**Program Assessment Policy for the**

**Master’s Degree in Exceptional Student Education**

(adopted October 22, 2010; revised November 12, 2010)

The Master’s Degree in Exceptional Student Education is a 36-credit (minimum) program comprised of a College of Education core (6 credits), a Department core (15 - 18 credits), and student options for a Concentration Area (13-15 credits). The logic of a Department core is that each student who enters the Master’s Degree program should acquire a common set of skills and knowledge, shared among all special educators, and demonstrable upon graduation. The logic of the Concentration Area is that students in a graduate program should be able to select a specialization that builds on their previous knowledge and skills in the field. A graphic summary of the ESE Master’s Degree program follows:

**College of Education Core**

EDF 6481 Educational Research

STA 6113 Educational Statistics

**Exceptional Student Education Department Core**

**Content Courses**

EEX 6259 Cognitive and Metacognitive Learning Strategies

EEX 5622 Collaboration & Consultation Skills for Educators

EEX 6065 Transition Planning for Individuals with Disabilities

**Culminating Experiences**

EEX 6027 Seminar in Special Education ***and***

EEX 6971 Thesis ***or***

EEX 6942 Field Project ***or***

EEX 6683 Graduate Internship

**Concentration Areas**

*Instructional Practices in ESE Reading*

*Applied Behavior Analysis Gifted Education*

*Early Childhood Professional Development*

Many courses in the Department Core and Concentration Areas contain Critical Assignments (CAs). These CAs are central to the course, and represent foundational content on which students must show mastery. Assessment of students’ proficiency in these CAs is an important part of the instructional relationship between faculty and students. These CAs, like all course assignments, demonstrate students’ content proficiency *within each course*.

Assessment of student progress *through the program* also is required for accreditation purposes, and involves tracking beyond individual course assignments. Any tracking system for students in a degree program must respond to three factors:

1. The Department responds to changes in the profession and requests from our partner school districts by developing new courses and programs. In the past 5 years the Department has completely redesigned the Master’s Degree program, and has built new graduate courses and programs in early childhood, applied behavior analysis, instructional practices, classroom management, and autism spectrum disorders in response to regional requests and changes in the field.
2. Students take graduate and continuing education courses in ESE even if they are not currently in the Master’s Degree program. They use these courses to gain new endorsements, to remain current in their skills and knowledge, and to explore new developments in the field. In Fall 2010, 75.2% of students enrolled in graduate or continuing education ESE courses were not enrolled in the ESE Master’s Degree program. The Department identifies many of these students as potential degree students, and recruits these Non-Degree Objective (NDO) students into the degree program.
3. The COE Assessment system is based on a relationship with an outside vendor (Live Text) that requires students to purchase from the vendor services that are unrelated to their coursework. Non-degree students enrolled in graduate or continuing education ESE courses have complained that absorbing these additional vendor costs is unrelated to their progress in a course. This has reflected badly on the College and Department, and interferes with the Department’s effort to recruit NDO students into graduate programs.

The Department is committed to complying with the COE assessment plan. It is also committed to offering graduate continuing education to professionals in our region, and building on this relationship to continue its effort to recruit these students into the ESE graduate program. The program assessment model for the Master’s Degree in Exceptional Student Education is designed with these factors in mind.

Student progress in three courses from the Department Core will be tracked for the Department assessment plan, and serve as indicators of student progress through the degree program. Two of these courses are didactic in nature and incorporate content that is foundational to the field (EEX 6259; EEX 5622). The third course is a capstone course, and draws together content and experiences from each student’s complete Master’s Degree experience (EEX 6027). Important features of the plan are:

1. All students in the Master’s Degree program take these courses;
2. Few students who are not in the Master’s Degree program take these particular courses;
3. The courses are taken at various times during the program, and one is taken at the end of the degree program;
4. Two courses include foundational content expected of all special educators;
5. One course (the capstone course) requires that students synthesize their learning;
6. Each of these courses has a Critical Assignment which has been reviewed for its ease of inclusion into the Live Text system;
7. The syllabus for each of the three courses will include the COE-required statement mandating that students taking the particular course must purchase Live Text;
8. Containing the courses tracked through the Live Text system to the Department core removes the unnecessary cost factor for students who take courses in the concentration areas, but who are not in the Master’s Degree program;
9. Collectively the three courses provide coverage of the broader FAU assessment model that links student progress to Content, Critical Thinking, and Communication outcomes.
10. Implementation of the program assessment policy for the Master’s Degree in Exceptional Student Education will begin in Spring semester of 2011.

The following table summarizes program assessment model for the ESE Master’s Degree program, and shows the connection to the FAU assessment model linking student progress to Content, Critical Thinking, and Communication outcomes.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Course and CA** | **Type of**  **Assessment** | **Content** | **Critical**  **Thinking** | **Communication** |
| EEX 6259: Cognitive & Metacognitive Learning Strategies  (CA: Strategies Manual) | Foundational Knowledge | X |  | X |
| EEX 5622 Collaboration & Consultation Skills for Educators  (CA: Problem Solving Group Activity ) | Foundational Knowledge |  | X | X |
| EEX 6027 Seminar in Special Education  (CA: Topic Presentation) | Culminating Activity  (Capstone) | X | X | X |