GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

NICHOLLS STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Version 9/23/26

HIGH INCIDENCE DISABILITIES CONCENTRATION

ABA OPTION

Version 9/23/26

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PROGRAM RESOURCES

The High Incidence Disabilities Concentration with Applied Behavior Analysis Option is housed within the Department of Teacher Education in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences. The Department Office is located in Hill Hall 233.

Program Address:

Cynthia Dong, PhD, BCBA-D
Program Chair, High Incidence Disabilities Concentration
Department of Teacher Education
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Nicholls State University, Thibodaux
906 East 1st Street
Thibodaux, LA 70301

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Department of Teacher Education 985-448-4331

Dr. Sara Bourgeois, Department Head of Teacher Education

Mrs. Wanda Porche, Admin. Coordinator

ABA Program Faculty ADD NUMBER

Dr. Cynthia Dong, Program Chair

cynthia.dong@nicholls.edu

Dr. Francis Hwang, ABA Faculty

francis.hwang@nicholls.edu

Office of Student Affairs 985-448-4022

Picciola Hall

Dean's Office, College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Hill Hall 220

985-448-4371

Dr. Kimberly Reynolds, LPC-S

Office of Academic Affairs 985-448-4012

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

WELCOME

The faculty and students of Nicholls State University welcome and congratulate you on your entrance to our university. Graduate education is a privilege and an important decision as you demonstrate your commitment over the next few years to attaining a Master of Education (MEd) degree in High Incidence Disabilities in Applied Behavior Analysis Option.

ADDITIONAL UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Student Access Center

The Student Access Center (SAC) provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals, as outlined by the regulations. For additional information, go to https://www.nicholls.edu/student-access-center/, call 985-448-4430, email: studentaccess@nicholls.edu or visit the office at 137 Peltier Hall.

Counseling Center

The counseling center is available to help students with adjustments as well as other personal and career issues. All services are offered through the University Counseling Center (UCC) address aspects of wellness. The UCC is available to students, faculty, and staff. For additional information, go to https://www.nicholls.edu/counseling/, call 985-448-4080, email: counseling@nicholls.edu, or visit the office at 252 Elkins Hall

University Health Services

University Health Services (UHS) offers quality healthcare for all currently enrolled students

and staff. UHS provides services for acute health problems, medical information, and injuries. For additional information, go to https://www.nicholls.edu/health/, call 985-493-2600, or visit the office at Betsy Cheramie Ayo Hall.

PROGRAM MISSION AND STRUCTURE

Program Mission

The mission of the High Incidence Disabilities program with the concentration in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is to empower the next generation of behavior analysts and educators using the ABA and data driven decision making as the foundation for transformative learning. As a unique provider of both BCBA® and CABAS® certification pathways, our program equips future practitioners to focus on developing evidence-based interventions related to skills acquisitions and behavior reduction. We dedicate ourselves to training professionals who can skillfully build academic, social, and verbal repertoires in diverse learners, utilizing research-based behavioral strategies and ethical and culturally responsive practices to make profound and lasting contributions.

Program Structure

Nicholls State University, High Incidence Disabilities (HID) concentration in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a 45-credit program. New students are accepted in spring, summer, and fall. At the enrollment in the first ABA course, all students must have a practicum site with an approved Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) supervisor to meet supervision requirements. Most classes are synchronous online

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual Framework: Responsible Leaders Engaging in Professional Practice

Programs of study in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences are grounded in the Conceptual Framework of "Responsible Leaders Engaging in Professional Practice." Candidates are prepared in the core knowledge and skills needed to become *responsible leaders* engaging in *professional practice.* The core components educate candidates to

develop and maintain the dispositions that promote positive change in the community and profession, who are open to diversity and innovation, and who are culturally responsive. The College's core components and dispositions represent the University's commitment to transforming the lives of students by working to ensure that all students become successful life-long learners.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Nicholls State University, HID concentration in ABA is committed to all legal and ethical guidelines and professional standards described by Behavior Analysis Certification Board (BACB®) and the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI). The students will acquire knowledge of legal responsibilities, ethical standards, and professional standards within the field of behavior analysis. All students must adhere to the guidelines of professional standards and ethical standards.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

***Grants** are available for individuals who meet the qualification standards.*

***Loans** include Unsubsidized Stafford Loan available for graduate students. More information can be found: https://www.nicholls.edu/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid/*

***Scholarship Opportunities** are available for students who meet the eligibility requirements. More information can be found: https://www.nicholls.edu/financial-aid/scholarships/*

ADMISSION

CRITERIA AND SELECTION

All applicants must have a completed bachelor's degree with a minimum of a 2.5 out of 4 GPA on their last 60 hours of undergraduate coursework. An undergraduate degree in education, psychology, or a related field and at least one year of professional work or internship experience working with individuals with disabilities is recommended. Applicants with non-education undergraduate degrees may be considered, depending upon the type of non-education degree and years of technical work experience.

UNIVERSITY AND PROGRAM APPLICATION PROCESS

1. **Application**

   Applicants for admission to the program must complete an application on Nicholls State University Graduate Admissions. ***Please review the step-by-step application guide below.***

2. **Resume**

   Include an updated copy of your resume listing work experience. The resume can be uploaded in the online application system.

3. **Academic credentials and transcripts**

   To complete your application and verify your degree and undergraduate GPA, you must submit transcripts from all educational institutions you have attended.

   - **When applying:**
     - You may upload scanned copies of official transcripts, diplomas, or degree certificates to the online application system. **Note:** You do not need to submit transcripts for coursework or degrees earned from Nicholls State University.
     - These scans help form a complete application packet, but they **do not replace** the need for official documents.
   - **When it is *not* accepted:** These types of documents will not be used for degree verification or GPA calculation:
     - Advising reports
     - Unofficial transcripts or scans labeled "UNOFFICIAL"
     - Documents with a URL across the top
     - Transcripts missing the institution's name, seal, stamp, or GPA

4. **Letters of recommendation**

   Please submit three professional letters of recommendation. All letters of recommendation should be submitted directly to the Administrative Coordinator and the Program Chair. The letters should be on letterhead, have a cursive handwritten signature and the professional (ex: academic advisor, professor, research mentors, clinical and professional supervisors or workplace managers, etc.) should include how the person knows you in a professional manner, your ability to

complete a graduate program and can attest to your intellectual curiosity, research skills and or work ethic. Letters from family members, friends, co-workers, not on letterhead and without a handwritten signature and emailed from you are not acceptable.

5. **Nonrefundable application processing fee**
   A non-refundable application fee of $20 for US citizens and $30 for others is required.
6. **High Incidence Disabilities interest survey**
   Please complete High Incidence Disabilities Program interest survey: NSU HID Interest Form
7. **Interview**
   An interview will be conducted with the High Incidence Disabilities faculty admission committee. The interview will be conducted synchronously via video teleconference.

ADMISSION STATUS

Admit: Applications that meet all acceptance criteria are admitted to the program.

Deny: Applications that do not meet the criteria described above.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND REQUIREMENTS

ACADEMIC COURSEWORK

COHORTS AND COURSE ARRANGEMENT

Cohorts: Students are grouped as a cohort depending on their time of entry into the program. Students in the same cohort are advised to enroll in the same core ABA courses each semester. The cohort approach is implemented for the faculty to monitor student progress and advise accordingly.

Course Arrangement: HID program with concentration in ABA is a 45-credit program. Courses are offered in a hierarchical sequence from foundational knowledge to advanced and concentrated knowledge. Each student will receive individualized advising in addition

to following the sequence prescribed to each cohort. Graduation may be delayed for individuals who do not take/do not pass required courses in the recommended time.

COURSE SEQUENCE: SAMPLE OVERVIEW

Semester	Suggested Courses
1 (Fall)	• EDCI 511 • EDCI 534
2 (Spring)	• EDCI 547 • EDCI 539 • EDFR 501
3 (Summer)	• EDCI 515 • EDCI 548
4 (Fall)	• EDCI 557 • EDCI 555 • EDCI 552
5 (Spring)	• EDCI 599 • EDCI 538 • EDCI 553
6 (Summer)	• Elective
7 (Fall)	• EDCI 523 • EDFR 594

APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Foundations**
  - EDCI 515 (3) – Seminar in High Incidence Disabilities
  - EDCI 511 (3) – Applied Behavior Analysis/Principles of Behavior
  - EDFR 501 (3) – Educational Research
- **Professional Courses**
  - EDCI 538 (3) – Ethics for Teaching as Applied Behavior Analysis
  - EDCI 547 (3) – Instructional Intervention Strategies
  - EDCI 548 (3) – Consultation for Implementation of Class-wide Strategies
  - EDCI 557 (3) – Behavior Intervention Strategies

- EDCI 523 (3) – Advanced Verbal Behavior/Conceptual Analysis
- EDCI 522 (3) – Basic Behavior Analysis
- EDCI 599 (3) – Field-based Research Seminar
- EDFR 594 (0) – Master's Thesis
- Electives: 3 semester hours from Special Education, Reading, Dyslexia, Psychology

- **Applied Behavior Analysis Option**
  - EDCI 534 (3) – Practicum I in Teaching as Applied Behavior Analysis
  - EDCI 539 (3) – Practicum II in Teaching as Applied Behavior Analysis
  - EDCI 555 (3) – Practicum III in Teaching as Applied Behavior Analysis and Organizational Behavior Management

ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

Upon completion of 36 credits (excludes an elective and EDFR 594), the student will advance to a master's degree candidate. The student will be enrolled in EDFR 594 to complete a thesis project that meets the requirements below.

APPLIED EXPERIENCE

All students must have a placement in which they can accrue fieldwork experience hours towards BCBA® credential. The clinical supervisors will meet with the Practicum instructor at least once per semester to establish expectations and monitor progress of the student. A supervisor – university contract will be developed at the beginning of each semester.

The students are expected to maintain active a maintain an active supervision contract, track hours accurately, adhere to the Ethics code, maintain proactive communication, and maintain professionalism.

THESIS

As a graduation requirement, all students will complete a master's thesis. EDFR 594 is a zero (0) credit course offered to students who have completed all required course work with the exception of an elective. The thesis must meet the requirements of Nicholls State

University's Thesis Guidelines. The student will propose and defend their thesis which must be written in APA-style. The student may complete a traditional experimental thesis or a systematic literature review.

The student must have a thesis committee formed by the end of his/her second semester. The student will present the thesis proposal to the committee for approval. Once approved, investigation will begin which will include implementation and data collection for the thesis. The student must propose one of the three types of work: experimental, correlation, or systematic literature review as their thesis. The proposal should include a literature review and methods. The investigation must be in any branch of behavior analysis (philosophical/conceptual, basic, or applied). The committee will oversee the process of the of the thesis and conduct scheduled progress monitoring meetings with the students to ensure the progress and completion of the project. The student will complete an oral defense of the thesis in the presence of the committee in which the student's conferral of the degree will be determined.

GETTING INVOLVED

MEMBERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Louisiana Behavior Analysis Association (LaBAA): https://www.labaa.net/

Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI): https://www.abainternational.org/welcome.aspx

Association of Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA): https://www.apbahome.net/

ADMINISTRATIVE (DEGREE) REQUIREMENTS

GRADE STANDARDS

If a student earns a grade below C in any course, the student must retake the course. Grades below C cannot be used for certification.

ADVISING

Upon admission, the student will be assigned an advisor who is a faculty member of HID ABA. The advisor will guide the student through the program of study. The advisor will assist in selection and completion of courses with satisfactory outcomes. The advisor will individualize the course sequence in addition to the required courses for each cohort.

COURSE REGISTRATION

All students are required to register in a timely manner prior to the beginning of the semester. The steps for course registration are outlined below:

1. Complete the Financial Responsibility Obligation Agreement (FROA) found in Banner
2. Review transcript to verify courses that were taken and are currently enrolled
3. Refer to the program course sequence spreadsheet and decide the number of courses (one, two, or three) to take. Students are highly advised to take courses that are in the sequence of the assigned cohort.
4. Send an email to Graduate Administrative Assistant (Ms. Wanda Porche, wanda.porche@nicholls.edu) and CC all professions in HID ABA. The email must include, a) student's name, b) N number, c) semester registering, d) courses requesting to take, e) name of current supervisor

WITHDRAWAL/RESIGNATION FROM PROGRAM

Students who wish to resign must complete an official form available in the academic dean's office. Grades of W are posted through the last day to drop a course or resign. After the drop date, students will not be permitted to drop a course or resign from the university.

Students who leave the university without properly completing a resignation form will receive a grade of F (or FNA) or U (UNA) in all courses. Additional information can be found: https://www.nicholls.edu/records/resignations/

SUSPENSION/DISMISSAL

First Suspension: A student on probation who fails to earn a minimum, graduate, semester GPA of 3.0; the student may re-enroll.

Second Suspension: For an indefinite period of time. A student who has served a time of suspension of at least one semester may appeal to the Graduate Council for readmission following the procedure as outlined in the Application of Appel for Readmissions after Second Suspension.

Third Suspension: Permanent dismissal from graduate studies.

MAKING CHANGES

CHANGING GRADE FROM "INCOMPLETE"

Change of Grade

After a grade is recorded in the Office of Records and Registration, it can be changed only upon certification by the instructor on the proper form obtained from the instructor's academic dean. The change of grade must be approved by the dean of the instructor's college and the Office of Records and Registration. Once the form is completed and turned into the Office of Records and Registration, the instructor must sign the official grade book indicating the grade change.

Incomplete (I) Grades

A grade of I may be given for work which could not be completed because of circumstances beyond the student's control and will not be given to a student doing unsatisfactory work. A grade of I is not counted in the grade-point average until it is resolved into a final grade. The same procedure is used to change an I grade as stated in Change of Grade. However, a grade of I must be resolved within one calendar year following the semester in which the I grade was received, or the I grade will automatically be changed to F (or U where applicable).

CHANGING THE PROGRAM PLAN

If a student wishes the change the program plan, it must be discussed with the faculty advisor regarding changes and gain approval.

DEMONSTRATION OF COMPETENCY

COMPETENCY REQUIREMENT

Thesis Proposal Eligibility Requirement

Students are eligible to enroll in EDFR 594 (Master's Thesis) upon completion of 36 credits (with the exception of EDCI 593 and EDCI 553). Thes

BACB® Eligibility Requirement

Information on BACB® eligibility requirement can be found in BCBA® Handbook: https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/BCBAHandbook_260130-a.pdf

THESIS PROPOSAL AND DEFENSE

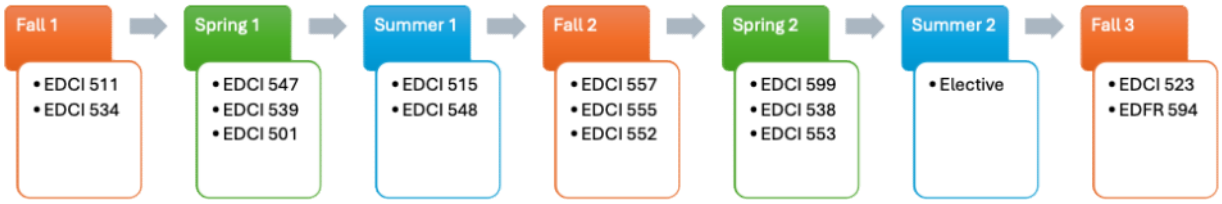
The students must propose one of the three types of work: experimental, correlation, or systematic literature review as their thesis. The candidates must have a thesis committee formed by the end of their second semester. The proposal should include a literature review and methods. The candidates will present their thesis proposal to the committee.

M.ED DEGREE AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

DIPLOMA/DEGREE PROCESS AND FEES

A graduate fee of $35 is required of each candidate for the master's degrees, and a $10 fee is required for certificate only programs. These fees are paid at registration or when the student applies for graduation. Graduation fees are not carried forward to subsequent semesters; therefore, when a candidate does not meet graduation requirements in the current semester, the entire fee must be paid when application is made subsequently. The graduation fee covers the printing cost of a diploma and is non-refundable. A $35 fee will be charged for a duplicate diploma.

ABA STUDENT DEGREE PLAN EXAMPLE



Version 9/23/26