



Special Education Doctoral Student Handbook

**Department of Teacher Education
College of Professional Education**

This Doctoral Handbook does not constitute a contract between current or prospective students and TWU. It is intended to be a guide. The Department of Teacher Education and Graduate School websites will have the most current and accurate information.

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Part 1: Doctoral Program in Special Education

Introduction

The goal of the Doctoral Program in Special Education at Texas Woman's University (TWU) is to prepare leaders who will make significant contributions to the field of special education in the areas of teaching, research, and service. The degree designation on the transcript and diploma reads *Doctor of Philosophy*. The Ph.D. is a research degree; thus, a major emphasis of the TWU Doctoral Program in Special Education is on research coursework and experiences regarding designing, conducting, and disseminating new knowledge gained through empirical examination of issues in the field of special education. Graduates typically assume leadership positions in PK-12 schools (public and private), institutes of higher education, and policy (e.g., federal agencies, state, and local agencies).

Learning Outcomes

Specific learning outcomes include:

- By the end of coursework, students will be able to synthesize and evaluate high priority issues in the field of special education related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment for students with low and high incidence disabilities within the context of relevant policy, research, and theory.
- By the end of coursework, students will have thorough working knowledge of relevant research, policy, and theory related to their specific research interests.
- By the end of coursework, students will be able to independently design an empirical study examining a problem in the area of curriculum, instruction, or assessment for students receiving special education services.
- By the end of the program, students will be able to (a) independently complete a dissertation study examining a problem in the area of curriculum, instruction, or assessment for students receiving special education services and (b) prepare a manuscript that includes a literature review, description of the study method, report of the study results, and a discussion of the study results.

The Federated Doctoral Degree

TWU partners with area universities, including the University of North Texas (UNT) and Texas A&M-Commerce, to provide a federated doctoral degree. Under this partnership agreement, students in specified degree programs may enroll at their home institution for graduate courses offered by one of the other universities. To be eligible for cross-registration, students must be admitted to a degree program or be working on a certification plan at the home institution.

TWU graduate students who have been admitted to a jointly-offered degree program and who wish to enroll for graduate courses offered by a university participating in the federation should first secure their major advisor's approval of registration for a specific course or courses. After the advisor's approval, students will contact the Federation of North Texas Liaison designee in the TWU Graduate School to assist with registration procedures.

Part 2: TWU Doctoral Program in Special Education—Process and Timeline

The Admission Process

Students interested in the Doctoral Program in Special Education at TWU should:

1. Apply to the TWU Graduate School. (Please note: GRE should be completed prior to application.)
 - a. Visit <https://www.applytexas.org>
 - b. Pay the non-refundable application fee.
 - c. Submit all official transcripts to:
Texas Woman's University
Office of Admissions Processing
P.O. Box 425649
Denton, TX 76204
2. Submit (a) **a letter of intent**, (b) **three letters of reference**, (c) **a copy of your resume**, (d) **a copy of your Teaching Service Record**, and (e) **a copy of your Texas Teacher Certification** (five items in total) to:
Special Education Program Coordinator
Texas Woman's University
Department of Teacher Education
P.O. Box 425649
Denton, TX 76204-5769
3. Call (940) 898-2271 to schedule an interview with TWU faculty in the special education program.

Provisional Admission (see most current guidelines on the TWU Graduate School website) From the Graduate School handbook (<http://catalog.twu.edu/graduate/graduate-school/admission-graduate-school/nature-admission/>)

Provisional Admission: Graduate degree study is permitted with the imposition of certain conditions which must be met for the student's continuation in the degree program. These conditions may require the completion of prerequisites, satisfactory performance in initial course work, satisfactory completion of a degree in progress, or the completion of other conditions which indicate the student should continue graduate study. A student admitted with less than a 'B' average is given Provisional Admission, conditioned upon maintenance of a 'B' average during the first twelve semester credit hours of graduate study or upon other requirements specified. Once the conditions for full admission have been met, the student should petition the Graduate School through the department for advancement to Unconditional Admission. Failure to meet conditions of admission results in the student's removal from a degree program.

All eligible students will be accepted into the Doctoral Program in Special Education *provisionally* after meeting the admission standards established by the TWU Special Education Program (which include review of the following: letter of intent, resume, transcripts, teaching certification, teaching record, GRE scores, letters of reference, and interview). Once

provisional admission is granted, the special education program chairperson assigns a faculty advisor for the student. Advisors assist students with the selection of courses for the first semester.

Unconditional Admission

Students must meet the following criteria to be accepted into the Special Education doctoral program *unconditionally*:

- Successful completion of at least 12-18 graduate hours with a 3.0 or better
- Completion of the *Initial Review Paperwork for the Student Self-Report Form* (hereafter referred to as the *Initial Review*; a full description of the initial review process is included in Part 4 of this handbook and a copy of the *Initial Review* can be found in the Appendix A).
- Obtaining signatures from Special Education program faculty indicating that the student has met the criteria for unconditional admission.

Any student who meets the criteria for unconditional admission is responsible for petitioning the Graduate School (through the Department of Teacher Education) so he or she can advance to Unconditional Admission status.

Part 3: Doctoral Advisory Committee, Plan of Study, and Mentorships

Doctoral Advisory Committee

The doctoral advisory committee is selected and appointed after students receive unconditional admission status. At this time, students select a chairperson for their committee, who serves as the major advisor for the remainder of their degree program. This major advisor's area of expertise should match students' interests in research, service, and teaching. The committee is composed of a minimum of three members. The chairperson must be a full-time faculty member within the TWU special education program and have full Graduate Faculty status. At the discretion of the chairperson, and in consultation with students on an individual basis, committee members may be changed or added. Chairperson approval is required for additional committee members outside of TWU (e.g., faculty at another institution). The doctoral advisory committee serves multiple functions. The primary purposes are to assist students in developing their degree program leading to the Ph.D. and to support students in preparing their comprehensive exam portfolio, dissertation proposal, and dissertation study. At the conclusion of coursework and successful passing of the comprehensive examination portfolio, students work with committee members to prepare and file the "Doctoral Proposal" with the TWU Graduate School. The student must present his or her proposal to the committee to obtain approval before moving forward with the dissertation study. The doctoral advisory committee evaluates students' comprehensive examination portfolio, dissertation proposal, and dissertation manuscript.

Special Education Comprehensive Examination Portfolio Procedures

At the conclusion of coursework and prior to dissertation enrollment, students submit a comprehensive examination portfolio to their doctoral advisory committee. The doctoral advisory committee uses this portfolio to assess students' mastery of the following program learning objective: By the end of coursework, students will be able to synthesize and evaluate high priority issues in the field of special education related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment for students with low and high incidence disabilities within the context of relevant policy, research, and theory.

The comprehensive examination portfolio includes products students independently develop in the areas of teaching, research, and service. Examples of products are (a) published manuscripts, (b) manuscripts in preparation, (c) grant proposals, and (d) development of a syllabus and materials (e.g., instructional activities, assessment tools) for an undergraduate- or graduate-level course within a special education degree program or closely related area.

Students work closely with their faculty advisor and advisory committee in determining the nature of products included in the portfolio. This determination is completed on an individual basis and is determined by input from the student and faculty members. Final products must have faculty advisor approval. Please see Part 4 for a description of the portfolio.

Plan of Study

General requirements for the Ph.D. in Special Education include:

- 90 hours of course work beyond the Baccalaureate, including 6-12 dissertation hours
- Successful completion of the *Initial Review* and signatures of support from three Special Education faculty members.
- Successful completion of *Annual Review Paperwork for the Student Self-Report Form* and a signature of support from the student's advisor, done once per year while enrolled.
- Special Education Comprehensive Examination Portfolio.
- Ten years or fewer as the total time frame for completion, from the date of acceptance into the doctoral program to graduation.

A typical program of study includes the following two research tools:

- Tool #1: 6 hours of language (Computer Science)
 - CSCI 5793 Statistical Package I (SSPS)
 - CSCI 5893 Statistical Package II
- Tool #2: 12 hours of Research Design and Statistics (determined with advisor)

Required core special education courses are as follows:

- EDSP 6103 Intellectual and Development Disabilities
- EDSP 6303 Seminar in Emotional/Behavioral Disorders
- EDSP 6403 Seminar in Learning Disabilities
- EDSP 6603 Social Constructs of Disabilities
- EDSP 6913 Doctoral Mentorship (6 hours)

A cognate or minor field of 12 -16 hours is also required. Students choose a minor area in conjunction with the major professor. The area should complement the professional goals of the student or enhance the student's ability to conduct research in areas of particular interest.

6 – 12 dissertation hours are included on the degree plan. Only 12 semester hours of dissertation credit are applied to the degree program, even though more dissertation hours may be accumulated. The student is required to enroll for dissertation credit and must maintain continuous enrollment in a minimum of 3 semester hours during each long semester until the dissertation has been accepted by the graduate dean. Dissertation hours include:

- EDSP 6983 Dissertation
 - Prior to enrolling in dissertation hours, the student must have successfully passed the comprehensive examination portfolio requirement.
 - Students enroll in EDSP 6983 each semester until they successfully defend their proposal and their prospectus is submitted to and accepted by the Graduate School.
- EDSP 6993 Dissertation
 - This includes multiple enrollments until the dissertation is completed and defended.
 - A maximum of 12 hours will be credited on the degree plan. All other enrollments will be PR (i.e., "progression").

Electives or leveling courses may consist of 18-27 semester credit hours. Courses completed from the masters' degree may be included. The following courses represent student options for electives and/or leveling courses.

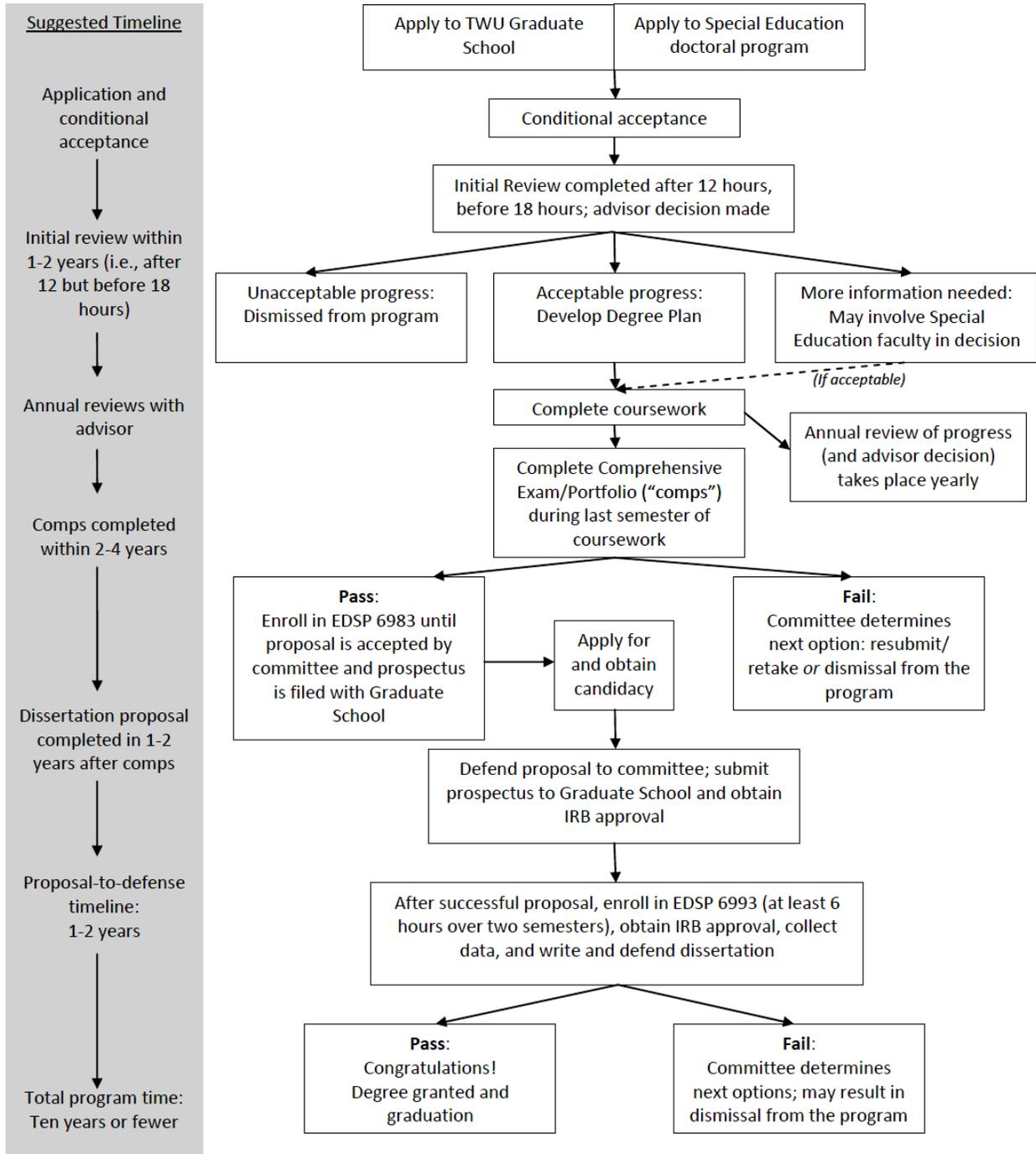
- EDSP 5103 Students with Developmental Disabilities
- EDSP 5303 Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders
- EDSP 5413 Students with Learning Disabilities
- EDSP 5423 Instructional Interventions for Students with Disabilities
- EDSP 5053 Principles of Learning for Exceptional Children
- EDSP 5033 Using Assessments for Effective Interventions
- EDSP 5013 Collaborating for Effective Interventions
- EDSP 5343 Instructional Interventions: Applied Behavior Analysis
- EDSP 5353 Instructional Interventions: Learning Strategies
- EDSP 5833 Clinical Instruction in Psychoeducational Assessment
- EDSP 5843 Clinical Instruction in Intellectual Assessment
- EDSP 5853 Advanced Assessment & Evaluation of Individuals with Disabilities
- EDSP 5423 Instructional Interventions for Students With Disabilities
- EDSP 5313 Behavior Interventions for Students with Disabilities
- EDSP 5043 Legal and Administrative Issues in Special Education

Federated courses may be taken at approved universities participating in the federation. These courses must be approved by the student's advisor prior to acceptance on the degree plan.

Mentorships

Students complete two semesters of mentorship (EDSP 6913) as part of their degree program. Mentorships can be two separate scholarly projects or one scholarly project continued over two semesters. The purpose of the mentorship is for students to work closely with one or two faculty members. Examples of mentorships include a research project with a faculty member, a grant writing project with a faculty member, or co-teaching with a faculty member. Students enroll in EDSP 6913 under the faculty mentor's section number.

Flow Chart for Special Education Doctoral Program



Part 4: Initial/Annual Reviews of Progress, Comprehensive Examination Portfolio, Admission to Candidacy, Dissertation, and Student Responsibility

Initial/Annual Reviews of Progress

The purposes of the Initial/Annual Reviews are to: (a) ensure that students are progressing in the areas of teaching, research, and service; (b) enable students to engage in reflection regarding their progress and program-related experiences on an annual basis; (c) enable students to receive annual feedback on progress from their advisor and/or advisory committee; and (d) provide students with the opportunity to develop annual goals in the areas of teaching, research, and service. The initial/annual review process mirrors the annual review process required of university tenure-track faculty, research faculty, or clinical faculty; program administrators in K-12 settings; and professionals in local, state, or national education agencies. These settings are appropriate for graduates of the TWU doctoral program; therefore, by completing annual reviews, students gain experience with reporting processes required in their career post-graduation.

Process for Initial Review

After the completion of 12 credit hours and before completing 18 credit hours, students will complete and submit the *Initial Review Paperwork for the Student Self-Report Form* to their faculty advisor. Advisors provide written and verbal feedback in a face-to-face meeting with students after their review of the form. Advisors also provide students with one of the following recommendations: (a) approved for continued study in the program, (b) additional information needed prior to approval, (c) committee meeting with student needed prior to approval, or (d) student recommended for dismissal from program (full doctoral advisory committee approval required).

At the advisor's discretion, students may be asked to meet with their advisory committee in addition to completing the *Initial Review* paperwork. Any recommendation to dismiss students from the program will be made by the full advisory committee. After successful completion of the initial review process, students petition the Graduate School for unconditional acceptance.

Comprehensive Examination Portfolio

The comprehensive examination portfolio requires synthesis and application of knowledge acquired during the course of study for the Ph.D. in Special Education. Satisfactory performance in coursework does not guarantee successful performance on the portfolio. Students may submit the comprehensive exam portfolio after the Graduate School has approved their degree plan and after a majority of the coursework on their degree plan has been completed. Students are responsible for contacting their advisory committee to determine products for their portfolio and the format and timeline for submission.

Based on students' plan of study, the comprehensive examination portfolio contains products (e.g., conference presentation, submitted manuscript, papers written in response to specific faculty questions, grant applications) related to the field of special education (e.g., intellectual

disabilities, learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, policy issues), research tools, and a paper (based on a specific faculty question) related to the minor area of study. Students should work with their advisor and doctoral advisory committee to determine the products that will comprise the final comprehensive examination portfolio.

Students will complete an oral examination as part of the comprehensive examination portfolio to provide additional evidence of their ability to synthesize and apply knowledge of special education and/or their minor or related field of study. If a student does meet committee expectations with the initial portfolio submission, the comprehensive examination portfolio may be revised one time after a lapse of at least four months if the student's committee agrees.

Doctoral advisory committees evaluate students' comprehensive examination portfolio on a pass/fail basis. The following criteria are used to judge the quality of the admissions examination.

Evaluation Criteria for Comprehensive Examination Portfolio

Writing Style: Any written products in the portfolio are accurate in content and follow the style and formatting guidelines of the most current edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary and use of paragraphs are commensurate with papers prepared for submission to an academic journal. Writing demonstrates cohesion, mastery of content, and ability to convey information to the reader.

Accuracy: Any products submitted are accurate in terms of content, research, citations, and formatting. Theories and practices align with current evidence. Topics are discussed thoroughly and include multiple perspectives.

Completeness: The portfolio demonstrates the student's depth and breadth of knowledge in special education, with an emphasis on his or her area of focus. The products should indicate that the student can present competently, write competently, and represent TWU competently in written and oral demonstrations of special education knowledge.

Synthesis: All portfolio products (a) demonstrate critical and reflective thinking skills, (b) synthesize current literature across all disciplines as necessary, and (c) explore both theoretical and practical implications of research literature.

Admission to Candidacy

Once students successfully pass their comprehensive examination portfolio, the chairperson of their advisory committee forwards a recommendation for candidacy to the TWU Graduate School. The student is responsible for following Graduate School policies and timelines.

Dissertation

Dissertation Research Committee. When students have successfully completed their comprehensive examination portfolio and have been admitted to candidacy, they select a dissertation research committee. The committee must have at least two TWU special education graduate faculty members. Students may select other members from the TWU graduate faculty within the special education program at TWU or a related area. The chair of students' dissertation research committee must be from their specialization area. The committee chair typically assists students in structuring the committee.

Proposal. After passing the comprehensive examination portfolio, students are eligible to present a proposal for dissertation research to their dissertation committee. The proposal must be at least 10 pages in length. After the committee approves the proposal, the student may submit his or her IRB application. After IRB approval, a 10-page prospectus (based on the approved proposal and completed according to the Graduate School guidelines, available here: <http://www.twu.edu/media/documents/graduate-school/Guide-to-thesis-dissertation-preparation.pdf>) and IRB approval are forwarded to the TWU Graduate School. Prospectus approval must be received in writing before the study is implemented. Students remain enrolled in EDSP 6893 until the proposal is approved; they then enroll in EDSP 6993 for at least 6 hours across two semesters until the dissertation is completed and defended successfully.

Human Subjects Review. All proposed human subjects research, including proposed dissertation research, is subject to review by the TWU Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) and cannot take place without institutional approval. All doctoral students are required to complete the Application for Expedited and Full Review, which is accessible via the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs website (<http://www.twu.edu/research/default.asp>). IRB approval must be obtained before submitting the prospectus (see above).

Oral Defense. Students and chair of their committee determine the point at which the research and manuscript are complete; at this time, students schedule their oral defense. At their oral defense, students deliver a formal presentation of their research and field questions from committee members. The oral defense is open to all interested TWU faculty, students, and guests. At the conclusion of the defense, the student's committee members reach consensus regarding whether or not the student has passed and if any revisions are required.

Student Responsibility

Students are responsible for meeting established benchmarks and timelines associated with the program. Students are also responsible for communicating with their advisor and advisory committee as needed to maintain satisfactory progress in the program. Student must be aware of admission requirements, program expectations, and graduation requirements. Students can access information about specific Graduate School requirements and related forms through the TWU Graduate School here: <http://www.twu.edu/gradschool/forms.asp>.

Appendices

Appendix A

**TEXAS WOMAN’S UNIVERSITY
 Doctoral Program in Special Education
 Initial Review Paperwork
 Student Self-Report Form**

Initial Review Period: Occurs between 12-18 hours of coursework

Name:

Date:

Advisor:

Semester/Year Entered Program:

Hours Accumulated as of Initial Review:

I. TEACHING

A. General Information about Teaching.

In the space provided below, please list your teaching experience relevant to your doctoral studies. This can include teaching in K-12 public or private school settings and/or university coursework. Please highlight teaching you have done since your matriculation into the TWU special education doctoral program. For university level teaching, please also add courses you have taught to Table B, “Courses Taught at the University Level” (see below).

B. Courses Taught at the University Level

Semester	Courses Taught (Course No. & Title)	Credit Hrs.	Enrollment	Overall Course Evaluation

C. Reflection on Teaching

Use this section to provide any narrative you consider necessary to clarify, expand or provide context for your accomplishments and activities in the area of Teaching. Use as much space as you need.

II. SCHOLARSHIP

In the space provided, please provide citations for (A) publications and (B) presentations. For publications, make sure to list the type of the publication and status of the manuscript (i.e., in print, accepted, in review). For conference presentations, include relevant comments about the presentation if appropriate (e.g., number attending or nature of presentation – poster, lecture, roundtable). Expand on additional research/scholarship in section (C) and provide a reflection in section (D).

A. Publications

Type of Publication (e.g., peer reviewed journal article, book chapter, non-peer reviewed)	Citation	Status (i.e., in print, accepted, under review)

B. Presentations

	Citation	Relevant Comments
Peer-reviewed		
Invited		
Other		

C. Other evidence of research and scholarly activities not included above.

D. Reflection on Scholarship (Use this section to provide any narrative you consider necessary to clarify, expand or provide context for your accomplishments and activities in the area of Scholarship.)

III. SERVICE

A. Courses, workshops, etc. conducted as service activity and not included under Presentations (in Scholarship Section of this document)

On-campus	Program or Project	Role	Additional Information
Off-campus			

B. Service to the University and Profession

Type	
International/National	
Regional/State	
College/University	
Departmental/Program	

C. Professional Development and Consulting

(Describe any professional development, consulting, workshops, and projects including location, duration, and scope of services, and amount of compensation (where applicable).)

D. Honors and Awards (during this review period).

E. Other evidence of service and outreach activities.

F. Reflection on Service (Use this section to provide any narrative you consider necessary to clarify, expand or provide context for your accomplishments and activities in the area of Service.)

IV. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Establish goals in each area for the next review period.

I. Teaching

Goal(s) for next review period:

II. Scholarship

Goal(s) for next review period:

III. Service

Goal(s) for next review period:

Advisor Decision (circle one):

(a) Approved for continued study in the program

(b) Additional information from student needed prior to approval; full committee meeting is not necessary

(c) Committee meeting with student needed prior to approval

(d) Student recommended for dismissal from program; committee approval required

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Application Packet for the Ph.D. in Special Education

Dear Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in Texas Woman's University Special Education Ph.D. program. In order to be considered for doctoral studies, the following items should be assembled into a packet and sent to the Special Education Doctoral Program Coordinator:

1. The Applicant Data Sheet (See attached Applicant Data Sheet.)
2. A Letter of Intent (See Instructions for Letter of Intent.)
3. Copies of Teaching Certificates (if applicable)
4. Curriculum Vita
5. Academic Writing Sample (can be master's thesis or major paper written during master's work; if applicable, include a published manuscript)

Three letters of recommendation from professionals in the field are also required. The letters should address your qualifications in regard to: interest in scholarly activities, leadership, initiative, and analytical thinking. (See attached Letter of Recommendation Form.)

Your application packet and outside letters of recommendation should be sent to:

Special Education Doctoral Program Coordinator
Texas Woman's University
Department of Teacher Education
P.O. Box 425769
Denton, TX 76204-5769

Applicant Data Sheet

Name: _____

Permanent address: _____

Primary phone number: _____

Secondary phone number: _____

Primary email address: _____

Instructions for Letter of Intent and Seeking Recommendations

Letter of Intent

The purpose of the letter of intent is for you to provide a written reflection regarding your professional experiences and goals. This information will determine if there is a potential match between our program and your professional needs.

The letter should be 3-5 pages, typed, and double-spaced. The letter will be reviewed for both content and clarity. Please include the following information in your letter:

1. Describe your philosophy of teaching for exceptional learners.
2. Explain your reasons for pursuing a doctoral degree.
3. Describe your experiences with individuals with disabilities or students who are gifted. This may include your experiences with disabilities in inclusive settings as well as support settings.
4. List and describe your personal strengths that would provide insight about your ability to complete doctoral-level work.
5. List and describe your professional experiences that would provide insight into your ability to complete doctoral work. This may include grant writing, curriculum development, special projects, presentations for professional audiences, completed manuscripts, and/or leadership roles and responsibilities related to the profession.
6. Describe your research interests and why that research interests you.
7. Describe why you believe you can contribute to the field of special education.

Seeking Recommendations

Please ask a minimum of *three* individuals to recommend you for the TWU Special Education Ph.D. program who view you as having potential to succeed in the program. References should have knowledge of your *academic ability*, *work experience* and *communication skills*. You will ask these individuals to provide information on the Recommendation Form for the Ph.D. in Special Education form contained on the following page. Each person who serves as a reference should mail the recommendation to the TWU address included at the bottom of the form.

Ph.D. in Special Education Recommendation Form
Texas Woman’s University

Applicant’s Name _____

Directions: The person named above is applying for admission to the Texas Woman’s University Special Education Ph.D. program. Please rate the applicant in the areas on the rating scale to the best of your knowledge. You are also encouraged to attach additional information in the form of a letter. Thank you.

Your Name _____

Position _____

Address _____

Phone: work _____ home _____ cell _____

email _____

Please respond to the following questions:

1. How long have you known the applicant?
2. How well do you know the applicant? (casually, fairly well, very well)
3. In what capacity have you known the applicant?
4. Please rate your knowledge of the applicant’s skills according to the following scale:

1 = weak 2 = fair 3 = good 4 = strong NA =not applicable NK= not known

a.	higher level thinking	1	2	3	4	NA	NK
b.	problem solving	1	2	3	4	NA	NK
c.	organization	1	2	3	4	NA	NK
d.	analytical reasoning	1	2	3	4	NA	NK
e.	working cooperatively	1	2	3	4	NA	NK
f.	dependability	1	2	3	4	NA	NK
g.	initiative	1	2	3	4	NA	NK
h.	synthesizing information	1	2	3	4	NA	NK
i.	oral communication	1	2	3	4	NA	NK
j.	written communication	1	2	3	4	NA	NK
k.	interest in special education	1	2	3	4	NA	NK

