Doctor of Philosophy in Special Education

Special Education Doctoral Program

The mission of the doctoral program in special education is to prepare civically-committed scholars who, through rigorous and relevant research and transformational interventions, address significant educational and social problems in ways that advance education, social policy, research, care giving, and public service to enhance the quality of life of persons of all ages with (dis)abilities and their families. Program students and graduates rely on interdisciplinary theoretical knowledge and the full range of methodological approaches to engage, influence, and transform educational and social institutions and their practices to promote learning, equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.

Program graduates are highly-competent, socially-committed educational researchers, leaders, and teacher educators engaged in the design, development, and/or use of educational and social interventions that result in transformational outcomes. Graduates are scholars who steward the profession, working across disciplinary boundaries to address the educational and social challenges of the 21st century. Moreover, as civic professionals, they also engage in stewardship with their communities.

Our graduates are scholars who recognize that resolving the great social and education challenges we face requires a sense of collective social purpose among the professions, and that the professions’ greatest responsibility is to the people most affected.

The specific principles that define how students will be engaged in learning build upon the idea that doctoral education is a complex process of formation emphasizing development of scholars’ professional identity in all its dimensions, including their recognition of the role the discipline and its scholars are to play in academe and in society. Because such a professional identity requires students to play an active role in its development, the doctoral program is premised on four instructional principles: (a) problem-centered learning focusing on the formulation of significant research questions and specification of corresponding methods of inquiry; (b) apprenticeship with multiple mentors involving intentionality, collective responsibility, recognition, respect, trust, and reciprocity; (c) creating and sustaining a safe and engaging intellectual community/culture in which students feel support among themselves and in collegial relations with faculty; and (d) scholarly integration in which the teaching and research mission of the department and faculty is closely linked.

Every year the doctoral program accepts a cohort of students from throughout the world. Each cohort consists of students with diverse interests and career goals. Underlying this cohort design are weekly seminars, various research and teaching experiences, and an interrelated specialization structure. Each doctoral student chooses an area of specialization and potentially a related area of interest outside the specialization and the department as a cognate. Currently, our program has the following areas of specialization:

- Early Childhood Unified (http://specialedu.ku.edu/academics/doctorate/program-structure/specializations/#ECU) (Blending of Early Childhood and Early Childhood Special Education)
- Disability and Diversity in School and Society (http://specialedu.ku.edu/academics/doctorate/program-structure/specializations/#DDDES)
- Instructional Design, Technology, and Innovation (http://specialedu.ku.edu/academics/doctorate/program-structure/specializations/#IDTI)
- Special Education Policy and Systems Studies (http://specialedu.ku.edu/academics/doctorate/program-structure/specializations/#SEPPSS)
- Strengths Based, Inclusive Education: Adolescents with Extensive and Pervasive Support Needs

Please find additional information on the doctoral program on our website (http://specialedu.ku.edu/academics/doctorate/).

Graduate Admission to the School of Education and Human Sciences

Graduate programs in education are open to students with acceptable baccalaureate and graduate degrees 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 in prior degrees. Individual departments may require additional information and may have more stringent admission requirements.

Departments that offer provisional admission have minimum grade point average requirements. Check admission requirements for individual programs. 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 and Human Sciences.

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 and Human Sciences sets its own application deadlines. Prospective graduate students should contact their departments for more information.

Admission to Ph.D. in Special Education at KU

Individuals applying to the Ph.D. in Special Education at the University of Kansas must have relevant professional training, usually represented by undergraduate and graduate degrees in special and/or general education or a related field. Applicants are usually expected to have at least three years of professional experience teaching in public schools or related work in agencies that serve individuals with disabilities. Both formal education and experience in the field help to demonstrate the foundational knowledge necessary to develop expertise in special education.

Applicants are strongly advised to establish a dialogue with one (or more) faculty members in the preferred specialization area prior to applying for the doctoral program. The purpose of the dialogue is to understand how scholarship interests align and/or intersect with departmental faculty, and to ensure the specialization focus aligns with the student's interests and skills. Meeting with faculty will help identify a good match between a student and the specialization advisor with whom they may wish to study. This dialogue is critical to inform students about various social, academic, and teaching aspects of the doctoral experience that will complement their development as a scholar. Communicating with specialization faculty prior
to submitting the application is strongly recommended and is considered vital to the department admissions process.

**Admission Process Components**

Doctoral program applications are only reviewed for fall admission. After the Admission Committee has reviewed applications, selected applicants will be invited to participate in an onsite interview.

**On-line Application Process:** Application Packet Submission ([https://specialedu.ku.edu/academics/special-education/phd/graduate-admission/](https://specialedu.ku.edu/academics/special-education/phd/graduate-admission/))

- Letter of Introduction
- Professional Resume
- Transcripts (Bachelor’s and Master’s degree conferred)
- Official GRE Exam Results
- Official Proof of English Proficiency (international applicants only)
- Official Statement of Financial Documentation (international applicants only)
- Letters of Reference
- Academic Writing Sample

Students are encouraged to submit application packages in advance of deadlines. Until all components of the application package (on-line application submitted and fee paid, letter of application, resume, official GRE report, all transcripts, letters of reference, professional writing sample) are received, the application will not be considered by the Special Education Department Admissions Committee. Only completed application packages received by the deadline will be considered.

**Official GRE Exam Results**

The GRE exam is required to be considered for admission to the Department of Special Education as a doctoral student. Request GRE scores to be submitted by Educational Testing Service as stated: for electronic submission (ETS), the Institution Code for KU is 6871 and the Department Code is 3705. Students that have an official copy of their GRE exam results, should upload a copy when applying online under “Misc documents”. The Admission Committee can use unofficial copies of the exam results for reviewing applications. Official scores must be submitted if the applicant is recommended for admission.

**Applied English Center Proficiency Test**

International students must meet one of the following English proficiency exam score requirements UNLESS they have completed a baccalaureate degree or higher from an accredited English-medium U.S. college or a college or university in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, an English-speaking province of Canada, or an English-speaking Caribbean country, with instruction conducted in English. To forward exam scores electronically, the University code is 6871 and the Department code is 85. Please see the [English proficiency chart](https://specialedu.ku.edu/academics/special-education/phd/graduate-admission/) for more information.

- TOEFL (paper): 57 or above on each section and 5.0 on the Test of Written English
- TOEFL (iBT): 23 or above on the reading, listening, and writing sections
- IELTS (Academic): 6.5 minimum overall score and at least 6.0 in listening, reading, and writing
- PTE: 58 or above with no part score below 53 in listening, reading, and writing

More information including deadlines can be found on our website. ([https://specialedu.ku.edu/academics/special-education/phd/graduate-admission/](https://specialedu.ku.edu/academics/special-education/phd/graduate-admission/))

**Ph.D. Degree Program**

The doctoral degree program encourages and supports students to work with faculty on cutting-edge research and development related to address significant educational and social problems that advance education, social policy, and research in the field of disabilities. The degree requires intensive and rigorous study in educational foundations, disability issues, special education, organizational and individual change, curriculum, teaching, program development, and research. The Graduate Record Examination is required for admission.

**Doctor of Philosophy**

This is a full-time 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. Students typically take 3 courses per fall and spring semester and 1 course in the summer in the first 3 years of the program followed by work on their dissertation. In addition to the special education and research cores, students complete course work in a 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.

Minimum hours for the program are 72.

- Research skills require 15 credit hours of research methods classes.
- Students may select to fulfill a research minor by completing an additional 3 credit hours of research.
- Students may also complete a Cognate comprised of 12 credit hours of coursework (includes the 6 credit hours outside the program area required of each specialization).
- Responsible Conduct of Research is satisfied with EDU 800. All students complete the Human Research Protection Tutorial ([https://research.ku.edu/human_subjects_compliance_training/](https://research.ku.edu/human_subjects_compliance_training/)) in Fall of the first year of the program.
- College Teaching Experience: We require one teaching internship. Students may enroll in SPED 996 or not, depending on the student/advisor.
- Research Internship Experience: We require at least one research internship. It is at the discretion of the student and advisor to determine if students enroll in credit hours.
- Doctoral seminar. At least 9 doctoral seminar hours are completed by all students.
- Dissertation: 18 minimum, 24 maximum, does not count toward Major courses.

**Course List:** (Note: Full Course plan is best viewed in handbook)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>EDUC 800</td>
<td>Education as a Field of Scholarship</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPED 851</td>
<td>Law and Special Education</td>
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<td>SPED 930</td>
<td>Praxis Seminar: Scholarship and Writing</td>
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<td>SPED 932</td>
<td>Praxis Seminar: Scholarship of Teaching</td>
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<td>SPED 936</td>
<td>Cross-Spec I: Conceptual Issues in Special Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPED 937</td>
<td>Cross-Specialization Seminar: Methodological and Conceptual Issues in Special Education</td>
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<td>SPED 950</td>
<td>Civic Professionalism</td>
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<td>SPED 983</td>
<td>Research Funding and Proposal Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPED 999</td>
<td>Doctoral Dissertation</td>
<td>18</td>
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Specialization Courses: 9

Research courses, Outside courses, Internships, Cognate courses & Individual Study courses as directed by program plan and advisor