

Teaching Students with Disabilities Graduate Certificate Program Policy Statement

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Part I. Program History and Purpose

A. Statement of Purpose

The Graduate Certificate in Teaching Students with Disabilities supports teachers to learn and apply specialized instructional and curricular practices aligned with the Council for Exceptional Children's professional educator standards and requirements established by the State of Delaware for acquiring additional teaching certifications. This certificate offers two options.

- Teachers with prior certification as a general education teacher or those working under emergency certification in general education and teaching students with disabilities in the elementary or secondary grades will complete the Teaching Students with Disabilities: K-12 option.
- Teachers with prior certification as teachers of students with disabilities or those working under emergency certification teaching students with autism and severe

disabilities will complete the Teaching Students with Disabilities: Autism/Severe Disabilities option.

The certificate provides a formal graduate academic credential that recognizes completion of 15 credits of master's level coursework that may be applied to the M.Ed. in Teaching Students with Disabilities.

B. Current Status

The Graduate Certificate in Teaching Students with Disabilities was developed in 2024 by faculty and staff in two units within the College of Education & Human Development: School of Education and Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification program within the Center for Equity & Excellence in Teacher Education.

Upon approval by the University Faculty Senate, the certificate program will begin accepting applications for the 2025-2026 academic year.

C. Credential Offered

The College of Education & Human Development through its School of Education and in collaboration with the Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification program offers a Graduate Certificate in Teaching Students with Disabilities. Students may focus on coursework for K-12 or Autism/Severe Disabilities as determined by their prior teaching certifications.

The graduate credential is awarded by the University of Delaware in recognition of master's level academic achievement. Courses in the Certificate reflect the State of Delaware's requirements for additional teaching certifications. The related teaching certifications are separately awarded by the Delaware Department of Education.

Students who complete the Graduate Certificate in Teaching Students with Disabilities may apply the 15 credits earned toward the M.Ed. in Teaching Students with Disabilities.

Part II. Admission

A. Admission Requirements

Candidates apply for admission via the online application process at grad.udel.edu/apply. This process prompts applicants for the following information:

- First name, last name, phone, email, and demographic information.
- Current teaching license and certification(s)
- Praxis secondary/high school subject matter exam results, *if the applicant is hired through emergency certification as a secondary special educator and has no prior teaching certification*

- Academic transcripts of degrees earned previously.
- Two letters of recommendation from professional references, including one from an educator who has supervised or formally evaluated the applicant's teaching.
 - A letter submitted by a school district confirming intent to hire the applicant under emergency certification can take the place of a letter from a supervisor/evaluator.
 - *The applicant provides names and email addresses of the recommenders, and recommendation forms are emailed directly to them from the online application. Instructions are included as to how the recommenders return the completed forms electronically.*
- A resume that documents the applicant's prior work experience, honors and awards received, and a summary of educational credentials.
- A brief statement explaining why the applicant seeks to earn this graduate certificate and a summary of previous experience with children or youth with disabilities.

B. Prior Degree Requirements

Candidates must hold a bachelor's degree in any academic field from an accredited college or university. Typically, our applicants have an undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher.

C. Transcripts

An unofficial transcript is required with the application. Applicants should visit the Registrar's page of their home institution (post-high school institutions only) to print an unofficial copy to save or scan for uploading. Do not mail official transcripts during the applicant stage. Please visit <http://grad.udel.edu/apply/transcripts/> for more detailed information.

D. Application Fee and Deadlines

A \$75 application fee is due upon receipt of the online application.

Admission decisions are made on a rolling basis throughout the year. Students may start in any academic term. Applicants must apply by December 15 for Spring or Winter admission and by April 1 for Fall or Summer admission.

E. University Statement

Admission to the graduate program is competitive. Those who meet stated requirements are not guaranteed admission, nor are those who fail to meet all of those requirements necessarily precluded from admission if they offer other appropriate strengths.

Part III. Academic

A. Course and Grade Requirements

The Graduate Certificate in Teaching Students with Disabilities requires satisfactory completion of five (5) graduate-level courses (15 credits) as listed below. Each certificate course must be completed with a grade no lower than a C. The overall GPA of the Graduate Certificate must be no lower than 3.0 for the Certificate to be awarded.

Candidates for the Graduate Certificate in Teaching Students with Disabilities **K-12 option** must complete the following 3-credit courses.

- EDUC 680: Educational Evaluation: Exceptional Children and Youth
- EDUC 757: Diagnosis and Instruction in Literacy
- EDUC 754: Special Education Instruction and Curriculum: Elementary **OR** EDUC 674: Special Education Instruction and Curriculum: Secondary
- EDUC 681: Techniques for Behavior Change and Positive Behavior Support
- One of the following:
 - EDUC 682: Current Issues in Special Education
 - EDUC 673: School-to-Adult: Life Transitions & Disability
 - EDUC 745: Collaborative Teaming in Special Education
 - EDUC 653: Assistive Technology: High Incidence Disabilities

Candidates for the Graduate Certificate in Teaching Students with Disabilities **Autism/Severe Disabilities option** must complete the following 3-credit courses.

- EDUC 624: Introduction to Autism and Severe Disabilities
- EDUC 625: Special Education Instruction/Curriculum: Autism/Severe Disabilities
- EDUC 626: Functional Communication for Individuals with Autism and Severe Disabilities
- EDUC 681: Techniques for Behavior Change and Positive Behavior Support
- EDUC 729: Behaviorally Based Teaching Practicum

B. Non-Registered Requirements

Candidates for the Certificate who are teaching under an emergency certification will be registered with the University's Alternate Routes to Teacher Certification (ARTC) office as required by the State of Delaware.

Candidates teaching under an emergency certification and who have no prior teaching certification are required to complete a non-credit teaching seminar provided by the ARTC office before registering for their first credit-bearing course.

Upon completion of the required coursework, to obtain the additional teaching certification from the state, candidates must

- pass a state-approved exam in special education (e.g., Praxis)
- submit the exam scores and their transcripts to the Delaware Department of Education

If a candidate was hired under emergency certification, in addition to the above they must also

submit the special education exam scores to the ARTC office along with copies of their official school evaluations (e.g., DTGSS) completed during the program.

C. Timeline for Completion

The Graduate Certificate in Teaching Students with Disabilities can be completed in less than two years on a part-time basis.

K-12 Option: The five courses for the K-12 option may be completed in a single year or in 1.5 years. Courses could be extended over two years if needed. Courses may be completed in any order.

A sample schedule for completing the certificate courses in one year includes:

- Fall - EDUC 680, EDUC 674; Winter - EDUC 673; Spring- EDUC 757, EDUC 681

A sample schedule for completing the certificate courses in 1.5 years includes:

- Fall - EDUC 674; Winter - EDUC 745; Spring - EDUC 757; Summer 1- EDUC 680; Fall- EDUC 681

Autism/Severe Disabilities Option: The five courses for the Autism/Severe Disabilities option may be completed in 1.5 years. Courses could be extended over two years if needed.

- EDUC 624, 625, and 626 are recommended but not required to be completed in sequence.
- EDUC 729 must be taken after completion of the other four courses.

A sample schedule for completing the Autism/Severe Disabilities courses in the recommended order in 1.5 years includes:

- Summer - EDUC 624; Fall - EDUC 625; Spring - EDUC 681; Summer 1 - EDUC 626; Fall - EDUC 729.

Part IV. Assessment Plan

In addition to monitoring student grades in each course, the SOE faculty collect student performance data on three course-related projects in each option:

- K-12: EDUC 681, EDUC 754 or 674, and EDUC 680
- Autism/Severe: EDUC 681, EDUC 625, and EDUC 729

These assessments are conducted for all master's level students in a certification pathway as part of the program accreditation process and reviewed on an annual basis. Student performance is also reviewed periodically relative to the Program Education Goals established for the M.Ed. in Teaching Students with Disabilities. The ARTC office also monitors the successful completion of Praxis exams and school-based supervisor evaluations (e.g., DTGSS).

Part V. General Information

A. Financial Aid

Because students in this program typically work full-time as teachers and take courses on a part-time basis they do not qualify for most forms of financial aid available through the University.

Certificate students who are Delaware teachers enrolled in the master's courses are charged the same reduced tuition rate that is applied to students in M.Ed.

The state of Delaware offers a limited number of partial scholarships (e.g., [Delaware Education Support Scholarship](#)). Some districts offer partial tuition reimbursement upon successful completion of a course. Students may only be eligible for federal financial aid if they chose to take two courses in a semester.

B. Advisement

Upon admission to the Certificate program, candidates will be assigned an academic adviser from among the program faculty and ARTC staff. Students should meet with their adviser prior to enrolling in courses to develop a program of study that meets all program requirements. Students should consult with their adviser to discuss any proposed changes to the planned program of study. Faculty advisers must approve or disapprove requests for course transfers, leaves of absence, and other requests related to a candidate's academic program.

C. Completion of Graduate Certificate

Students must submit a Completion of Graduate Certificate form, acquire the required signatures, and submit it to the Graduate College by the end of the free/drop add deadline at the beginning of the semester in which they register for the last course needed to complete the certificate. As needed, the Graduate College will record the grades for courses not yet graded in the semester that the certificate is completed.

D. Change of Classification from Certificate to Degree

Students who successfully complete the Graduate Certificate in Teaching Students with Disabilities are eligible to continue into the M.Ed. in Teaching Students with Disabilities. All 15 credits earned through the Certificate will automatically apply to the M.Ed. An application to the degree program is not required, if the oldest course taken as part of the Certificate was completed within the last five years.

To change status from a certificate student to a degree candidate, students must complete a Change of Classification Form for Graduate Students.

E. Continuous Registration and Leaves of Absence

Students are expected to enroll in at least one course each Fall and Spring semester in accordance with the University's policy on Continuous Registration. Students may request a leave of absence during a Fall or Spring semester for personal, medical or professional reasons by submitting a Leave of Absence form to their program adviser.

F. Transfer of Credits

Students who complete graduate credits with the classification of Graduate College Nondegree Student (GCND) at the University of Delaware prior to being admitted to the Certificate program may use a maximum of 9 graduate credits earned with this classification toward the Certificate. The course credits, grades, and quality points become a part of the student's academic record and grade point average. Credit can be transferred provided that: (a) the course was one of the required Certificate courses and (b) the course was taken within the last three years.

Students requesting transfer of graduate credits from another institution, must submit course descriptions and syllabi for review by program faculty. Up to 9 credits of coursework from another institution may be transferred if faculty deem the courses to be comparable to the required certificate courses.