

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

College of Education
Department of Counseling,
Educational Psychology and Special Education

Master of Arts in Applied Behavior Analysis

2025-2026 Program Handbook



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Table of Contents

Content Area	Page
<u>Personnel Directory</u>	4
<u>Introduction & Overview</u>	5
<u>Coursework</u>	6
<u>Course Sequence</u>	8
<u>Fieldwork</u>	9
<u>Thesis</u>	10
<u>Student-Advisor Relationships</u>	11
<u>BCBA Examination</u>	15
<u>The Graduate School</u>	17
<u>MSU Orienting Information</u>	19
<u>Departmental Information</u>	20
<u>Departmental Expectations of Graduate Students</u>	21
<u>General Departmental Policies and Procedures</u>	21
<u>Professional and Ethical Requirements</u>	22
<u>Appendix A: Resources</u>	25
<u>Appendix B: MA-ABA Annual Review</u>	33

Personnel Directory

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<u>Charis Wahman</u>	Assistant Professor	337	517-355-1837	<u>wahmanch@msu.edu</u>
<u>Sarah Avendano</u>	Assistant Professor	343a	517-432-0605	<u>byrnesa3@msu.edu</u>
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Introduction and Overview

The Master of Arts in Applied Behavior Analysis (MA-ABA) Program at Michigan State University prepares students to be highly competent behavior analysts in educational and clinical settings, and to develop and deliver educational and behavioral programming to children with autism, intellectual, and neurodevelopmental disabilities. Students will develop in-depth knowledge and applied competence in the delivery of behavior analysis to improve the quality of life of consumers in various service settings. Students who complete the MA-ABA program at MSU will be eligible to take the examination to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst®.

Behavior analysis is a natural science, like biology; it is not a social science, like psychology or sociology. Behavior analysis has four different branches: (1) the conceptual analysis of behavior, which addresses philosophical, theoretical, historical, and methodological issues; (2) the experimental analysis of behavior, which focuses on research on basic processes and principles; (3) applied behavior analysis (ABA), which focuses on applying basic principles to solve problems of social significance while systematically evaluating these applications; and (4) behavior analytic service delivery, which focuses on professional practice and consultation. The MA-ABA program at MSU will emphasize the third and fourth branches, with some material coming from the conceptual and experimental branches.

The MA-ABA program at MSU is an extremely competitive and rigorous graduate program. Students are expected to spend extensive time at a fieldwork site, while also completing coursework and research projects. Many students devote 40-60 hours per week to their graduate studies, which includes expectations related to coursework, practicum, and thesis. The program offers an immersive learning experience that will prepare students to be outstanding behavior analysts.

This handbook is updated periodically by the ABA Program Faculty, sometimes with changes in degree requirements. You must complete the requirements described in the Handbook at the time of admission. If more restrictive requirements are adopted after your admission, you are not bound by them. Should less restrictive requirements be adopted, you may fulfill the new requirements instead of those in place at the time of your admission. The latest version of the Handbook is always available online on the [ABA Program web site](#).

M.A. in Applied Behavior Analysis Coursework Requirements

The following courses represent the required courses students take during their two years in the program. Some of these courses are offered face-to-face, with the course scheduled one evening a week to allow students to complete intensive fieldwork requirements. Other courses are offered online, with students able to complete all assignments off campus. It is not possible to substitute any of the courses or take courses in an alternative order. The Behavior Analyst Certification Board Inc.® (hereafter “BACB”) has approved the following course sequence as meeting the coursework requirements for eligibility to take the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination®. The coursework is eligible via Pathway 2: Behavior Analytic Coursework. Applicants will have to meet additional requirements (i.e., fieldwork, exam application) to qualify for the exam. All students must have a Program Plan on file before beginning coursework.

****CEP 845: Autism Spectrum Disorders: Assessment & Intervention**

This course examines assessment and intervention for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Course participants will become knowledgeable and skilled practitioners who understand assessments (formal and informal) and can recommend and implement the most appropriate interventions to meet their students' needs.

****CEP 848: Organizational Behavior Management**

This course provides in-depth knowledge of effective supervision strategies in behavior-analytic practice and opportunities to systematically apply these supervision strategies in practicum placements.

****CEP 851: Concepts and Principles of Behavior Analysis**

This course provides the opportunity to learn, explore, and apply the fundamental elements, concepts and principles in applied behavior analysis (ABA) - the scientific application of learning principles to solve a wide range of socially significant issues facing humans. Students will become versed in the development of this science and be guided to think critically about the tenets of ABA, developing a graduate-level understanding and appreciation of the science of behavior including basic principles, concepts, techniques, interventions, research, ethical considerations, and applications of ABA.

CEP 852: Experimental Analysis of Behavior

This course provides graduate students with in-depth knowledge in basic behavioral processes, presenting information relating to human and nonhuman learning with a focus on the experimental analysis of behavior. Computer based simulations of laboratory experiments provide opportunities for students to apply acquired skills in areas including (but not limited to): respondent conditioning, operant conditioning, establishing operations conditioned reinforcement, rule-governed behavior, behavioral pharmacology, remembering/forgetting.

CEP 853: Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Change

This course examines multiple approaches to functional behavior assessment and intervention, emphasizing application to students with autism, intellectual, and developmental disabilities. Participants will be provided with the skills necessary to complete a thorough functional behavior assessment, develop a function-based behavioral intervention plan, and implement the behavior plan with a student diagnosed with ASD or other disabilities.

****CEP 854: Ethics in Behavior Analysis**

This course focuses on professional, legal, and ethical guidelines for the applied behavior analyst, preparing students to be ethical providers of behavior analytic services. Content for this course is required by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board for a University approved course sequence in the preparation of Board Certified Behavior Analysts, and will include, but is not limited to: informed consent, protection of confidentiality, selection of least intrusive and restrictive behavior change procedures, ethical decision making, and legal issues.

****CEP 855: Foundations of Behavior Analysis**

This course examines the underlying historical, theoretical, and philosophical foundations of behavior analysis.

CEP 942: Single-Case Experimental Design for Educational Research

This course will prepare participants to carry out intervention-based research and identify evidence-based practices in educational settings utilizing single-case experimental designs. Participants will carry out research projects directly relevant to roles as intervention researchers or practitioners (e.g., behavior analysts, special educators, school psychologists) working with individuals with disabilities in a variety of settings.

** = online course

MA-ABA Course Sequence

Year	Fall Courses	Spring Courses	Summer Courses
1	*CEP 851: Concepts and Principles of Behavior Analysis CEP 853: Functional Behavior Assessment & Behavior Change CEP 894F: Practicum 1 (2 credits)	*CEP 845: Assessment and Intervention in ASD CEP 942: Single-Case Experimental Design CEP 894F: Practicum 2 (2 credits)	*CEP 848: OBM CEP 894F: Practicum 3 (2 credits) CEP 899: Master's Thesis Research (2 credits)
2	CEP 852: Experimental Analysis of Behavior *CEP 855: Foundations of Behavior Analysis CEP 899: Master's Thesis Research (2 credit) CEP 894F: Practicum 4 (2 credits)	*CEP 854: Ethics in Behavior Analysis CEP 894F: Practicum 5 (2 credits)	

* = online course

Note: If not indicated, all courses = 3 credits

MA-ABA Fieldwork Requirements

Practicum

The practicum is both a course and supervised fieldwork experience. The practicum provides students with extensive supervised experience in the application of behavioral concepts and principles to consumers. All incoming MA-ABA students will be placed at a practicum site supported by the program faculty. Students are not permitted to accrue their MSU-sponsored fieldwork hours at a location not approved by program faculty. Students typically accrue 20-30 hours per week of fieldwork hours at their practicum site; however, more hours may be required based on your fieldwork site. Note that these hours are over and above course requirements or specific requirements from an advisor. Faculty recognize this is an intensive program and make every attempt to align assignments with fieldwork expectations and placements.

Practicum site supervision will be provided by the course instructor and the identified BCBA supervisor at the site. Although the sites may be affiliated with MSU, students hold professional positions and are expected to act in accordance with the policies and procedures at their practicum site. Failure to meet basic requirements and expectations at a practicum site will be addressed by the practicum site. In the rare case that a student does not fulfill expectations at the practicum site and is at risk of termination, the MSU MA-ABA program faculty will work with the student to develop a support plan that might be helpful to the student in meeting practicum site expectations. If a student were to be terminated from their original fieldwork location, they must find another approved by the MSU MA-ABA program faculty. If the student cannot obtain placement at an approved site, they will be at risk of not obtaining the necessary fieldwork hours and could receive a grade of 0.0 in the practicum course.

Regular cohort meetings with faculty will be scheduled as part of the practicum experience. The practicum coursework and requirements in placement sites are designed to fulfill the fieldwork requirements of the BACB. In addition to coursework, all Master's degree students are required to complete five semesters of practicum. This is built into the prescribed program plan during duration of the program.

The MSU MA-ABA practicum is designed to fulfill the 2027 1500-hour concentrated supervised fieldwork, as required by the BACB, if students meet expectations at fieldwork sites and in the MSU practicum course. A supervisory period is one calendar month. To count fieldwork hours within any given supervisory period, supervisees must meet with their supervisor during that period for no less than 7.5% of the total hours spent in practicum, including at least 90 minutes of direct observation with a client. At least 60% of your 1500 total hours must be spent engaging in unrestricted activities (i.e., activities that are most likely to be performed by a BCBA.). It is your responsibility to be familiar with the fieldwork requirements as outlined in the BCBA Handbook and ensure your fieldwork experience meets the fieldwork requirements. At the end of your fieldwork experience, MSU's responsible supervisor will sign your final verification form based on

the requirements met during your time in the program. If you did not meet all the BACB's fieldwork requirements for whatever reason during the program, it is your responsibility to continue your fieldwork experience at another organization and/or under a new supervisor until you meet the minimum requirements to apply to sit for the examination. Because the BACB standards change periodically, we direct you to the BACB website for the latest information and to sign up for their newsletter.

MA-ABA Additional Degree Requirements

Master's Thesis

Students in the MA-ABA program, which is considered a Plan A master's degree program, are required to propose, implement, write, and orally defend an empirically-based master's thesis. A master's thesis is the culmination of your graduate education and training. You may begin working on your master's thesis as soon as you begin the program, but should have begun it by the end of your first year. The first step is to decide on a topic and develop the research project with your advisor. Your topic must fit Baer, Wolf, and Risley's (1968; 1988) definition of applied behavior analysis and must utilize a systematic approach to analyzing human behavior (e.g., a single-case experimental design, a systematic literature review, or a group-design study). You will need to identify and select four individuals to serve on your thesis committee, the guidelines for which are provided below. Data collection may begin once your committee has approved the project and you have approval from the university's Institutional Review Board. While working on your thesis, you will enroll in four (4) credits of CEP 899: Master's Thesis Research with your advisor; 2 for the summer semester and 2 for the fall semester of your second year. When your data are collected and analyzed, the thesis needs to be written and defended. You will have successfully completed your Master's thesis when it is signed by at least two of the three faculty members of your thesis committee, you have completed 4 credit hours enrolled in CEP 899, and your thesis document is accepted by The Graduate School. The following table outlines the Thesis timeline, with additional details following.

Year	Fall Tasks	Spring Tasks	Summer Tasks
1	- Discuss research questions with advisor - Finalize research topic and gain approval from advisor	- Design research methodology in CEP 942 - Working with advisor and 942 instructor, prepare an introduction and literature review of thesis - Identify and confirm committee members – schedule proposal for early fall of year 2 - Confirm site for research	- Finalize introduction and method section - Complete IRB application - Enroll in 2 credits of CEP 899
2	- Propose thesis early to committee - Obtain final IRB - Complete any revisions suggested by committee - Recruit participants and start project - Enroll in 2 credits of CEP 899	- Complete research project - Write discussion and results - Schedule thesis defense: should be prior to the graduate school's deadline for theses submissions	

Thesis Committee

Your thesis committee is composed of four members: a chair and three additional committee members. The chair of your committee should be your graduate advisor. Two additional members should include at least one faculty member who has a BCBA-D. The faculty must be tenure-track, holding the rank of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor. An exception may be granted by the Dean of the Graduate School to allow a non-tenure stream faculty member to serve on a master's student's thesis committee as one of the three required faculty members, or in special circumstances, as the chairperson of a master's student's thesis committee or as the thesis advisor. The final committee member should be a doctoral student who has experience in areas related to the thesis topic. All committee members should be *uniquely qualified by training or experience* to serve on the thesis committee. Forming the thesis committee is your responsibility and should be done with the advice and consent of your advisor. Once you have formed your committee, you must add committee members to your grad plan. Due to the nature of committee member involvement in theses, wherein faculty and doctoral students discuss projects with one another outside the thesis meetings and participate extensively in developing the thesis project for all student committees on which they serve, all committee members should be offered an opportunity to co-author any peer reviewed journal submissions that arise from thesis activities.

Changing Committee Members

You may choose to replace members of your thesis committee at your discretion. When a change occurs, for whatever reason, you are responsible for finding a replacement. The MA-ABA Program incurs no obligation to provide a replacement committee member.

Thesis Proposal

You will work with your primary advisor to develop an initial draft of your thesis proposal and present an oral draft to your committee early in your second year either in-person or virtually. When your thesis proposal is approved by your advisor, you should email your committee to schedule a 1-hour meeting to propose it that can be attended by your committee members. This is your responsibility. You should prepare a 25 to 30 min presentation to present to your committee. The committee must approve the oral presentation before you can start your research project.

The Thesis Document

The written thesis must conform to the guidelines outlined in the latest edition of the APA Style Manual. It must also conform to the physical specifications required by the College. You should review these before you start writing so that you do not spend time reformatting it later. This information may be found at the [Graduate School website](#).

Thesis Defense

When you have finished writing your thesis and have had it approved by your advisor, you should email your committee to schedule a 1.5-hour meeting (in person or virtually) to defend it that can be attended by your committee members. This is your responsibility.

One week prior to your defense, you need to provide your committee members with the final draft of your thesis, including all figures and tables. Should a member of the thesis committee request further documentation of any aspect of the research process (e.g., completed data sheets or a contact person at the research site), this request will be honored.

You should prepare a 25 to 30 min presentation of your thesis to present to your committee. Once you have given your presentation and you have addressed all the committee's questions and concerns, you will be asked to leave the room so the committee can conduct the examination portion of the thesis defense. The defense is passed if 2 of the 3 faculty committee members vote to pass it. If you do not pass, you may not defend it again for at least 90 days. If the oral defense is failed twice, you have 30 days to petition the department for a third attempt. Failure to petition or a rejected petition will result in your dismissal from the program.

You must be a registered student during the semester in which the defense, aka the thesis examination, is administered. Registration means you are enrolled in one course of at least 1 credit. This requirement may be waived if the examination is administered during the summer session immediately after a spring semester during which the student was registered.

After a Successful Defense

Provided that you pass your defense, you must email the graduate secretary with your thesis defense date so it can be entered in your GradPlan.

Often, a thesis committee will ask that you make changes to the document before submitting it to the College. You must be a registered student and enrolled in at least 1-credit of coursework in order to submit your document to the College. Should you take longer than 6 months to complete the changes to your thesis, you must enroll in 3 credit hours per semester until the revised thesis is completed.

Once changes are made and you have your advisor's approval, you will electronically submit your thesis to the College. This process is described on The Graduate School website. You must have at least one copy of your thesis bound; however, some students choose to have a second copy bound to place on their bookshelf for posterity. Finally, you will need to pay your fees to the Graduate School (see the same website) and complete any additional required documentation, such as the master's student exit survey. For the thesis milestone to be considered complete, the thesis document must be submitted to ProQuest by the initial submission deadline and any requested revisions and additional

documentation must be completed and accepted by the Graduate School by the final deadline. See [The Graduate School website](#) for more information on completing your paperwork for graduation.

Should a student decide to submit their thesis for publication to a peer reviewed journal as the first author, they must continue to work on preparing the thesis for publication beyond what is required by the Graduate School. This may include revising the manuscript for tone, paper length, and for journal fit. If the student does not submit the paper to a peer reviewed journal within 365 days of their thesis defense, they relinquish first-author status on that submission to their major advisor.

The Student-Advisor Relationship

When you are admitted to the program, you are assigned a full-time faculty member as an advisor. Students receive advising from faculty that are MSU tenure track, three-year fixed-term, or clinical fixed-term assistant professors. The ABA Program Coordinator also makes every effort to assign you to an advisor who has expertise in your desired emphasis area. Students are distributed among the faculty so that each faculty has an approximately equal number of advisees—which means you may not always be advised by someone in your primary area of interest. However, all advisors are fully familiar with program requirements.

Despite best efforts to match students to advisors, a student may find it difficult to work with his/her advisor or may want to work with a different faculty member. If you wish to switch advisors, you should speak directly to your advisor right away to resolve any issues you may have. If this does not resolve the issue, you can then contact the MA in ABA Program Coordinator and explain the reasons for your desire to change advisors. The coordinator will consider your request and determine if it is possible for you to be assigned to a new advisor or to your requested advisor if s/he does not already have a full load of advisees.

The advisor's primary responsibility is to make sure each student is taking the appropriate coursework. Your advisor will also chair your Master's Thesis. As discussed below, you should work closely with your advisor when developing program plans. Your advisor can also help you with the difficulties you encounter in your coursework. You should feel free to contact your advisor at any time.

The program follows a junior-colleague model. In it, you and your advisor share equal responsibility in planning for your academic success and ensuring that you make timely progress in meeting the degree requirements of the department, college, and university. Your advisor will assist you in selecting required and elective courses, developing research projects, and preparing for degree requirements. You and your advisor will also work collaboratively on your professional development. Specifically, your advisor will assist you in clarifying your professional goals and attaining substantive experience.

Changing your Advisor

For a variety of reasons, you may complete your degree with someone other than your original advisor. The reasons include:

- Your or your advisor's interests may change such that the two are no longer compatible.
- After providing at least one full semester's warning, your advisor may terminate the advising relationship. This most often occurs when the student fails to make timely progress toward his/her degree.
- Your advisor leaves the department or MSU.
- Your advisor retires.

What happens next depends on your progress toward the MA-ABA degree. If you have completed all the MA-ABA requirements, after consulting with you, the program will appoint a replacement advisor. If, however, you have not completed all of the MA-ABA requirements, the program is under no obligation to appoint a new advisor. It is your responsibility to secure a new advisor. However, if you are in good standing (e.g., not on probation), your current committee (see below) will work with you to (a) identify a new advisor in the program, (b) identify a new advisor in a different program at MSU, or (c) identify a new advisor at another university. In the end, however, the program is under no obligation to identify a new advisor regardless of the reason for the break in the student-advisor relationship. Should a replacement advisor be found, the new advisor is not obliged to supervise research that is outside the advisor's area of expertise or interest. Thus, you may find that you must change your area of research to accommodate your new advisor. This may add time to earning your degree.

Who Can Serve as Your Advisor?

Your advisor must be tenured or in a tenure-track position or a recurring fixed term faculty member and must hold at least a 25% appointment in the department. Adjunct or courtesy faculty can co-advise students, but may not serve as their only advisor or, unless authorized, may not admit students.

BCBA Examination

BACB examinations are only offered to individuals who are seeking BACB credentials or continuing education, and for no other purpose. Before taking a BACB examination, all applicants must first apply to the BACB and document that all eligibility requirements have been met.

The Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination® is comprised of 175 multiple-choice questions. Each question has four possible answers. Examination content is based on the 6th Edition Test Content Outline and The Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts. To view a chart outlining the number of questions per content area, please visit the BACB website. In addition to the 175 graded questions, examinations typically include up to 10 ungraded pilot questions. Therefore, candidates sitting for the BCBA examination will usually answer 185 questions total.

Candidates are given four hours to complete the examination. This includes time spent reviewing and agreeing to the Examination Terms and Conditions, reading instructions, and any breaks taken during the examination. The examinations are administered using a computer-based testing (CBT) format by Pearson VUE, Inc. of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Pearson VUE's website offers a tutorial to become familiar with the CBT format and information about what to expect at a Pearson VUE testing center.

BACB examinations are professionally developed to accepted examination standards and are based on the results of a formal Job Analysis and survey. The BACB follows nationally accepted standards for test development. For the most up-to-date information, we direct you to the BACB's Web site at www.BACB.com

We recommend extensive preparation for the BCBA exam. Preparation methods will be discussed in your courses. In addition, we recommend students take initiative in planning and executing a plan for exam preparation. The following websites provide information about professional exam preparation agencies that may be helpful for students:

Behavior Development Solutions

BDS offers their CBA Learning Module Series, which will help you gain fluency in answering questions like those found on the BCBA exam. Learners who complete all the modules have demonstrated a 98.5% first-time pass rate on the examination and they offer a money-back pass guarantee.

BACB Exam Preparation

The BACB recommends that you prepare for the examination by reviewing the BCBA Task List, Ethics Code, and the materials gathered from your training.

The Graduate School at MSU

The MSU Graduate School oversees all graduate programs on campus. To obtain a graduate degree, you must fulfill its requirements and those of the ABA program. Although we attempt to cover all Graduate School requirements in this handbook, students should check the [Graduate School website](#) periodically for the latest information.

Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide, is a helpful resource guide to campus programs and services, and also includes rules, regulations, rights and responsibilities that have been established in the interest of intellectual and personal development while protecting individual freedoms. It is published annually by the Department of Student Life in the Division of Student Affairs and Services.

Admission to the Graduate School

Incoming graduate students must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited university and have earned an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher. All applicants must first meet the requirements of the University, College of Education, and Department. Faculty in the ABA program make admissions recommendations to the Chair of the Department, and offers of admission originate from our Department office.

Applicants are asked to complete a Department and a University application. With their application, applicants must submit: (a) official transcripts from all previously attended postsecondary institutions; (b) at least three letters of recommendation; (c) a goal statement; (d) a resume or other record of previous experiences; and (e) a sample of scholarly writing.

We strongly recommend that applicants seek letters from those who can speak directly to their ability and motivation for successful completion of the MA-ABA program. Thus, letters from former professors or other supervisors of graduate or undergraduate work are often more helpful than letters from colleagues or friends. The sample of scholarly writing should show the applicant's ability to think critically about an issue, review relevant information about that issue, and draw reasonable and creative conclusions or implications.

Graduate School Guidelines on Research and Teaching Assistantships

The latest information about Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) may be found at the [Graduate School Website](#): where you will also find eligibility requirements, information about tuition assistance, and general guidelines.

Graduate School Scholarships, Fellowships, and Assistantships

The graduate school offers many fellowships to attract particularly strong applicants. Application and eligibility information for all these programs may be obtained at the [Graduate School Website](#).

Graduate School Travel Fund

[Funds from the Graduate School](#) are available for graduate and graduate professional students to travel to present their research at professional conferences. These funds are not available to support thesis/dissertation research projects or course work. This funding is only for graduate students pursuing a degree program. Be sure to apply early in the year you hope to secure funding. The graduate school has a limited amount of funding; it is awarded on a first- come-first-served basis. More information may be obtained at from the [Graduate School website](#).

MSU Orienting Information

Student ID Cards and E-mail Accounts

The [MSU ID Office](#) serves as the single point of contact for all identity management activities at MSU and provides first-level support for the variety of services tied to MSU NetIDs and Spartan Cards. The [MSU ID Office](#) also provides support for a wide variety of services tied to Spartan Cards, including electronic access control to buildings and parking gates, MSU Library services, Spartan Cash, and residence hall meal plans. The MSU ID Office is responsible for the provisioning and maintenance of MSU's NetID authentication. A MSU NetID is a unique, alphanumeric identifier assigned to all current MSU faculty, staff, students, and retirees. MSU NetIDs provide access to the official MSU network and many other online services on campus (e.g., the university's e-mail service). This access is granted based on users' affiliations. Information about obtaining an MSU Net ID and ID card is located online or in person at the MSU ID office.

Course Requirements and Listings

Information about coursework may be found in this handbook, as well as in the [Graduate Catalog](#). Course offerings are also available on the web through the office of the registrar.

Parking Permit

Information on obtaining a parking permit is located on the [MSU police website](#).

Health Insurance

Information on your eligibility for health insurance is located on the [HR website](#).

Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education (CEPSE)

Departmental Expectations of Graduate Students

As an incoming graduate student, you may be unsure of what is expected of you when you enter the program. Here are some of the expectations:

- As a full-time student during all five semesters of the graduate program, you will enroll in 6-10 credit hours. Your thesis credits will count towards your research thesis activities and supervised by your advisor or site BCBA. This may sound like a light course load, but you will find that graduate courses are different from those you completed as an undergraduate.
 - Many graduate courses use multiple resources including textbooks, peer-reviewed articles, online training modules, and book chapters every week. Reading over 100 pages per class per week is not unusual.
 - When readings are assigned, you must read them before the next class meeting because you may be tested on their content and will be expected to discuss them with the professor and your peers during class.
- You are responsible for knowing and understanding your course and practicum training requirements. This ensures that you can avoid misunderstandings that might otherwise be construed as misconduct. In particular, you should obtain (a) course syllabi and written copies of all class assignments; (b) specific information on course deadlines, attendance policies, and grading practices; and (c) rules for how to complete class and practicum assignments and exercises, inside and outside of either setting. You should also assume that unauthorized collaboration on in-class quizzes, tests, examinations, and on out-of-class assignments is not permitted. You should retain all returned and graded materials until the final grade is reported. You should know your instructor's office hours and telephone number, and where the office is located.
- You are expected to earn exemplary grades in all your courses. Courses in which you earn less than a 3.0 are considered failed courses and will not count toward completion of your degree. If your cumulative graduate GPA falls below a 3.0 you cannot graduate with a Master's degree.
- Given these expectations, your days start early and end late, and you will work on the weekends. If you are working on academic, fieldwork, or research activities less than 40-50 hours a week, you may not be meeting your advisor's expectations.
- Because you are expected to complete your degrees in a timely fashion and to publish the results of your research, you are expected to remain in East Lansing during the fall, spring and summer of Year 1 and fall and spring of Year 2. You can expect to

work with your advisor and other faculty during the summer of Year 1, and some advisors may even expect you to work during the spring and winter breaks. Talk to your advisor to get a sense of these expectations.

These are high expectations, but they are expected of any student who is admitted to and enrolls in a premier graduate program. You would not have been admitted to our program if we did not feel confident that you could meet these expectations.

Departmental Policies and Procedures

Serving as a Graduate Teaching Assistant

More than 3,000 assistantships are available to qualified graduate students at Michigan State University. Most Master's students will not have time to complete a Graduate Assistantship. However, some may have such an opportunity and should therefore be familiar with the role. The University is concerned with the quality of educational experience graduate assistants receive and, for teaching assistants, the quality of instruction they provide undergraduates. Graduate assistants are enrolled students whose primary association with MSU is directed toward advanced degree completion. Satisfactory progress toward earning a degree is a condition of maintaining the assistantship. Departments may limit the number of years that a graduate student may hold an assistantship. Although this Handbook outlines University policy, graduate assistants are responsible for knowing the specific policies and procedures that govern their particular assistantship and academic program. The policies and procedures defined in this Handbook that cover wages, benefits, or other terms and conditions of employment do not apply to teaching assistants subject to the collective bargaining agreement with the Graduate Employees Union/American Federation of Teachers. To view the contract, see the [Graduate School's website](#).

As a graduate teaching assistant, you are expected to be prepared for and attend every class, as well as to be involved in all outside-the-classroom duties such as preparing study guides or lectures, grading assignments, maintaining the gradebook, communicating with students, etc. You should plan to spend 10 (0.25 time GTA) or 20 (0.5 time GTA) hours per week engaged in these activities. Your faculty teaching supervisor should not assign tasks to you that will require more of your time than this. As a graduate teaching assistant, you are a senior colleague to your junior colleagues - the students. As such, you should treat them professionally in all facets and manner of classroom instruction and practicum training, both inside and outside these settings. In particular, the Rules and Regulations of the University Senate state that, at the beginning of each course and each practicum, faculty members, instructors, and graduate teaching assistants should inform students clearly about how to prepare class and practicum assignments, notebooks, outside work, and the like. Information on attendance and grading practices should also be included. This ensures that students will not be suspected of academic misconduct on the basis of any ignorance of course

requirements.

Making Timely Progress

The University and ABA Program establish explicit guidelines for the completion of graduate degrees at Michigan State University. The MA-ABA program must be *completed within three years* from the time a student begins taking graduate level courses. Students who do not finish within this time frame must fill out a Request for Extension of Time form, which can be obtained from the Program Coordinator. Extension of time is not automatically granted. An advisor must approve a student's request; requests for a second extension require approval of the full faculty. A student must also specify why the first time extension was not sufficient for completing degree requirements. Each extension is for no more than two semesters, and no more than two extensions can be granted. The Dean of the College of Education must also approve each extension. Students who do not complete courses for one consecutive year will be required to re-apply to the MA-ABA program.

Annual Review

A written evaluation shall be completed at least once a year and a copy of the evaluation shall be placed in the graduate student's file. The annual review will consider the student's progress towards the completion of academic coursework and the completion of program milestones. For more information about the required written annual evaluation of each graduate student, please see [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#): 2.4.8.

GradPlan

[GradPlan](#) is MSU's online management system where students create and store their degree plans, program activities, track RCR hours, form their guidance committee, and update a course list. Students are required to keep their GradPlan up to date throughout the program. There are several resources available online, including a self-[paced training](#) and training materials to assist students in navigating GradPlan.

Graduation/Diploma

In the final semester of courses, you must apply to graduate through the [Registrar's office](#).

Requesting a Leave of Absence

If you wish to pursue professional opportunities consistent with your long-range professional goals or are confronted with unexpected illnesses or other emergencies, you may request a leave of absence. Requests must be made in writing and submitted to the

MA in ABA Program Director, along with completed forms and appropriate documentation (see the Graduate Secretary for the forms). If approved, the Director of Graduate Studies will submit a request for a leave of absence to the Graduate School. All requests must be granted by the Graduate School. If you leave the program for 1 year or more, you must apply for readmission. If you are readmitted, all time spent in graduate school at MSU before your readmission will count toward the time limits imposed by the College (8 yrs to Master's and 10 yrs to Ph.D.).

Grading

You are expected to earn exemplary grades in all of your coursework. If your cumulative graduate GPA falls below 3.0, the ABA Program will place you on probation. While on probation, you may not hold employment positions and must increase your cumulative GPA to 3.0 or above in the next semester or you will be dismissed from the program. You may not re-enroll unless the department petitions for an additional semester. If you are dismissed from the program, you may not be readmitted as a non-degree seeking student. Courses in which a grade below 3.0 is earned must be repeated if required for graduation.

Incompletes and Deferrals

The ABA Program rarely provides incompletes for courses. Incompletes are only given in the event of extenuating circumstances and when the student has completed the majority of the coursework. Courses for which you earned an "incomplete" must be completed by the middle of the subsequent semester if they are required for graduation. Only the instructor may convert incompletes into grades.

Deferrals are given to graduate students who are doing satisfactory work but cannot complete the course work because of reasons acceptable to the instructor. Please see MSU's Graduate School policies for complete information about deferrals.

Credit/no credit

Graduate students cannot take courses on a credit/no-credit basis.

Grading thesis/dissertation credit

The final enrollment in thesis credit must be given a letter grade by your advisor. All earlier credits may be graded on a "P" for progress basis.

Professional Ethics in Research and Practice

As behavior analysts and scholars interested in improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities, we hold ourselves to high professional standards in our research, teaching, and other professional practices. One set of standards to which we hold ourselves, and

consequently our students, is the Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for Behavior Analysts. As scholars, we also must be held accountable to a set of standards that guide our research and creative activity.

As described in the MSU Graduate Student Handbook, “integrity in research and creative activities is based on sound disciplinary practice as well as on a commitment to basic values such as fairness, equity, honesty, and respect.” You must become knowledgeable with the University’s procedures for research involving human subjects. At MSU, the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) oversees all research involving human subjects. Before you even submit a proposal for conducting research with human subjects, you must complete a tutorial about human subjects policies. UCRIHS also offers workshops throughout the year about research ethics and policies. You will receive information about these from the special education program secretary. You are strongly encouraged to attend one of these workshops.

Responsible Conduct of Ethical Research

As of September 2011, Michigan State University requires that all graduate students and research project staff be trained in the Responsible Conduct of Ethical Research (RCER) as part of their research experience. The basic education plan consists of (i) 4 on-line CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) training modules, (ii) a minimum of 6 hours of face-to-face, discussion-based workshops (4 workshops, 1.5 h each), and (iii) 3 additional on-line CITI modules. The additional CITI modules could be on new topics or the refresher modules for the topics covered in (i). All RCR requirements must be completed by the end of the spring semester of Year Two.

Completion of all CITI modules and workshops will be documented by the Office of Regulatory Affairs at MSU (ABILITY). To complete the CITI modules, log-in using your MSU NetID and password. As you complete RCR trainings/educational activities, students must log their activity into the ABILITY information management system. Please visit the Graduate School website to learn more about the RCR requirement.

Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

The University has established a judicial structure and process for hearing and adjudicating alleged violations of recognized graduate student rights and responsibilities (GSRR, Article 5). The first venue to resolve such conflicts informally or formally rests within the academic unit. Because the faculty advisor-graduate student relationship is deemed so important, special attention should be given to the resolution of conflicts between a graduate student and his or her faculty advisor.

Student Conduct and Academic Honesty

It is important that you are thoroughly familiar with these policies before you begin work in your courses. These principles apply to all work in your graduate courses and Fieldwork experiences. Violation of these ethical principles and policies may result in a failing grade

in a course and possible dismissal from the ABA Program without the award of a degree. Students who are dismissed from the program due to violations in academic integrity will not be eligible for re-admission at any time. The ABA Program assumes that graduate students, faculty members, instructors, and graduate teaching assistants are responsible for knowing and understanding these guidelines. Ignorance of them is not an adequate defense against charges of academic misconduct.

MSU expectations for acceptable student conduct are specified in the regulations and the rights and responsibilities sections of the [Spartan Life Student Handbook and Resource Guide](#).

In a community of scholarship and practice, all of us share the responsibility of making sure that standards of academic honesty and integrity are understood and followed. Faculty and students at Michigan State University are expected to conduct themselves with the highest character and integrity. As stated in University policy:

Academic honesty is central to the educational process and acts of academic dishonesty are serious offenses within the University community. Suspension from the University could be the consequence for acts of academic dishonesty. (Spartan Information and Services, p. 78)

As a student at Michigan State University, you are obligated to uphold MSU's principles of academic integrity, including the responsibility that "no student shall claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own" (MSU Graduate School Rights and Responsibilities, General Student Regulation 1.0). You should understand that ***no student is permitted to:***

- Claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own.
- Procure, provide, accept or use any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization.
- Complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization.
- Allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself in part or in total, by another without proper authorization.
- Alter, tamper with, appropriate, destroy or otherwise interfere with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person.

Source: MSU, General Student Regulations, 1989, p. 79 Integrity of Scholarships and Grades

The following are all considered instances of academic misconduct:

Cheating

Giving, using, or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids, or other devices in any academic exercise, including unauthorized communication of information.

Examples: (a) copying from another student's paper during a quiz, test, or examination; (b) using "crib" sheets during a quiz, test, or examination; (c) using unauthorized books, notebooks, study guides, or other devices (e.g., calculators) during a quiz, test, or examination without authorization; (d) receiving unauthorized assistance during a quiz, test, or examination; (e) procuring quizzes, tests, or examinations before the scheduled exercise without authorization; and (f) copying other student's reports, laboratory work, and computer programs or files.

Fabrication and Falsification

Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise:

Examples of fabrication: inventing or counterfeiting data or research procedures to make it appear that the results of several processes are actually the results of a single process.

Examples of falsification: (a) false citation of the source of information; (b) altering the record of or reporting false information about practicum or clinical experiences; (c) altering grade reports or other academic records; (d) submitting a false excuse for absence or tardiness in a scheduled academic exercise; and (e) altering a returned examination paper and seeking re-grading.

Plagiarism

Knowingly presenting the work of someone else's as your own without proper acknowledgement of the source. The sole exception to this requirement is when the ideas or information are common knowledge.

Examples: (a) submitting, as your own work, the work of another student, research assistant, "ghost writer," or commercial writing service; (b) quoting directly from a source without quotation marks and citations; and (c) paraphrasing or summarizing someone else's work without acknowledgement of the source.

Plagiarism may occur orally and in writing. It may involve computer programs and files, research designs, distinctive figures of speech, ideas and images, or generally any information which belongs to someone else and that is not acknowledged as such. The ABA Program Faculty route all course assignments through [turnitin](#) to assess for authentic work. Any instances of plagiarism, including turning in work a student has completed for another course or prior project of any kind, will be met with disciplinary proceedings, which could lead to dismissal from the program. We refer all students to the

resource “[iThenticate](#),” which is a free resource that will allow graduate students to check papers for unintended plagiarism before submitting them.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

MSU encourages all members of the university community to engage with generative AI tools responsibly, ethically, and creatively, always keeping in mind that academic and administrative decisions must be grounded and centered around human judgment and input.

Students may only use generative AI tools to support their coursework or research activities when explicitly permitted by the instructor/research advisor. Researchers should never enter confidential or sensitive information into third-party, non-MSU enterprise generative AI tools, unless explicitly approved by MSU IT Information Security. For more detailed information, please refer to the [institutional data policy](#) for specific details about data use and potential risks associated with generative AI tools.

Facilitating Academic Misconduct

Giving or attempting to help someone else commit an act of academic misconduct.

Examples: (a) allowing another student to copy from your paper during a quiz, test, or examination; (b) distributing test questions or substantive information about the material to be tested before the scheduled exercise; (c) collaborating on academic work with the knowledge that the collaboration will not be reported; and (d) taking an examination or test for another student, or signing a false name on an academic exercise.

Conflict Resolution

Usually the best approach to resolving a problem is through informal discussion and negotiation when the problem first arises. Discussion and negotiation among the parties in a conflict may not only help to resolve the original conflict, but can lead to better communication and more positive working relationships in the future. In addition, there usually are more options for solving a problem at the early stages of a conflict than later when working relationships may become seriously compromised or when the problem grows in complexity.

Try to resolve problems through discussions with the people who are immediately involved in the issue. In the CEPSE Department, one should consider speaking with the course instructor (if the problem is specific to a special education course), your supervisor (if the problem is specific to practicum), your advisor, the special education coordinator, and/or the department chairperson.

If your problem cannot be resolved at the departmental level or if you prefer discussing the matter with someone from outside the department, consider seeking help from the

MSU Ombudsman, the Judicial Affairs Office, Associate Dean for Student Affairs in the College of Education, or the Dean of the Graduate School.

The Graduate School conducts workshops on Communicating Your Message: Effective Communication Strategies That Work on Setting Expectations and Resolving Conflicts that are designed to help graduate students work effectively with their faculty mentors and to make good progress toward their degrees.

At times, students may have questions or conflicts that require answers or resolutions, and it may be difficult to identify who the students may need to contact to receive an answer or resolution. Furthermore, students may need guidance on who to contact if an initial attempt to ask a question is not answered or a conflict is not resolved. In the event a student has any issues getting a question answered or resolving a conflict, it is recommended they contact the ABA Program Director first (if possible), then the Special Education Program Director. If the Special Education Program Director cannot assist in the matter, it is recommended that the student contact the CEPSE Department Chair.

A student who believes his or her rights have been violated by a member of the Michigan State University community shall first attempt to resolve the dispute in an informal discussion with the appropriate individual(s). (See AFR 2.4.2 and GSRR 5.3.1 and 5.3.2.)

If after this discussion, the student remains dissatisfied with the results, the student should meet with the Chair of the Department and/or the University Ombudsman to seek a resolution. (See AFR 2.4.2 and GSRR 5.3.2.)

The Department Chair may respond by asking the complainant to consult with the appropriate Program Director. This does not preclude the student's right to consult with the Department Chair, either instead of, or after, consulting with the relevant degree Program Director.

If after this discussion, the student remains dissatisfied with the results, the student may submit to the Department Chair a written, signed request for an academic grievance hearing. The letter must (1) specify the alleged violations of academic rights to justify the hearing, (2) identify the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and (3) state the suggested remedy that could be implemented by the Department Chair or degree Program Director. (See AFR 2.4.2 and GSRR 5.3.2 and 5.3.6.)

Students should consult the Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities for additional information. At any point during this process, students may contact the University Ombudsman's Office for advice, guidance, or assistance regarding their concerns.

Dismissal from the Program

The dismissal of a student from the MA-ABA program is a significant event for both the student and the program faculty. It represents the conclusion of the faculty that the

student is not engaging in professional behavior or that the student has not demonstrated an adequate level of competency in either academic or instructional skills or professional conduct. Dismissal action is generally the final outcome of several informal and formal communications with the student regarding his or her unsatisfactory progress through the program and, when appropriate, special efforts at helping the student meet program requirements and objectives. The final decision regarding whether or not a student should be terminated from the program, or under what conditions a student making unsatisfactory progress will be allowed to continue, rests with the ABA faculty. At any point during the student's matriculation through the program, the faculty retains the right to review any student circumstances or personal performances that may negatively affect the student's competencies for independent professional practice or that may threaten client welfare.

The following are offered as examples of circumstances or performances that may be the basis for dismissal action:

1. Failure to maintain minimum academic standards
2. Unsatisfactory performance in practice courses (e.g., practicum)
3. Academic dishonesty or misconduct
4. Criminal misconduct
5. Failure to comply with established University or program timetables and requirements
6. Unethical practices and/or unprofessional conduct as specified in the BACB Code of Ethics
7. Failure to make satisfactory progress in completing program requirements
8. Failure to maintain regular contact with the program and internship/practicum supervisor

HIPAA, FERPA, & Privacy Policy Guidelines

All graduate students are expected to follow the MSU Privacy Office policies and procedures, regardless of their funding situation or assistantship placements. These guidelines will be discussed extensively at practicum sites, in some of the courses, and with advisors. Students are responsible for meeting all privacy requirements associated with work completed in the MA-ABA program.

Records Policies

The ABA program maintains records documenting each student's progress through the Master's program. These records may include the program plan, thesis committee form, thesis completion form, teaching and assistantship evaluations, practicum evaluations, and other materials that are deemed necessary. All student records are stored electronically; only program faculty and staff will have access to this material to protect students' privacy and confidentiality. Students are strongly advised to maintain copies of forms for their personal records. Students may request to examine their own files; this

request should be directed to the student's advisor or the Program Coordinator. The only material that will be withheld is that which the student has clearly waived his or her right to examine, e.g., confidential reference letters (Other than the latter, files generally only contain records of which students already possess copies). Once students graduate, a permanent file is maintained by the program which among other things, may assist documentation for future employment and credentialing.

Appendix A: Resources

Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI)

Membership in ABAI is highly recommended. Since 1974, ABAI has been the primary membership organization for those interested in the philosophy, science, application, and teaching of behavior analysis. ABAI provides many services to its members and the field including the following:

- Events that promote dissemination of the science and provide continuing education opportunities for practitioners.
- Job placement services for applicants and employers.
- Important scholarly journals in the field.
- Support of the dissemination of behavior analysis in the United States and around the world.
- Special Interest Groups (SIGs) initiated by and for members to provide forums for information exchange and to promote particular areas of behavior analysis.
- ABAI's membership publication, *Inside Behavior Analysis*, features articles of interest to the membership; information on upcoming events; and updates from chapters, SIGs, and more.

Behavior Analysis Association of Michigan (BAAM)

BAAM is a state affiliate of ABAI and is sponsored by the Eastern Michigan University Psychology Department. BAAM was organized to support and promote scientific research on the basic principles of behavior and the extension of those principles to create demonstrably effective and humane outcome-based therapies with the primary goal of establishing and enhancing functional independent living skills. BAAM also facilitates an annual convention that is well worth attending.

MSU Student Resources

The College of Education website may be a helpful resource. Information for College of Education students can be accessed on their website. Other resources that may be of interest to students are listed below.

Service	Web address
Black Student Alliance	https://www.msu.edu/~bsaemail/Welcome.htm

Service	Web address
Campus Wellness Partnerships and Resources	http://www.msu.edu/user/gradschl/
Career Services and Placement	http://www.csp.msu.edu/careerservices@csp.msu.edu
Counseling and Mental Health Resources	http://www.mentalhealthresources.msu.edu/
English Language Center	http://elc.msu.edu/
Family Resource Center	http://www.frc.msu.edu/
Graduate School	http://www.msu.edu/user/gradschl/
Judicial Affairs Office in Department of Student Life	http://www.studentlife.msu.edu/current_students/judicial.htm
Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender Resource Center	http://lbgtrc.msu.edu/resources/ncod.htm
Library	www.lib.msu.edu/
Office of Diversity and Pluralism	http://odp.anr.msu.edu/
Office of Financial Aid	http://www.finaid.msu.edu/work.asp
MSU Computer Store	http://cstore.msu.edu/
Office for International Students and Scholars	http://oiss.isp.msu.edu/
Office of Admissions and Scholarships	http://admissions.msu.edu/
Office of Financial Aid	http://www.finaid.msu.edu
Office of the Registrar	http://www.reg.msu.edu/
Olin Health Center	http://olin.msu.edu/
Ombudsman	http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/
Resource Center for Persons with	http://www.rcpd.msu.edu/

Service	Web address
Disabilities	
Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Prevention Program	http://www.studentlife.msu.edu/current_students/sarv/sarv.htm
Spartan Life (student rights and responsibilities)	http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/index.htm
Student Employment Office	http://www.finaid.msu.edu/work.asp
Services for the deaf and hard of hearing	http://www.rcpd.msu.edu/programs/hearingtech
Testing Office	http://www.testingoffice.msu.edu/

- **Learning Resources Center (LRC)**: provides instructional facilities, staff, and materials for MSU students interested in improving thinking, reading, writing, listening, study, time management, and test-taking skills. All services and workshops are provided free of charge.
- **Writing Center**: experienced writing consultants talk one-on-one with writers of all levels of proficiency at all stages of a composition. Get assistance in brainstorming topics, organizing ideas, developing rough drafts, and fine-tuning your writing. For an answer to a quick question, use the Grammar and Usage. Hotline at the same phone and E-mail address (grammar@msu.edu)
- **Career Development Center (CDC)**: The CDC contains a comprehensive collection of books and files on thousands of career fields and 3,200 employers as well as career and employer directories, MSU curriculum files, graduate and student information, audio-visual aids, and self-evaluation modules. Students in the College of Education receive help in activating a Placement File, preparing resumes, researching employers, and preparing for job interviews. Assistance is also offered in teacher certification in career planning and teaching market research.
- **Service Learning Center**: MSU students may receive placement assistance here for volunteer experiences and internships related to their majors. The office is open Monday - Friday, Noon - 5:00 pm.
- **The Testing Office**: registration materials for the LSAT, GRE, MCAT, and GMAT are available here, as well as foreign language placement tests. Registration materials for the NMC are available in the College of Education Student Affairs Office, 134 Erickson Hall.

**Appendix B: Master of Arts in Applied Behavior Analysis Annual Review
College of Education**

Portion Completed by the Student

Academic Progress

1. Name: _____
2. PID: _____
3. An accurate copy of the current program planning form must be attached to this report.
4. Date of entrance into the program: _____
5. If admitted under provisional status, date provisional status removed (if applicable) : ___N/A___
6. Anticipated completion date: _____
7. Are all program requirements completed?
 - a. ___ Yes ___ No
 - b. If no, what requirements remain?

8. Do you have any questions or concerns about your progress or the program? If so, please explain.

9. Comment briefly on your progress toward achieving your career goals during the past year. If you feel you are not making progress, explain why. Include perceived departmental/school obstacles that hinder your program.

Portion Completed by the Advisor/Program Coordinator

Academic Performance

Master of Arts in Applied Behavior Analysis Academic Advisor:

1. Has the student made acceptable progress during the evaluation period? Please comment below.