Doctor of Philosophy in Special Education

Special Education Graduate Programs

The Department of Special Education (http://specialedu.soe.ku.edu) offers graduate education for students interested in teaching, research, and professional service related to children, adolescents, and adults with disabilities and their families. Since the 1970s, the department’s master’s and doctoral programs have received national and international recognition. The faculty is known for its field leadership and commitment to high-quality education for children and youth with disabilities, innovative field-based research, and preparation of highly effective program graduates. The annual U.S. News and World Report graduate program survey consistently ranks KU at the top when compared to more than 200 graduate programs in this field. As one of the most comprehensive special education preparation programs in the country, the department attracts students from many states and countries.

Graduate degrees associated with the department’s programs include the Master of Science in Education (M.S.E.), Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.). Students may pursue a master’s degree emphasizing teaching in one of 5 areas:

1. High-incidence disabilities
2. Autism spectrum disorders
3. Early childhood unified (birth through kindergarten)
4. Low-incidence disabilities/significant intellectual disabilities
5. Secondary transition education and services

Students seeking Kansas State Department of Education teaching licensure can complete requirements for special education endorsement in the following areas:

1. Adaptive (high-incidence)
2. Functional (low-incidence/significant intellectual)
3. Early childhood unified (ECU, birth through kindergarten)

With the exception of ECU, all endorsement areas require current Kansas licensure in elementary, secondary, or early childhood education.

The doctoral program prepares experienced professionals for leadership roles as university faculty, researchers, and policymakers/administrators. Course work and field experience facilitate the development of advanced knowledge and skills in leadership, teacher education, research and scholarly writing, and disability advocacy. The following areas of specialization are offered:

- Policy analysis and research
- Teacher education (e.g., high-incidence disabilities, early childhood unified education, secondary special education transition, and low-incidence disabilities)
- Families and disability
- Educational technology

Graduate classes are taught on the main campus in Lawrence, the KU Edwards Campus (http://edwardscampus.ku.edu) in Overland Park in suburban Kansas City about 40 miles from Lawrence, and online and/or as hybrid courses. Master’s students can expect to complete some graduate work on each campus. The Secondary/Transition master/s program is fully online.

Graduate Admission to the School of Education

Graduate programs in education are open to students with acceptable baccalaureate and graduate degrees, as specified by the admitting departments, whose academic records indicate that they can do successful work at the graduate level. Regular admission requires a grade-point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. Departments that offer provisional admission require a grade-point average of at least 2.5. Individual departments may require additional information and may have more stringent admission and retention requirements.

Some departments may offer special provisional admission categories to students who may not qualify under traditional admission criteria. Applicants must provide evidence of ability to work successfully at the graduate level, including experience in and commitment to the profession. Exceptions to established policies must be sought individually by petition to the Graduate Division of the School of Education.

See Admission in the Graduate Studies (http://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies) section of the online catalog for more information.

Each department in the School of Education sets its own application deadlines. Prospective graduate students should contact their departments for application deadlines.

Graduate Admission to the School of Education

Graduate programs in education are open to students with acceptable baccalaureate and graduate degrees, as specified by the admitting departments, whose academic records indicate that they can do successful work at the graduate level. Regular admission requires a grade-point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. Departments that offer provisional admission require a grade-point average of at least 2.5. Individual departments may require additional information and may have more stringent admission and retention requirements.

Some departments may offer special provisional admission categories to students who may not qualify under traditional admission criteria. Applicants must provide evidence of ability to work successfully at the graduate level, including experience in and commitment to the profession. Exceptions to established policies must be sought individually by petition to the Graduate Division of the School of Education.

See Admission in the Graduate Studies (http://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies) section of the online catalog for more information.

Ph.D. Degree Program

The doctoral degree program encourages and supports students working with faculty in cutting-edge research and development related to effective education in the field of disabilities. The Ph.D. and Ed.D. programs are similar, but serve different needs for special educators seeking advanced knowledge and leadership skills. Both degrees require intensive and rigorous study in special education foundations, disability issues, curriculum, teaching, program development, and research. The Graduate Record Examination is required for admission.

Doctor of Philosophy

This is a research degree. Graduates are prepared for roles as university faculty members, researchers, or policy analysts. Specific core and
research skills for the Ph.D. are required. In addition to the special education and research cores, students complete course work in one of the areas of specialization, a 12-hour minor in a related field (at the discretion of the specialization area or advisor), and a dissertation based on original research.

**Note:** Contact your department or program for more information about research skills and responsible scholarship, and the current requirements for doctoral students. Current Lawrence and Edwards Campus policies on Doctoral Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship (https://documents.ku.edu/policies/Graduate_Studies/Research_Skills_and_Responsible_Scholarship.htm) are listed in the KU Policy Library.