



DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING,  
HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP, EDUCATIONAL  
PSYCHOLOGY, AND FOUNDATIONS

**Applied Behavior Analysis Supporting Interest Area**  
(for Educational Psychology Majors Only)  
**Undergraduate Student Handbook**

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## **PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT**

This handbook is intended to help students understand the framework and functioning of the Applied Behavior Analysis program at Mississippi State University. This handbook provides students with a variety of resources that will be valuable during their time as a student in the program. Students will find documents related to course sequences, accreditation information, student expectations, and how student progress will be evaluated throughout the program.

If any student has any questions about the information presented in this handbook or has additional questions that are not addressed in this handbook, they should contact the ABA Program Coordinator, Dr. Hallie Smith.

### **Contact Information**

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## **FULL TIME DEPARTMENTAL AND RELATED FACULTY AND STAFF**

### **Director of Applied Behavior Analysis Programs & Graduate Program Coordinator**

Dr. Hallie Smith – [hms238@msstate.edu](mailto:hms238@msstate.edu)

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### **Applied Behavior Analysis Core Faculty and Staff**

Aguilar, Marisela, M.S. (West Virginia University). Assistant Professor. Interests include procedural fidelity and staff/practitioner training, measurement strategies, behavioral interventions in school contexts, and cultural adaptations to behavioral intervention.

Deochand, Neil, Ph.D. (Western Michigan University). Assistant Professor. Board Certified Behavior Analyst-Doctoral (BCBA-D). Interests include quality assurance of behavioral graphing practices, behavioral medicine, and ethical decision-making tools to support the growing field of applied behavior analysis.

Mattson, Stephanie, Ph.D. (Utah State University). Assistant Professor. Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Interests include evaluating contextually appropriate interventions to increase independence for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders, practitioner training and support, and promoting the dissemination of behavior analysis through refining single-case design research methodology and reporting.

Smith, Hallie M., Ph.D. (Mississippi State University). Assistant Professor. Licensed Psychologist, Board Certified Behavior Analyst-Doctoral Designation (BCBA-D). Interests include the assessment and treatment of pediatric feeding disorders, understanding the relationship between social validity and treatment integrity of behavioral interventions, and the application of behavior analytic interventions to children with developmental disabilities.

Spencer, Beca, M.A. (Rockford University). Assistant Professor of Practice. Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Interests include helping prepare teachers to apply behavior analytic strategies in their classroom to prevent and effectively respond to problem behaviors and the utilization of behaviorally analytic interventions to improve the lives and skills of young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Staggers, Meredith, Ph.D. (Mississippi State University). Assistant Professor. Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Interests include the assessment and treatment of pediatric feeding problems, the development of effective and appropriate interventions and support for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the application of behavioral interventions to the pediatric population.

**School Psychology Faculty (Starkville Campus; eligible to teach ABA Courses)**

Bates-Brantley, Kayla, Ph.D. (University of Southern Mississippi). Assistant Professor, Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

Gadke, Daniel, Ph.D. (Illinois State University). Department Head and Associate Professor of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Foundations. Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

Ripple, Hailey, Ph.D. (Mississippi State University). Assistant Professor. Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

Sidwell, MacKenzie, Ph.D. (Mississippi State University). Assistant Professor. Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

Wildmon, Mark, PhD (Mississippi State University). Assistant Professor. Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

**Counseling, Higher Education Leadership, Educational Psychology, and Foundations Staff**

Theresa Hall-Brown, Business Manager

Dinetta Karriem, PhD, Student Services Coordinator

Amy Stockton, Academic Advisor- Graduate Students

## APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS PROGRAMS

The applied behavior analysis (ABA) programs at Mississippi State University (MSU) are designed to provide education, training, and experience to students with the goal of preparing them for practice in real-world settings. Our faculty members are equipped with extensive clinical experiences in the field of behavior analysis and have exceptional teaching, supervision, and research skills. Faculty in the ABA programs share the goal of preparing students to become behavior analysts who provide high quality, evidence-based services to a wide range of ages, populations, and functioning levels in order to make socially significant changes in the lives of others. Students will be encouraged to work with each core faculty member to facilitate skill development in a number of areas. The faculty members also serve as important role models in the students' development into professionals in the field of ABA.

Faculty members expect students to work diligently to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to be a successful behavior analyst. Thus, students are viewed as “works-in-progress” within a developmental approach to skill and knowledge acquisition. Degree and coursework options within the ABA programs include: Master of Science (MS) in Educational Psychology with a concentration in ABA, a graduate certificate in ABA, Bachelor of Science (BS) in Applied Behavior Analysis, and an undergraduate minor in ABA.

The undergraduate concentration in ABA is a Verified Course Sequence (VCS) program; completion of the program meets one of the Behavior Analyst Certification Board's (BACB) requirements for credentialing as a Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA). The VCS follows the BACB's 6<sup>th</sup> edition test content outline for BCaBA coursework requirements. For courses to count and meet the BACB's coursework requirements, students must earn a “C” or higher.

[Beginning in 2027](#), students will also need to have taken ABA 4663 Organizational Behavior Management to meet the BCaBA coursework requirements. [Additional requirements](#) outside of the coursework must be met to be eligible to apply for and sit for the BCaBA certification exam.

Per the 6<sup>th</sup> edition test content outline, the BACB requires that students receive 225 classroom hours of undergraduate level instruction in the following content areas:

Content Area	Classroom Hours
BACB Compliance Code and Disciplinary Systems; Professionalism	30 hours
Philosophical Underpinnings; Concepts & Principles	45 hours
Behavior Assessment	45 hours
Measurement, Data Display and Interpretations; Experimental Design	30 hours
Behavior-Change Procedures; Selecting and Implementing Interventions	60 hours
Personnel Supervision and Management	15 hours
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>225 hours</b>

## MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE ABA MINOR PROGRAM

The mission of the ABA programs at MSU is to prepare students to provide high quality behavior analytic services to a diverse population of individuals by offering excellent training, supervision, and research experiences.

More specifically, the mission of the ABA undergraduate minor program at MSU is for students to begin to acquire the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to demonstrate competency in applied behavior analysis, as demonstrated by their mastery of criteria outlined by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) in the [6th edition test content outline](#). Further, the mission of this program is to provide mentorship and guidance to undergraduate students regarding the incorporation of behavior analysis into their long-term career goals.

The ABA programs at MSU adhere to the **scientist-practitioner model**, where both faculty and students are expected to be (a) consumers of empirically-based practice, (b) evaluators of their own empirically-based practice, and (c) informed consumers and producers of research that contributes to the field of behavior analysis. While there are no specific research requirements for students in the program at this time, engagement in research at any capacity is encouraged and fostered by faculty in the ABA program.

## CURRICULUM

The undergraduate educational psychology supporting interest area in ABA is an 18-hour program that consists of 6 courses. Students who are educational psychology majors can choose ABA as their supporting interest area within the major. Courses primarily will be offered during the fall and spring semesters with some courses also being offered during the summer or winter sessions.

***The courses offered in this concentration are intended to be taken in a sequential order when possible, as the later courses build on content covered in the earlier courses.*** Students should begin their coursework with EPY/ABA 4113 and/or EPY/ABA 4103 since both are prerequisites for the other ABA courses. They each serve as an introductory course to the field of ABA and both courses teach many of the foundational principles and content that the other courses expand upon. The other courses can be taken after completion of, or at the same time as (with approval), the intro courses: EPY/ABA 4223, EPY/ABA 4443, EPY/ABA 4603, and EPY/ABA 4493.

**EPY Special Interest Area in Applied Behavior Analysis (18 HOURS)  
Beginning Fall 2020**

**Applied Behavior Analysis Concentration (18 hours)**

EPY/ABA 4103	ABA for Behavior Technicians
EPY/ABA 4113	Principles of ABA
EPY/ABA 4223	Applications of ABA
EPY/ABA 4443	Basics of Single Subject Design
EPY/ABA 4493	Behavior Assessment
EPY/ABA 4603	Ethics in ABA

<b>BACB Coursework Requirements for BCaBA-5<sup>th</sup> Edition Task List</b>	
<b>Content Area</b>	<b>Courses</b>
BACB Compliance Code and Disciplinary Systems; Professionalism	EPY/ABA 4603: Ethics in ABA
Philosophical Underpinnings; Concepts & Principles	EPY/ABA 4113: Principles of ABA
Measurement, Data Display and Interpretation; Experimental Design	EPY/ABA 4443: Basics of Single Subject Design
Behavior Assessment	EPY/ABA 4493: Behavior Assessment
Behavior-Change Procedures; Selecting and Implementing Interventions	EPY/ABA 4113: Principles of ABA EPY/ABA 4223: Applications of ABA
Personnel Supervision and Management	EPY/ABA 4603: Ethics in ABA

**Typical Course Offering Schedule (subject to change)**

<b>FALL</b>	<b>SPRING</b>
EPY/ABA 4103: ABA for Behavior Technicians	EPY/ABA 4103: ABA for Behavior Technicians
EPY/ABA 4113: Principles of ABA	EPY/ABA 4113: Principles of ABA
EPY/ABA 4603: Ethics in ABA	EPY/ABA 4223: Applications of ABA
EPY/ABA 4493: Behavior Assessment	EPY/ABA 4443: Basics of Single Subject Design
<b>SUMMER</b>	<b>WINTER</b>
EPY/ABA 4103: ABA for Behavior Technicians	EPY/ABA 4113: Principles of ABA
EPY/ABA 4113: Principles of ABA	



## DECLARING A SUPPORTING INTEREST AREA IN ABA

If you are interested in pursuing a supporting interest area in ABA, please notify your advisor and download and complete the “ABA Declaration Form for EPY majors” form located on the [ABA program’s website](#). As a VCS program, we are required to maintain a record of students enrolled in our coursework. Completion of this form serves as that documentation. The form should be emailed to Beca Spencer ([rs2417@msstate.edu](mailto:rs2417@msstate.edu)) after it is completed to make sure you are in our records.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*What is applied behavior analysis?*

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is the science of applying the principles of learning to change socially significant behavior. This basically means that we use principles of learning to change behavior that matters. We can use ABA to increase academic skills, communication skills, and functional life skills; we can also use ABA to decrease inappropriate or problematic behaviors that may be negatively impacting a person.

*Do I need to have experience in behavior analysis to take courses in this minor?*

No previous experience is necessary.

*How many courses will I be expected to take each semester?*

You can take courses as you are able each semester, we have standard course offerings in the fall and the spring, meaning that not every course is offered every semester, so make sure to look and plan ahead if you are interested in completing all courses required for the minor.

*Can I take some of these courses even if I don’t have time in my schedule to take all of them and complete the minor?*

Absolutely!

*Can I sit for the BCaBA exam after completing this program?*

After completing the ABA minor/emphasis area with a 70.0% (C) or higher in all of the courses, you will have completed and met the coursework requirements to make you eligible to take the exam through the end of 2026 (<https://www.abainternational.org/vcs.aspx>). However, in order to sit for the BCaBA exam, you will also need to have accrued all the required experience and supervision hours. ([www.bacb.com/bcaba](http://www.bacb.com/bcaba)). Beginning in 2027, students will also need to have taken ABA 4663 Organizational Behavior Management to meet the BCaBA coursework requirements.

*Is there a student organization for students interested in behavior analysis?*

Yes! The [Behavior Analysis Student Organization \(BASO\)](#) launched in fall 2024 and is open to any undergraduate student with an interest in behavior analysis.