Frequently Asked Questions:
Masters and Certification Programs in
Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
Preschool Special Education Endorsement

Department of Educational Psychology, Special Education, and Communication Disorders
College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA

How do I know if the Early Childhood Special Education program is the right program for me?

- The Masters of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) degree is offered for those who wish to receive initial certification working with young children with disabilities and typical children through 5th grade, along with a Master’s degree. The certification received through the M. A. T. degree is Special Education-General Curriculum—Early Childhood. This certifies individuals to teach all core subjects for children from preschool through 5th grade, with and without disabilities, included in the general curriculum. It also qualifies graduates to work in the Babies Can’t Wait Early Intervention program for young children Birth – 3 years, and their families.

- The Masters of Education (M. Ed.) Degree is for applicants who do not want teaching certification to be a classroom teacher but are interested in obtaining advanced pedagogy, methods and strategies to work with children with disabilities in non-educational settings that do not require state certification. It is also appropriate for those who already have T4 certification in special education. For those with current T4 certification in special education, this M. Ed. leads to a Level 5 advanced degree and certification upgrade, but only in the field of special education your current certification is in. This allows students with previous Georgia certification in special education to pursue a certification upgrade but it would not add the field of certification for Special Education-General Curriculum-Early Childhood (which certifies one to teach regular education as well from preschool through 5th grade) unless that is your T4 certification.

- The Certification only program in Early Childhood Special Education is offered for those who wish to receive initial teacher certification working with young children with disabilities and typical children through 5th grade, but do not want a Master’s degree (perhaps they already have one in something else). The certification received through this non-degree option is Special Education-General Curriculum—Early Childhood. This certifies individuals to teach all core subjects for children from preschool through 5th grade, with and without disabilities, included in the general curriculum.

- Students in both Masters degrees as well as certification only students who successfully complete the program will also receive a Georgia reading endorsement.
The Preschool Special Education Endorsement program prepares those with current Georgia certification in early childhood education, special education, or speech/language to add an endorsement to their current certification to work specifically with preschoolers (age 3-5 years) with disabilities.

What are the Georgia PSC certification options in ECSE?

- Early Childhood Special Education General Curriculum (certified to teach all core subjects for children from preschool through 5th grade with and without disabilities included in the general curriculum); Offered as M. A. T. with certification OR certification only
- Preschool Special Education Endorsement (certified to teach children 3-5 year old children with disabilities)

Should I do the certification only or the Masters with certification in ECSE?

- The answer to this depends on your career goals as well as your current degree status. If you already have a relevant Masters degree, it may make sense to do the certification only. If you do not already have a Masters degree, completion of the M.A.T. degree with the certification may increase your marketability and pay scale on the job market. The M.A.T. degree involves 3 additional courses and a comprehensive exam requirement beyond the coursework required for the certification only. If you already have an undergraduate degree and certification in ECSE (or don’t wish to get certification), the M.Ed. will allow you to expand your growth and research in Early Childhood Special Education.

If I am admitted into the certification only program, can I decide later to complete the Masters degree?

- Yes. You will need to apply to the M.A.T. program, which involves sending GRE scores and submission of letters of recommendation and an application fee. Note: You are only able to transfer up to 9 semester credit hours in addition to prerequisite courses to the M.A.T. program so you should decide quickly if you want to change to this option.

What if I already have certification in a related field and just need an endorsement to work with young children?

- You can add the Preschool Special Education endorsement to current Georgia certification in early childhood, special education or speech-language. The 3 required courses are: EXC 7010 (language development) offered every other summer, EXC 7650 Characteristics of Young Children with special needs (offered every other fall), and EXC 7660: Methods of teaching young children with special needs (offered every other spring). You must take 7650 before you take 7660 and 7660 has a required practicum 3 hours a day one day a week in a program serving young children with special needs.

What is a typical course load for a full-time student? What about a part-time student?

- Full time students are those taking 9 semester hours per semester (3 courses), although you may be able to take more courses per semester. Part-time students are taking 5
semester credit hours per semester (less than 2 courses). Many students complete their master’s while working full time in the classroom as a teacher or a paraprofessional or even in other jobs.

**Do I need to take prerequisite courses before I apply to the program?**
- No. You do not need to take prerequisite courses before applying to or being admitted to the program. If you are missing any of the prerequisite courses, they will be included in your program plan. You can take them at your convenience during your studies. Although it is advised that you complete the prerequisites before your other courses, that is not a requirement. Work with your advisor to take courses as they become available.

**How long will it take me to complete the program?**
- If a full-time student has no prerequisite courses completed prior to admission, he or she can usually complete the program in 2-3 years (including summers). Receiving credit for prerequisite courses from comparable courses completed in a previous degree program may reduce the number of semester hours required to complete the program.

**When will I know what courses I will take?**
- Once you are admitted to the program you will be assigned an advisor. You will contact your advisor and meet with her to plan your program (determining specific courses needed and when they will be taken), prior to your first semester of courses.

**When are classes offered?**
- Most classes are offered in the afternoon (e.g., 4:30-7 p.m.) and at night (7:15-9:45 p.m.). However, some courses may be offered during the day during the summer. The time each class is scheduled may vary from semester to semester and some classes are only offered once per year or every other year. Your advisor will have up to date information on course availability.

**Do you offer distance learning or on-line courses?**
- At this time, there are several courses in the program that are offered completely online. Parts of other courses are offered online in a hybrid model, meeting on campus part of the semester and online other times.

**When should I submit my application?**
- Applications may be submitted at any time of the year but we only admit students to the ECSE program in the Summer and Fall terms. To be admitted, applications must be complete and all materials submitted to the Office of Academic Assistance in the College of Education & Human Development. You can find admissions information on the web under the College of Education & Human Development, Graduate Admissions, or you can call (404) 413-8000
What materials are required to be included in the application packet?
- For the certification only application, you must submit the completed application form, two copies of sealed, official undergraduate transcripts, and a 300 to 500-word essay about why you want to pursue certification.
- For the Master’s programs application, you must submit the above with at least 2 letters of recommendation and current GRE scores.

Who should write my letters of recommendation?
- You want individuals who know your academic potential to write letters of recommendation for you. Typically academic faculty members who taught courses in which you were enrolled serve as the most relevant letter writers. You are not limited to two letters, so an employer or supervisor might also be an appropriate person to write a letter. Personal friends, friends of the family, family members, etc. are usually not the best sources for recommendations.

What are the minimum grade point average and GRE scores required for the Master’s programs?
- Please see the information at the Office of Academic Assistance website. You are encouraged to re-take the GRE before you apply if you do not believe your scores are a reflection of the best you can do.

Is the Praxis I Exam or GACE I Exam required for admission into the ECSE programs?
- For some applicants it will be required. You will be exempt from the PRAXIS I Exam or GACE I Exam if you hold a clear renewable T-4 or higher level teaching certificate in any area or if you have earned qualifying scores on any of the following tests: SAT with at least a total score of 1000 (verbal & math combined), GRE with at least a total score of 1030 if taken prior to Aug 1, 2011 & a score of 297 if taken on or after Aug. 1, 2011 (verbal & quantitative combined), ACT with at least a total score of 43 (verbal & math combined) or if you hold a master’s degree. If you do not meet one of these criteria you must take and pass the PRAXIS I Exam or GACE I Exam: Academic Skills Assessment of Reading, Mathematics, and Writing. Again, the Office of Academic Assistance is the best contact for these answers.

How does admission work if I’m an international student and/or I received my undergraduate education at a university outside of the U.S.?
- You should contact the Office of Academic Assistance (http://education.gsu.edu/oaa/). They will do a course evaluation to determine if your coursework completed outside of the U.S. meets our requirements for a bachelor’s degree. They can also answer your questions about the requirements for admission for International students.

How does Georgia State University decide whom to admit to the program?
- Your application will go through two reviews. The initial review is done by the Office of Academic Assistance to ensure that it is complete and that you meet the minimum requirements established by the College of Education & Human Development. If your
complete application meets the minimum requirements, it will be reviewed by Special Education and ECSE faculty. The most qualified applicants (highest GRE scores and undergraduate GPAs, most appropriate goal statements, strongest letters of recommendation, etc.) will be invited for admission.

**When will I know if I am accepted into the program?**
- You should receive your letter of acceptance by email from the admissions office within two months of your application being submitted.

**What semester would I start the program if I am admitted?**
- You may begin in either the Summer or Fall semesters, depending on which you applied for.

**Who do I talk to about admissions questions?**
- Our department intake specialist, Sandy Vaughn, is a wonderful resource: svaughn@gsu.edu or 404-413-8318. You can also find admissions info at the Office of Academic Assistance website: [http://education.gsu.edu/oaa/](http://education.gsu.edu/oaa/). For questions about Georgia State University in general, from a student’s perspective, please contact our student recruitment advisors at escrecruitment@gsu.edu

**Are there scholarships/graduate assistantships and financial assistance options available?**
- Yes. Our program offers a limited number of graduate assistantships and these assistantships vary in terms of type of work, tuition payment, and stipend. Once you have been admitted into the program, we will send you a graduate assistantship application if requested. If an assistantship is not obtained within the Special Education program, there are other options available within Georgia State. Other departments within the College of Education & Human Development and other colleges at Georgia State offer graduate assistantships for which you can apply by contacting those departments. Financial aid is also available through the Office of Financial Aid ([http://sfs.gsu.edu/the-financial-aid-process/](http://sfs.gsu.edu/the-financial-aid-process/))