



# M.A. in Special Education / 2016-2017

## Candidates for *Initial* License

### Master of Arts in Special Education: Initial License for Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities (PreK-8 or 5-12)

Candidates for the degree of Master of Arts in Special Education are required to complete a rigorous eleven-course, 36-credit program to develop systematically the knowledge and skills essential to demonstrate competence as a teacher of students with mild or moderate disabilities. Some flexibility is afforded those students not seeking Massachusetts educator license. For those seeking teaching licensure, institutional endorsement for the Massachusetts *Initial* License for Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities (PreK-8 or 5-12) requires, at a minimum, successful completion of all eleven required courses or their equivalents. Students who have not had prerequisite courses may also take additional courses. Whether or not students have had equivalent courses is determined in transcript review. Enrollment in some courses, including the practicum may require the prior approval of the Special Education Program Director and/or the completion of prerequisite course(s) beyond the ten required courses listed.

### Oral Examination or Case Study

All students in the Master of Arts in Special Education program are required either to pass an oral examination or present a case study to complete the requirements for the degree.

## Course of Study – *Initial* License

### Required:

- **SED 502** Teaching English Language Learners with and without Special Needs  
*OR*
- **EDU 515** Diversity in Schooling
- **EDU 512** Introduction to Research in Education
- **EDU 552** Foundations of Teaching Reading
- **SED 560** Foundations of Special Education
- **SED 561** Individualized Education Planning: A Collaborative Approach
- **PSY/SED 563** Developmental Pathways and Challenges
- **PSY/SED 566** Assessment of Special Learning Needs of Children and Adolescents
- **PSY/SED 568** Behavioral Assessment and Interventions
- **SED 570** Inclusion: Theory and Classroom Practice  
*OR*
- **EDU 572** Teaching Reading to Diverse Learners
- (*Prerequisite: EDU 552, OR equivalent course OR evidence of passing score on MTEL Foundations of Reading Test*)
- **EDU 574** Teaching Mathematics to Diverse Learners
- **SED 590\*** Practicum and Seminar: Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities

*\*Those degree candidates who do not seek Massachusetts teacher licensure must substitute an approved elective for the practicum; they may not enroll in the practicum.*

## Candidates for *Professional* License

All candidates for *Professional* Licensure must meet the following criteria:

1. Possess a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree;
2. Have a minimum undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.0;
3. Possess an *Initial* license as Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities or Elementary Education from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts;
4. Have at least one year of full-time employment in an educational setting.

For information concerning Commonwealth of Massachusetts teacher licensure, contact the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

Office of Educator Licensure  
75 Pleasant Street  
Malden, MA 02148  
(781) 338-3000  
[www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu)

NOTE: The following is required for a *Professional* License. For more information, visit [www.doe.mass.edu/Educators](http://www.doe.mass.edu/Educators)

- a. Three years of employment under an *Initial* License
- b. Completion of a teacher induction program

## Course of Study – *Professional* License

### Required:

- **SED 660** Critical Issues in Special Education (*Prerequisite: SED 560 or equivalent*)
- **SED 571** Curriculum and Methods for Students with Moderate Disabilities (PreK-8; 5-12)
- **SED 591\*\*** Performance Assessment and Seminar (PreK-8; 5-12)
- **SED 599** Thesis: Guided Evidence-Based Instruction  
(*Prerequisite: EDU 512, EDU 703, or equivalent*)

### Seven Additional Courses:

(*Must be approved by the Director of Special Education*)

- **EDU 512** Introduction to Research in Education  
*OR*
- **EDU 703** Advanced Research Seminar
- **EDU 515** Diversity in Schooling
- **EDU 572** Teaching Reading to Diverse Learners
- **EDU 575** Seminar: Strategies in Teaching Mathematics to Students with Moderate Disabilities
- **SED 567** Seminar: Advanced Assessment of Special Learning Needs
- **SED 580** Learning Disabilities
- **SED 585** Teaching Students with Behavior Disorders
- **SED 586** Students with Severe Disabilities
- **SED 600** Special Topics in Special Education
- **SED 700** Directed Study

*\*\*Those degree candidates who do not seek Massachusetts teacher licensure must substitute an approved elective for the performance assessment; they may not enroll in the performance assessment.*

# COURSE DESCRIPTIONS / 2016-2017

## **SED 502 Teaching English Language Learners with and without Special Needs**

This course introduces the structural levels of language, theories, principles, and processes of language acquisition. The course also focuses on reading of complex informational and literary texts, responding to text-based questions, writing from sources, and building academic vocabulary and background knowledge through discussion, reading, and writing. Graduate students will explore and examine various effective instructional approaches and pedagogical implications with critical appreciation for a full range of English language learners (PreK-12), including those with special needs.

*3 credits*

## **EDU 512 Introduction to Research in Education**

This course is designed to enable students to become critical readers of research in education. It will also help them to design and conduct research in an educational setting. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies will be addressed. Students will be expected to analyze research reports and to design potential research projects.

*3 credits*

## **EDU 515 Diversity in Schooling**

This course examines the concept of diversity and its implications for teachers, students, and schools. The course draws from leading scholars and writers in the fields of education and related disciplines to highlight the various perspectives on diversity. It also will emphasize the impact of culture on the curriculum, teacher-student relationships and pedagogy in schools. Through course readings, discussion and collaborative learning, and independent research, students will gain a greater understanding of the concept of diversity in its various permutations and will learn how to identify, select, and design teaching strategies that support expressed goals for diversity in schools.

*3 credits*

## **EDU 552 Foundations of Teaching Reading**

This course introduces students to the theoretical and philosophical bases underlying reading development. Using the stages of reading development as a frame, students explore the role of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension at stages from emergent literacy to mature reading. Students also investigate the relationship of reading to writing, language and cultural influences on reading development, instructional models of reading, methods and materials for reading instruction, and the assessment and evaluation of reading development. There is a focus throughout the course on connecting theory and research to current practice and policy, with specific focus on the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework.

*3 credits*

## **SED 560 Foundations of Special Education**

This introductory course focuses on the overview of special education, various categories of disabilities, and educational issues and strategies for teaching and accommodating pupils with special needs. This course serves to familiarize graduate students with the historical, theoretical, and philosophical bases underlying special education including educational terminology for pupils with mild/moderate to severe/profound disabilities, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), the current laws, landmark decisions, and educational mandates that govern the education for all children and adolescents with disabilities. It also encourages proper understanding of critical issues with regard to individuals with disabilities. Services provided by other agencies are also discussed. This course provides an essential foundation for further study in special education.

*3 credits*

## **SED 561 Individualized Education Planning: A Collaborative Approach**

Responding to IDEA 2004, professional standards, theory, and contemporary research, this course frames the special education process as a collaborative, tiered problem solving approach to individualized educational planning. Through evidence-based tools, best practices, application, and interactive discussions, students investigate learning and behavior struggles to construct quality IEPs and documents. The course concludes with formulating a proactive action plan to promote a culture of professional support and cooperation in school settings.

*Prerequisite: SED 560*

*3 credits*

## **PSY/SED 563 Developmental Pathways and Challenges**

This course provides a comprehensive examination of human growth and development of children and adolescents in the physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional domains with an emphasis on both typical and atypical development. This course assists graduate students to better understand the relationships between developmental challenges and their effects on learning, thereby enabling them to examine and implement effective instructional approaches and interventions with critical appreciation for children and adolescents with special needs.

*3 credits*

## **PSY/SED 566 Assessment of Special Learning Needs of Children and Adolescents**

In this course, students gain knowledge of both formal and informal assessment of students with special learning needs using a systematic and comprehensive approach. They examine frequently used diagnostic assessment tools in areas of physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional development. Emphasis is placed on those assessment strategies that yield objective data regarding individual skill repertoires and learning characteristics, thereby providing a basis for educational decision making and the preparation and evaluation of IEPs. Topics such as portfolio assessment, alternative assessment, interpretation of results of assessment, report writing, IEP preparation, and communication with families and other professionals are also included.

*3 credits*

## **SED 567 Seminar: Advanced Assessment of Special Learning Needs**

This advanced studies graduate seminar focuses on promoting the advanced graduate students' knowledge of and mastery in administering educational diagnostic assessments for students with diverse moderate learning needs. Seminar participants learn advanced principles of accurate assessment of children and adolescents' learning needs, to aid decision making and instructional planning for these students. Select representative diagnostic tools, which are frequently used in PreK-12 schools, are discussed, demonstrated, practiced and administered to develop skill proficiency. Seminar participants are expected to engage in independent research, including, but not limited to, current best practices.

*Prerequisite: PSY/SED 566 or equivalent*

*3 credits*

## **PSY/SED 568 Behavioral Assessment and Interventions**

This course is designed to provide students with principles for the effective use of behavioral assessment and interventions in inclusive and special education classrooms. Students learn to use a cognitive-behavioral approach within a developmental context to identify, analyze, implement, and evaluate interventions that both prepare children and adolescents with special needs for and maintain them in general education classrooms. A team approach with a focus on consultation and collaboration skills necessary for special educators is emphasized. Research-based strategies to enhance classroom management, organization, and the learning environment are considered.

*3 credits*

**SED 570 Inclusion: Theory and Classroom Practice**

This course is designed to enable students to practice inclusive education for children and adolescents with special learning needs. Students will learn ways to design and modify curriculum, instructional materials, and teaching strategies for children and adolescents with moderate disabilities in general education settings. Emphasis is placed on the teacher's role in the preparation, implementation, and ongoing evaluation of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), consultation and collaboration skills, and on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks that govern content and instruction in the state's public schools.

*Prerequisite: SED 560 or equivalent; may be taken concurrently*  
3 credits

**SED 571 Curriculum and Methods for Students with Moderate Disabilities (PreK-8; 5-12)**

This course is designed to enable teachers to provide high-quality education for their elementary, middle and high school (PreK-8; 5-12) students with disabilities. This course focuses on appropriate teaching strategies, tactics, and suggestions for students with various disabilities. It also emphasizes the implementation of research-based instruction that ensures effective teaching and learning of students with diverse learning needs. In addition, comprehensive transition planning and implementation from school to young adulthood life for secondary school students with special needs are addressed. It therefore helps beginning teachers to achieve initial classroom success and to provide experienced teachers with an opportunity to extend and refine their knowledge and skills.

3 credits

**EDU 572 Teaching Reading to Diverse Learners**

Drawing from seminal research and reading disabilities, students explore the theoretical and philosophical bases underlying reading development, including the relationship between reading and writing. They will investigate etiology of reading difficulties, principles and tools of assessment, models of reading and instructional strategies that have proved successful with learners who have reading problems. Issues such as cultural and linguistic diversity, the influence of legislation regarding children with reading/learning disabilities, prevention vs. intervention vs. remediation of reading difficulties, implementation of the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework, and the critical role of the teacher are also considered.

*Prerequisites: EDU 325, EDU 552 or equivalent course in Foundations of Reading OR evidence of passing score on the Foundations of Reading Test of the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL)*

3 credits

**EDU 574 Teaching Mathematics to Diverse Learners**

This course serves to familiarize students with the theoretical and philosophical bases underlying acquisition of numeracy, with particular emphasis on the identification and prevention of children's difficulty in mathematics. Drawing from seminal research in mathematics instruction and mathematics disabilities, students will explore the acquisition of mathematics concepts and skills, etiology of difficulties in mathematics, principles of assessment, and instructional strategies that have proved successful with learners who have problems in mathematics. Issues such as cultural and linguistic diversity, the influence of legislation concerning children with learning disabilities, prevention vs. intervention vs. remediation of problems in mathematics, implementation of the Massachusetts Mathematics Curriculum Framework, and the critical role of the teacher are also considered.

3 credits

**EDU 575 Seminar: Strategies in Teaching Mathematics to Students with Moderate Disabilities**

This advanced studies graduate seminar focuses on best practice in designing and teaching mathematics instruction to meet the unique needs of elementary and middle/secondary students with moderate disabilities based on Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The continuum from PreK through Secondary is presented so that teachers at all levels identify what knowledge to expect students to possess from previous courses, as well as what students need to retain for later courses. In this course, graduate participants explore, learn, and research how to teach children and adolescents critical mathematical concepts and functional math that apply to their everyday lives and future careers. Current theory and frequently used accommodations for these students for statewide, district-wide, and/or alternative math assessment are also examined. In addition, participants learn to use diagnostic tools to assess dyscalculia. Case studies from current research and participants' own teaching experiences are integrated to illustrate effective teaching of children with various mathematical difficulties. Furthermore, this course advances the mastery and progress of graduate-level participants in the field of teaching mathematics with diverse learning needs. Seminar participants are expected to engage in independent research, including, but not limited to, current best practices.

*Prerequisites: EDU 574 or equivalent and permission of Program Director*  
3 credits

**SED 580 Learning Disabilities**

This advanced course serves to deepen students' understanding of developmental variation and learning disabilities. Students examine basic neurodevelopmental functions that affect how children and adolescents learn and the disorders that cause or contribute to academic difficulties. Focus is placed upon receptive and expressive oral language, reading, written language, mathematics, and social and emotional behavior. Students review the federal and state definitions of specific learning disabilities, eligibility criteria for support services, the regulations that govern such service, and the instructional responsibilities of the teacher of students with mild to moderate learning disorders. Current issues such as cultural and linguistic diversity of students, inclusion, and the standards-based education reform movement are broadly addressed. Case studies serve to assist the student to bridge theory to practice, as well as to develop problem solving skills within the context of assessment and instructional planning for students with particular profiles.

*Prerequisite: SED 560 or equivalent*  
3 credits

**SED 585 Teaching Students with Behavior Disorders**

This course provides students with an in-depth understanding of available evidence-based interventions for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Students will be able to design effective classroom management systems that maximize social success for all students, including those with challenging behavior. In addition, the course will address the behavioral assessment and evaluation options available to special education practitioners.

3 credits

**SED 586 Students with Severe Disabilities**

This course focuses on principles and foundations of teaching students with severe disabilities. Concepts related to history, definitions, identification, etiology, and assessment of students with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities are addressed. Other focus areas include education issues and evidence-based instructional strategies, adaptations, and multidisciplinary teaming for students with severe disabilities. Graduate students learn ways to provide individualized interventions and to include students with severe disabilities in least restrictive environments and/or general education settings.

*Prerequisite: SED 560 or equivalent (can be taken concurrently)*  
3 credits

**SED 587 Advanced Application of Positive Behavior Supports**

This course focuses on school application of positive behavior supports (PBS), beginning with the logic and research supporting the three-tiered school-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS) model. Students will learn about the training process for schools implementing SWPBS, including the development, teaching, and reinforcing of school-wide expectations (i.e., primary level supports). Students will also learn about implementing secondary-level, targeted behavior supports at the school-wide level. In addition, students will know how planning individualized (i.e., tertiary level) interventions fit into the SWPBS model. This course also focuses on working in teams to promote behavior support, on training staff to implement behavior supports with fidelity, and in school-wide data collection systems.

*Prerequisite: PSY/SED 568 or equivalent; may be taken concurrently*  
3 credits

**SED 589 Seminar: Research and Practice in Positive Behavior Supports**

As part of this course, students will work in a school setting that utilizes the multi-tiered school-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS) model. Depending on the schools' needs and the students' interest, students may be (a) working with individual students, conducting functional behavioral assessments and designing behavior intervention plans, or (b) working with a school's behavior support team to plan and assist with SWPBS implementation at the primary and/or secondary-level(s). In addition, the student may complete on-site evaluations of SWPBS and conduct training sessions with staff. Weekly seminars will focus on the successful implementation of evidence-based practices in behavior support, problem-solving techniques, and evaluation and modification of existing behavior supports.

*Prerequisites: SED 587 and EDU 512 or equivalent; may be taken concurrently*  
3 credits

**SED 590 Practicum and Seminar: Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities**

The practicum is conducted in accordance with current Massachusetts educator licensure regulations. The student completes the practicum under the direction of a college program supervisor and under the immediate supervision of a supervising practitioner who is licensed in the field and at the level of the licensure sought. At least 75 hours for the PreK-8 license or 150 hours for the 5-12 license, if not all, of the practicum is completed in an inclusive classroom setting. The practicum student spends a full day at the placement site(s) for the duration of the practicum. The student's teaching performance is evaluated in accordance with criteria specified in the Massachusetts regulations in particular, the Professional Standards for Teachers. Students must meet specified criteria for enrollment in the practicum. Permission required; enrollment limited to qualified, matriculated graduate students.

3 credits

**SED 591 Performance Assessment and Seminar: Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities (PreK-8; 5-12)**

The performance assessment provides the opportunity for the student seeking *Professional* License to integrate content area knowledge, pedagogical theory, and practical experience. The duration of the clinical experience will be no less than 400 clock hours. The college program supervisor will evaluate the candidate in Massachusetts educator license regulations.

3 credits

**SED 599 Thesis: Guided Evidence-Based Instruction**

This thesis is an independent study in using a recognized research method. The thesis should examine the effectiveness of evidence-based practice. The student may develop an instructional strategy or choose a research-based instructional strategy for (a) student(s) with special needs, conduct a relevant literature review, implement strategy, and investigate its effectiveness. The subject of the study should be from PreK-12. The thesis may be used for the final exit examination of Master's degree program.

*Prerequisite: EDU 512 or equivalent*  
3 credits

**SED 600 Special Topics in Education/Special Education**

This course is designed to address contemporary topics and issues in education/special education. Topics will be chosen based on timelines, interest, and relevance to current educational practices. The course will allow students the opportunity to examine current issues in greater detail than would be possible in other course offerings.

3 credits

**SED 660 Critical Issues in Special Education**

This course introduces the context for special education and examines current and controversial issues such as inclusion, special education law, educational reform, and accountability. Graduate students are provided with opportunities to explore, to research and to debate these issues from multiple perspectives. In addition, this course emphasizes current and critical issues that affect educators and their students.

*Prerequisite: SED 560 or equivalent (can be taken concurrently)*  
3 credits

**SED 700 Directed Study**

The student, in conjunction with a faculty advisor, designs and conducts a critical study of a topic of interest, a curriculum-based project, a research study, a field experience, a practicum, or an internship.

3 credits

**EDU 703 Advanced Research Seminar**

The course content focuses on developing and understanding the issues necessary to read critically and evaluate research literature. Students are expected to prepare an extensive review of the research literature, develop research questions, and employ methodology relevant to special education. The paper must demonstrate an evident understanding of the clinical area of focus and the research methodology.

3 credits



## GRADUATE STUDIES

### ASSUMPTION COLLEGE

**Special Education Program**

Kennedy, Rm 169  
For information, call 508.767.7297

**Graduate Studies**

Admissions House  
For information, call 508.767.7387  
e-mail: graduate@assumption.edu

**www.assumption.edu/graduate**

500 Salisbury Street  
Worcester, MA, 01609  
phone: 508.767.7387  
fax: 508.799.4412