

# Master of Science in Education in Special Education



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 to serve students from both sides of the river in the Quad Cities. Each degree candidate completes an action research project to demonstrate his or her ability to impact students' learning, classroom and school.

## Admission Requirements

Candidates for the Master of Science in Special Education degree program at Western Illinois University 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 the reasons for seeking a master's degree in Special Education, and the expectations for how this degree will contribute to a professional career. This letter must be mailed directly to the School of Graduate Studies, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455-1390.

The School of Education graduate committee will evaluate all application materials to make an admission decision. Upon admission to the program, students are assigned an advisor to help 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 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

All courses are now available online. Completion of 37 semester hours (SH) of graduate credit, within six years of the first course, is required for this program. Twenty-eight semester hours of the program include the following core requirements:

Self-Determination and Independence, Graduate Field Work in Special Education, Special Education Law and Supervision, Leadership in Collaboration, Action Research in Education, Action Research Project and Methods of Research. In addition to the core courses, each candidate must choose one of the following tracks:

### Track I

This 9-SH track is designed for individuals with an elementary or secondary general education 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: Characteristics with Mild/Moderate Disabilities. In addition, two of the following methods courses are also required: Instructional Methods: Individuals with Moderate/Severe Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Instructional Methods: Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Instructional Methods: Individuals with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders, Instructional Methods: Individuals with Learning Disabilities, Instructional Methods for K-6 Learners with Disabilities, Instructional Methods for Secondary Learners with Disabilities and Methods in Autism and Language Disorders.

### Track II

This 9-SH track is designed for teachers with one or more endorsements in special education who are seeking professional advancement or additional endorsements in Iowa. Completion of the core requirements, plus two of the following, are required: Instructional Methods: Individuals with Moderate/Severe Intellectual and Developmental

**Program Location:**  
Online

## Contact Information

### Questions about the program:

School of Education  
Professor Christine Anderson,  
graduate coordinator  
(309) 762-9481  
CJ-Anderson2@wiu.edu  
wiu.edu/curriculum

### General admission questions:

School of Graduate Studies  
(309) 298-1806 or (877) WIU GRAD  
Grad-Office@wiu.edu  
wiu.edu/grad

Disabilities, Instructional Methods: Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Instructional Methods: Individuals with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders, Instructional Methods: Individuals with Learning Disabilities, Instructional Methods for K-6 Learners with Disabilities, Instructional Methods for Secondary Learners with Disabilities and Methods in Autism and Language Disorders. In addition, candidates must choose one graduate-level elective.

## Faculty Expertise

WIU's 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 including 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](http://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 WIU School of Graduate Studies.

*Western Illinois University is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity employer with a strong commitment to diversity. In that spirit, we are particularly interested in receiving applications from a broad spectrum of people, including, but not limited to, minorities, women and individuals with disabilities. WIU has a non-discrimination policy that includes sex, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability and veteran status.*



## Featured Alum

*“Attending Western Illinois University was a life-changing experience for me. I was taught by knowledgeable professors who invested themselves in my life. They supported me every step of the way and, without them cheering me on, I would not have become the successful professional I am today.”*

– Rachel Runge-Cuppy, MS Ed '15

*“I would highly recommend the special education graduate degree program at Western Illinois University. Thanks to the rigorous program, and the knowledgeable and highly qualified professors, I was able to obtain my LBS1 license. The tools that the program and professors at Western gave me have enabled and prepared me to become a successful and confident special education teacher.”*

– Kristin Fox, LBS1 Endorsement recipient

*“Since graduating in May '15, I have presented at the Raising Student Achievement conference in St. Charles, IL, student achievement conference at Drake University and a poster presentation at MLSBD—all centering on my research project of increasing positive behavior in students by having a positive relationship with parents. I have also furthered my career by accepting a position as an instructional coach at Bettendorf High school. I have begun implementing standards-based IEPs in my district, and I am training a cohort in Bettendorf in how to write and progress monitor a standards based IEP with the intent to implement standards-based IEPs district wide.”*

– Beth Thompson, MS Ed '15