The Special Education master’s degree program at Western Illinois University provides comprehensive graduate programming for students desiring professional careers in special education. Students completing their master’s degrees usually move on to positions as classroom, consultant, or inclusion teachers of children and adolescents with varying disabilities in schools, clinics, and residential facilities. The Special Education graduate program provides opportunities for two groups of students: (1) those with general education certification who wish to also earn special education certification and (2) those with special education certification who wish to increase their skills through advanced study. The program integrates the needs of Illinois and Iowa certificate requirements in order to serve students from both sides of the river in the Quad Cities. Each degree candidate completes an action research project that demonstrates his or her ability to impact his or her students’ learning, classroom, and school.

Program Location: Quad Cities

Admission Requirements

Candidates for the Master of Science in Special Education degree program must meet the criteria for admission to the WIU School of Graduate Studies. In addition, candidates must have a letter of intent, a valid U.S. teaching license, and a cumulative grade point average of 2.75, or 3.0 in the last two years. The document is a formal, typed letter of intent that presents your reasons for seeking a master’s degree in Special Education, and your expectations for how this degree will contribute to your professional career. This letter must be mailed directly to the School of Graduate Studies, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455-1390.

The Departmental Graduate Committee will evaluate all application materials to make a decision on admission. Upon admission to the program, students will be assigned an advisor to help them design a graduate degree plan.

Prior to admission, students need to complete the following course requirements if they were not included in the undergraduate program that led to the teaching certificate that they possess:

- A survey course in exceptional individuals
- A course in the teaching of reading
- A course in the teaching of mathematics
- A course in the use of computer technology in the classroom

Degree Requirements

Face-to-face courses are offered on the Quad Cities campus, with several courses available in an online format. Completion of 36 or 37 semester hours (sht) of graduate credit within six years of the first course is required for this program. Twenty-one semester hours of the program include the following core requirements: Self-Determination and Independence, Leadership in Collaboration, Special Education Law and Supervision, Action Research in Education, Action Research Project, Graduate Field Work, and Methods of Research. In addition to the core courses, each candidate must choose one of the following tracks: Track I or Track II.

Track I

This 16-sht track is designed for individuals with an elementary or secondary general education teaching certificate or endorsement but no endorsement in special education who are seeking either professional development or a special education endorsement in Illinois or Iowa. Completion of the core requirements, plus the following, is required: Behavior Intervention, Psychoeducational Assessment, and Characteristics of Learners with Mild/Moderate Disabilities. Two of the following methods courses are also required: Instructional Methods: Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Instructional Methods: Individuals with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders, Instructional Methods: Learning Disabilities, Instructional Methods: Mild/Moderate Disabilities K-6, Instructional Methods: Mild/Moderate Disabilities 7-12, and Instructional Methods: Autism and Language Disorders.

Track II

This 15-sht track is designed for teachers with one or more certifications/endorsements in special education who are seeking professional advancement or additional endorsements in Iowa. Completion of the core requirements, plus the following, are required: Diagnostic Assessment for Program Planning, Seminar in Curriculum, and Advanced Behavior Intervention. Two of the following methods courses are also required: Instructional Methods: Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Instructional Methods: Emotional/Behavioral Disorders, Instructional Methods: Learning Disabilities, Instructional Methods: Mild/Moderate Disabilities K-6, Instructional Methods: Mild/Moderate Disabilities 7-12, and Instructional Methods: Autism and Language Disorders.

Faculty Expertise

Special Education faculty hold advanced degrees from notable universities across the United States. They are all experienced special education classroom teachers as well. They engage in a wide variety of scholarly activities that enhance their teaching: collaboration with local education agencies; research; professional presentations; publishing in special education and general education journals, along with authorship of books and book chapters; and grant writing/project management. Several have won teaching, technology, and/or research awards.
**Financial Assistance**

A limited number of graduate assistantships, which include a tuition waiver and a monthly stipend, are available for qualified full-time students. Graduate assistants work approximately 20 hours per week. Applications are available from the School of Graduate Studies. Call (309) 298-1806 or visit wiu.edu/grad to obtain the necessary form.

In addition, financial assistance opportunities are available for minority graduate students. Application materials and detailed program descriptions are available from the School of Graduate Studies.

“Small class sizes, comfortable class environments that allow you to be yourself, and knowledgeable professors who are current with academic trends and information—professors who care, are there to help and guide you toward your academic goals. I would choose WIU all over again (even a third time!).”

— Amber Wetzel, MSEd, 2013

**Featured Alum**

“Choosing the WIU-QC Special Education Graduate Program is a logical choice for any teacher wishing to expand their knowledge base and marketability in what is becoming an overwhelmingly competitive career field. My professors are knowledgeable, highly experienced, and approachable, and I feel as though all of my professors are personally invested in my professional success.”

— Kelly Jacoby, 2013

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**Contact Information**

For admissions process and general program information, contact:

School of Graduate Studies  
Western Illinois University  
1 University Circle  
Macomb, IL 61455  
(309) 298-1806  
Toll-free: (877) WIU GRAD  
Grad-Office@wiu.edu  
wiu.edu/grad

For specific program questions, contact:

Associate Professor Christine Anderson, graduate coordinator  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
Western Illinois University  
1 University Circle  
Macomb, IL 61455  
(309) 762-9481  
CJ-Anderson2@wiu.edu  
wiu.edu/curriculum_and_instruction.