

# **SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT HANDBOOK GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

**M.S. SPECIAL EDUCATION DEGREE, EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTICIAN PROGRAM,  
& LOW-INCIDENCE DISABILITIES TRANSCRIPTED CERTIFICATE PROGRAM  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-2025**

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*This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the Graduate Catalog: <http://catalog.tamucc.edu/index.php> and the College of Graduate Studies Handbook [http://gradcollege.tamucc.edu/current\\_students/masters\\_students.html](http://gradcollege.tamucc.edu/current_students/masters_students.html). Last Revised August, 2024.*

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## SECTION I. MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM FACULTY

Welcome to the Special Education program in the College of Education and Human Development (COEHD) at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMUCC)!

Our M.S. in Special Education degree provides students with an eclectic program in special education that interfaces theory and pedagogy from both the special education and emergent bilingual education fields. Students receive specialized training that is unique and specific to the needs of students receiving special education services, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Students learn instructional methodology to address the needs of students with high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities across instructional domains including: cognitive, communicative, behavioral, social, and functional. Students also receive training in consultation, collaboration, and family system support.

In addition to offering an M.S. in Special Education degree, we also offer programs for those pursuing the Educational Diagnostician Certification and/or a Low-Incidence Disabilities (LID) Transcribed Certificate. In addition, students seeking initial teacher certification can pursue the MS in Special Education along with the Alternative Certification of Educators (ACE).

The Educational Diagnostician certificate program can be taken concurrently with the M.S. Special Education degree program. This coursework prepares students to assess, diagnose, and support instructional planning for students referred to special education.

To be certified as an Educational Diagnostician, the student must have a master's degree from an accredited institution, have three creditable years of teaching experience as a classroom teacher, and pass the required TExES #253 exam.

The LID Transcribed Certificate is an interdisciplinary program that prepares graduate students to collaboratively serve students with significant support needs through evidence-based practices. This 3-course certificate is offered to educators in the field of special education and other related disciplines, such as: counseling, psychology, general education, and education administration.

We encourage you to engage fully in your learning experience. Collaborate with classmates, connect with your instructors, and intentionally participate in the many activities and opportunities that you will encounter during your professional journey. We look forward to working with you to pursue your educational goals!

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### SECTION III. LEARNING OUTCOMES

One of the primary goals of the M.S. in Special Education degree is to provide students with an eclectic program in special education that interfaces theory and pedagogy from both the special education and emergent bilingual education fields. Students receive specialized training that is unique and specific to the needs of students receiving special education services, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Students learn instructional methodology to address the needs of students with high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities. After successful completion of the program, our students will:

- demonstrate knowledge of the field of special education;
- plan and develop effective instructional interventions responsive to the unique needs of individual learners;
- plan and implement a behavior intervention plan to provide behavioral supports aligned with individual needs; and
- demonstrate knowledge and skills needed to provide culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction to students with disabilities.



## SECTION IV. APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

### **Application Requirements**

Applicants should adhere to following deadlines:

Domestic Students

<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer I</b>	<b>Summer II</b>
August 1	November 15	May 11	June 30

International Students

<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer I</b>	<b>Summer II</b>
June 15	September 1	February 1	February 1

Complete Application:

- Apply for Admission via [Apply Texas Application](#)
- An applicant may defer admission to an earlier/later semester. Applications are valid for one year. One deferral is allowed per application.

Application Fee:

- \$50 for US citizen, \$70 for International Students
  - Pay during application process
  - Pay fee online: [Pay Online](#)
  - Pay fee on campus to [Business Office](#)

Please Note: Applicants who wish to apply for a different program will be required to submit a new application. The application processing fee is required for each application submitted.

Additional International Applicant Requirements:

- Copy of current Visa (if applicable)
- English Language Proficiency. TAMUCC currently accepts the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) within the last 2 years:
  - Official TOEFL score minimum paper-based score of 550 or internet-based score of 79-80
  - Official IELTS score minimum 6.5

## **Program Admission**

### **Graduate Admissions**

To be admitted to a program of graduate study, an applicant must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education in the United States or an equivalent foreign institution. *(Note: The requirement to hold a bachelor's degree does not apply to students enrolling in the RN-MSN option in nursing.)* Decisions concerning admission to graduate study are based on all admission criteria. To be considered for a graduate program, a minimum last 60-hour GPA of 2.5 is required. Some programs may have higher GPA requirements; review specific program information in the graduate catalog or elsewhere in this handbook. All applications must be made via the following website: <http://gradschool.tamucc.edu>. For complete information, see the Catalog, [Graduate Admissions section](#).

#### General Requirements:

- Graduate Students in Special Education should have a GPA of 3.0 or above or pursue conditional admittance.
- Official transcripts from all undergraduate and graduate course work taken at any accredited college or University attended (Foreign College credits/transcripts require an official foreign evaluation.) TAMU-CC transcript is not required.
- Essay (Approximately 300-400 words in length which includes information about their reasons for pursuing graduate study and for choosing this specific graduate program).

\*Please allow 3-5 business days to receive Student ID before submitting additional supporting documents.

Submit all supporting documents online.

### **Admission Review Process/Timeline**

Degree and certification program applications are reviewed by program faculty. Admission decisions are typically made within one week of the program's receipt of application materials.

### **Enrollment Status**

Graduate students should be aware of their enrollment status, as it may impact financial aid, veteran's benefits, or other important aspects of graduate life. In addition, international students have specific requirements about enrollment status. Enrollment status for graduate students is as follows:

Full-time graduate student:

Fall or spring term = 9 hours

Combined summer terms = 6 hours



(5) have three creditable years of experience as a classroom teacher, as defined in Chapter 153, Subchapter CC, of this title (relating to Commissioner's Rules on Creditable Years of Service) and the Texas Education Code, §5.001(2).

*Source: The provisions of this §239.84 adopted to be effective April 28, 2002, 27 TexReg 3351; amended to be effective December 23, 2009, 34 TexReg 9201; amended to be effective December 21, 2017, 42 TexReg*

In addition to successful completion of all courses required for graduation, all students are required to successfully complete a 160 clock-hour practicum experience. Prior to the school field experience, students will need to submit to a criminal background check as required by each school district.

Prior to taking the state #253 Educational Diagnostician Certification exam, students are required to work with faculty and the COEHD Certification Office in preparation for the exam.

### **Low-Incidence Disabilities Transcribed Certificate**

The LID Transcribed Certificate is an interdisciplinary program which prepares graduate students to address and support students with significant support needs through evidence-based practices. This 3-course certificate is offered to educators in the field of special education and other related disciplines, such as: counseling, psychology, general education, and education administration.

To receive a LID transcribed certificate, the student must complete 9 semester hours of sequential coursework consisting of the following 3 courses in sequence:

- SPED 5319 - Introduction to Low-Incidence Disabilities
- SPED 5320 - Application of Learning Principles
- SPED 5321 - Supporting Access for Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities

### **Degree Plan**

All M.S. Special Education students must successfully complete no less than 36 semester credit hours to include: 9 semester credit hours of Foundation Courses, 15-21 (depending on past course work) semester credit hours of Core Courses including a field-based experience, and 6-12 semester credit hours of Elective Courses which can include the educational diagnostician certification option (if eligible) and/or the low-incidence disabilities transcribed certificate option.

	<b>Foundation Courses</b>	<b>SCH 9</b>
EDFN 5301	Introduction to Research	3
BIEM 5345 or BIEM 5346	Developmental Linguistics or Pedagogic Implications of Bilingual-ESL	3
SPED 5385	Emergent Bilinguals and Special Education	3
	<b>Core Courses</b>	<b>SCH 15-21</b>
SPED 5315*	Individuals with Exceptionalities in the Schools	3
SPED 5320**	Application of Learning Principles	3
SPED 5340	Individuals with Multiple Disabilities	3
SPED 5380	Behavior Supports and Interventions for Students with Disabilities	3
SPED 5386	Strategic Reading and Language Instruction for Students with High- Incidence Disabilities	3
SPED 5387	Strategic Math and Content Area Instruction for Students with High- Incidence Disabilities	3
SPED 5397 (for non-ed diag students)	Special Education Field Experience	3
SPED 5399 (for ed diag students)	Individualized Programs for Students with Disabilities: Practicum	4
	<b>Electives</b>	<b>SCH 6-12</b>
	Students may choose the educational diagnostician coursework, the low- incidence disabilities certificate, and/or other relevant electives.	
<b>Ed Diag. Cert. Courses</b>		
SPED 5311	Advanced Assessment	3
CNEP 5371	Psychometrics	3
CNEP 5374	Individual Intelligence Testing	3
<b>LID Tran. Cert. Courses</b>		
SPED 5319	Introduction to Low-Incidence Disabilities	3
SPED 5321	Supporting Access for Students with Low- Incidence Disabilities	3

Educational Diagnostician Certificate Only:

	<b>Special Education &amp; Foundation Courses</b>	<b>SCH 12-18</b>
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BIEM 5345 or BIEM 5346	Developmental Linguistics Pedagogic Implications of Bilingual-ESL	3
SPED 5315*	Individuals with Exceptionalities in the Schools	3
SPED 5320**	Application of Learning Principles	3
SPED 5380	Behavior Supports and Interventions for Students with Disabilities	3
SPED 5386***	Strategic Reading and Language Instruction for Students with High- Incidence Disabilities	3
SPED 5387***	Strategic Math and Content Area Instruction for Students with High- Incidence Disabilities	3
	<b>Educational Diagnostician Courses</b>	<b>SCH 15</b>
SPED 5311	Advanced Assessment	3
SPED 5399	Individualized Programs for Students with Disabilities: Practicum	4
CNEP 5371	Psychometrics	3
CNEP 5374	Individual Intelligence Testing	3

- \* This requirement may be waived for currently certified special education teachers and those with a previously earned degree in special education, if deemed appropriate after consultation with the faculty advisor.
- \*\* If not pursuing the LID transcribed certificate option, SPED 5320 may be waived if student took SPED 3335 or 4335 as an undergraduate.
- \*\*\* Candidates will take either SPED 5386 or SPED 5387 based upon expertise and faculty advisor recommendation.

Electives. Elective courses are to be selected in consultation with faculty advisor.

Ed. Diag. Cert. SPED 5311 requires the following prerequisites: CNEP 5371 & CNEP 5374;

SPED 5399 requires the following prerequisites: CNEP 5371, CNEP 5374, SPED 5311, SPED 5315 (as appropriate), SPED 5386 OR SPED 5387.

LID Cert. SPED 5319, SPED 5320, and SPED 5321 (in sequence) are required for the LID Transcribed Certificate.

COURSEWORK MUST BE NO MORE THAN SEVEN (7) YEARS OLD.

### **Course Sequence**

The M.S. in Special Education program consists of a minimum of 36 semester credit hours. Students may pursue the Educational Diagnostician certificate (must meet TEA requirements), the Low-Incidence Disabilities (LID) transcribed certificate, or choose other relevant electives – in consultation with their advisor - as part of their

specially designed degree plan. Students must work with their faculty advisor to develop the degree plan scope and sequence.

The following course schedule is tentative. Course offerings may vary by semester. Check the catalog each semester for course offerings and additional information.

	<b>Foundation Courses</b> 9 Semester Credit Hours	<b>SCH</b>	<b>FA</b>	<b>SPR</b>	<b>SU I</b>	<b>SU II</b>
EDFN 5301	Introduction to Research	3	X	X	X	
BIEM 5345 or BIEM 5346	Developmental Linguistics Pedagogic Implications of Bilingual-ESL	3		X		X
ERST 5302	Studies of Equality in Educational Opportunities	3	X		X	
SPED 5385	Emergent Bilinguals and Special Education	3				X
	<b>Core Courses</b> 15-21 Semester Credit Hours	<b>SCH</b>				
SPED 5315*	Individuals with Exceptionalities in the Schools	3	X	X		
SPED 5320	Application of Learning Principles	3		X		
SPED 5380	Behavioral Interventions and Supports for Students with Disabilities	3		X		
SPED 5386	Strategic Reading and Language Instruction for Students with High- Incidence Disabilities	3	X			
SPED 5387	Strategic Math and Content Area Instruction for Students with High-Incidence Disabilities	3		X		
SPED 5397	Special Education Field Experience	3		X		
SPED 5399	Individualized Programs for Students with Disabilities: Practicum	4	X			X
	<b>Program Electives</b> <b>6-12 Semester Credit Hours</b>	<b>SCH</b>				
	Students may choose the educational diag coursework, the low-incidence disabilities					

	certificate, and/or other relevant electives.					
<b>Ed Diag. Cert. Courses</b>						
SPED 5311	Advanced Assessment	3		X		
CNEP 5371	Psychometrics	3	X	X		
CNEP 5374	Individual Intelligence Testing	3	X			
<b>LID Cert. Courses</b>						
SPED 5319	Introduction to Low-Incidence Disabilities	3	X			
SPED 5321	Supporting Access for Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities	3			X	

**Exit Requirements**

Students pursuing the M.S. in Special Education must be successful in completing the Benchmark Assessments as specified in each course syllabus.

Students are also required to complete a field-based course and pass a comprehensive written examination (multiple-choice and essay) taken during their final semester of enrollment.

Any student seeking state certification, must complete a test preparation process under the supervision of program faculty in collaboration with the Certification Office.

**General Information**

**Continuation of Enrollment**

The University does not have a continuous enrollment policy for master’s students. However, students should be aware of their own program’s requirements, which may differ from general University requirements. Master’s students should also know that if they do not attend for two years, they will be required to reapply to the University. Students should consider applying for a leave of absence (see below), especially if the time-to-degree and recency of credits requirements will be impacted by a needed absence.

**Ethical Standards Specific to the Program**

The program adheres to the standards established by the Texas Education Agency and the Council for Exceptional Children. The MS in Special Education Standards Matrix provides detailed information related to compliance with these standards.

### **Leave of Absence**

Students experiencing life changing or catastrophic events should consult with their program coordinator and/or department chair and request a [Leave of Absence](#) in writing from the College of Graduate Studies using the [Request for Leave of Absence form](#). A student who is in good standing may petition for a leave of absence of no more than two full academic terms. The maximum number of leave of absence requests permitted in a program is two. A request for a leave of absence requires approval in advance by the faculty advisor, Program Coordinator, College Dean, and Graduate Dean. If the Graduate Dean approves the petition, the registration requirement is set aside during the period of time of the leave. Students should be aware that leaves of absences require suspension of all activities associated pursuit of the degree. See the catalog for more information.

### **Maximum Course Load**

Graduate students may not register for more than 12 hours in a regular semester, 6 hours in a single session of summer school, or 12 hours in the combined summer session (not including Maymester) without the approval of the appropriate college dean. See the [Maximum Course Load](#) section in the catalog.

### **Repetition of a Course**

There are specific policies about repeating courses for higher grades, including the provision that graduate students may retake a maximum of two courses during graduate study at the University. Each course may be repeated only once. Some courses may be repeated for multiple credit if those courses are so designated in the course description and approved by the faculty or program advisor as designated by their college. Complete catalog information can be found in the [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog.

### **Time Limit to Degree**

The requirements for a master's degree at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi must be completed within seven years subsequent to admission to the program. The seven-year period begins the first semester of enrollment and is calculated from the date of degree conferral. Credit that is more than seven years old will not be counted toward a master's degree. Exceptions will require **strong** justification in writing from the student requesting the exception as well as submission of a revalidation plan. Credits earned at another university are not eligible for an exception. Written approval from the major department chairperson, the dean of the college offering the degree, the Graduate Dean, and the Provost are required. See the revalidation process below.

### **Revalidation of Courses Beyond Degree Time Limit**

In order to revalidate dated courses, students should carefully attend to information in the catalog (see [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog. Revalidation requests should be made using the [Revalidation Request Form](#). The request form must be accompanied by a written justification, updated degree plan, and documentation to be used for revalidation. All revalidation requests and plans must be approved by the student's advisor, department chair, academic college Dean, Graduate Dean, and Provost.

If your program has shorter time-to-degree limits, it may impact recency of credit and other timelines. See program information in this handbook or seek information from your Program Coordinator.

### **Academic Requirements for Graduate Work**

**Good Standing.** Graduate Students, including degree-seeking, certificate-seeking, and non-degree-seeking students are considered in “good academic standing” if they maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA) on all graduate course work and earn a grade of S (Satisfactory), IP (In Progress), or CR (Credit) on all course work that does not affect GPA. A higher GPA may be required by some programs. In such cases, the higher standard will be substituted for 3.0 in all other matters related to good academic standing. A complete discussion of academic requirements including but not limited to scholastic probation and enforced withdrawal can be found in the [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog. For information regarding the financial impact of scholastic probation and enforced withdrawal, see the [Financial Assistance Suspension Policy](#) in the Tuition, Fees, & Financial Assistance section of the catalog.

### **Academic Integrity**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, which include but are not limited to illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, plagiarism, or collusion in any of these behaviors. All students should familiarize themselves with the full Academic Integrity Policy as well as the processes and procedures used to address violations thereof. You can find additional information in the [Academic Integrity](#) section of the catalog. Students can also access University Rules and Procedures [13.02.99.C0.04](#): Student Academic Misconduct Cases.

## **SECTION VI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Student Development**

**Student Organizations.** Students are encouraged to fully participate in our University organizations and professional field. Our University hosts Chapter #328 of the [Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society](#). The [Graduate Resource and Opportunity Workspace \(GROW\)](#), through the College of Graduate Studies, provides professional development activities, resources, and events for graduate students.

**Program/College Awards.** The College of Graduate Studies sponsors annual awards including the Outstanding Master’s Student Award.

**Conferences to Attend.** Students are encouraged to attend and present at local, state and national conferences. Conference attendance and proposal submissions are discussed and supported throughout the program courses. Funding support may be available.

**Campus Resources.** Students are encouraged to take advantage of Student Health Services and Counseling Services available on campus.



*We are looking forward to our journey together!*