STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY FORM

Program Name: Master of Science in Special Education
Dept: Department of Special Education
College: College of Education
Submitted by: Cori More and Jennifer Buchter

Part 1:

CGS Learning Goal #1 **A depth of content knowledge**	Program Learning Goal(s): Graduating majors have a comprehensive knowledge base of the issues, research, and practices of Special Education.
How are learners assessed?	The Graduate Outcome "Depth of Content Knowledge" includes in its description "application of theory into practice." While all graduate candidate assignments/ assessments require application of knowledge, it is in the field experiences that candidates' ability to relate theory to practice is authentically assessed. Graduate candidates complete a practicum course, SPE 5770. A required component of the field experience is the expectation that candidate's experience is outside their classroom and diverse from their current role.
	Each candidate to graduate must complete a written comprehensive exam or write a thesis. During this assessment period, no candidates have completed a thesis. The comprehensive exam requires that the candidate successfully demonstrate a depth of content knowledge specific to the topic of the exam.
	The required comprehensive exam is a combination of an Issues (5120) and Research (SPE 5900) exam. Comprehensive Exams are scored by faculty with expertise using a Departmental Rubric.
	If the candidate is seeking an MS with a Learning Behavior Specialist II (LBS II) or SPE Director (DIR) advanced credential, the candidate is expected to pass the appropriate advanced licensure test demonstrating content knowledge.

	Candidates completing their M.S. in Fall 2022-Summer 2024 were rated by faculty on a dispositional survey relative to demonstration of content knowledge.
What are the expectations for the students?	Candidates successfully complete: • SPE 5770 (3), the field experience/practicum course • The 5120/5900 Comprehensive Exam • The advanced licensure exam (LBS II BIS, LBS II CAS, or SPED Director exam) if applicable to their chosen program option
What are the expectations for the program?	It is expected that candidates meet or exceed standards as defined by the elements of the rubric used to assess the fieldwork or field experience activities in SPE 5770. A 3.0 or above on a 5.0 scale reflects standards are met (or exceeded). On the written comprehensive exams, candidates will demonstrate "depth of content knowledge" meeting or exceeding the standards by earning a rating of 3 or above. Related to advanced licensure for those candidates seeking an additional credential (e.g. LBS II or SPE DIR), a score of 240 indicates "Passing" The Dispositional Survey will reflect that all candidates "Meet" or "Exceed" the standard related to the Depth of Content Knowledge learning goal
What were the results?	The SPE 5770 project requires the completion of a field experience project that relates research to practice; 19 candidates completed this project Fall 2022-Summer 2024 Ratings are as follows: Consistently Exceeds n=10 Exceeds Some Standards n=6 Meets Standards n=2 Inconsistently Meets n=1* Does Not Meet N=0 *for those who inconsistently met this standard, scaffolded support was provided by faculty to aid candidates in clarifying and/or strengthening their performance related to this standard. As can be seen in the comprehensive exam ratings for this standard below,

	candidates were able to meet the Depth of Knowledge Goal by the conclusion of their program. The SPE 5120/5900 Issues/Research Comprehensive Exam question requires the ability to analyze and synthesize research, utilizing a candidate's depth of knowledge to apply the findings to his or her own practice. All candidates (n=26) who completed the SPE 5120/5900 Issues/Research comprehensive exam between Fall 2022-Summer 2024 passed the exam. In terms of outcomes on the Depth of Knowledge indicator, ratings are as follows: Consistently Exceeds n=2 Exceeds Some Standards n=18 Meets the Standard n=3 Across the time frame from Fall 2022-Summer 2024, 4 out of 5 candidates who took an advanced licensure test (LBS II) or (DIR) through the state earned a passing score demonstrating their depth of content knowledge. The student who did not pass the licensure exam chose to complete an internal comprehensive exam through our department and retake the exam at a later date. They had a series of personal and professional changes occur during this time including a classroom/position change. They have yet to retake this exam. The candidates completing their degree Fall 2022 through Summer 2024 were rated by faculty at the end of their programs on their Depth of Content Knowledge. Aggregate ratings are as follows (n=31): Exceeds n=9 Meets n=22 Does Not Meet n=0
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	Results are shared through rubrics used to grade products, final course grades, evaluation of written comprehensive exams, passing of required licensure exams for program

	options with licensure. Performance data is analyzed by the Department Curriculum Committee (DCC) to determine any changes or areas of concern based on data.

CGS Learning Goal #2: **Critical thinking and problem-solving skills**	Program Learning Goal(s): All candidates will develop knowledge and understanding of the issues in Special Education as well as the ability to think critically and solve problems of practice.
How are learners assessed?	Critical thinking and knowledge of issues is addressed in SPE 5120 "Current Issues in Special Education". These skills are also assessed by the departmental Issues/Research comprehensive exam which all candidates must successfully complete. In the Issues course (5120) candidates choose an issue and are required to engage in critical thinking through thorough examination of the issue, drawing implications and then supporting through research one side of the issue. The major paper (Issue Paper) and accompanying presentation requiring critical thinking, problem-solving and demonstration of research skills, constitute 75% of the SPE 5120 course grade. Departmental rubric is completed by course instructor. In the Research course (5900), candidates learn how to be a good consumer of research and how to devise and conduct their own research study. Various methods and analyses are learned and applied in constructing a research proposal which constitutes 75% of the course grade. Departmental rubric is completed by course instructor. Every candidate, to earn the M.S. degree in Special Education, must pass a written comprehensive exam specific to content and concepts covered across the core courses (SPE 5120 and SPE 5900). The exam requires candidates to read a provided article and identify various elements of the research study (i.e. problem examined in the study, hypotheses, sample, research design, procedures used in the study, dependent and independent variables, the statistical analyses employed, the results and conclusions) and discuss the value or lack of value of the results for a special educator and/or the broader field of special education. Each candidate must then synthesize the research surrounding the issue on which the article was focused and reflect on his/her own position, providing

	research supporting it. Problem solving and application of research are required to determine and support the candidate's position as does the application of the findings to one's own setting. Comprehensive Exams are scored by faculty with expertise using a Departmental Rubric. Candidates completing the M.S. in Special Education were rated by faculty on a dispositional survey in terms of their ability to think critically and apply problem solving skills
What are the expectations for the students?	Candidates successfully complete: - SPE 5120 Course - SPE 5900 Course - The 5120/5900 Comprehensive Exam
What are the expectations for the program?	All candidates enrolled will meet knowledge base expectations ("B") or exceed expectations ("A") in SPE 5120 and SPE 5900. Candidates completing the Issue paper will demonstrate "critical thinking and problem-solving skills" at a minimum overall rating of 3.0 (meets standards). Candidates on the "Issue Paper" will meet or exceed standards as defined by elements of the rubric. On the Issues and Research written exams, the candidate will demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Candidates must earn a "3" or above which indicates "meeting" or "exceeding" standards. The Dispositional survey will reflect that all candidates "Meet" or "Exceed" the standard related to the Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking learning goal
What were the results?	Grades earned in "Core Courses" – SPE 5120 Fall 2022/Spring 2024 (n=30)

	A n=17
	B n=10
	C=2
	I= 1
	SPE 5900
	Summer 2023/Summer 2024 (n=24)
	A n=20
	B n=3
	F=1*
	*for the candidate who failed this course, additional support was provided by faculty to aid candidates in clarifying and/or strengthening their performance related to the learning outcomes of the course. As of the date of this report, the candidate has not continued to enroll in courses in the calendar year of 2024. Their intent to continue is uncertain.
	The final overall ratings for candidates completing an "Issue paper" follow:
	Fall 2022 and Spring 2024 (n=32)
	Consistently Exceeds n=16
	Exceeds Some Standards n=6
	Meets n=10
	Inconsistently Meets n=0
	Does Not Meet=0
	Across the 26 Issues/Research comprehensive written exams taken in Fall 2022 through Summer 2024 26 out of 26 received a rating of 3 (Meets) or above on the rubric element related to Critical Thinking/Problem Solving. The number of candidates receiving each rating level follows:
	Consistently Exceeds n=6
	Sometimes Exceeds n=9

	Meets n=11 Inconsistently Meets=0 Does Not Meet=0 The candidates completing their degree Fall 2022 through Summer 2024 were rated by faculty at the end of their programs on their Critical Thinking/Problem-Solving Skills. Aggregate ratings are as follows (n=31): Exceeds n=12 Meets n=19 Does Not Meet n=0
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	Results are shared through rubrics used to grade products, final course grades, evaluation of written comprehensive exams, passing of required licensure exams for program options with licensure. Performance data is analyzed by the Department Curriculum Committee (DCC) to determine any changes or areas of concern based on data.

CGS Learning Goal #3: **Effective oral and written communication skills**	Program Learning Goal(s): Candidates for a Master's degree with a major in Special Education will demonstrate written competence. Candidates for a master's degree with a major in Special Education will demonstrate oral language competence.
How are learners assessed?	Writing Competence is assessed in all courses; however, to standardize outcomes, results from the two required core courses: SPE 5120 (Issues) and SPE 5900 (Research) will be analyzed. Candidate written competence is also assessed on all completed departmental comprehensive exams. Comprehensive Exams are scored by faculty with expertise using a Departmental Rubric.

	Oral Language Competence is assessed in many courses; however, to standardize outcomes, results from an oral presentation in SPE 5120 (Issues) will be analyzed. Departmental Rubric completed by the course instructor is applied.

Major papers: SPE 5120 (Issues) and SPE 5900 (Research)—Departmental Rubric completed by the course instructor is applied in each course

Candidates completing their M.S. Fall 2022 through Summer 2024 were rated by faculty on a dispositional survey relative to demonstration of written and oral communication |
| What are the expectations for the students? | Candidates successfully complete:

- SPE 5120 Course
- SPE 5900 Course
- The 5120/5900 Comprehensive Exam |
| What are the expectations for the program? | It is expected all candidates will meet or exceed standards specific to written communication skills (rating of 3 or above) as defined in the departmental rubrics for assignments and exams

Candidates will demonstrate writing competence in two major papers (an Issues paper and a Research proposal) in addition to their Comprehensive Exam earning a rating of 3 or above on the assignment rubrics

Oral language skills will be demonstrated appropriate to an advanced professional. An advanced professional can communicate effectively, sharing synthesized information, clearly communicate concepts and opinions, and demonstrate appropriate semantics and grammatical skills. All candidates will earn a rating of 3 or above on the assignment rubric.

The Dispositional Survey will reflect that all candidates "Meet" or "Exceed" the standard related to both the Written and Oral Communication Learning Goals |

What were the results?	Results from Major Papers in SPE 5120 and SPE 5900 Fall 2022 through Summer 2024 Across the aggregate of both papers, the following summarizes candidates' Writing Competence ratings (n=54):
	Consistently Exceeds n=27
	Exceeds Some Standards n=13
	Meets n=14
	Inconsistently Meets=0
	Does Not Meet=0
	Results on the SPE 5120/5900 Written Comprehensive Exam: candidates completed the written comprehensive exam for SPE 5120/SPE 5900 Fall 2022 through Summer 2024. The rubric used in scoring the written exam includes "Written Communication Skills" as an area of evaluation. On this area, candidates (n=26) received the following ratings:
	Consistently Exceeds n=9
	Exceeds Some Standards n=6
	Meets n=11
	Inconsistently Meets n=0
	Does Not Meet=0
	Oral language skills are formally assessed through an "Issue" presentation which is given by the candidate in SPE 5120. Ratings on candidates' oral communication follow (n=32):
	Consistently Exceeds n=16
	Exceeds Some Standards n=8
	Meets n=8
	Inconsistently Meets=0
	Does Not Meet=0

	Candidates completing their program between Fall 2022 through Summer 2024 were rated by faculty in their last semester of coursework on both their Written and Oral Communication. Aggregate ratings are as follows(n=31): Written Communication Exceeds n=20 Meets n=11 Does Not Meet n=0 Oral Communication Exceeds n=24 Meets n=7 Does Not Meet n=0
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	Results are shared through rubrics used to grade products, final course grades, and evaluation of written comprehensive exams. Performance data is analyzed by the Department Curriculum Committee (DCC) to determine any changes or areas of concern based on data.
CGS Learning Goal #4: **Evidence of advanced scholarship through research and/or creative activity.**	Program Learning Goal(s): Candidates for a Master's degree in Special Education will demonstrate the ability to critically review and synthesize existing research and to relate research to practice.
How are learners assessed?	Candidates must pass a written comprehensive exam specific to Issues/Research. Candidate demonstration of advanced scholarship is assessed in this exam. Comprehensive Exams are scored by faculty with expertise using a Departmental Rubric. Across coursework, graduate candidates complete projects that are designed to assess candidate performance. Each graduate assessment assesses evidence of "advanced scholarship" and "ability to relate research to practice". The two core courses (SPE 5120 and SPE 5900) taken by all MS candidates have major assignments which evaluate

	candidates' ability to do so. Departmental rubrics are used by the respective instructors of each course to evaluate candidate performance. Candidates completing the M.S. in Special Education are rated by faculty on a dispositional survey in terms of their ability to advanced scholarship through research
What are the expectations for the students?	Candidates successfully complete: • SPE 5120 Course • SPE 5900 Course • The 5120/5900 Comprehensive Exam
What are the expectations for the program?	Candidates are expected to meet or exceed standards of demonstration of advanced scholarship on the written comprehensive exam for SPE 5120 (Issues) /SPE 5900 (Research) Candidates will demonstrate advanced scholarship and ability to relate research to practice in completion of graduate programmatic assessments earning a rating of 3 (Meets Standard) or above on each related rubric element from the SPE 5120 Issues Paper and SPE 5900 Research Proposal The Dispositional survey will reflect that all candidates "Meet" or "Exceed" the standard related to the advanced Scholarship through research
What were the results?	Candidates completing the Research Proposal (5900) earned the following ratings on the Required Components section of that assignment (n=22): Summer 2022 and Summer 2024 Consistently Exceeds n=10 Exceeds Some Standards n=9 Meets n=3 Inconsistently Meets n=0 Does Not Meet n=0

	Candidates completing the Issues Paper (5120) earned the following ratings on the rubric element "Candidate Demonstration of Analysis & Synthesis of Research" (n=22) Fall 2022/Spring 2024 Consistently Exceeds n=8 Exceeds Some Standards n=7 Meets n=6 Inconsistently Meets n=1* Does Not Meet n=0 *for the candidate who inconsistently met this standard, scaffolded support was provided by faculty to aid candidate in clarifying and/or strengthening his/her performance related to this standard. As can be seen in the comprehensive exam ratings for this standard below, candidate was able to meet the Research/Advanced Scholarship Learning Goal by the conclusion of their program. Across Fall 2022 through Summer 2024, 26 Issues/Research written comprehensive exams were completed. Related to Oral/Effective Written Communication, candidate ratings were as follows: Consistently Exceeds n=7 Exceeds Some Standards n=9 Meets n=10 Inconsistently Meets n=0 Does Not Meet n=0 The candidates completing their degree Fall 2022 through Summer 2024 were rated by faculty at the end of their programs on their skills in Research/Scholarship. Aggregate ratings are as follows (N=31): Exceeds n=17 Meets n=14

	Does Not Meet n=0
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	Results are shared through rubrics used to grade products, final course grades, and evaluation of written comprehensive exams. Performance data is analyzed by the Department Curriculum Committee (DCC) to determine any changes or areas of concern based on data.

CGS Learning Goal #5: **Ethics and Professional Responsibility**	Program Learning Goal(s): The graduate candidate demonstrates an understanding and respect for professional ethics in special education.
How are learners assessed?	While all graduate candidate assignments/ assessments require candidates to act ethically and responsibly, it is in the field experiences assessed during the SPE 5770 Practicum course that candidates are authentically assessed. A required component of the field experience is the expectation that candidates' experience is outside their classroom and diverse from their current role. Candidates are then assessed on numerous criteria, including 'Demonstrating Professional Ethical Behavior', and 'Demonstrating Professional Responsibility'. Each Comprehensive Exam question/task has been expanded to require that candidates discuss ethical issues/issues of professional responsibility. The rubric also includes a rating for this indicator. Comprehensive Exams are scored by faculty with expertise using a Departmental Rubric.
What are the expectations for the students?	Candidates successfully complete: • SPE 5770, the field experience/practicum course • The 5120/5900 Comprehensive Exam
What are the expectations for the program?	It is expected that candidates meet or exceed standards as defined by the elements of the rubric used to assess the fieldwork or field experience activities in SPE 5770. A 3.0 or above on a 5.0 scale reflects standards are met (or exceeded).

	On the written comprehensive exams, candidates will demonstrate "ethics/professional responsibility" meeting or exceeding the standards by earning a rating of 3 or above. The Dispositional Survey will reflect that all candidates "Meet" or "Exceed" the standard related to the Ethics/Professional Responsibility learning goal.
What were the results?	Across Fall 2022 through Summer 2024, candidates completed the SPE 5770 Practicum course. Below are the ratings (on a 5-point scale) for the related indicators of *Demonstrating Professional/Ethical Behavior* and *Demonstrating Professional Responsibility* *Demonstrating Professional/Ethical Behavior (n=19)* Consistently Exceeds Standards n= 3 Exceeds Some Standards n=8 Meets Standards n=8 Inconsistently Meets Standards n=0 Does Not Meet Standards n=0 *Demonstrating Professional Responsibility (n=19)* Consistently Exceeds Standards n= 3 Exceeds Some Standards n=12 Meets Standards n= 3 Inconsistently Meets Standards n= 1* Does Not Meet Standards n=0 *for the candidate who inconsistently met this standard, scaffolded support was provided by faculty to aid candidate in clarifying and/or strengthening his/her performance related to this standard. As can be seen in the comprehensive exam ratings for this standard below, candidate was able to meet the Ethics/Professional Responsibility Learning Goal by the conclusion of their program. SPE 5120/5900 Comprehensive Exam ratings for the area of Ethical/Professional Responsibility follow (N=26):

	Consistently Exceeds n=11 Exceeds Some Standards n=8 Meets n=7 Inconsistently Meets n=0 Does Not Meet=0 The candidates completing their degree Fall 2022 through Summer 2024 were rated by faculty at the end of their programs on their skills in Ethics/Professional Responsibility. Aggregate ratings are as follows (n=31): Exceeds n=19 Meets n=12 Does Not Meet n=0
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	Results are shared through rubrics used to grade products, final course grades, and evaluation of written comprehensive exams. Performance data is analyzed by the Department Curriculum Committee (DCC) to determine any changes or areas of concern based on data.

Part 2

Describe what your program's assessment accomplishments since your last report was submitted. Discuss ways in which you have responded to the Graduate Assessment Summary Response from last year's report or simply describe what assessment work was initiated, continued, or completed.

After our realignment to the CAEP standards and new Graduate School Learning Outcomes, we added early writing samples. Through our analysis of data, we noticed that the depth of knowledge our students were demonstrating was starting to decrease. With that, we have been working on realigning/integrating 2 courses, SPE 5120 Current Issues in Special Education and SPE 5900 Research, ensuring the culminating experience for Issues course can lead into the work completed in the research course. Moreover, we have aligned the course schedule so that the Issues course SPE 5120 is offered in Spring while the Research Course is offered

immediately after in Summer. The intent is to reduce the cognitive load which occurs with time between courses to allow students to delve more deeply into the content. Results should be evident during the next assessment cycle.

The addition of the early writing sample seems to be addressing some concerns earlier in the program. We are currently aligning our programs to the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards and should have this work completed by Spring 2025. We were able to create several new masters courses which will be utilized in a hopefully soon to be approved by ISBE Master of Arts in Teaching program. Some of these courses, including the transition course and behavior course, can be utilized in our current masters program. While these additions are not a direct result of assessment data as mentioned above, they are a result of responsiveness to the needs in the field by our current and advanced practitioners.

The MS in SPE graduate program is designed to meet each candidate's career goals and objectives. Furthermore, the program is intended for individuals who already hold licensure in Special Education. Candidates may elect to complete the sequence of courses that culminates in an additional entitlement (LBS II) as a "Curriculum Adaptation Specialist" or "Behavior Intervention Specialist"; they may commence work toward the "Director of Special Education" endorsement, or may choose Master's coursework as it relates to their own professional goals. Beginning in Fall 2021, the core courses for the MS in SPE expanded to include five classes (previous core was only two courses). All candidates are now required to complete SPE 5120 Current Issues in Special Education, SPE 5900 Research in Special Education, SPE 5670 Assessment in Special Education OR for those seeking an administrative path SPE 5675 Assessments, Programs, and Services for Individuals with Exceptional Learning Needs, SPE 5970 Curriculum and Methods for K-12 Special Education, and SPE 5770 Practicum in Special Education (Field Experience). All candidates must also successfully complete comprehensive exams or a thesis; if choosing to seek additional licensure or an additional endorsement, a state exam is required and counts as one of the two required comprehensive assessments of knowledge. This background information is provided to contextualize our program. In response to the graduate college recommendation from the previous assessment cycle to include more assessments in our report, we have strategically chosen these courses as these are taken by all students. We do collect and analyze data specific to each course sequence, however the courses reported here provide the best reflection of the overall health of our program. This is an assessment system that also allows us to examine students at the beginning, middle and end of their course sequence.

Part 3

Summarize changes and improvements in curriculum, instruction, and learning that have resulted from the implementation of your assessment program. How have you used the data? What have you learned? In light of what you have learned through your assessment efforts this year and in past years, what are your plans for the future?

The Department of Special Education has a robust data collection system which is utilized as part of program decision making. It is a system that has withstood recent leadership changes relatively seamlessly. We feel this is a strength of our program. A concern noted by many faculty is that we make be collecting too much data. What is reported in this assessment report is just a glimpse of the data we collect and review on an annual basis. Through these reviews, trends are noted by faculty related to all coursework and are addressed by the graduate teaching faculty, which consists of the faculty as a whole.

During this assessment cycle, as previously mentioned, faculty have completed some minor changes related to coursework SPE 5120/SPE 5900 to allow us to address the depth of knowledge trend noted in the review of data. While students are meeting expectations, faculty would like the number of students who are exceeding expectations to increase. Additionally, our curriculum committee has been working on possible program changes related to the curriculum adaptation specialist track and behavior intervention specialist track to stay current with the trends in the field and needs students are reporting. Specifically, we are revising two of our courses for the curriculum adaptation specialist track, combining the content into one course, then we hope to free up space for an elective for students, to meet their individualized learning needs. For the Behavior Intervention Specialist track, we have added a masters level course related to behavior. Faculty noted that even though we can embed the content across our courses through the assignments, we did not have enough dedicated behavior track courses. This will address the first two tiers of behavior intervention, allowing us to refocus the current Applied Behavior Analysis course on more specialized/intensive interventions. These course and program changes will be the focus of this next year in addition to the realignment to the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards.

We are also working on a better tracking system for the licensure exams. Currently these data are reported to us as students take these exams. We have only been collecting data at the passing/not passing level. We would like to start collecting data at the indicator level to examine trends across topics. While these large-scale assessments are typically not the best measure of student outcomes, they would provide another data point to better triangulate the current data.