2026-27

STUDENT HANDBOOK

M.Ed. in Special Populations

College of Education

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

Welcome

Congratulations on your acceptance to the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies (ELPS) in the University of Houston's College of Education! By joining our graduate, certificate, and accelerated certification programs, you become part of a Tier One research community dedicated to preparing compassionate, transformative leaders who improve educational outcomes for every learner. Whether you aspire to lead a school, district, university office, community organization or policy initiative, ELPS offers the rigorous curriculum, scholarly expertise and richly diverse Houston partnerships to help you advance your career and serve the public good.

This Student Handbook complements—yet does not replace—the University of Houston and College of Education policies and procedures outlined in their official documents (including the College's Graduate Student Success Handbook). Here you will find ELPS- and program-specific expectations, milestones, resources and support services to guide your academic and professional journey. Because policies evolve, the information in this handbook is subject to change; your program will keep you informed of any updates, and individual programs may issue additional handbooks for specialized requirements.
We are thrilled to welcome you to our vibrant community of students, faculty and alumni committed to leading equitable, evidence-based change across the educational pipeline. We look forward to learning with you and celebrating your accomplishments!

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Educational Leadership & Policy Studies (ELPS) Team

The ELPS Department supports students from application to graduation—and beyond—as you grow into a transformative leader and Coog alum!

The Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies provides leadership and ongoing support for our graduate programs, faculty, and students. Our goal is to foster excellence in all aspects of the graduate experience, including teaching, advising, scholarship, and professional development. We serve as a hub for communication, guidance, and advocacy within the department and act as a liaison between our students, program faculty, and the College of Education. We work closely with the College's Graduate Student Success team and the UH Graduate School to help ensure our students have access to the resources, services, and support needed to achieve their academic and professional goals.

Team members

- Dr. Kristen Hassett – Department Chair & Clinical Professor, khassett@cougarnet.uh.edu
- Dr. Keith Butcher – Associate Chair for Certification & Accreditation, kbutche2@cougarnet.uh.edu
- Dr. Vincent Carales – Associate Chair for Research & Development, vcarales@cougarnet.uh.edu
- Dr. Charlotte Carp – Associate Chair for Curriculum & Student Success, clcarp@cougarnet.uh.edu
- Mr. Norquezdan Florence – Program Manager 2, njfloren@cougarnet.uh.edu
- Ms. Deborah Gary – Program Coordinator 2, dagary@cougarnet.uh.edu

Contact us

- McElhinney, Suite 3001
- Email ELPS: delps@cougarnet.uh.edu
- Email Educational Diagnostician Certification: elpsdiag@cougarnet.uh.edu

Institutional and College of Education Resources

For information about university-wide and college-level resources, please refer to the Graduate Student Success (GSS) Handbook. The following section provides department-specific resources and guidance relevant to students in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies.

Grievances

Students may grieve any faculty decision or action that affects their progress through the program. If the student chooses to grieve, he or she must follow the formal grievance procedures as specified in the ELPS Student Grievance Policy, the College of Education Student Grievance Policy, and in the UH Graduate Studies Catalog. Also see the Complaint Policy for Certification Programs.

Academic Information

Academic Support

- Academic status: Good standing is maintained through continuous enrollment, regular communication with the faculty and academic advisor, progress with the tasks and critical milestones outlined in the program handbook (e.g., submitting degree plans, etc.), no incompletes, and no program holds. A student may also be asked to develop an action plan with the program area if they are not in good standing or if placed on academic warning or probation by the university.

    - If a graduate student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.00, the student is placed on Academic Warning. When a student is placed on Academic Warning, the student will be notified and will be instructed to contact their academic advisor. If the student does not raise the GPA to 3.00 after one long semester on Academic Warning, the student will be placed on Academic Probation. A student on Academic Warning or Academic Probation is not allowed to take the comprehensive examination.
    - A student regains satisfactory academic standing when their cumulative GPA returns to 3.00 or above. A student on Academic Probation will be dismissed from the graduate program if any of the following occurs:
        - the student¹s cumulative GPA remains below 3.00 after completing an additional 9 SCH of letter-graded coursework.
        - the student has not completed 9 SCH of letter-graded coursework within two long semesters after being placed on academic probation and the student's cumulative GPA remains below 3.00.
- Discontinuation: Our program follows the discontinuation policies outlined in the College of Education Graduate Student Success (GSS) Handbook, which include academic performance, enrollment status, and progress toward goals on an action plan.
    - Please note: In addition to the college-wide policies, our program will initiate discontinuation if a student fails to enroll for one semester without an approved leave of absence. This is a stricter standard than the general one-year lapse allowed by the College.
    - Refer to the GSS Handbook for full details on discontinuation policies.
- Readmission to the Program: The readmission policy is designed to outline the conditions, procedures, and requirements for students who seek to return to the program after a period of withdrawal or discontinuation. The policy is intended to ensure that students who are readmitted are well-prepared to succeed and contribute positively to the academic community. A candidate who is in good standing when withdrawn or discontinued is eligible to apply for readmission. Students who are dismissed from the program or who are not in good standing when withdrawn or discontinued are not eligible to reapply.
    - To be considered for readmission, students must submit an application to the program in the same manner as new applicants. Currently, applications are submitted via ApplyWeb. Complete application instructions, requirements, and links can be found on the ELPS Admission page: https://uh.edu/education/departments/elps/admissions/#Spec-Pop. Evaluation of applications for applicants seeking readmission will follow the same procedures as for all other applicants.
    - If the applicant for readmission is not offered admission, the student may appeal the decision following any prescribed University of Houston and/or College of Education readmissions policies.

Grades

- Low Grade threshold: In our program, all *certification* coursework must be completed with a grade of B or better to meet certification standards. A grade of B- or lower in a certification course will require the student to retake the course, regardless of cumulative GPA.
- If you are unsure whether a course is considered part of the certification sequence, please consult your academic advisor.

Changing Specialization Areas

When students apply to the M.Ed. in Special Populations, an emphasis area or specialization (i.e., Special Education, Special Education Certification, Educational Diagnostician Certification, Special Education Leadership, or HDFS Dual Degree) is selected. Current students who wish to change specialization areas must apply, via petition, following the same admissions guidelines in place at the time of their application.

Applications will be reviewed following the same timeline for applicants who are not current students. Students considering this option are highly encouraged to consult with the academic and faculty advisors. Students enrolled in the M.Ed. in Special Populations – Education Diagnostician Certification program may not change to the Educational Diagnostician Certification-only program.

Students may only change emphasis areas one time.

Student Benchmarks

Foundational Coursework and Degree Plans

Education Core Courses (all students)*

- SPEC 6360 Individuals with Disabilities – or – SPEC 6367 Special Education for School Leaders**
- SPEC 6340 Learning and Education Sciences
- SPEC 6327 Introduction to Educational and Psychological Measurement

*Students in the HDFS/Special Populations dual degree program have different requirements; see below.
**Students in the Special Education Leadership specialization; and students in the Educational Diagnostician Certification specialization with special education certification/background and faculty approval.

Content Courses (by Specialization)

Special Education/Special Education Certification	**Educational Diagnostician Certification**	**Special Education Leadership**	**Applied Behavior Analysis**
SPEC 6354 Low-Incidence Populations	SPEC 6361 Behavior: Interventions	SPEC 6362 Behavior: Evidence-Based Decisions	SPEC 7370 Basic Principles of Behavior Analysis
SPEC 6361 Behavior: Interventions	SPEC 6362 Behavior: Evidence-Based Decisions	SPEC 6363 Instructional Interventions	SPEC 7371 ABA Assessment & Intervention I
SPEC 6362 Behavior: Evidence-Based Decisions	SPEC 6363 Instructional Interventions	SPEC 6365 Data-Based Individualization of Instruction	SPEC 7372 ABA Assessment & Intervention II
SPEC 6363 Instructional Interventions	SPEC 6365 Data-Based Individualization of Instruction	SPEC 7391 Collaborative Consultation & Coaching	SPEC 7373 Research Methods in Behavior Analysis
SPEC 6365 Data-Based Individualization of Instruction	SPEC 7341 Assessment of Learning Difficulties	ELCS 6301 Leadership for Equity in Diverse Schools	SPEC 7374 Organizational Behavior Management
SPEC 7343 Psychological Processes of Reading	SPEC 7343 Psychological Processes of Reading	ELCS 6304 Law and Policy for School Leaders	SPEC 7375 Ethics in Behavior Analysis

Special Education/Special Education Certification	**Educational Diagnostician Certification**	**Special Education Leadership**	**Applied Behavior Analysis**
SPEC 7391 Collaborative Consultation & Coaching	SPEC 7391 Collaborative Consultation & Coaching	ELCS 6310 Strategic Engagement of School and Community Stakeholders or ELCS 6370 Research for Educational Leaders*	SPEC 7376 Theory and Philosophy of Behavior Analysis

*Students seeking principal certification in addition to the M.Ed. should take ELCS 6370

Additional Coursework Required for Certification (by Specialization)

Special Education Certification	**Educational Diagnostician Certification**	**Special Education Leadership**
CUIN 6301 The Teaching Profession	SPEC 7340 Assessment of Academic Achievement	ELCS 7302 Data Informed Decision Making for School Leaders
SPEC 6390 Supervised Experience in Special Education	SPEC 7392 Assessment of Intellectual Abilities	ELCS 7320 Instructional Leadership I
EDUC 6395 Clinical Teaching I	SPEC 7394 Educational Diagnostician Practicum I	ELCS 7321 Instructional Leadership II
EDUC 6396 Clinical Teaching II	SPEC 7395 Educational Diagnostician Practicum II	ELCS 7391 Practicum in the Principalship

Education/Special Populations Core Courses (HDFS/Special Populations Dual Degree)

- SPEC 6340 Learning and Education Sciences
- SPEC 6327 Introduction to Educational and Psychological Measurement
- SPEC 6362 Behavior: Evidence-Based Decisions – OR – SPEC 6365 Data-Based Individualization of Instruction
- SPEC 7343 Psychological Processes of Reading
- SPEC 7391 Strategies for Collaboration, Coaching, and Consultation
- Interpersonal Skills Elective (choose from approved list)

Specialization Electives (HDFS/Special Populations Dual Degree)

Initial EC-12 Special Education Certification	**Organization/Management/ Leadership**	**Assessment**
Reading Elective (choose from approved list)	ELCS 6310 Strategic Engagement of School and Community Stakeholders	ELCS 6301 Introduction to School Leadership
CUIN 6301 The Teaching Profession	ELCS 6322 Student Development/Student Affairs	ELCS 6334 Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education
EDUC 6395 Clinical Teaching I	ELCS 6336 The Two-Year College	SPEC 7341 Assessment of Learning Difficulties
EDUC 6396 Clinical Teaching II	LEAD 8341 Seminar in Learning Science	SPEC 7342 Formative Assessment

Degree Plans

All students are required to file a formal **degree plan** in **MyAdvisor** during their **first semester** of enrollment. This degree plan outlines the specific courses and requirements you will complete to earn your

degree. It must be approved and on file before you will be allowed to register for courses for your second semester.

Filing your degree plan ensures that:

- You and your academic advisor share a clear understanding of your academic pathway.
- You remain on track for timely degree completion.
- Course selections align with certification or graduation requirements.
- You avoid delays in registration or graduation processing.

Take action early! Meet with your advisor and submit your degree plan in MyAdvisor as soon as possible during your first semester. Failure to file a degree plan will result in a hold on your account that prevents second-semester course registration.

Comprehensive Exam

In addition to completing required coursework, students in the M.Ed. in Special Populations Program complete either a written Comprehensive Examination (Special Education and Special Education Leadership, HDFS Dual Degree without Certification) or take and pass the relevant TExES Examination (Special Education Certification and Educational Diagnostician Certification) as part of a capstone to the program.

The Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies regularly schedules written exams that test a student's comprehensive knowledge of the Special Populations Program area (Fall and Spring only). Students have the option of taking a traditional written comprehensive examination if they are unable to take the relevant TExES exam. Students seeking certification should take the appropriate TExES Certification exam in lieu of the traditional written comprehensive examination. Students should apply for the exam in the last semester of their program through MyAdvisor (or during the Spring semester if they plan to graduate in the summer).

To be eligible to take the exam, a student must have:

- An approved degree plan on file with MyAdvisor.
- Completed at least 18 semester hours of course work, and
- Submitted a completed application to take the Master's Comprehensive Examination on time via MyAdvisor. Be sure to indicate the area to be tested (i.e., TExES 253, TExES 186, or written exam) and emphasis if taking the written exam (i.e., special education, special education leadership, organization, assessment).

TExES Option

Students seeking certification must take the appropriate TExES Certification exam (i.e., EC-12 Special Education Specialist 186 for Special Education emphasis, Educational Diagnostician 253 for Educational Diagnostician emphasis). Students selecting the certification test option must receive a passing score as set by the State of Texas. Score reports should be sent to the designated advisor for upload into MyAdvisor. Students should be in their final semester of content coursework during the semester in which they take the TExES. To register for the TExES (once approved by the Certification Office):

- Go to Educator Certification Online System to set up an account.
- Go to Pearson/VUE TExES website to set up your testing account, register for your approved exams, and pay testing fees.

Additional information and links are available on the Certifications webpage.

Written Exam Option

Students unable to take a TExES Certification exam will be given a traditional written exam. At least two full-time College of Education faculty members will grade the exam. Adjunct or part-time faculty may not grade the questions. Each faculty member is responsible for scoring the exam and returning it within 15 working days. The scoring for each of the questions will be Pass or Fail. The Department notifies the student of the results of their examination. In order to pass the comprehensive exam, the student must pass all exam questions. If the student fails any of the questions, they need to retake a similar question (or questions) from the same general area(s) within the next academic year. This requires, once again, following all the previous procedures. If the student fails any part of the examination a second time, they shall be ineligible for a master's degree in the College of Education at the University of Houston.

The written examination is offered twice a year – once in the Fall and once in the Spring. Exact dates will vary each year and will be posted. Students should apply for the exam in the final semester of their program through MyAdvisor (https://www.coe.uh.edu/MyAdvisor/login.cfm). Application deadlines will also be posted. Under exceptional circumstances, students may petition to take the comprehensive examination in the summer, but it must be approved by the advisor, program director, and the department chairperson.

Ongoing and Annual Review

The overall progress of all students is evaluated annually by advisors. Students are given feedback each year concerning the outcome of this evaluation. Students are in good standing if they:

- register continuously at the University in courses consistent with the approved degree plan and/or certification plan, or seek a formal leave of absence from the program if they must interrupt their enrollment (see Graduate Catalog Continuous Enrollment Policy);
- maintain close contact with their advisor concerning progress toward the degree/certification requirements;
- make adequate progress in accordance with the length of time that the student has enrolled in the program; and,
- maintain adequate progress and performance in their coursework*. Adequate progress includes formally resolving all Incompletes received in any course during the previous semesters.

**Students seeking state certification must earn a grade of B or higher in all courses listed on the certification plan.*

Certification

Students that are not currently certified as teachers have the option of pursuing initial teacher certification in EC-12 Special Education. Students that currently hold a teaching certificate may pursue certification as Educational Diagnosticians or Principals (requires separate application). Formal admission to the UH Educator Preparation Program is a separate process from applying to the University of Houston graduate degree program.

- Special Education Certification emphasis students must apply to Teacher Education for certification as special education teachers. This step should have been completed simultaneously with the

application to the M.Ed. Please see the next section (Initial Teacher Certification) for more information.

- Educational Diagnostician Certification emphasis students must apply for formal admission to the Educational Diagnostician educator preparation program. This step should have been completed simultaneously with the application to the M.Ed. For more information, refer to the Educational Diagnostician Student Handbook and the section below titled "Educational Diagnostician Certification."
- Special Education Leadership emphasis students first must be accepted to the Accelerated Principal Certification Program if they are interested in pursuing certification as a Principal. Via petition, apply for admission to the program. If accepted, the Associate Chair for Certification & Accreditation will provide additional information. Please see the section below titled "Principal Certification."

Seeking a Master's *degree* and *certification* are two separate but related endeavors; each has its own requirements and resources. Certification plans detail the coursework and requirements you'll need to be eligible to be recommend for a Texas Educator Certificate through the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC). We have designed our graduate degree plans to align closely with the coursework listed on the certification plans; however, it is important to remember that you are really completing both sets of requirements concurrently.

Formal Admission

In addition to accepting the offer of admission to the University of Houston, per TAC 227.17 you must accept our offer of formal admission to the AAQEP Accredited University Based Educational Diagnostician Certification program or EC-12 Special Education Certification program by completing the survey as outlined in your Decision Letter. This process leads to your formal enrollment and will be designated in TEAL/ECOS. I*f the formal admissions survey is not completed by the specified date, you will not be able to enroll in certification coursework.* Next, your acceptance will be processed by the Certification Office and your official Certification Plan will be completed by the faculty advisor. You will receive a copy of your Certification Plan once it has been prepared.

Students accepted into the UH AAQEP Accredited M.Ed. in Special Populations – Educational Diagnostician Certification program are not eligible for admission to the UH AAQEP Accredited Alternative Certification Program (i.e., Educational Diagnostician certification-only program) unless they have completed their M.Ed. in Special Populations at the University of Houston and returned after graduating.

Initial Teacher Certification

The Teacher Education program is organized into pre-teaching, developing teaching, and clinical teaching. Students are encouraged to begin the cycle as early as possible (preferably their first semester) as four (4) semesters are required. Students who begin pre-teaching after their first or second semester are likely to require more time to finish degree and certification requirements than initially anticipated.

Pre-Teaching

The entire **Pre-Teaching** semester is considered the application to the Teacher Education program. Potential candidates complete introductory coursework, observe classrooms at multiple levels and districts, and satisfy entry requirements, including formal application to the program. Coursework and field experiences are specifically designed to give candidates experience interacting with children in public schools throughout the greater Houston area in order to confirm their decision to become a teacher and to prepare for the prospect of a career in education.

Coursework: CUIN 6301 The Teaching Profession, plus additional program coursework as needed.

Field Experience: 1-day-a-week "rounds" of a variety of schools and districts around Houston and surrounding communities; primarily observation and some small group/individual student interaction.

Developing Teaching

Developing Teaching is the first formal semester in the Teacher Education program.
Coursework builds on initial learning in Pre-Teaching, and candidates spend significant time in a school, working with a cooperating teacher to assist with a variety of classroom tasks for two days a week. Students should take the TExES 160 PPR during this phase if not taken while enrolled in CUIN 6301.
Coursework: SPEC 6390 Supervised Experience in Special Education, plus additional program coursework as needed.

Field Experience: Students are required to complete 50 hours of observations and may arrange their schedules with their cooperating teachers.

Clinical Teaching

Clinical Teaching is a full-year, full-time placement integrated with accompanying coursework. Clinical Teaching 1 and Clinical Teaching 2 are content-focused, allowing candidates to learn the most current methodology for teaching all content areas for which they will be certified, as well as performance-focused, immersing candidates in the real work of teachers in school settings. Candidates are supported in the schools by quality Cooperating Teachers and trained University Supervisors, supplemented by scheduled on-campus and online professional development and faculty and peer interactions. Students should take the TExES 163 Special Education content exam during this phase.

Coursework: EDUC 6395 Clinical Teaching I (1 semester) and EDUC 6396 Clinical Teaching II 1 semester).

Field Experience: 4 days per week in schools (1 semester must be elementary and 1 semester must be secondary).

Candidates should refer to the Student Teaching Handbook for more information.

Candidates may also choose the **Internship Program**. This is an option for students who have completed all coursework with the exception of Clinical Teaching and are seeking full-time employment. This program is not an alternative certification program; it simply offers an alternative route to clinical teaching. The Internship Program is a total of two regular (Fall and Spring) semesters. During each of two semesters, students will enroll in six semester hours of coursework – a clinical teaching course and an Internship course (SPEC 6393 Internship & Practicum). In order to be accepted to the Internship Program, students must

secure their own full-time teaching position as a teacher of record at an accredited school. Once a student has been offered a position in writing from a school district, he or she will meet with the Certification Officer to apply for a Probationary Certificate.

Educational Diagnostician Certification

Students seeking Educational Diagnostician certification will begin certification coursework after taking SPEC 6327 Introduction to Educational and Psychological Measurement. Certification coursework includes two phases: assessment courses and practicum.

Assessment Courses

SPEC 7341 Assessment of Learning Difficulties
Prerequisite: Approved course in measurement, or concurrent enrollment in SPEC 6327.
Characteristics of learning difficulties; assessment and linking assessment to intervention. A study of legal issues related to assessment and eligibility.
Offered *online* every summer semester

SPEC 7340 Assessment of Academic Achievement
Prerequisite: Approved course in measurement and SPEC 7341 (SPEC 7341 may be concurrent).
Standardized, norm-referenced assessment of academic achievement, including test administration, scoring, interpretation, report writing, and linking results to interventions.
Offered *face-to-face* every fall semester

SPEC 7392 Assessment of Intellectual abilities
Prerequisite: SPEC 7340 and SPEC 7341.
Standardized, norm-referenced assessment of intellectual/cognitive abilities, including test administration, scoring, interpretation, report writing, and linking results to interventions. This course also reviews determination of learning disabilities. Students should take the TExES 253 Educational Diagnostician exam during (or after) this course.
Offered *face-to-face* every spring semester

Practicum

SPEC 7394 Educational Diagnostician Practicum I and SPEC 7395 Educational Diagnostician Practicum II
The practicum is the final, "capstone" field experience that builds on and integrates prior experiences and coursework, allowing increasing autonomy in providing comprehensive diagnostic services under supervision. The primary focus/purpose is assuring breadth and quality of training designed to help the intern develop those competencies necessary for professional functioning in the schools. Students in the Educational Diagnostician practicum sequence must enroll in two consecutive semesters of practicum and successfully complete 160 hours of supervised internship experience in a public school to complete program requirements and to partially meet state requirements for certification as an Educational Diagnostician. Please see the Educational Diagnostician Certification Student Handbook for more information.

Principal Certification

Students in the Special Education emphasis may wish to pursue principal certification. The K-12 Leadership program in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies houses an Accelerated Principal Certification program. Students wishing to pursue Principal certification need to (1) apply to the K-12 Leadership certification program, and (2) complete additional requirements (including coursework and internship, at a minimum). Currently, the principal certification-only program course sequence requires 18 hours; the Special Education Leadership degree plan includes 9 of those hours: ELCS 6301, ELCS 6304, and ELCS 6370.

Additional Coursework

Additional coursework required for Principal certification includes:

- ELCS 7302: Data Informed Decision Making for School Leaders
- ELCS 7320: Instructional Leadership I (40 hours embedded practicum)
- ELCS 7321: Instructional Leadership II (40 hours embedded practicum)
- ELCS 7391: Practicum in the Principalship (80 hours practicum)

The Course sequence and other requirements may change. Please consult with the Certification or Program Director in the K-12 Leadership program.

Applying for Texas Educator Certification

After completing UH program requirements, submitting all required documentation, and taking/passing the required TExES exam, candidates should apply for certification through TEAL. Note that TEA does not contact UH when candidates apply for certification. Educational Diagnostician candidates must notify UH that you ready to be certified by completing the Application for Educational Diagnostician Certification.

- ✓ The Educational Leadership & Policy Studies staff member will confirm that all requirements have been met and then will recommend you to the Certification Officer. Please allow 5-7 business days for processing. You will be notified if any requirements have not been met or informed that you have been recommended for certification to the Certification Officer. Contact elpsdiag@central.uh.edu for inquiries.
- ✓ Next, the Certification Office will approve your certification application in TEAL. Please allow 5-7 business days for confirmation. Contact the Certification Office (uhcert@central.uh.edu) for inquiries.

Students in the special education certification program will receive information about applying for Texas educator certification from the Teacher Education program; students in the principal program will receive information about applying for Texas educator certification from the Principal program.

Release from the University of Houston Educator Preparation Program

Candidates who wish to be released from the UH Educator Preparation Program (any certification area) must complete Part A of the TEA Candidate Transfer Form. The UH Certification Office will complete Part B of

the TEA Candidate Transfer Form. Please contact the Certification Office at uhcert@central.uh.edu for more information.

Educator Dispositions

Professional educator dispositions include the values, commitments, and ethics that influence educators' behavior towards students, families, colleagues, and others (NCATE, 2022). These behaviors affect student learning, motivation, and outcomes. They also affect an educator's own professional growth. University of Houston candidates should exhibit the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions of competent, caring, and effective professional educators with the capacity to support success for all learners (AAQEP, 2017).

The professional dispositions expected of all Educational Diagnostician candidates include:

- Demonstrate *professional competence and conduct*, complying with the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics, Nationally Certified Educational Diagnostician (NCED) Program Code of Ethics, and Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Special Education Professional Ethical Principles and exhibiting dependability, punctuality, time management, and sound judgment,
- Exhibit a *commitment to social justice* by engaging in culturally relevant and responsive practice and pedagogy and promoting meaningful and inclusive participation of individuals with exceptionalities in the classroom and all environments,
- *Communicate* (oral and written) effectively and professionally, and
- Engage in *critical reflection* by being self-aware, seeking and responding appropriately to constructive feedback from others, and demonstrating a commitment to life-long learning.

Candidates seeking initial certification in special education are expected to follow the Teacher Education Professional Attributes Policy.

Graduation Requirements

As noted in the GSS Handbook, the GSS team conducts a review of all academic activity to certify a student's status for graduation. The requirements for graduating with the M.Ed. in Special Populations are:

- ✓ Approved degree plan.
- ✓ Completion of the courses on the degree plan with no Incompletes or grades below a C- for a required course.
- ✓ Completion of all certification courses with no Incompletes or grades below C.
- ✓ Fully executed Petitions for any transfer credits or course substitutions.
- ✓ Minimum Cumulative GPA of 3.0.
- ✓ Mid-Career Review Reports.
- ✓ Passage of Comprehensive or Certification Exam.

Letters of Recommendation

Current students may request letters of recommendation from faculty in order to support their applications to other doctoral programs. Students should contact individual faculty to seek permission and should allow at least two (2) weeks prior to the deadline. Faculty in the M.Ed. program also serve on the admissions committee for the Ed.D. in Professional Leadership – Special Populations; in order to avoid a conflict of

interest, faculty will not write letters of recommendation to support an application to the UH Ed.D. in Professional Leadership – Special Populations program.

Exit policy

19 TAC §228.20(h) requires all Educator Preparation Programs to have an exit policy for the dismissal of candidates published, reviewed, and signed by candidates when they are admitted to the program. Refer to the UH Certifications website.

General Dismissal Policies and Procedures

The dismissal of a student from the program is a significant event for the student, the program, and the program faculty and represents the conclusion of the faculty that the student has not demonstrated appropriate, consistent matriculation; has engaged in academic dishonesty; has not met multiple program milestones; has been charged with or convicted of a criminal offense; has failed to demonstrate an adequate level of professional or personal competency, or for other serious reasons (e.g., has been disruptive to the education and training process). Dismissal action is typically the outcome of careful inquiry and collection of data from multiple sources as well as communication with the student regarding his or her unsatisfactory performance in basic or, where appropriate, remedial work, as outlined in a Performance Improvement Plan. However, immediate dismissal may occur under dangerous (e.g., threat of bodily harm, slander, libel), unusual, or other serious circumstances.

Dismissal from the Educator Preparation Program

A candidate may be removed from the Educator Preparation Program in the event they demonstrate behavior not consistent with the professional and ethical expectations of an educator in Texas. Dismissal from the Program may be based on grounds including but not limited to:

1. Failure to meet coursework requirements
2. Failure to abide by policies and/or procedures established by the University of Houston Educator Preparation Program and/or program requirements established by the State Board for Educator Certification as published in the Texas Administrative Code.
3. Failure to contact your field supervisor for your formal observations.
4. Any action deemed a violation of the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators.
5. Any action deemed a violation of the University of Houston Student Code of Conduct.
6. Any action deemed a violation of school district and/or campus policy during the field-based experiences or clinical teaching or internship.

Dismissal from the program is determined by a committee comprised of the program faculty and program director. This may occur at any time. If a candidate is dismissed from the College of Education, they will also be automatically dismissed from the Educator Preparation Program. All decisions of dismissal can be appealed through college policies.

Withdrawal from the Educator Preparation Program

A candidate who decides to voluntarily withdraw from the Educator Preparation Program needs to send a written notice of that intent from a University of Houston email account including their PeopleSoft ID. The candidate also needs to submit a signed Withdrawal Form (see Appendix A). Withdrawal from the College of Education translates to withdrawal from the Educator Preparation Program.

Re-entry into the program will be considered on an individual basis. Program requirements change over time because of revisions in licensing rules or educator standards; therefore, re-admittance could mean that there are new criteria that the re-admitted candidate would have to meet.

Applicants or Candidates Convicted of an Offense

An applicant or candidate who has been convicted of an offense may be ineligible for issuance of a certificate upon completion of the Educator Preparation Program. Please refer to the current State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) rules prescribed in §249.16 of the Texas Administrative Code (relating to Eligibility of Persons with Criminal History for a Certificate under Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 53, and Texas Education Code, Chapter 21). Applicants/candidates have the right to request a criminal history evaluation letter as provided in Chapter 227, Subchapter B, of the Texas Administrative Code (relating to Preliminary Evaluation of Certification Eligibility).

Discontinued from the Educator Preparation Program

A candidate who has not attended courses for more than one long semester is automatically discontinued by the University unless a leave of absence has been granted. Candidates will need to reapply to the program to attend after being discontinued and will be subject to policies and procedures at the time of the reapplication.

Texas Educators' Code of Ethics

All students, faculty, staff, and field supervisors comply with standard practices and ethical conduct towards students, professional colleagues, school officials, parents, and members of the community and shall safeguard academic freedom as set forth by Texas Administrative Code §247.2, the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics.

During the formal admission process, all candidates must affirm that they have read and thoroughly understand and agree to adhere to the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics.