



APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

Applied Behavior Analysis Undergraduate Handbook

**Department of Counseling, Higher Education Leadership,
Educational Psychology, and Foundations (CHEF)**

College of Education

Mississippi State University

Last Revised 8/11/2025

WELCOME TO APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS!

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is an undergraduate degree program in the Department of Counseling, Higher Education Leadership, Educational Psychology, and Foundations (CHEF). The major leads to a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree in applied behavior analysis and is generally referred to as the ABA major.

ABA is the scientific study of behavior and learning, focused on understanding why behavior occurs and how it can be shaped to improve lives. Using evidence-based principles, ABA professionals assess, design, and implement interventions to teach new skills, increase positive behaviors, and reduce behaviors that interfere with daily living. This undergraduate degree includes the coursework requirements to pursue certification as a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) and a Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA). It is also an excellent foundation for students planning to earn a master's degree and become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Graduates are prepared for diverse career paths, including behavior therapist, behavior specialist, behavioral health technician, and other roles in clinics, education, developmental services, organizational behavior management, and rehabilitation.

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, 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 Undergraduate Program Coordinator.

Contact Information

Beca Spencer, M.A., BCBA, LBS1

Assistant Professor of Practice, Undergraduate Program Coordinator

Applied Behavior Analysis Program

Department of Counseling, Higher Education Leadership, Educational Psychology, & Foundations

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Program Website: <https://www.chef.msstate.edu/programs/undergrad/applied-behavior-analysis>

Department Phone: 662-325-3426

FULL TIME DEPARTMENTAL AND RELATED FACULTY AND STAFF

Director of Applied Behavior Analysis Programs & Graduate Program Coordinator

Dr. Hallie Smith – hms238@msstate.edu

Applied Behavior Analysis Undergraduate Program Coordinator

Beca Spencer – rs2417@msstate.edu

Applied Behavior Analysis Core Faculty and Staff

Aguilar, Marisela, M.S. (West Virginia University). Assistant Professor. Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). 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 Professor of Counseling, Higher Education Leadership, 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, Ph.D., 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 ABA, and an undergraduate minor in ABA.

The undergraduate major and minor in ABA both contain courses that cover the required content to meet the Behavior Analyst Certification Board's (BACB) coursework requirements for credentialing as a Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA). Our Verified Course Sequence (VCS) follows the BACB's 6th edition test content outline for BCaBA coursework requirements. For courses to meet the BACB's coursework requirements, a grade of “C” or higher must be earned.

Per the 6th 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
TOTAL	225 hours

BACB Coursework Requirements	
Content Area	Courses
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

MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE ABA PROGRAM

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

More specifically, the mission of the ABA 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.

ABA B.S. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

To graduate with a B.S. degree in Applied Behavior Analysis, students will need to complete the 120-hour degree program as outlined in the ABA curriculum outline and below:

1. General Education requirements (30 hours)
2. ABA major core courses (54 hours)
3. Additional required courses (36 hours)

To graduate in four academic years, an ABA student should plan to take approximately 15 credit hours (5 courses) each regular (i.e., fall and spring) semester. Typically, students work to finish their general education requirements during their freshman year. After they are finished, students can begin to enroll in their ABA major core courses and the additional required courses.

Please find a copy of the curriculum outline and examples of 4-Year Degree Plans below:

- [ABA Curriculum Outline](#)
- [Example: 4-Year Degree Plan for Starkville Campus](#)
- [Example: 4-Year Degree Plan for Online Campus](#)

The ABA curriculum outline document includes all required coursework. There are two prerequisite courses and at least one of the two courses need to be taken before or at the same time (with approval) as the other courses in the ABA major core with an ABA prefix.

Prerequisite Courses:

- ABA 4103 ABA for Behavior Technicians
- ABA 4113 Principles of ABA

The following ABA major core courses can be taken at any point after or at the same time as the prerequisite courses have been completed:

- ABA 4223 Applications of ABA
- ABA 4303 ABA in Education
- ABA 4443 Basics of Single Subject Design
- ABA 4493 Behavioral Assessment
- ABA 4603 Ethics in ABA
- ABA 4663 Organizational Behavior Management
- ABA 4703 Theory and Philosophy of ABA
- ABA 4773 Advanced Topics in ABA
- ABA 4893 (6 hours) Supervised Experiential Learning in ABA

There is also one course that will be taken during the final semester before graduation:

- ABA 4903 Undergraduate Capstone in ABA

To help prepare for the capstone course, it is highly recommended that students save their work and course materials each semester from their other ABA courses.

The remaining ABA major core courses do not have a prerequisite requirement:

- PSY 1013 General Psychology
- PSY 3343 Psychology of Learning
- EDX 3213 Foundations of Special Education
- EPY 2513 Human Growth and Development
- EPY 4513 Educational Research

The additional required courses include:

- Writing (3 hours)
- Communication (3 hours)
- Human/Cultural Diversity (9 hours)
- Upper-Level Humanities (6 hours)
- Upper-Level Electives (15 hours)

ADVISING

Upon acceptance into the ABA undergraduate program, an ABA core faculty member will be assigned to each student as their academic advisor. Students can view their assigned advisor's name and contact information in Banner. If the advisor information is missing, please contact Beca Spencer (rs2417@msstate.edu) to be assigned an advisor.

Students are responsible for attending their advising sessions, meeting with their advisor when needed, being responsive to messages from their advisor, asking appropriate questions, listening to their advice, and making informed decisions.

Advising sessions will be offered every fall and spring semester during the pre-registration period as specified in [MSU's academic calendar](#). Students should make their best effort to attend. Students should come prepared to their advising appointments by reviewing Degree Works in advance of the meeting and having a draft plan of courses to take in the upcoming semester. This plan should include some alternative ideas in case some of the courses are full before they can register for them. Students are also encouraged to bring any questions they may have about classes to their appointment.

OBTAIN YOUR B.S. DEGREE IN ABA ONLNIE

The ABA B.S. degree can also be completed online. Our online program (<https://www.online.msstate.edu/apba>) offers great flexibility for those who will be taking courses while balancing other commitments.

If you are interested, please follow these steps to get started:

1. Fill out the online Application for Admission and pay an application fee online. Choose Applied Behavior Analysis (BS) as your major and Online Education as your campus.
2. Request official transcripts from EVERY university or school you have previously attended. Your application will not be considered until **ALL** transcripts are received. Transcripts can be mailed to the Office of Admissions and Scholarships, P.O. Box 6334, Mississippi State, MS 39762 or electronically submitted (eScripted) to admit@msstate.edu.
3. If you **have** attended college; please submit the following:
 - a. Official transcripts from each school attended.
 - b. ACT or SAT scores may possibly be required; NOT required if you have already earned a bachelor's degree.
 - c. High school transcript; may possibly be required.
4. If you have **never** attended college; please submit the following:
 - a. High school transcript showing graduation date.
 - b. ACT or SAT scores.

Once students have been accepted, register for online orientation.

- Every new student must register for Online@State Orientation. Students must successfully complete orientation to obtain a release to register.

After students have successfully completed Online orientation, the advisor is notified.

- Release to register for class. Advisor releases and advises the students to register for classes.

If you are already a Mississippi State Student and looking to transfer into this online program, complete the change of major form. Then contact Anusha Rijal at a.rijal@msstate.edu to get started.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION

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

SOCIAL MEDIA

Students are welcome to follow the ABA program on social media for program updates and announcements, as well as learn more about ABA. We are on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

MSU ACADEMIC POLICIES

- [General Education Core Curriculum](#)
- [Transfer from Community College](#)
 - [Transfer course equivalents](#)
- [Academic Standing \(Probation, Suspension, & Dismissal\)](#)
- [Academic Amnesty policy](#)
- [Academic Fresh Start policy](#)
- [Academic Forgiveness/Retake policy](#)
- [Add/Drop policy](#)
- [Withdrawals](#)
 - [Process](#)
- [Change of Major policy](#)
 - [Form](#)
- [Incomplete Grade \(Grades of I\)](#)
- [Grade Appeal policy](#)
- [Request to Take Courses at Another Institution](#)
- [Add/Drop, Major Change, and Grade Appeals in the College of Education](#)