Practicum Placement

Practicum placement for students requiring a cooperating teacher (i.e., those who are completing traditional student teaching) is conducted by the practicum coordinator. Practicum students should not contact schools or cooperating teachers until directed to do so. Students holding an intern’s license (i.e., i-license) or other alternate licensure who wish to conduct the practicum in their own classrooms may request to do so.

Students currently working as an educational assistant (EA) will not be able to conduct their practicum in the classroom where they are an EA nor may they work full-time as an EA during the practicum semester. Students working as EAs may conduct their practicum in one of two ways:

1. Work as an unpaid practicum student full-time for the first half of the semester and work as an EA full-time for the remaining half; OR
2. Work as an unpaid practicum student for half of the day and work as an EA for the half of the day.

18
Policy Statement in regards to SPCD 504 Practicum

Students who earn a grade of “F” in SPCD 504, Practicum, will be dropped from the licensure and MA programs in special education at the end of the semester in which the “F” is earned. Note that UNM regulations specify that graduate students may not be assigned a grade of C-, D+, D, or D- (see p. 40 in the UNM Catalog). Therefore, students earning a grade of C-, D+, D, or D- will receive a grade of F.

Practicum is the practical application component of the licensure program in special education. Students in this course must demonstrate acquisition of the competencies required of classroom teachers by the UNM Special Education Program and the New Mexico Public Education Department. This includes demonstration of the ability to synthesize and apply the knowledge and skills acquired from other course work to actual educational settings as well as demonstration of professional, collaborative behavior. Students who do not demonstrate these competencies in SPCD 504 do not meet the requirements of the program and will be dropped from the licensure and master’s program in special education.

Special Education Licensure Testing Requirements

You are not required to take standardized tests before entry to the Special Education Graduate Program. Consistent with COE policy on student teaching, passing NES Essential Academic Skills scores are required prior to taking SPCD 504 Practicum.

In order to obtain New Mexico Licensure in Special Education, scores at or above the 40th percentile on national norms are required. The New Mexico Teacher Assessments Examination is required for state licensure.

The following minimums are required for licensure:

- NES Essential Academic Skills (Subtests I, II, and III) 220
- NES Assessment of Professional Knowledge Elementary/Secondary) 220
- NES Content Knowledge Assessment in Special Education 220

Please note NM PED may change testing passing scores and policies. Please contact NM PED for a current list of required tests and passing scores for licensure.

For more information on taking the NMTA:

New Mexico Teacher Assessments
Evaluation Systems
Pearson
P.O. Box 660
Amherst, MA  01004-9012
(413) 256-2884 or toll free (866) 613-3295
TTY: (413) 256-8032
Internet Registration: www.nmta.nesinc.com