

# **Ph.D. in Special Education Academic Assessment Plan**

College of Education  
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*University of Florida*

*Institutional  
Assessment*

*Continuous Quality  
Enhancement*

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# Academic Assessment Plan for Ph.D. in Special Education

College of Education

## A. Mission

The mission of the Special Education program area is to promote the successful inclusion of individuals with disabilities and their families in society through excellence in the education of teachers and leaders, the generation of new knowledge, and the application of existing knowledge.

UF seeks to strengthen the human condition and improve the quality of life for the citizens of Florida, the nation, and the world by pursuing new knowledge and its dissemination while building upon the rich experiences of the past. The University values quality and inclusive public education, leading-edge research, and meaningful outreach and public service as ways to distinguish itself among the finest public universities in the nation. The University of Florida must create the broadly diverse environment necessary to foster multi-cultural skills and perspectives in its teaching and research for its students to contribute and succeed in the world of the 21st century.

In keeping with this institutional perspective, the faculty in the special education doctoral program recognizes the importance of the three-fold mission and actively seek to improve the lives and outcomes of individuals with disabilities from birth through adulthood and their families (a) by generating new knowledge through a variety of research endeavors, (b) through practical application of knowledge in real world settings, and (c) by preparing doctoral students for leadership roles in colleges, universities, research centers, public policy institutes, professional associations, school districts or human service agencies.

The Special Education doctoral program faculty is committed to fostering a research community among professors and doctoral students whose work directly contributes to the advancement and betterment of infants, toddlers, children, youth, and adults with disabilities and their families and teachers.

## B. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

SLO Type	Student Learning Outcome	Assessment Method	Degree Delivery
Knowledge	Candidates will demonstrate advanced levels of knowledge in the following core areas: (a) trends and issues in Special Education and their relationship to practice, policy, and research; (b) acquisition, organization, and interpretation of information about research in Special Education; c) identification of research questions and methodology emanating from different knowledge paradigms; and, (d) critique of Special Education research and practice from various knowledge paradigms.	Candidates will earn satisfactory ratings on first-year review as determined by the doctoral committees.  Candidates will earn satisfactory ratings on qualifying examinations as determined by the doctoral committees.	Campus

Skills	Candidates will attain the technical knowledge and skills to become independent scholars capable of conducting research and evaluating educational programs, products, and practices.	<p>Candidates will earn satisfactory ratings on the major area paper as determined by the doctoral committees.</p> <p>Candidates will earn satisfactory ratings on the dissertation defense as determined by doctoral committees.</p>	Campus
Professional Behavior	Candidates will give a presentation to other professionals or submit a paper for publication based on a research project.	Candidates will present at a national, state, or local conference or submit a paper for publication. The doctoral committee will determine satisfactory completion.	Campus

### C. Research

As one of the central purposes of the Ph.D. program in special education is to prepare scholars with the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct high quality research, the program requires students to participate in a variety of rigorous course work and experiences.

All Ph.D. students in special education take a sequence of three courses designed to introduce them to the trends, issues, paradigms, and methods of research in the field. The first course, Trends in Special Education (EEX 7934), students are introduced to scholarship in special education by exploring current trends and issues and their relationship to practice, policy, and research. The second course, Introduction to Field of Inquiry in Special Education (EEX 7304), is designed to assist doctoral students in the acquisition, organization, and interpretation of information about research in special education. The third course, Inquiry in Special Education: Analysis of the Literature (EEX 7303), is designed to help students become familiar with how different views of knowledge affect special education research and practice, identify research questions and methodology emanating from the different knowledge paradigms, and critique special education research and practice from these various paradigms.

In addition to these courses focused specifically on special education research, students must take at least the College of Education minimum requirement of 12 credit hours in research methods coursework. Students may elect to focus on either quantitative methods or qualitative methods, or they can take a combination of courses from both approaches. Most special education students take more than the minimum number of credit hours. In addition to these required courses, methods

courses focused on research approaches frequently used in special education research, such as single case experimental design or applied behavior analysis, are offered within the program.

Ph.D. students in special education typically participate in research apprenticeships with faculty. These apprenticeships are often part of externally funded research grants. Through these experiences, students have the opportunity to apply what they are learning in their coursework and develop independence in the use of research skills. The program offers a course in Grant Writing (EEX 7526) to prepare them to develop fundable research proposals.

Students' research skills are formally assessed at several points in their programs. Each course has assessment included to ensure that students reach mastery. At the end of their first year in the program, students go through a first-year review process in which their progress in the development of knowledge and skills is evaluated. Students also develop a major area paper, which is an exhaustive review of the literature on a topic of interest. At the conclusion of coursework, students take written and oral qualifying examinations. Finally, students' independent research skills are assessed through completion of the dissertation.

#### D. Assessment Timeline

Program Ph.D. in Special Education

College of Education

Assessment	Assessment 1	Assessment 2
<b>SLOs</b>		
<b>Knowledge</b>		
#1	First-year review	Qualifying examination
<b>Skills</b>		
#2	Major area paper	Dissertation
<b>Professional Behavior</b>		
#3	Paper(s) submitted for publication; presentation(s) at conferences	

#### E. Assessment Cycle

Assessment Cycle for:

Program Ph.D. in Special Education College of Education

Analysis and Interpretation: by October 1

Program Modifications: by May 1

Dissemination: by May 1

Year	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
<b>SLOs</b>						
<b>Content Knowledge</b>						
#1	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Skills</b>						
#2	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Professional Behavior</b>						
#3	x	x	x	x	x	x

## F. Measurement Tools

The performance of Ph.D. students on the Student Learning Outcomes is measured at various points during the program of study, using several key tools. The first year review is the initial progress monitoring checkpoint conducted to ensure that students have successfully mastered the knowledge and skills expected at that point in the program and are ready to continue in further coursework. Subsequent assessments include the major area paper, the oral and written qualifying examinations, and the dissertation defense.

Examples of two direct measurement tools are attached. Faculty members who have worked with the student provide feedback via Doctoral Student Evaluation forms (Appendix 1) to the student's supervisory committee, who compile and analyze the data and use it to provide direction to the student. Members of the student's supervisory committee evaluate the written portion of the qualifying examination and provide feedback via the Doctoral Qualifying Exam Rating form (Appendix 2).

In addition to these direct assessments, several indirect methods are used to gather data on students' perceptions of the value of their learning experiences. Throughout their first year in the program, students regularly attend "Professional Seminar" (ProSem). During ProSem, students are provided with ongoing opportunities to share feedback about the value of their learning experiences. Upon completion of the program, students complete an exit survey to provide a summative evaluation of their experiences. Periodically, graduates are surveyed to assess the value of the program in preparing them for their careers.

## G. Assessment Oversight

Name	Department Affiliation	Email Address	Phone Number
Holly Lane	School of Special Education, School Psychology, and Early Childhood Studies	hlane@ufl.edu	273-4273
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## Appendix 1: Doctoral Student Evaluation Form

### University of Florida Special Education Program

#### Doctoral Student Evaluation Form – Academic Performance

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Semester/Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Initial Advisor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Reviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** The ratings provided on this form are intended to guide doctoral students and the Special Education program faculty in evaluating academic performance. Please rate students in your course on the basis of their actual performance, observations, and/or reports of performance. For each item, check the box under the number that best describes the student's performance using the following scale.

1-Unsatisfactory      3-Satisfactory      N/O Not Observed  
2-Needs Improvement      4-Outstanding

<b>Academic Performance</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>N/O</b>
1. Performance during class meetings					
2. Mastery of material					
3. Effort					
4. Commitment to excellence					
5. Writing skills					
6. Oral communication skills					
7. Research skills					
8. Knowledge of professional literature					
9. Openness to feedback					
10. Meets deadlines					
11. Comparison to course peers					
12. Overall rating					

Please elaborate on the doctoral student's performance on any items that you rated 1 or 2 so that we may have a more complete understanding of any area of weakness.

Please return the completed form to the Graduate Coordinator within one week of receipt. Thank you for providing supervision and/or instruction and for assisting in the professional development of our doctoral students.

## Appendix 2: Doctoral Qualifying Exam Rating Form

### Doctoral Qualifying Exam Rating Special Education

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Directions

1. Assess competence on each task or question. Competence should be assessed using any or all of the evaluation criteria listed below. As a reviewer, you do not need to review every component of the student's qualifying exam, but rather, should review those areas in which you have specific expertise.
2. Assess demonstration of the student's depth and breadth of knowledge in his/her area of specialization, in research methods, in current issues, and in historical perspective.
3. Once you have evaluated (a) and (b) please provide an overall judgment of Pass or Fail. Include comments and/or recommendations, and sign the form and return it to the student's advisor.

#### Evaluation Criteria

- a. **Knowledge and Understanding of Professional Literature:** Student is familiar with key concepts and major research, cites relevant research and uses references appropriately, and provides accurate and complete information.
- b. **Clarity of Expression:** Discussion is relevant to question, writing is clear and concise, and ideas flow logically. Student avoids inappropriate jargon and clichés and uses educational language effectively.
- c. **Critical Thinking:** Student supports statements and claims with evidence, evaluates sources cited, and displays evidence of critical reflection.
- d. **Creativity:** Student synthesizes the work of others to develop innovative ideas or proposed solutions, considers multiple perspectives, and provides insightful or new perspectives.

Question/Task # \_\_\_\_\_

Knowledge of Professional Literature  
Clarity of Expression  
Critical Thinking  
Creativity

Poor Adequate Excellent


Comments:

Question/Task # \_\_\_\_\_

Knowledge of Professional Literature  
Clarity of Expression  
Critical Thinking  
Creativity

Poor Adequate Excellent


Comments:

## Appendix 2: Doctoral Qualifying Exam Rating Form continued

Question/Task # \_\_\_\_\_

Knowledge of Professional Literature  
Clarity of Expression  
Critical Thinking  
Creativity

Poor	Adequate	Excellent

Comments:

Question/Task # \_\_\_\_\_

Knowledge of Professional Literature  
Clarity of Expression  
Critical Thinking  
Creativity

Poor	Adequate	Excellent

Comments:

Question/Task # \_\_\_\_\_

Knowledge of Professional Literature  
Clarity of Expression  
Critical Thinking  
Creativity

Poor	Adequate	Excellent

Comments:

### Overall Assessment

PASS indicates:

- Demonstrated competence on each question/task assessed by this reviewer
- Satisfactory demonstration of depth and breadth of knowledge in the student's area of specialization, research methods, current issues, and historical perspectives

**PASS**

**FAIL**

Reviewer's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Figure 1. University of Florida Graduate/Professional Program Assessment Plan Review Rubric

Related resources are found at <http://www.ua.assessment.edu>

Program:		Year:			
Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	Partially Met	Not Met	
Mission Statement	Mission statement is articulated clearly.				
	The program mission clearly supports the College and University missions, and includes specific statements describing how it supports these missions.				
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Assessment Measures	SLOs are stated clearly.				
	SLOs focus on demonstration of student learning.				
	SLOs are measurable.				
	Measurements are appropriate for the SLO.				
Research	Research expectations for the program are clear, concise, and appropriate for the discipline.				
Assessment Map	The Assessment Map indicates the times in the program where the SLOs are assessed and measured.				
	The Assessment Map identifies the assessments used for each SLO.				
Assessment Cycle	The assessment cycle is clear.				
	All student learning outcomes are measured.				
	Data is collected at least once in the cycle.				
	The cycle includes a date or time period for data analysis and interpretation.				
	The cycle includes a date for planning improvement actions based on the data analysis.				
	The cycle includes a date for dissemination of results to the appropriate stakeholders.				

University of Florida Graduate/Professional Program Assessment Plan Review Rubric, continued

Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	Partially Met	Not Met	
<b>Measurement Tools</b>	Measurement tools are described clearly and concisely.				
	Measurements are appropriate for the SLOs.				
	Methods and procedures reflect an appropriate balance of direct and indirect methods.				
	The report presents examples of at least one measurement tool.				
<b>Assessment Oversight</b>	Appropriate personnel (coordinator, committee, etc.) charged with assessment responsibilities are identified				