

Unit Plan for Assessing and Improving Student Learning in Degree Programs

Masters Programs in Special Education

Unit: Special Education

Unit Head approval:

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SECTION 1: PAST ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Brief description of changes or improvements made in your unit as the result of assessment results since 2000.

LBS I

Since 2000 the initial masters teacher certification program, Learning and Behavior Specialist I (LBS I) underwent a major revision in response to legally mandated changes to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) special education teacher certification requirements. All LBS I program graduates are formally and informally assessed during each phase of their teacher education program. Using technology skills acquired through the program, each LBS I graduate student develops an electronic portfolio that includes their own multimedia philosophy of teaching as well as several integrated reflections about the knowledge and skills they have acquired to be an effective special education teacher. Students include documentation (e.g., demonstration videos they have developed for students with disabilities; instructional programs) to support their reflections.

In addition, Special Education Department faculty follow the UIUC Council on Teacher Education (CTE) guidelines to ensure that all students enrolled in special education teacher certification programs meet the requirements of the *CTE Conceptual Framework Expectations* and the *CTE Common Assessment Plan*. All graduate program teacher education candidates must pass the Illinois State Certification Tests (ISCTs) designed to ensure that graduates of the special education teacher education programs are prepared to educate students across a wide variety of ages and disabilities. Feedback gathered from multiple sources and stakeholders: a) Illinois State Certification Test results, b) cooperating professionals, c) practicum supervisors, d) faculty, and e) current and former students has resulted in ongoing improvements to the LBS I masters program.

LBS II

The Learning and Behavior Specialist II (LBS II) was approved in 2005. LBS II prepares teachers with initial special education teacher certification to assume leadership roles in specific areas of expertise (curriculum adaptations, behavior interventions, transition services, and multiple disabilities). At this time students in Chicago and on the UIUC

campus are enrolled in this program. Department of Special Education faculty work closely with the CTE to ensure that LBS II candidates meet the requirements for certification. All LBS II candidates must pass the ISCT for LBS II in order to receive this certification. LBS II candidates complete a traditional portfolio documenting how they have addressed each of the standards for their specialty area. The portfolio is submitted and reviewed by the chair of the Department of Special Education Curriculum Committee.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

This is designed for those interested in working with young children (ages birth to five years old) with disabilities and their families. This program prepares students to work in the field of early intervention and in preschool settings with young children with disabilities. Graduates already holding the State of Illinois Early Childhood teacher certification (Type 04) may apply for the State of Illinois Early Intervention Developmental Therapist Credential and/or the State of Illinois Early Childhood Special Education Approval. Students demonstrate their knowledge and skills in this area through multiple assessments in coursework, field experiences, and related professional activities. Students develop a traditional portfolio that demonstrates how they have met the State of Illinois standard areas required for this degree. As a culminating activity prior to graduation, the student presents his/her portfolio during a meeting with his/her advisor, another faculty member, and invited knowledgeable guests (e.g., ECSE doctoral students, practicing early interventionists).

General Masters

Students expand their knowledge and skills with regard to teaching students with disabilities.

Research Practitioner

In addition to fulfilling all course requirements students must complete a thesis.

SECTION 2: REVISED ASSESSMENT PLAN

(a) PROCESS: Brief description of the process followed to develop or revise this assessment plan.

The Department of Special Education Unit Assessment Plan was developed as a result of discussions regarding student outcomes, assessment, and program improvement by the members of the Department of Special Education Curriculum Committee. This committee, made up of faculty and staff members coordinate and provide oversight of the department masters program. The members make recommendations for student admissions, student outcomes, and revisions to the content, design, and evaluation of the masters program.

(b) STUDENT OUTCOMES: List Unit's student learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and attitudes).

All students who complete a masters degree in the Department of Special Education will:

Outcome 1. Students who complete a graduate degree resulting in teacher certification (e.g., LBS I or LBS II) will demonstrate the dispositions, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and skills as outlined in the UIUC Council on Teacher Education (CTE) Conceptual Framework Expectations and meet the requirements of the Council on Teacher Education (CTE) Common Assessment Plan. (<http://www.cote.uiuc.edu>)

Outcome 2. Students who complete the graduate LBS I course sequence will demonstrate acquisition of the knowledge and skills required to be a competent novice special education teacher by meeting the indicators addressed in several sets of standards. These indicators are embedded in coursework, field-based activities, and other related professional experiences.

Outcome 3. Graduate students who complete the LBS II course sequence will demonstrate expertise and leadership in their respective areas of specialization by engaging in: a) collaborative leadership activities, b) mentoring other educators, c) practicing effective communication skills, d) acting as change agents, and e) advocating for learners with disabilities.

Outcome 4. Graduates completing the coursework in Early Childhood Special Education will demonstrate particular knowledge and skills reflective of the theoretical and applied concepts that serve as the framework for the preparation of early interventionists/early childhood special educators.

Outcome 5. Graduates students will expand and deepen their attitudes, knowledge and skills about evidence-based practices that result in improved learning and successful outcomes for students with disabilities.

Outcome 6. Graduate students will acquire the knowledge and skills to understand multiple research methodologies and how research is used to inform instructional practices with persons with disabilities by engaging in a capstone research project.

(c) MEASURES AND METHODS USED TO MEASURE OUTCOMES:

Several methods are used to measure these outcomes. For those graduate students in teacher certification programs, the Department of Special Education receives student assessment data from the CTE. This data indicates how many students have passed the Illinois Certification Tests. Graduate students in LBS-I program are required to complete an electronic portfolio in which the student develops a multimedia teaching philosophy, integrated reflections that address the major standard areas required to be a special education teacher and results of assessments and or assignments they have completed in order to meet multiple indicators within the standard areas. The e-portfolio is developed across several semesters with guidance from Special Ed Department faculty and the

student's advisor. A formal e-portfolio presentation attended by the advisor and e-portfolio coordinator occurs prior to the student's graduation from UIUC.

Graduate students in ECSE and LBS-II complete traditional portfolios that include reflections, assignments, and other exemplars demonstrating how they have addressed the standard areas for their programs. Masters students are required to complete field-based experiences with individuals with disabilities. The written and verbal feedback from cooperating professionals and university supervisors provide data regarding each student's dispositions, attitudes, knowledge, and skills. All graduate students complete a two semester course addressing research methodologies and design, implement, and present a capstone research project.

The Department of Special Education has not routinely gathered data from past graduates or their employers. Post graduation evaluation data of this nature would be helpful in determining areas for improvement at the masters level.

SECTION 3 : PLANS FOR USING RESULTS

(a) PLANS: Brief description of plans to use assessment results for program improvement.

The Department of Special Education uses both formal and informal assessment results to revise course content, assignments, course sequences, and field-based experiences. Both formal and informal feedback from stakeholders (current students, cooperating professionals, supervisors, and faculty) is used to continuously monitor and improve the masters programs.

(b) TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

The Department of Special Education will work closely with the College of Education Office of Development and Alumni Relations and the CTE to access data from alumni and employers of program graduates. Through these collaborative efforts we can access a data base of past graduates and their employers in order to gather more information about student outcomes. Data gathered through these efforts will be used to make improvements to the masters program.

Timeline

1. Design an on-line and/or mail based follow-up survey to be sent to program graduates and their employers.
2. Review information gathered from the survey results to make improvements to the masters program.

3. Review all follow-up data on special education department graduates gathered through CTE.