M.S. Student Handbook
2024-2026

Applied Behavior Analysis Program

College of Education Vision

Driven by a commitment to diversity, social justice and equity, the College of Education is a premier educational organization that engages in innovative and impactful research, teaching and service.

Applied Behavior Analysis Program

The ABA Program is one of the programs offered at the *Instruction and Curriculum Leadership Department* (ICL), of the College of Education at the University of Memphis (UofM).
The ABA program is ideal for students looking to become Board Certified Behavior Analysts while earning an MS or EdD degree. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a rapidly growing field that uses learning principles to change and improve socially significant behaviors in different settings. The ABA program offers a face-to-face **Behavior Analyst Certification Board® Verified Course Sequence** in a *cohort model* that prepares students to be ethical and well-rounded practitioners, committed to delivering high-quality behavioral services in the community and to the dissemination of our field.

Faculty

The ABA Program consists of four core faculty:

- Thouraya Al-Nasser, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA, Clinical Assistant Professor, *Director of Clinical Services, and UofM Autism Treatment, Training and Research Clinic*
- Laura Casey, Ph.D., BCBA-D: Professor, *Undergraduate ABA Coordinator*
- Diana Delgado, Ph.D., BCBA-D: Assistant Professor, *Practicum Coordinator*
- James Meindl, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA: Professor, *Graduate Program Coordinator*

MS Course Sequence

The MS program is a 36-credit hour program that operates on a cohort model beginning in the Fall semester. The coursework covers all the requirements of the current Behavior Analysis Certification Board Task List. See Appendix A for the master's degree course sequence and the Verified Course Sequence hour allocation.

1st Fall
SPED 7514 ---- Intro to ABA (3hrs)
SPED 7010 ---- Ethical Issues in ABA (3hrs)

1st Spring
SPED 7518 ---- Evidence-Based Practice (3hrs)
SPED 7517 ---- Functional Behavior Analysis and Treatment of Problem Behavior (3hrs)

1st Summer
EDPR 7581 ---- Single Subject Research Designs (3hrs)
SPED 7521 ---- Principles of Behavior (3hrs)

2nd Fall
SPED 7519 ---- Practicum (3hrs)
SPED 7516 ---- Advanced ABA (3hrs)

2nd Spring
SPED 7519 ---- Practicum (3hrs)
SPED 7520 ---- Behavior Seminar (3hrs)

2nd Summer
SPED 7521 ---- Practicum (3hrs)
SPED 7900 ---- Advanced Practicum (3hrs)

Total: 36 credits

Grades

A (B-) is considered a passing grade in the ABA Program. A lower grade indicates that the student is not performing to the standards required to be academically successful. If a student obtains a grade lower than B- in their Intro to ABA class (SPED 7514), they cannot continue taking classes. To do so, the student will have to apply for re-admission to the program the following Fall and retake SPED 7514.

Academic Advisement

Upon acceptance to the ABA program, students are assigned a faculty advisor. Students are encouraged to review their acceptance letter and reach out to the program coordinator if they are unsure about their advisor assignment.

The role of the academic advisor is to provide guidance with respect to course registration, graduate assistantships, academic success, and professional and intellectual development. Students should reach out to their advisor if they need help or guidance regarding course registration, academic progress or if they have any other questions or concerns about the program.

Practicum Courses

Students will take 4 practicum courses starting their second year. These courses are designed to supplement and support the student's fieldwork experience at their practicum sites.

Because Practicum courses are not part of the VCS, students who do not want to be Board Certified Behavior Analysts do not have to take these courses or complete fieldwork requirements. They can either take these courses or select replacement elective courses with their academic advisor, to meet the credit hour requirements of their MS degree.

- ***Practicum Registration***: An essential requirement to register for these courses is to have secured a practicum placement and an on-site supervisor. To register for practicum courses, students will need to email the Practicum Coordinator with their U number, practicum site, and the name of their on-site supervisor. The Practicum Coordinator will then issue a permit and clear the student to register for practicum. An email from the on-site supervisor confirming that they will be supervising the student may be required from the practicum instructor if the practicum site is new.

- ***At the beginning of each practicum course***, the practicum instructor will share the syllabus with on-site supervisors and inform them about upcoming practical assignments that will be required to implement at the site and under their supervision. Students and on-site supervisors must also review the UofM Practicum Handbook and indicate their agreement with practicum procedures and expectations by signing the last page of the Practicum Handbook.

- ***Practicum meetings*** take place every other week in groups of less than 10 students. During these meetings, students can share their progress and experiences at the sites and learn from the group's experiences. Students can count these meetings as group supervision hours and related class assignments and activities as unrestricted fieldwork hours.

- **If students are struggling at their practicum site,** they should talk to their practicum instructor. They will help you make the best decisions to guarantee a productive and positive experience at the student's practicum site.

Overview of practicum courses

- *Practicum 1*: This course discusses requirements for fieldwork experience, the scope of practice of ABA, ethical issues, and standards of supervision. During this course, students will conduct some basic behavioral assessments and work on data collection at their practicum sites.

- *Practicum 2*: More advanced behavioral assessments will be conducted under proper supervision at the practicum sites. Challenging behavior and skills assessments will be reviewed and discussed before each practical assignment. Applications of ABA principles with other populations and in other settings will be explored.

- *Practicum 3*: In this course, students will design and implement a skill acquisition plan and collect data to monitor their client's progress. The groups will work on weekly assignments in preparation for the BCBA exam. Other current topics of relevance for practitioners including supervision skills and application of ABA principles with other populations and in other settings will be explored.

- *Advanced Practicum*: In this course, students discuss topics related to their future work as BCBAs as they prepare for the BCBA exam. Mock exams and other resources will be available to evaluate and strengthen areas that require improvement.

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantships will be offered when available. GAs typically cover the cost of 1 or 2 courses per semester and offer the student a monthly stipend for 20 hours per week working as an RBT or providing behavior analytic services in the community.
When these positions become available, they will be shared with all students. Students in good standing with the program will be eligible to apply.

Supervised Fieldwork Experience

To be eligible to take the BCBA exam, students need to accrue supervised fieldwork hours. Students are encouraged to have secured a practicum site and to start accruing hours at least by the beginning of their first Spring to complete the fieldwork requirement by the time they finish their coursework.

If students have no prior experience in the field or do not have a practicum site, the ABA Program will assist with the student's placement throughout their first semester. The

practicum coordinator will suggest practicum placements based on the interests of the student and the positions available at the time.

If students are currently employed at a site providing behavior analytic services, they can start accruing hours during their first semester. Before starting their supervised fieldwork, students will need to notify the practicum coordinator. She will verify that all requirements are in line with BACB standards, and contact the on-site supervisor to agree on expectations, roles, and procedures related to the practicum experience.

Students should not pay for supervision. Sites that partner with UofM provide supervision to our students without cost. When students start taking practicum classes, students will have the option of counting this time as group supervision. Supervisors can sign off on those hours or add the practicum instructor to the supervisory contract.

Per BACB requirements, students can start accruing fieldwork hours if:
- They have started their coursework in an ABA Verified Course Sequence
- They have a qualified supervisor on-site (eligible to supervise trainees)
- They have signed a supervision contract with their supervisor.
- They have created a gateway account on the BACB's website.

Thesis

A completed thesis is required for graduation. Students will conduct a research project under the guidance of their assigned advisor. Once submitted, an ABA faculty committee will evaluate whether the project meets the standards required for graduation. Detailed information about the steps required to complete this project can be found in the Thesis Handbook.

Student Performance Evaluation

Students' performance will be monitored continuously by their advisors. By the end of the first year, students will self-assess their proficiency on the task list items that have been covered during content or practicum courses. This will help students and advisors identify areas that need improvement in terms of conceptual accuracy, fluency, or further practice.
During practicum courses, supervisors will fill out a feedback form to evaluate the student's overall performance and progress at the site. This is an opportunity for trainees and supervisors to obtain feedback and evaluate goals and program changes if required. Students will also be asked to provide feedback about their supervisory experience.

Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism refers to copying material from other sources and presenting it as if it was one's own. Copying and pasting text from other articles, websites, or other sources, published or unpublished, to papers, term papers, or other assignments or projects constitutes plagiarism. It also includes any unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person.

As a form of academic dishonesty, plagiarism is severely punished per university policies. Any documented cases of plagiarism can result in zero points for that grade for a first occurrence, and dismissal from the course with a failing grade for a second time. It may also result in other more severe sanctions by the College of Education.

Forgery refers to copying someone else's signature on any physical or electronic documents without their knowledge. Altering an existing document with someone's signature on it without their knowledge or consent, is also considered forgery. Forgery will result in the student's dismissal from the ABA Program. Faculty will also report forgery to the Office of Student Affairs. Depending on the case, an investigation might be conducted which may result in the student's dismissal from UofM.

Applied Behavior Analysis Program Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools in Academic Work

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are becoming increasingly accessible. These tools can be valuable for learning and research, but it is important to use them responsibly and ethically within the academic environment. This policy outlines the appropriate use of AI tools in coursework and academic integrity expectations. These policies are specific to the Applied Behavior Analysis department and do not supersede any University policies.

Examples and Non-examples of AI Tools
- AI Tools are systems or machines that can perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence. These tasks include learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and language understanding. Examples include tools such
    - Writing assistants (e.g., Grammarly, Jasper)
    - Chatbots (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini)
    - Transcribers/Notetakers (e.g., Otter, MeetGeek)
- Programs that contain student postings of materials used in classes (e.g., Course Hero, StuDoc) are not considered AI. Accessing any unauthorized information through one of these programs is considered cheating, and incorporating this information into any assignment is considered plagiarism.

Acceptable Use of AI Tools
- **Research and Exploration:** Students may use AI tools to explore topics, generate ideas, or gather information for research and class projects. However, all information obtained from AI sources must be critically evaluated and properly cited.

- **Drafting, Editing, and Brainstorming:** AI tools can be used to help with brainstorming ideas, outlining arguments, or generating drafts. However, students are responsible for revising and editing the output to ensure accuracy, clarity, and originality. Students are ultimately responsible for the content and originality of their work.

- **Accessibility and Learning Support:** Students with documented disabilities may be able to use AI tools for approved accommodations, such as text-to-speech conversion or grammar checking.

- **Learning Resources:** AI tutors or question-answering systems can be used as supplemental learning tools to understand concepts or practice critical thinking. Students should approach AI generated answers cautiously as AI is occasionally inaccurate.

Unacceptable Use of AI Tools
- **Plagiarism:** Using AI tools to generate content that is presented as the student's own work constitutes plagiarism. This includes copying content directly, paraphrasing extensively, or using AI-generated text without attribution.

- **Fabrication:** Fabricating data or results with the help of AI tools is strictly prohibited.

- **Circumventing Assessments:** Using AI tools to complete quizzes, exams, or other assessments without authorization is a violation of academic integrity.

Student Responsibilities
- **Academic Integrity:** Students are responsible for upholding the university's standards of academic integrity. This includes using AI tools responsibly and ethically.
- **Transparency:** Students must disclose the use of any AI tools in their work as instructed by the faculty member.
- **Understanding AI Limitations:** Students should be aware of the limitations of AI tools, such as potential biases and factual inaccuracies.

Consequences
- Violations of this policy will be treated as violations of the university's academic integrity code. Consequences may include failing an assignment, failing a course, or even academic suspension or expulsion.

Faculty Guidance

Individual instructors may have specific policies regarding the use of AI tools in their courses. Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to these policies, which may be outlined in the course syllabus.

- **Detection and Prevention:** Faculty are encouraged to use plagiarism detection tools and other methods to identify AI-generated content.

UMABA

UMABA (University of Memphis Association for Behavior Analysis), is a student organization that promotes and disseminates behavior analysis in the university and the local community. By participating in UMABA students will be able to network with local BCBAs, alumni, and attend ABA conferences. Members of this organization are current graduate students enrolled in the ABA Verified Course Sequence, with a 3.0 GPA and are eligible to hold leadership roles within the organization. All students are encouraged to participate in this organization.

See: https://memphis.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/umaba

How to be a Successful Grad Student

Being a graduate student is difficult but can also be very rewarding. Keep your eye on the ultimate goal but don't forget to enjoy every step of your way there. Below are some suggestions that will help you succeed:

- Remember why you are doing this: you want to become a successfully applied behavior analyst.
- Be humble, be teachable, and be willing to learn.
- Be open: let your views be challenged.
- Think critically and ask questions.
- Come to class prepared: do the readings in advance and identify the implications of the things you are learning, on your work and your life. Come to class with questions.
- Taking shortcuts on your assignments or doing the minimum to get a passing grade *will not* be to your advantage. You may pass the class, but are you preparing yourself for the exam? Are you preparing yourself to handle a difficult situation as a BCBA? Are you learning? Grad school is a big investment. Make the most out of it.
- Start your assignments early.
- Participate in any research opportunities.
- Contact your professors to discuss any challenging content. They will be happy to meet with you or provide additional guidance.
- Be respectful to your faculty and peers.
- Reply to emails and feedback in timely manner.
- Participate, and contribute. Engage in behavior, so your behavior can be shaped.

- Discuss, practice, and apply the concepts learned in class in your supervision experience.
- Instead of asking, *"what can the program offer me"* ask yourself, *"how can I contribute to this program"?*

APPENDIX A

University of Memphis Applied Behavior Analysis Program
Master's Degree Course Sequence

Semester	Required Courses	Credit hours
1st Fall Semester	SPED 7514 ---- Intro to ABA	3hrs
	SPED 7010 ---- Ethics	3hrs
1st Spring Semester	SPED 7518 ---- Evidence-based Practice	3hrs
	SPED 7517 ---- Functional Behavior Analysis	3hrs
1st Summer Semester	SPED 7521 ---- Principles of Behavior	3hrs
	EDPR 7581 ---- Single Subject	3hrs
2nd Fall Semester	SPED 7519 ---- Practicum	3hrs
	SPED 7516 ---- Advanced ABA	3hrs
2nd Spring Semester	SPED 7519 ---- Practicum	3hrs
	SPED 7520 ---- Behaviorism Seminar	3hrs
2nd Summer Semester	SPED 7519 ---- Practicum	3hrs
	SPED 7900 ---- Advanced Practicum	3hrs