PhD in Special Education with Emphasis in Behavior Disorders

Degree Overview and Requirements

The Doctorate of Philosophy program in Behavior Disorders supports advanced instruction and research in Behavior Disorders. Candidates complete individualized programs of study to meet their learning objectives and prepare for further research in the field. The candidate will build on prior graduate coursework through special education doctoral coursework, specified behavior disorders coursework, and dissertation preparation and defense. Students meeting entrance criteria will be conditionally admitted to the program, assigned an advisor, and expected to enroll in designated requisite coursework.

1. After completion of 9 credit hours, including 3 credits of quantitative methods plus 6 credits of special education doctoral core coursework, students must pass a qualifying examination to be fully admitted into the department.

2. Upon successful completion of the qualifying examination, students form a program committee and develop a program plan. The committee shall consist of four or more graduate faculty members (at least three from within the department and at least one from outside the department). The program plan will delineate coursework and competency activities to meet department requirements.

3. Once the majority of coursework and competencies are completed (80-90%), students will be required to pass a comprehensive examination to advance to candidacy.

4. Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination, students will form a dissertation committee and develop a research proposal. The dissertation committee may be the same as the program committee or may change based on the need to include faculty members with specific areas of expertise. Once all committee members approve the proposal, students can begin implementation of the dissertation study.

5. Upon completion of the study, students must submit a written draft to the dissertation committee and orally defend their work.

6. Students will graduate only after all dissertation committee members approve the written dissertation and oral defense.

7. Students must also comply with all College of Education and Graduate School guidelines.

Admissions

Applicants are required to meet two sets of minimum qualifications for admission: the requirements of the PhD in Special Education program (https://gradstudies.missouri.edu/degreecategory/special-education) and the minimum requirements of the Graduate School (http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/admissions/eligibility-process/minimum-requirements.php). Because requirements vary, you must refer to a degree program’s graduate admission page to learn about specific admission criteria, application deadlines, eligibility and application process. Before official admissions to the University of Missouri, your application materials will be reviewed by both the Graduate School and the degree program to which you’ve applied.

Admissions to Doctoral programs in Special Education will be based upon the following criteria:

1. Graduate grade point average above 3.5 and a preferred combined score of 297 or better on the Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning sections and Analytical Writing score of 4.0 or better on the GRE taken within the last 5 years.

2. A minimum of three years full-time appropriate teaching or professional experience in pre K-12 or other direct services with persons with disabilities.

3. A minimum of three letters of recommendation, which on the whole, clearly reflect professional success and predict academic success at the advanced graduate level.

4. Statement of purpose indicating clearly that the proposed doctorate is appropriate to the applicant’s professional aspirations.

5. For students whose native language is not English, a score of 100 of better on the TOEFL or a grade band score of 7 or better on the IELTS taken within the past two years. Ideally, the TOEFL or IELTS will be taken 6-9 months prior to the term in which the student wishes to start their program.

6. An interview may be required by the admissions committee.

7. Confer or correspond with one of the special education faculty members in the proposed area of concentration prior to submitting an application. This contact is ultimately a requirement for admission.

All requirements implicit in the above statement must be completed before consideration of an applicant for admission. The department cannot assure admission to all applicants who meet minimum standards specified for the degree program. Resource constraints do not permit the admission of all qualified applicants.

A committee of faculty reviews the credentials of all applicants. It is the responsibility of this committee to exercise professional judgment related to the criteria which applicants must meet in order to be considered for admission to the program. The committee frequently must use its judgment to discern from among a number of applicants those individuals who are judged to have the greatest potential for program success and ultimate contribution to the profession. Membership in under-represented groups will be a special consideration with regards to admission by the committee.