Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the Special Education Graduate Program

1. Can I be admitted into the program if I don’t have a Pennsylvania teaching certification?
   No, our current agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) requires that all candidates hold prior Pennsylvania certification in early childhood education, elementary education, or a secondary content area. If a candidate is certified from another state, he/she must apply for Pennsylvania certification via the PDE at http://www.pde.state.pa.us/ before applying to the special education graduate program.

2. Can I be admitted into the program if I have Pennsylvania certification in music, physical education, health, technology, career, or technical areas?
   No, due to PDE Chapter 49 mandates only certifications in early childhood education, elementary education, or a secondary content area are accepted. Examples of secondary content areas include English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Earth and Space Science, and Social Studies. Acceptable K-12 certifications include Spanish, French, and Reading Specialist.

3. Is the program designed for teachers who are already certified in Special Education?
   No, since the program is designed to prepare candidates for special education certification, it is not appropriate for individuals who are already certified in special education.

4. Where do I find a checklist of courses for the graduate special education program?
   The course requirements checklist is sent to each student who is formally accepted into the program. The checklist may also be downloaded as a pdf file available on the wilkes.edu website at:

   http://www.wilkes.edu/include/academics/altlearn/GTE_SpEd_checklst.pdf

5. Do certain courses need to be taken before other courses?
   The ED foundations and EDSP (special education) courses may be taken in any sequence with the exception of the EDSP 506 Internship which must be the final EDSP course or taken in conjunction with the final EDSP course. The six EDSP courses are offered during specific semesters on the Wilkes campus as follows:
   - EDSP 501 and 503 every fall
   - EDSP 502 and 504 every spring
   - EDSP 505 every summer
   - EDSP 506 offered every fall and summer
6. **Can I complete the EDSP courses first in order to get certified in special education?**
   Yes, the six EDSP courses may be completed before the four ED courses as they are offered each semester (as indicated in question # 5.) However, a student cannot graduate with a masters degree without satisfactorily completing all 30 credits in the program.

7. **Do I need clearances for the graduate special education program?**
   Yes, Wilkes University adheres to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) mandate that requires all students conducting field experiences to show evidence of current child abuse, criminal record, and FBI fingerprinting clearances. Copies of clearances should be sent to the Special Education Program Coordinator after formal admission into the program. Once the clearances are on file, a student does not need to submit another set of clearances as long as the student is continuously enrolled at Wilkes University.

8. **Do I have to complete the four pre-requisite courses? (Developmental Psychology, Foundations of Reading, Math for Elementary Education, Science for Elementary Education)**
   Yes, our current agreement with PDE necessitates that all students admitted into the program complete these four pre-requisite courses for state certification. Evidence of completion must be shown on a student's transcript. If the courses were not completed prior to admission, students must complete the courses before graduation and before applying for state certification. The courses may be completed at the undergraduate or graduate level at any accredited institution, including distance learning.

9. **What PRAXIS tests are needed for Pennsylvania certification?**
   The state requires the following PRAXIS tests for Special Education certification: Education of Exceptional Students Core Knowledge Test #20353 AND Fundamental Subjects Content Knowledge Test #20511. Information about registering for the PRAXIS tests is available at [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org). Practice tests (Tests-At-A-Glance) and other preparation materials are also available on the PRAXIS website.

10. **If I took a PRAXIS test required for special education for another certification can I use those scores?**
    Yes, if a test was taken for a prior certification, the scores are acceptable for the new certification, as long as a copy of the scores is included in the certification packet. For example, the Fundamental Subjects Content Knowledge test is taken by all teachers who are certified in Early Childhood and Elementary Education.

11. **When should I take the PRAXIS tests?**
    PRAXIS tests can be taken at any time as scheduled by the Educational Testing Service ([www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org)). However, it is recommended that students take at least one EDSP course prior to completing the Education of Exceptional Students Core Knowledge test.
12. **What forms do I complete to apply for certification in special education?**

Application forms PDE 338G (General Application) and PDE 338C (University Verification Form – Part A) for Pennsylvania Teacher Certification are available on the PDE website at: [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us) (under the forms link of the Teaching section.) Please note that PDE form 338G Add-On is NOT the correct form.

13. **How do I apply for certification?**

After satisfactorily completing the coursework and field experiences and receiving passing scores on the appropriate PRAXIS tests you are eligible for state certification. You will complete the two PDE Forms indicated in question # 12, and attach the required $40.00 money order made payable to Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, along with a copy of your initial certification and PRAXIS scores for BOTH required tests. The application packet is given/sent to the Special Education Coordinator who will attach your transcript and review your application. The application packet is then forwarded to the Wilkes University Certification Officer. The Certification Officer endorses the contents of the packet and will send it along to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The PDE will not certify you without all required components.

14. **Do I need to obtain a physician’s signature for the application?**

No, a physician’s signature is NOT needed for individuals who have obtained a previous Pennsylvania instructional certification.

15. **What is the certification code for Special Education Certification?**

The special education certification code for the PDE application is 9225.