APPROVAL FORM FOR

DEGREE PROGRAMS

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

NOTE: This form is a cover sheet that must accompany the degree program change proposal. The actual proposal should be prepared in accordance with format requirements provided in the *Guide and Format for Curriculum Proposals* published by the UCCC. Both cover sheet and proposal should be submitted to UCCC Mail Stop 9702 (281 Garner Hall), Phone: 325-9410.

College College of Education **Department:** Teacher Education & Leadership

Contact Person: Patricia Hampshire **Mail Stop:** 6705 **E-mail:** pkh80@msstate.edu

Nature of Change: Modification **Date Initiated:** 10/2023

Current Degree Program Name: See proposed changes below.

Current Major: N/A

Current Concentration(s): N/A

Current Campus(es): Starkville

New Degree Program Name: MS **Effective Date:** 08/01/20

Semester Fall **Year** 2024

Proposed Major: Special Education

Proposed Concentration(s): N/A

Proposed Campus(es): Distance

Summary of Proposed Changes:

Propose a new program of study in Special Education along with a newly constructed set of courses aligned with today's national standards, peer institution curricula, and current best practices.

**Please note that while the MS in Special Education will eventually replace an existing program (MS in Special Education with concentrations in Mild/Mod K-12, Gifted, Severe & Profound, & Emotional and Behavioral), it is submitted as a "new" program owing to over 50% modification of the courses included in the current program. To ensure continuity for students enrolled in the current program, the corresponding proposal to delete that program of study will be submitted once preliminary approval for the replacement program has been secured and a timeline for implementation of the new program confirmed.*

Approved:	Date:
Janice Nicholson Department Head	03/22/2024
Daniel Ponsford Director of Academic Quality	4/2/2024
K Molina Chair, College or School Curriculum Committee	4.09.2024
Kimberly R. Hall Dean of College or School	Digitally signed by Kimberly R. Hall Date: 2024.04.18 09:45:10 -05'00'
Chair, University Committee on Courses and Curricula	
Chair, Graduate Council (if applicable)	
Chair, Deans Council	

NEW DEGREE OUTLINE FORM

Use the chart below to indicate your new degree outline. If any General Education (Core) course is acceptable in the category, please indicate by saying "any Gen Ed course". There is no need to type in the whole list. Expand rows as needed.

PROPOSED New Degree	
Degree: Master of Science Major: Special Education	
A graduate-level program designed to provide educators and professionals with advanced knowledge and skills related to working with individuals who have diverse learning needs and disabilities.	
Proposed Curriculum Outline	Required Hours
EDX 6813 Intro. to Assessment Issues in Special Education	3
EDX 8003 Multi-tiered Systems of Support	3
EDX 8043 Evidenced-Based Practices for Struggling Learners	3
EDX 8063 Universal and Focused Behavioral Interventions (Tier 1 & 2)	3
EDX 8073 Intensive Behavioral Interventions (Tier 3)	3
EDX 8083 Universal Design for Learning	3
EDX 8113 Sped Law and Research	3
EDX 8093 Special Education Project	3
EDX 8343 Single Case Design Research in the Classroom	3
EDX 8173 Special Education in the Regular Classroom	3
EDX 8493 Action Research	3
Total Hours	33 hours

Justification:

Housed in the Department of Teacher Education and Leadership, MSU currently offers the MS in Special Education with concentrations in Mild/Mod K-12, Gifted, Severe & Profound, and Emotional and Behavioral. Since the program's conceptualization, however, the field of Special Education has radically shifted its approach to scholarship, theorizing, and practice in the field. In a recent assessment of similar programs at peer institutions (e.g., University of Alabama, University of Southern Mississippi, University of Mississippi), today's national standards, and current best practice, the Special Education faculty recognized the need to align MSU's curriculum with these overarching shifts in the field. While internally the faculty would consider this a modification to the existing program, the overall changes to the Program of Study appear to exceed the 50% modification standard outlined in the UCCC Guide and Format. Therefore, we propose this new MS in Special Education program and its corresponding courses with the intent of phasing out the current MS in Special Education program.

Overview of Proposed Course Content

As research in Special Education continues to inform the field, the Special Education faculty have proposed new revised course objectives and content to reflect the field's new vocabulary, knowledge base, and philosophies. Each course has been reviewed and revised or developed to align with the most up-to-date national standards to ensure program completers can meet the expectations and requirements and enhance employability. The updated program content aligning with best practices and national standards (i.e. CEC Advanced Standards) will improve student outcomes by incorporating the most effective instructional strategies, assessment methods, and intervention techniques. Reviewing and revising the program is also necessary to maintain the most current legal and ethical standards for teaching students with disabilities.

The courses built into the proposed program of study also reflect the evolving needs of our students. Based on feedback from current and recent students in this program, we have learned that there is a need for improved professional writing skills, increased knowledge to consume and apply research, and the ability to advocate for inclusive policy and procedure in the field of special education. This proposed program will provide an opportunity for the faculty to incorporate these objectives into the coursework, thereby reflecting the voices of our students as we move forward.

Overview of Proposed Virtual Delivery

The program is also proposed to be taught virtually, with Campus 5 approval. This fully online format responds to the growing demand for flexible and accessible professional development/training options for teachers who otherwise hold full-time jobs in schools. Transitioning the Master of Special Education program to an online format will remove barriers to access for students who are unable to attend traditional on-campus classes due to geographical constraints, work commitments, or personal responsibilities. By offering the program online, we can reach a broader and more diverse student population, including working professionals,

parents, and individuals with disabilities, thereby fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

Overview of Impacts on the Institution and Students

While potentially increasing enrollment, our goal is to follow national trends of high-quality online master's programs and focus on academic rigor in the quality of the program offerings to improve MSU's reputation as a leader in Special Education training. Offering a virtual program in Special Education training also positions us to be more competitive with regional peer institutions that have transitioned to online education in this same field over the past several years (e.g., University of Alabama, University of Southern Mississippi, and University of Mississippi).

Online learning will offer students the flexibility to study at their own pace and on their own schedule, accommodating diverse learning needs and preferences. With asynchronous learning options, students can access course materials, lectures, and assignments at any time, allowing them to balance their academic pursuits with other commitments and obligations. Advancements in educational technology and online learning platforms have made it increasingly feasible to deliver high-quality instruction and interactive learning experiences in a virtual environment. By leveraging these technological innovations, we can create engaging multimedia content, facilitate real-time collaboration and discussion, and provide personalized feedback and support to students.

This new master's program will be delivered online format can lead to cost savings for both students and the university. Eliminating the need for physical infrastructure and associated overhead costs can make education more affordable and accessible. Additionally, online programs often require fewer administrative resources and can accommodate larger class sizes, resulting in greater cost-effectiveness for the institution. By proactively transitioning the Master of Special Education program to a fully online format, we can future-proof our program and adapt to evolving trends in higher education, ensuring that we remain competitive and relevant in the global marketplace.

Summary

Transitioning the Master of Special Education program to a fully online format represents a strategic opportunity to expand access, enhance flexibility, and embrace technological innovation in higher education. By leveraging the benefits of online learning, we can create a more inclusive, cost-effective, and future-proof educational experience for our students, while maintaining the academic excellence and integrity of our program. This transformation underscores our commitment to meeting the evolving needs of learners in the digital age and positioning our institution as a leader in online education.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will apply knowledge of assessment by developing assessments that minimize bias and evaluate the effectiveness of evidence-based practices to teach students with exceptionalities.
    - Students will develop informal assessment tools to determine the effectiveness of evidence-based practices in the classroom. A rubric will be used to assess the effectiveness of each assessment.

2. Students will apply their knowledge of universal design principles to enhance the programs, supports, and services in classrooms, schools, communities, and systems.
    - Students will adapt and modify classroom instruction, procedure, and assessment based on principles of universal design using real-world and case-based scenarios.

3. Students will evaluate general and special education programs to support continuous improvements for students with exceptionalities.
    - Students will apply environmental inventories to determine if general education classrooms are supportive of inclusion and if special education classrooms encourage individual skill development. Students will summarize their findings and reflect on best practices and opportunities for improvement.

4. Students will guide their professional practice by consuming and applying knowledge of research methodology as it relates to delivering appropriate instruction to students with exceptionalities.
    - Students will develop an action research proposal to answer questions related to the effectiveness of interventions and opportunities for generalization and maintenance of skills.

5. Students will set professional goals and practices to advocate for effective policies and practices to create positive learning environments.
    - Students will develop and implement an advocacy project aimed at improving outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities.

6. Students will model professional and ethical principles to inform practice, engage in lifelong learning, and advance the profession to serve students with exceptionalities.
    - Students will develop and present a professional portfolio that includes a teaching philosophy grounded in the professional teaching dispositions for the College of Education at Mississippi State University.

7. Students will collaborate with school, family, and community agencies to improve programs and services for individuals with exceptionalities.
    - Students will summarize and reflect on strategies to improve family-to-school communication and involvement through a review of the literature.

- The students will develop a plan for partnering with local or national agencies to facilitate support and resources for improving opportunities for individuals with exceptionalities.

Proposed 4 Letter Abbreviation
MEDX

Letter of Support
See attached documents.

Effective Date
Fall 2024

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

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April 16, 2024

Dr. Nicholson,

The special education faculty are writing to express our support for the initiation of a new online Special Education master's degree program. We recognize the growing demand for qualified professionals in special education. The need for well-trained educators who possess advanced knowledge and skills in catering to the diverse needs of students with disabilities is more pressing than ever. We believe that establishing this new master's degree program in Special Education will not only meet this demand but also contribute significantly to the academic excellence and social impact of our university.

MSU and the College of Education have a commitment to fostering inclusive education, and the introduction of a Special Education master's degree program aligns with this mission. By offering advanced training in special education, we will be equipping educators with the necessary tools to address the unique challenges faced by students with diverse learning needs. A Special Education master's degree program will also attract top-tier faculty members, researchers, and students passionate about advancing special education.

The new courses that will be developed for this program will include:

- EDX 8003 Multi-tiered Systems of Support
- EDX 8063 Universal and Focused Behavioral Interventions (Tier 1 & 2)
- EDX 8073 Intensive Behavioral Interventions (Tier 3)
- EDX 8083 Universal Design for Learning
- EDX 8093 Special Education Project
- EDX 8343 Single Case Design Research in the Classroom
- EDX 8493 Action Research

Thank you for considering this proposal, and I look forward to witnessing the positive impact of this program on our institution and the broader field of education.

Thank you,

Dr. Patricia Hampshire

Dr. Kellie Fondren

Kellie Fondren