



## APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

**Applied Behavior Analysis Master's  
Program- Online Campus Handbook**  
**Graduate 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**

Hallie Smith, PhD, BCBA-D, LP  
Assistant Professor, Program Coordinator  
Applied Behavior Analysis Program  
Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, & Foundations  
Email: [hms238@msstate.edu](mailto:hms238@msstate.edu)



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

### **Director of Applied Behavior Analysis Programs**

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 and severe problem behavior, understanding relationship between social validity and treatment integrity of behavioral interventions, and application of behavior analytic interventions to children with developmental disabilities and CHARGE syndrome.

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

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.

Spencer, Jordan C., SSP, NCSP, BCBA (Illinois State University). Assistant Professor of Teaching. Licensed AAA School Psychologist, Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Interests include working with college students with disabilities on improving academic, social, independent living, and employment outcomes, parent/teacher training, and the use of single-subject design in higher education to develop evidence-based practices on campus.

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, and an undergraduate minor in ABA.

The master's program in ABA is recognized by the Association of Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) as 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 Behavior Analyst (BCBA). The VCS follows the BACB's 5<sup>th</sup> edition task list for BCBA coursework requirements.

Per the 5<sup>th</sup> edition task list, the BACB requires that students receive 315 classroom hours of graduate level instruction in the following content areas:

<b>Content Area</b>	<b>Classroom Hours</b>
BACB Compliance Code and Disciplinary Systems; Professionalism	45 hours
Philosophical Underpinnings; Concepts & Principles	90 hours
Behavior Assessment	45 hours
Measurement, Data Display and Interpretations; Experimental Design	45 hours
Behavior-Change Procedures; Selecting and Implementing Interventions	60 hours
Personnel Supervision and Management	30 hours
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>315 hours</b>

## ACCREDITATION AND VERIFIED COURSE SEQUENCE

Within the field of applied behavior analysis (ABA), credentialed practitioners at all levels are required to meet a set of standards developed by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB). Although the standards differ across credentialing options (e.g., BCBA, BCaBA, RBT), completing specific coursework is a requirement for all credentials. Currently, the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) serves as the accreditation and approval body for all education programs and coursework in ABA. Their mission is to contribute to the well-being of society by developing, enhancing, and supporting the growth and vitality of the science of behavior analysis through research, education, and practice. ABAI's primary objective in education is to recruit, train, and professionally develop behavior analysts. As is common in other disciplines, professional associations often oversee training programs within their discipline, and ABAI manages the verification of course sequences as part of its objective to foster high-quality education in behavior analysis.

Verified Course Sequence (VCS) status is granted once ABAI has verified the sequence of courses as meeting particular instructor and coursework standards in a college or university program offering behavior analytic instruction. Completion of a VCS meets the coursework requirement for applications for the BACB's Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) credential. **ABAI has designated Mississippi State University's ABA program as a VCS, meaning that our courses cover all of the required content to meet requirements for credentialing as a BCBA.**

Please note that this does not mean you will receive your BCBA upon completion of this program, as the BACB requires not only completion of coursework in behavior analysis, but also completion of supervised field work and passing of the credentialing exam (<https://www.bacb.com/bcba/>).

### Contact information of accrediting and approval bodies:

#### Association for Applied Behavior Analysis International (ABAI)

550 W. Centre Avenue  
Portage, MI 49024  
269-492-9310  
abainternational.org

#### Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB)

7950 Schaffer Parkway  
Littleton, CO 80127  
720-438-4321  
bacb.com



## MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE ABA MASTERS 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 master's program at MSU is for students 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 [6<sup>th</sup> edition test content outline](#).

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.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ABA MASTERS PROGRAMS

Every ABA student in the master's program is expected to meet the goals and requirements listed below. Goals and objectives of this program are aligned with both the Conceptual Framework Program Outcomes (CFPO) of the College of Education and with the BACB's 6<sup>th</sup> Edition Test Content Outline and coursework requirements.

Opportunities for students to meet these requirements will occur in the classroom through active engagement with course material, participation in classroom discussion and lectures, successful completion of various assignments, and passing scores on assessments of content mastery. Applied experiences will be provided as part of required coursework assignments throughout many courses but will also be available in the form of practicum courses; currently, participation in practicum courses is not required, but is encouraged. Those who do participate in practicum courses will have additional opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to meet the goals and objectives listed below.

### **GOAL 1. BACB Compliance Code and Disciplinary Systems; Professionalism** (CFPO # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 14; BACB 6<sup>th</sup> Edition Test Content Outline items E1- E12)

Objective 1-A: Students will behave in accordance with the *Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for Behavior Analysts*.

#### *Competencies:*

1. Students will gain knowledge and skills related to the responsible conduct of behavior analysts when practicing in the field; including the behavior analysts' ethical responsibility to their clients, their colleagues, the profession, and to the BACB.
2. Students will gain knowledge and skills regarding the ethical guidelines of assessing behavior, implementing a behavior-change program, and conducting research.



3. Students will gain knowledge and skills about the professional expectations and ethical guidelines of being a behavior analyst in a supervisory role as well as on making public statements.

**GOAL 2. Behaviorism and Philosophical Foundations; Concepts and Principles**  
(CFPO # 1, 3; BACB 6<sup>th</sup> Edition Test Content Outline Items A1 – A5 and B1- B24)

Objective 2-A: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the foundational principles of applied behavior analysis that define the field.

*Competencies:*

1. Students will gain knowledge related to the conceptualization of applied behavior analysis as a science and will be able to successfully explain the philosophical assumptions underlying the science.
2. Students will be proficient at describing and explaining behavior from the perspective of radical behaviorism and will be able to distinguish among the different established disciplines of behavior analysis (e.g., experimental analysis of behavior, applied behavior analysis).
3. Students will describe and define the dimensions of applied behavior analysis (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968).

Objective 2-B: Students will demonstrate understanding of the concepts and principles used in applied behavior analysis.

*Competencies:*

1. Students will define and provide examples of behavior analytic concepts and terminology (e.g., response, positive and negative punishment contingencies, operant extinction, stimulus control, discrimination, verbal operants)

**GOAL 3. Measurement, Data Display and Interpretation; Experimental Design**  
(CFPO # 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 13; BACB 6<sup>th</sup> Edition Test Content Outline items C1 – C12 and D1-D9)

Objective 3-A: Students will demonstrate the ability to measure behavior, display data, analyze data using visual analysis, interpret data, and disseminate data to relevant parties.

*Competencies:*

1. Students will be able to accurately and reliably measure occurrence of behavior, temporal dimensions of behavior, form and strength of behavior, and trials to criterion.
2. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to create operational definitions of behavior and select appropriate measurement of behavior.
3. Students will be proficient at graphing data and interpreting the graphed data.
4. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to design and implement sampling procedures and to evaluate the validity and reliability of measurement procedures.
5. Students will distinguish among direct, indirect, and product measures of behavior.

Objective 3-B: Students will understand the importance of experimental design in both research and applied practice within the field of applied behavior analysis and be able to select and employ appropriate experimental design methodology when implementing behavior change interventions.

*Competencies:*

1. Students will distinguish between dependent/independent variables and external/internal validity.
2. Students will be able to identify the defining features of single-subject experimental design and describe the advantages of it.
3. Students will be able to independently use single-subject experimental designs.
4. Students will correctly describe the rationale for conducting different types of analyses.

**GOAL 4. Behavior Assessment**

(CFPO # 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10; BACB 6<sup>th</sup> Edition Test Content Outline items F1 – F8)

Objective 4-A: Students will master the skills necessary to conduct and interpret a variety of behavior assessments.

*Competencies:*

1. Students will be able to review records and existing available data at the outset of the case and apply the data to case conceptualization, as appropriate.
2. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to determine the need and appropriateness of behavior analytic services.
3. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and prioritize socially significant behavior-change goals.
4. Students will be able to independently conduct the following: assessments of relevant skill strengths and deficits, preference assessments, descriptive assessment of problem behavior, and functional analysis of problem behavior.
5. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to describe the functions of problem behavior and interpret functional assessment data.

**GOAL 5. Behavior-Change Procedures; Selecting and Implementing Interventions**

(CFPO # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; BACB 6<sup>th</sup> Edition Test Content Outline items G1 – G19 and H1- H8)

Objective 5-A: Students will be proficient in implementing a variety of behavior-change procedures.

*Competencies:*

1. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to know how and when to implement various procedures to teach a variety of skills (e.g., modeling, shaping, chaining, response prompts, stimulus fading).
2. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to use behavior analytic procedures to change behavior (e.g., positive and negative reinforcement, positive and negative punishment, extinction, high-probability instructional sequence).

3. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to use equivalence based instruction as well as use discrete-trial, free-operant, and naturalistic teaching arrangements.
4. Students will be able to use Skinner's analysis to teach verbal behavior.
5. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to use token economies, group contingencies, and self-management strategies to change behavior.
6. Students will use procedures to promote stimulus and response generalization and to prompt maintenance.

Objective 5-B: Students will learn how to select appropriate interventions for a variety of presenting concerns as well as how to implement these interventions using a data-based-decision making process.

*Competencies:*

1. Students will be able to state intervention goals in measurable terms and gain the knowledge and skills necessary to identify potential interventions based on assessment results.
2. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to recommend intervention goals and strategies based on a variety of factors.
3. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to plan for possible unwanted side effects of interventions.
4. Students will use data-based decision making to determine effectiveness of interventions as well as the need for ongoing services.
5. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to monitor client progress and treatment integrity and to collaborate with others who support clients.

## **GOAL 6. Personnel Supervision and Management**

(CFPO # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14; BACB 6<sup>th</sup> Edition Test Content Outline items I1 – I7)

Objective 6-A: Students will learn how to supervise others who are training to become behavior analysts and learn how to incorporate behavior analytic principles in management of personnel in a professional setting.

*Competencies:*

1. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to become effective supervisors in the field of behavior analysis (e.g., establishing clear performance expectations, selecting supervision goals appropriately).
2. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to evaluate and change personnel performance (e.g., using function-based strategies, use performance-based monitoring and feedback).

## **OUTCOMES TO DEMONSTRATE EVIDENCE OF MAKING APPROPRIATE PROGRESS ON GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF TRAINING**

The knowledge and skill development that leads to the student meeting the goals, objectives, and competencies described above will be consistently evaluated by faculty through (a) course assignments and examinations, (b) practicum supervision and field experiences, (c) the written comprehensive masters exam, and (d) College of Education and departmental research requirements (i.e., required research and statistics coursework).

Students are expected to (a) achieve grades of 'B' or better in program core courses and to obtain ratings of 'expected' or above in all areas addressed by student annual evaluations, (b) receive a passing score on the comprehensive examination, and (c) receive acceptable ratings on practicum evaluations in order to meet the goals, objectives, and competencies of the ABA master's program.

### **Student Advisement**

One of the most important individuals in graduate education is the advisor. The student's advisor is an advocate and confidant. The advisor recommends and approves the program of study (along with the student's graduate committee), monitors the student's progress, provides positive and constructive feedback, approves course selections, assists in the decisions of the core faculty for students' practicum placements, provides guidance in required and applied research projects, and is pivotal in the graduate's job search and placement. With the student, the advisor will assist in completion of paperwork and direct requisite activities as the student pursues the master's degree.

Upon acceptance into the ABA master's program, the ABA core faculty will assign each student an advisor. The students will receive notice via email informing them of their advisor. This advisor will work with the student to ensure that all the required courses are taken at the appropriate times and will work with the student to complete a Program of Study form during their first semester of the program.

For the master's degree, students must complete required course work and pass the master's comprehensive examination. The master's degree fulfills the degree requirements necessary to sit for the BCBA exam. While there are other criteria that must be met before taking the exam, the degree provided in this program meets both the degree and the coursework requirements. The master's degree is typically completed in 2 years. During the spring semester of the student's second year in the program (or when the student meets the degree requirements) they will be required to complete and submit a committee request form as well as a departmental application to take the master's comprehensive exam. These forms will be provided to students by their advisors. The student's advisor will provide support in completion of the necessary paperwork.

## PROGRAM OF STUDY

The student handbook provides the ABA program curriculum for the master's degree approved by the MSU UCCC, Graduate Council, and Provost. However, students are held to the curriculum posted in the Graduate School Bulletin for the year that a student is accepted into the degree program. Therefore, if students wish to use the later set of requirements listed in this Student Handbook, they should submit a formal request to the Graduate School to use the desired approved curriculum listed in that year's *Graduate Bulletin*. Students should consult with the ABA Program Coordinator to submit this request. The academic advisor for graduate studies in our department (Carrie Black), the student's advisor, and the program coordinator are valuable resources in completing the paperwork to allow documentation of completion of all degree requirements.

### Curriculum

Starting with students admitted to the Fall 2021 cohort, the master's degree in Educational Psychology with a concentration in ABA is a 40-hour degree that is designed to be started in the fall semester and be completed in 2 years. During each of these semesters, the student will need to take 6 to 9 semester hours to complete the program in sequence and allow completion within the time frame. It is essential that students enroll in the correct courses and follow the correct course sequence in order to complete their degree in a timely fashion. The master's comprehensive exam is offered one time per year during the semester in which the student's cohort is expected to complete the degree (i.e., Spring semester of second year).

Although not part of the required coursework for the program, students are strongly encouraged to take EPY 6103 during their first semester in the program and this course is scheduled into the students' course sequence calendar (see below). After completing this course, this allows students to be able to apply to and take the Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) exam, and upon passing, students can work in the field of behavior analysis as RBT's. This is important because it allows the student to be more competitive for securing paid positions at potential practicum sites while participating in the program.

**Master of Science in Educational Psychology with a concentration in Applied Behavior Analysis (40 HOURS minimum; hours increase when students take additional practicum courses)**

**Beginning Fall 2021**

**Major Core in Educational Psychology (10 hours)**

- EPY 6214 Educational and Psychological Statistics
- EPY 8253 Child and Adolescent Development and Psychopathology
- EPY 8363 Psychological Testing in Education and Related Settings

**Applied Behavior Analysis Concentration (30 hours)**

- EPY 6103 Behavior Analysis for Behavior Technicians\*
- EPY 6113 Principles of Behavior Analysis
- EPY 6223 Applications of Behavior Analysis
- EPY 8390 Applied Behavior Analysis Practicum
- EPY 8493 Social Emotional and Behavioral Assessment
- EPY 8713 Experimental Analysis of Behavior
- EPY 8763 Advanced Applied Behavior Analysis
- EPY 9603 Legal and Ethical Issues in Behavior Analysis
- EPY 9443 Single Subject Design
- EPY 9613 Consultation, Supervision, and Personnel Management

*\* EPY 6103 is not included in the 21 hours of coursework required for the degree. However, we strongly encourage and highly recommend all students take this course in their first semester, particularly if they are interested in working in the field prior to becoming a BCBA.*

<b>BACB Coursework Requirements-5<sup>th</sup> Edition Task List</b>	
<b>Content Area</b>	<b>Courses</b>
BACB Compliance Code and Disciplinary Systems; Professionalism	EPY 9603: Legal & Ethical Issues
Philosophical Underpinnings; Concepts & Principles	EPY 6113: Principles of ABA EPY 8763: Advanced ABA
Behavior Assessment	EPY 8493: Social Emotional & Beh. Assmt.
Measurement, Data Display and Interpretations; Experimental Design	EPY 9443: Single Subject Design
Behavior-Change Procedures; Selecting and Implementing Interventions	EPY 6223: Applications of ABA EPY 8763: Advanced ABA
Personnel Supervision and Management	EPY 9613: Consult., Sup., & Management

## Applied Behavior Analysis MS Program Recommended Course Schedule

**\*Please note:** EPY 8390, Applied Behavior Analysis Practicum, is a course that students in the online program **will be assigned to on a rotating basis by their advisor**. Online students are **limited to only 2 semesters of practicum** to meet the minimum requirements of the degree. If a student would like to enroll in additional semesters of the course, this will be done on a case-by-case basis with approval from all ABA faculty members. **Students are not able to take practicum their first semester unless they are already RBT's or have already taken the RBT course.**

**\*Please note:** Students are also required to take EPY 6214-Educational & Psychological Statistics. This course is offered every semester and can be added to the schedule at any time. Faculty recommend students enroll in this course in the Spring semester of Year 1 or during the summer semester.

YEAR 1	YEAR 2
<b>FALL SEMESTER</b>	
EPY 6103: Behavior Analysis for Behavior Technicians (RBT Course) *	EPY 8763: Advanced ABA
EPY 6113: Principles of ABA	EPY 8493: Social Emotional & Bx Assessment
EPY 9603: Legal & Ethical Issues in ABA	
<b>SPRING SEMESTER</b>	
EPY 6223: Applications of Behavior Analysis	EPY 8713: Experimental Analysis of Behavior
EPY 9443: Single Subject Design	EPY 9613: Consult., Sup., & Personnel Management
<b>SUMMER SEMESTER</b>	
EPY 8253: Child & Adolescent Development (June)	
EPY 8263: Psychological Testing (July)	

*\*EPY 6103 is not a required course for the program but is strongly encouraged and recommended. If students have already taken this course or are already credentialed as RBT's, students may choose to enroll in EPY 8390 (Practicum course) during their first semester.*

## OTHER REQUIREMENTS

### Professional Behavior

All graduate students will be expected to engage in professional behavior as they participate in all activities related to the master's program. During the student's graduate school career, it is important that student's start learning to present themselves as a professional across multiple contexts. Students' professional behavior will be consistently monitored by faculty in the



program and positive/constructive feedback will be provided regularly. Professional behavior includes (but is not limited to) the following:

1. **Class Attendance.** Students are expected to attend all class meetings and let instructors know in advance of any unavoidable absences. As classes occur on a schedule, students should not plan any trips or vacations that conflict with the semester's schedule.
2. **Class Participation.** Students are expected to participate in classes by attending to the persons speaking, asking questions, contributing to conversations and discussions, answering questions, and being proactive in their learning.
3. **Appropriate Attendance and Participation in Mandatory Program Events.** Each year the ABA Faculty prepare a comprehensive schedule of professional development events that are meant to enhance training provided to students. Attendance at these events is **REQUIRED** for all students. In order for attendance to count, students must have their cameras on and must attend from a stationary location (i.e., not while driving in a car).
4. **Appropriate use of Electronics.** Phones are not to be on the student's desk or lap at any time during class. They should be put away and on vibrate or silent. If there is a personal emergency and the student is expecting an important call or text related to that emergency, they will need to leave the classroom to attend to the call or text. Laptops should **ONLY** be used for note taking or other instructional purposes. Students are expected to refrain from browsing the internet or other social media sites during class and from working on other class or work assignments.
5. **Respectful Interactions with Others.** Students are expected to interact with other students, faculty, clients, supervisors, and others in a respectful manner. This means respecting variety among individuals and respecting differences. Students will frequently come in contact with others who have different perspectives and opinions; the students' ability to accept others and their opinions facilitates a strong professional/working relationship.
6. **Managing Conflict with Others.** If students have a concern with the behavior of another student, co-worker, or faculty member, the student should first address the concern with that person individually, in a respectful manner, and as soon as possible.
7. **Punctuality.** Students are expected to arrive on time for classes, meetings, practicum, and any other program-related activities. If students will be late, it is important to communicate to the person they are meeting with that they will be late.
8. **Proper Attire.** As professionals in a practicum setting (e.g., school, clinic), students are expected to dress in business casual attire. When you engage in activities in professional settings, you are a representation of your field, our program, and your faculty members. Students should refrain from wearing t-shirts, shorts, any athletic attire, tennis shoes, or flip flops at their practicum sites or any professional events/meetings.
9. **Responsibility and Accountability.** As a graduate student, there is an expectation that students will be responsible and held accountable with schoolwork and professional behavior. This includes fulfilling course work and practicum responsibilities in a timely manner, providing quality work with respect to written activities, clinical activities, and course discussions. This also includes checking MSU email regularly and responding promptly to emails with a professional tone.

## Academic Honor Code



We as faculty expect students to follow the Mississippi State University Honor Code, which states, “As a Mississippi State University student, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.” The honor code applies to your behavior towards other students and faculty, your work in your academic courses, as well as your behavior at any practicum site you may be involved with during the course of your time in the program. Honor code violations will be reported to the Student Honor Code Office. For additional information and resources, please visit, <https://www.honorcode.msstate.edu/resources>.

### **Professional Membership**

Professionals in the field of ABA must belong to professional associations after they earn their degrees in order to stay current in the field; your training, education, and learning experiences do not end once you have your degree, they are really only beginning. Active participation in professional associations is vital to professional success, not only as a means to receive continuing education, but also as a way to get involved in the field and build relationships and community with other behavior analysts. **Each graduate student who resides in the state of Mississippi is required to join the state-level behavior analysis organization, Behavior Analysis Association of Mississippi (BAAMS).** Membership dues are typically less for students; members receive professional newsletters, journals, and announcements about professional activities. ABA students residing in the state of Mississippi must join BAAMS, but may also choose to join the Association of Behavior Analysis International (ABAI).

Behavior Analysis Association of Mississippi (BAAMS)

<https://www.baams.org/membership>

Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI)

<https://www.abainternational.org/membership.aspx>

### **Professional Development Activities**

Students in the program are required to attend each monthly professional development seminar that the program holds. All seminars are held virtually on Friday afternoons at 3:00 PM central time to accommodate working professionals as best as possible. All seminars are scheduled at the beginning of each semester and the calendar is sent to students prior to the start of the semester. Students are expected to make necessary arrangements to attend.

Students residing in the state of Mississippi are required to attend the BAAMS Annual Conference each year that they are a student in the program. The program does cover the cost of your registration, but you are expected to make other accommodations in order to attend **with their cameras on and from a stationary location. Students are not permitted to join while driving in a vehicle.** Students must attend 80% of all mandatory program events each semester; if their attendance is below 80%, students will be placed on a remediation plan due to concerns with professional behavior.

### **Program Research Requirements**

Currently, students in the master’s program are not required to engage in the production of individual or independent research. However, our students are strongly encouraged to engage in research activity at a variety of levels. There will be ample opportunities to be involved, assist,

and support both ABA program faculty and other graduate students in the department with their research agendas. This could include activities such as: collecting data for an existing research project, doing literature searches and organizing downloaded articles, assisting with putting together a research presentation, and participating in faculty-led research groups. Faculty in the ABA program are also open to supporting and supervising any students' own research ideas or questions and encourage initiation of student-led projects as well.

Although there are not requirements related to producing research, students are expected to understand the research process, comprehend, evaluate, and critique existing research in the field of behavior analysis, and to be fluent with identifying relevant research to inform clinical practice.

## **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PROGRESS**

### **Meeting Program Training Goals and Objectives**

The knowledge and skills that students have gained will be assessed by faculty through (a) course assignments and examinations, (b) written comprehensive exam, (c) practicum evaluations- when available, and (d) annual student evaluations.

Students are expected to:

- Achieve grades of 'B' or better in all coursework (any core ABA course in which a 'C' is earned, must be retaken)
- Receive a passing score (70% or higher) on the master's comprehensive exam
- Receive acceptable ratings on practicum evaluations
- Obtain ratings of 'expected' or above on all areas addressed by annual student progress evaluations

\*Unsatisfactory performance in graduate level coursework is defined as:

- Earning a grade of 'U', 'D', 'F' in any course
- Earning a grade of a 'C' in two courses during the course of the program
- Failing the master's comprehensive exam twice

Any of these situations or a combination of these situations will result in termination of the student's graduate study in this program.

## **STUDENT ANNUAL EVALUATIONS OF PROGRESS**

Prior to the start of the Fall Semester of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the program, core ABA faculty and affiliated ABA staff meet to discuss and evaluate the progress of each 1<sup>st</sup> year student in the program. Through this evaluation process, satisfactory progress is noted, performance exceeding satisfactory progress is commended, and concerns regarding less than satisfactory progress are identified in order to provide detailed and constructive feedback and promote remedial efforts. In addition, the evaluation process is intended to ensure that all core program faculty are aware of the progress of all students in the program. Detailed instructions for completing the annual evaluation are located in the program's Annual Evaluation Handbook.

### Steps to the Annual Evaluation Process

1. Students are required to complete and submit a self-evaluation of their own progress to faculty.
2. Core faculty will collectively complete the evaluation for each student.
3. Core faculty will meet individually with each student to review their annual evaluation as well as provide feedback to the student on their own self-evaluation.
4. If there are multiple areas in which less than satisfactory progress is noted OR a significant concern is noted, the student and their advisor will develop a specific written plan to help the student continue to progress through the program. This plan will detail specific steps both the student and faculty will take to promote change in the designated areas.

### MASTER'S COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

The purpose of the master's comprehensive exam is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of all of the content areas of behavior analysis. Questions will map directly onto the items included in the [BACB's 6<sup>th</sup> Edition Test Content Outline for BCBA's](#). Demonstrating mastery of these tasks indicates that students possess the knowledge and understanding necessary to be an effective behavior analyst. This exam will include a range of questions that test not only recall and understanding of the principles of behavior analysis but also the student's ability to apply these principles to clinical situations that are representative of work they may be expected to do as a BCBA. Each section of the exam is based off a set of Test Content Outline items.

The exam will be 150 questions and will be in multiple choice format. The exam will be given online, via a Lockdown Browser and will be held on a pre-determined date during the middle of the last semester of the student's coursework, typically in the Spring semester of their 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the program. Student's must pass the exam with a 70% in order to be eligible for graduation and completion of the program.

Should a student fail the comprehensive exam, they will be permitted to re-take the sections of the exam that they failed, **they will not be required to re-take the entire exam. A student must wait 3 months to re-take any sections in which they failed.**

- Students must enroll in at 1 credit hour DIS with their advisor during the semester in which they re-take the exam. This provides the student with access to ongoing study sessions and an individualized study plan that is led by their advisor.

## PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT CONCERNS

### **Program Policy on Mental Health Support and Accommodations**

The mental health of our students is something that we, as program faculty, take seriously. We strive to be a source of support for our students while directing them toward appropriate professional resources who can provide diagnoses, recommendations, and treatment options, when warranted. We also know that the mental health of our students is not always predictable, and that sometimes, resources for this kind of support are not always easily accessible.

Per the existing university policies, mental health issues (e.g., having a panic attack earlier in the day, depression symptoms are more significant than typical) are not listed under academic operating policy 12.09 as excused reasons for missing class or needing an extension on outstanding assignments. Because of this, it is up to the individual instructor's discretion on what should be deemed "excusable" as a reason for missing class or needing an extension on class work.

However, the Disability Resource Center (DRC), on MSU's campus, is equipped to review documentation related to mental health diagnoses and provide appropriate and reasonable accommodations based on recommendations of the student's mental health provider. These accommodations may or may not include: extended test time, extensions on assignments by a certain period of time if requested, and permissible absences from class.

**Based on all of this information and experiences from faculty, we, as a program are adopting the following policy.**

If a student (who has not already registered with DRC and has accommodations) requests any of the below accommodations from an instructor due to their mental health, the instructor will provide that student with a one-time pass and excuse the late work or absence or whatever was requested. However, at that time, the instructor will remind the student that this is their one free pass, and that if they would like additional accommodations to be made, they will need to contact the DRC to provide them with documentation to begin the formal university process of requesting accommodations because of their mental health diagnoses. The instructor will also provide the student with a list of resources to make sure they are able to make contact with a mental health provider.

Accommodations Requested:

- extension on an assignment
- additional time to complete a test/exam
- permission to miss class
- states that they missed class due to any concerns related to their current mental health state

### **Program Status Appeal and Grievance Procedures**

Students may appeal their program status after failing to meet departmental or program requirements. Student who wish to file appeals must meet with the department head. The department head can accept an appeal or refer students to the Departmental Appeal Committee. The department head will outline the process for bringing appeals before the Departmental Appeal Committee. Students are also able to appeal specific grades and attempt to have any other problems or grievances addressed. The process is outlined in the *Graduate School Bulletin* (located at <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/>). The first step is to typically inform the advisor or another professor of intent to pursue an appeal, grievance, or when any issue arises in which the student may need assistance. The student's adviser will assist with the process.

### **Student Problems and Grievances**

The faculty and staff will strive to make the graduate school experience rewarding, educational, and fair. They are committed to treating students with respect and dignity. However, in the course of graduate school training, a student may run into some problems. The faculty wants to encourage all students to approach any ABA faculty member if there are problems. It is almost always best to obtain assistance at the onset of an issue or difficulty rather than wait. The faculty are likely to have more resources and alternatives early in the process than after an issue has become overwhelming. The faculty will do all they can to help solve or resolve these problems. However, at any time a student feels there has been unfair treatment by any faculty, staff, or student, the student should discuss these matters with the advisor or any faculty member who will help determine the most appropriate course of action. Serious grievances or problem typically follow a responsible chain through the:

- ABA Program Coordinator
- Department head
- Associate Dean of the College of Education
- Dean of the College of Education
- Provost
- President

However, students may approach any faculty member or administrator who will assist them in taking the appropriate professional and ethical action. Most issues are resolved informally at the department level. A formal grievance procedure policy is provided in the *Graduate School Bulletin* (located at <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/>). The university policies and procedures for due process, grade appeal, violations of the student code of honor and academic dishonesty can be accessed via the website for the Honor Code Office (<http://www.honorcode.msstate.edu>). Guidelines related to Title IX protections (exclusion or discrimination on the basis of sex) can be found at <http://www.hrm.msstate.edu/aaeeo/titleix/>.

### **Student Remediation and Probation**

The Department of Counseling, Higher Education Leadership, Educational Psychology, and Foundations form for evaluation of students' dispositions that is provided during the departmental orientation during the first week of classes states:

“The Department of Counseling, Higher Education Leadership, Educational Psychology, and Foundations faculty members believe they have a responsibility to dismiss students who are unable to render competent service due to academic or personal limitations. They also recognize the obligation to assist students in obtaining remedial assistance as needed, to consult with colleagues and document their decision to refer students for assistance or to request that students be dismissed from the program, and to assure that students have adequate recourse to address decisions made. If in the professional judgement of a faculty member, a student’s behavior is deemed substandard, unethical, illegal, and/or professionally unbecoming at any time during the course of training (including course work, practica, and internships), a faculty review committee will be called to review the performance and behavior of the students and to make recommendations for remediation to the department head.”

Unfortunately, there are times when a student may not perform all of the requirements necessary to fulfill the expectations of a didactic or applied courses or they may exhibit behaviors that are inappropriate for professional graduate study. In these situations, a student will be given formal feedback and a remediation plan will be developed to support the student in addressing these concerns.

- With regard to academic deficiencies, if a student takes an “Incomplete” in a course, earns a grade of a “C” in an ABA core course or a “B” in a practicum course, they will automatically be placed on a remediation plan. If a student fails their masters comprehensive exam, they will also be placed on a remediation plan.
- A student may also be placed on a remediation plan for failing to meet clinical skill development expectations (as identified from practicum evaluations) and for failing to meet professional skill expectations (as outlined on pages 14 and 15).

Remediation plans detailing the specific expectations and timelines to complete these expectations are typically developed by the instructor of an academic course and/or the student’s advisor and the ABA core faculty. This formal plan is outlined in writing, reviewed by relevant faculty, signed by all relevant parties, and placed in the student’s file. This plan is then explained to the student in conjunction with identification of remedial supports in order to ensure optimal success for the student. University policy requires that all ‘I’ grades be adjusted within one semester of the assignment of such a grade or the ‘I’ automatically turns into a ‘F’. If the student successfully completes the plan, then an appropriate grade for the course will be assigned. In addition, a letter stating that the terms of the remediation plan have been fulfilled will be placed in the student’s file.

If a student fails to complete the remediation plan in an appropriate manner, he or she will be placed on probation, except in unusual circumstances. The ABA faculty will then hold a meeting to discuss the terms of the probation for the individual student’s case. Adaptations to the initial remediation plan may be made or a new plan may be developed. This formal probation plan is outlined in writing, reviewed by the core program faculty, signed by all relevant parties, and placed in the students file. As with the remediation plan, problem-solving efforts are made with the student to identify the supports needed for successful completion of the probation plan. Students will remain on probation for at least one academic semester.

For academic deficiencies, appropriate grade changes will be made if that is within the plan at the completion of the probationary period. In addition, a letter stating that the terms of the probation plan have been fulfilled will be placed in the student's file for students placed on probation for behavioral or academic concerns. If a student fails to fulfill the requirements of the probation plan, he or she may be dismissed from the program.

Other potential reasons for dismissals are located below in the Student Retention and Dismissals section of this handbook. Student efforts at successful completion of remediation or probation plans will also be reviewed during annual reviews by school psychology core program faculty. If, at any time, the student feels that he or she has been treated inappropriately or unfairly, they are encouraged to follow the student grievance procedure outlined and within *The Graduate School Bulletin*.

### **Student Retention and Dismissals**

The MSU faculty, administration, and staff are extremely interested and committed to student success and completion of the program and want to assist with this process when they can. However, they must also maintain the integrity of the training programs. Therefore, a student's acceptance into the program does not guarantee her or his fitness to remain in the program. A detailed description of student retention and dismissal criteria and procedures are provided in this handbook. These processes and criteria are also outlined during orientation. The basic criteria will be outlined below.

#### Academic Program Standards

*Students will be dismissed from the program if:*

- They make more than two grades of C or below *or*
- They make a D, F, or U in one course *or*
- They make a B in a practicum course *or*
- They fail the Master's Comprehensive Examination twice *or*
- Obtain unacceptable ratings on competencies evaluated in their annual progress evaluation

\*Any or a combination of these will result in the termination of the student's program in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Foundations.

#### Non-Academic Program Standards

Students may also be dismissed if they fail to develop the skills needed to effectively work with people with diverse needs or fail to follow relevant ethical (BACB) and legal codes. Students are expected to:

- Be committed to professional development and ethics of the field of applied behavior analysis
- Be concerned about the welfare of those with whom they work
- Demonstrate professional skills that suggest they have the emotional and mental fitness to interact appropriately with others
- Receive constructive feedback and alter their performance based on that feedback

- Apply theories, skills, and techniques that have been empirically supported or validated

Again, the processes and procedures by which students will be dismissed from the program are outlined above in this handbook. Please read these carefully.



### Student Acknowledgement Form

Please print and sign this form and turn it in to the Program Coordinator, Dr. Hallie Smith or your Advisor.

I \_\_\_\_\_, have read the program handbook in its entirety and understand the expectations of the program, as well as the various policies and procedures. I also attest that any questions or concerns I had about any material presented in this handbook were addressed by program faculty.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date