Exceptional children are those who deviate so far from average in physical, intellectual, emotional, or social characteristics that they require highly specialized instruction and related services. The purpose of the M.Ed. program in Special Education is to prepare educational service providers of exceptional children in advanced training in academic and behavior management strategies. M.Ed. students are trained in behavior management and instructional design, implementation, and evaluation appropriate for effective work with children and youth who qualify for services for intellectual, behavioral, or physical disabilities at all age levels and degrees of severity. The purpose of the M.S. and Ph.D. programs is to prepare researchers and college and university teachers in areas encompassing the education of the children and youth who qualify for services for intellectual, behavioral and/or physical disabilities. The former program is professional in nature; the latter two, academic.

Admission Requirements

Applicants apply for admission to the program via the Graduate School application for admission (http://gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply). Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-300 Admissions (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies).

Applicants for master's and doctoral programs must present evidence of superior academic achievement, complete a personal statement, and provide professional references. Applications for the M.S. and Ph.D. programs must also present GRE verbal and quantitative test scores. Minimum GPA for master's and doctoral applicants are, respectively, 3.00 for M.Ed. and M.S., and 3.50 for Ph.D. Minimum GRE test scores are (verbal and quantitative combined): 290 for M.S., and 300 for Ph.D. Applicants for doctoral study must have had at least three years of relevant experience with special-needs children or youth. Exceptions to the admissions criteria may be made only for highly qualified students with special backgrounds, abilities, and interests. At the discretion of a graduate program, a student may be admitted provisionally for graduate study in a program without these scores.

The language of instruction at Penn State is English. English proficiency test scores (TOEFL/IELTS) may be required for international applicants. See GCAC-305 Admission Requirements for International Students (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-300/gcac-305-admission-requirements-international-students) for more information.
The communication and foreign language requirement for the Ph.D. degree is prescribed by each student’s Ph.D. committee. Minimum requirements for the Ph.D. degree include:

- 24 credits of research methods;
- 18 credits in a cognate area such as psychology, sociology, or child development; and
- 36 credits in education.

The student also must enroll in SPLED 500 each semester prior to successful completion of the comprehensive examinations. A qualifying examination is required after the first semester of full-time study; written and oral comprehensive examinations also are required. A student is required to complete the program within seven years from the date of successful completion of the qualifying examination.

## Dual-Titles

**Dual-Title M.Ed., M.S., and Ph.D. in Special Education and Comparative and International Education**

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-title-graduate-degree-programs).

### Admission Requirements

Students must apply and be admitted to the graduate program in Special Education and The Graduate School before they can apply for admission to the dual-title degree program. After admission to their primary program, students must apply for admission to and meet the admissions requirements of the Comparative and International Education dual-title program. Refer to the Admission Requirements section of the Comparative and International Education Bulletin page (http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/comparative-international-education). Doctoral students must be admitted into the dual-title degree program in Comparative and International Education prior to taking the qualifying examination in their primary graduate program.

### Degree Requirements

To qualify for the dual-title degree, students must satisfy the degree requirements for the degree they are enrolled in Special Education. In addition, students must complete the degree requirements for the dual-title in Comparative and International Education, listed on the Comparative and International Education Bulletin page (http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/comparative-international-education).

The qualifying examination committee for the dual-title Ph.D. degree will be composed of Graduate Faculty from Special Education and must include at least one Graduate Faculty member from the Comparative and International Education program. Faculty members who hold appointments in both programs’ Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. There will be a single qualifying examination, containing elements of both Special Education and Comparative and International Education. Dual-title graduate degree students may require an additional semester to fulfill requirements for both areas of study and, therefore, the qualifying examination may be delayed one semester beyond the normal period allowable.

In addition to the general Graduate Council requirements for Ph.D. committees (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/phd-dissertation-committee-formation), the Ph.D. committee of a Special Education and Comparative and International Education dual-title Ph.D. student must include at least one member of the Comparative and International Education Graduate Faculty. Faculty members who hold appointments in both programs’ Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. If the chair of the Ph.D. committee is not also a member of the Graduate Faculty in Comparative and International Education, the member of the committee representing Comparative and International Education must be appointed as co-chair. The Comparative and International Education representative on the student’s Ph.D. committee will develop questions for and participate in the evaluation of the comprehensive examination.

Students in the dual-title program are required to write and orally defend a dissertation on a topic that is approved in advance by their Ph.D. committee and reflects their original research and education in Special Education and Comparative and International Education. Upon completion of the doctoral dissertation, the candidate must pass a final oral examination (the dissertation defense) to earn the Ph.D. degree. The dissertation must be accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School.

## Student Aid

Graduate assistantships available to students in this program and other forms of student aid are described in the Tuition & Funding (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-funding) section of The Graduate School’s website. Students on graduate assistantships must adhere to the course load limits (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gsad-gsad-900-gsad-901-graduate-assistants) set by The Graduate School.

The following award typically has been available to graduate students in this program:

**U.S. Office of Education Assistantships or Traineeships in Special Education**

Open to graduate students being prepared as leadership personnel in special education; stipend varies, depending on conditions of existing grants. Other graduate assistantships also may be available. Apply to the Graduate Admissions Committee, 125D CEDAR Building.

World Campus students in graduate degree programs may be eligible for financial aid. Refer to the Tuition and Financial Aid section (http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/tuition-and-financial-aid) of the World Campus website for more information.

## Courses

Graduate courses carry numbers from 500 to 699 and 800 to 899. Advanced undergraduate courses numbered between 400 and 499 may be used to meet some graduate degree requirements when taken by graduate students. Courses below the 400 level may not. A graduate student may register for or audit these courses in order to make up deficiencies or to fill in gaps in previous education but not to meet requirements for an advanced degree.

Special Education (SPLED) Course List (https://bulletins.psu.edu/university-course-descriptions/graduate/spled)
Contact

Campus
University Park

Graduate Program Head
Mary Catherine Scheeler

Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Professor-in-Charge (PIC)
Mary Catherine Scheeler

Program Contact
Jennifer L Farkus
125G CEDAR Bldg
University Park PA 16802
jlf5261@psu.edu
(814) 863-4452

Program Website
View (http://ed.psu.edu/epcse/special-education/special-education)

Campus
World Campus

Graduate Program Head
Mary Catherine Scheeler

Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Professor-in-Charge (PIC)
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