

SPECIAL EDUCATION, BSE

HOW TO GET IN

PROGRAM ADMISSION OVERVIEW

Undergraduate students generally apply to the professional part of the Special Education degree program in their sophomore year. Selection is made during the spring semester. Currently, students are admitted to the program once a year, effective for the summer following selection. Once admitted, students typically spend four semesters completing their remaining coursework.

Information about application procedures for the Elementary-Special Education dual teacher certification option is available in the Elementary Education (<http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/education/curriculum-instruction/elementary-education-bse/>) section of the Guide.

ENTERING THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

NEW AND CURRENT UW–MADISON STUDENTS

New freshmen and transfer students interested in special education are admitted directly to the School of Education with a “pre-professional” classification. This classification indicates that a student is interested in a program offered by the school, but has not applied and been admitted to the professional program. Students interested in special education receive the “pre-professional” classification of PSR.

On-campus students wishing to be admitted to the school while working on eligibility requirements and application can apply for admission to the school by completing a Pre-Professional Application (<http://www.education.wisc.edu/soe/academics/undergraduate-students/academic-program-admission/>). A minimum GPA of 2.5, based on UW–Madison coursework, is required to transfer into the school. This GPA may be modified by the Last 60 Credits rule (detailed below (p.)). It is not necessary to be a “pre-professional” student before applying to a professional program.

It is strongly recommended that students interested in a School of Education program meet with an academic advisor in the School of Education Student Services office, 139 Education Building, 1000 Bascom Mall. Students may call 608-262-1651 to schedule an appointment with an advisor.

PROSPECTIVE TRANSFER STUDENTS

Applicants not already enrolled on the UW–Madison campus must be admissible to the University to enroll in a School of Education program. Admission to UW–Madison requires a separate application and admission process. See UW–Madison Office of Admissions and Recruitment (<http://admissions.wisc.edu/>) for application information. Prospective transfer students are strongly advised to meet with an advisor in the School of Education Student Services office in advance of their application; to schedule, call 608-262-1651.

STUDENTS WITH A PREVIOUS DEGREE

Prospective applicants who already hold an undergraduate degree are strongly encouraged to meet with an advisor in the

School of Education Student Services office in advance of their application. Consultations with advisors are available in person or via telephone; to schedule, call 608-262-1651.

Applicants who already hold an undergraduate degree are admitted to the School of Education as either an *Education Special student* or a *second degree student*, depending on their interests and academic background. Admission as an Education Special student indicates that the student has an interest in pursuing certification in a subject area studied during the initial degree; another degree is not awarded for this “certification only” coursework. Second degree students are seeking a second, unrelated degree from the School of Education, which may, or may not, include teacher certification. Candidates for limited enrollment programs must meet all admission eligibility requirements for the program and must compete with the eligible applicants for program admission. More information is available here (<http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/education/#policiesandregulationstext>).

APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

Certification to teach special education requires that a student be admitted into the professional part of the degree program. The School of Education admits students into the special education program one a year, effective for summer following selection. Resources limit the number of students who can be served by the UW–Madison Special Education Teacher Education Program. In recent years the program has been able to accommodate all qualified applicants; however, if the number of qualified applicants exceeds program resources, admission will become limited and competitive. If this happens, meeting or surpassing the minimum eligibility criteria will not guarantee admission.

PROGRAM ADMISSION ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Requirements and selection criteria may be modified from one application/admission period to the next. Any changes to these criteria may occur up until the application period begins. Potential applicants should consult the School of Education’s Undergraduate Admissions (<http://www.education.wisc.edu/soe/academics/undergraduate-students/academic-program-admission/>) page for application deadlines and detailed information regarding current eligibility requirements and selection criteria prior to submitting an application.

To be eligible for admission to the professional program, applicants must:

- complete at least 40 transferable college-level credits by the end of the fall semester before application.
- successfully complete RP & SE 300 Individuals with Disabilities (3 cr) by the end of the summer semester of the application year.
- earn a minimum 2.5 grade point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale on all transferable college-level coursework attempted.¹
- submit all program application form(s), transcripts, and other related application materials by the application deadline specified on the School of Education’s Undergraduate Admissions (<http://www.education.wisc.edu/soe/academics/undergraduate-students/academic-program-admission/>) page.
- Note: In previous years, applicants to teacher education programs were required to submit scores from one of the following exams: ACT, SAT, Praxis I/PPST, Praxis Core, or GRE. Under emergency rules announced by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, no applicants need to submit scores for any exam as a component of their application to this

program. The exam requirement was officially removed by the School of Education on November 15, 2017.

¹ A comprehensive cumulative GPA of all college-level, transferrable coursework attempted on both the UW–Madison campus coursework and coursework taken at any other colleges or universities may be calculated for the exclusive purpose of establishing an applicant's eligibility for consideration. Both the comprehensive cumulative GPA and the comprehensive cumulative GPA based on a student's last 60 credits may be calculated. See Last 60 Credits Rule (detailed below). If admitted, students must earn the minimum cumulative GPA for UW–Madison coursework established by their program and the School of Education each semester after admission.

Last 60 Credits Rule

Two grade point averages will be calculated to determine candidates' eligibility for program consideration. GPAs will be calculated using

- all transferable college level coursework attempted, and
- the last 60 credits attempted.

The higher GPA of these two will be used for purposes of determining eligibility. If fewer than 60 credits have been attempted, all credits will be used to calculate the GPA. Graded graduate coursework will also be used in all GPA calculations. ("Attempted" coursework indicates coursework for which a grade has been earned.) More information on this rule is available here (<http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/education/#policiesandregulationstext>).

PROGRAM SELECTION CRITERIA

The special education faculty will review all completed applications that meet eligibility criteria. When reviewing an application, special education faculty want to learn as much about the applicant as possible and will make every effort to take into account the whole person. Applicants are encouraged to provide, in writing, whatever they would want to share in a face-to-face interview.

The selection committee members will consider several factors when selecting students for the program. Although the grade point average (GPA) is considered an important indicator of success, it is not the only basis on which applicants will be selected for admission. Trends in the applicant's grades, difficulty of course load, and outside work load will be considered (see factors 1, 2, and 3 below).

In addition to the GPA, faculty will consider the following factors:

- **College grading and course selection pattern.** Transcripts will be examined individually. Account will be taken whether an applicant has clearly followed an unusually easy or difficult pattern of courses or if the GPA reflects a poor grade in an exceptionally difficult subject area.
- **Trends of college grades.** An applicant who started very poorly or showed a decline in their early phases of college, but performed strongly in later college years, may be judged more favorably than another with the same GPA but level or declining record.
- **Diversity of experience or background.** Work/life experience, college activity, political activity, and other experiences or background that adds a diverse perspective to the special education student body may work in the applicant's favor.

Volunteer or paid work with people with disabilities will be taken into account in the selection process. Volunteer or paid work with people from a background different than the applicant's may also be taken into account in the selection process.

- **Writing sample (Statement of Purpose).** Application materials must include an essay in which the applicant gives reasons for becoming a special education teacher. Writing is so important in the professional life of teachers and in the teacher education program that the quality of the applicant's writing will be taken into account in making admissions decisions.
- **Letters of recommendation.** Recommendation letters will play an important role in helping the selection committee judge the applicant's prospects for academic success in the program. Careful, thoughtful letters from mentors, teachers, or employers will provide information about the applicant's intellect, imagination, or prospects for becoming a successful teacher. Working with people with disabilities will be taken into account in the selection process. Working with people from a background different than the applicant's may also be taken into account in the selection process.
- **Other factors.** The program's quest for diversity leads the selection committee to take into account fully qualified applicants from under-represented groups. Race, ethnicity, cultural, geographic background, and economic disadvantage are among the factors that will be considered, taking into account the needs of the schools. A full-time or extra heavy part-time work load will be considered a factor in close cases.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is required by law to conduct a background check on each applicant for a Wisconsin educator license. This check is intended to determine if the applicant has engaged in any behavior that endangers the health, welfare, safety or education of PK–12 pupils. Local school districts also will conduct criminal background checks routinely on teacher education students prior to the start of in-classroom field work. Admitted applicants to any teacher education program who have a positive background check should confer with the Academic Dean's Office (Room 139 Education, 1000 Bascom Mall) about the potential impact of this on field placements and licensure.

An individual who is deemed ineligible to participate in field or clinical experiences based on the results of their background check may not be able to complete the requirements for their degree or certification. Students with questions about these processes should contact the academic dean in the School of Education Student Services office.