

Reading: Reading Teacher and Reading Specialist Emphasis - Master of Science in Education

UWL's **online reading and literacy programs** prepare licensed teachers to use science-backed, evidence-based strategies that improve reading outcomes for learners from early childhood through high school. Designed for working educators, these flexible programs allow candidates to immediately apply what they learn in their own classroom and school—while progressing toward advanced credentials aligned with Wisconsin DPI requirements.

Graduates of this program earn a Master of Science in Education degree. Wisconsin educators are eligible for both the Wisconsin Reading Teacher License (1316), and the Wisconsin Reading Specialist (5017) license.

Master of Science in Education in Reading Program

The **online Master of Science in Education (MSED) in Reading – Reading Teacher/Reading Specialist program** at University of Wisconsin–La Crosse is dedicated to preparing graduate students who serve communities, families, students, schools, and fellow educators as leaders in literacy education. The 36 credit program emphasizes both foundational and applied knowledge in literacy instruction, grounded in current research and responsive to evolving state and national expectations.

Through preparation and experiences in developmental and exceptional literacy instruction and assessment, candidates develop the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to serve effectively as classroom teachers of reading, Title I or intervention specialists, and Reading Specialists or literacy coaches at the school and district levels. Coursework is intentionally designed to integrate the requirements of Wisconsin Act 20, including structured literacy, science of reading principles, early screening, and evidence-based intervention practices aligned with state-mandated literacy initiatives.

Graduates of the MSED in Reading program are prepared to:

- Model current and authentic best practices in PK–12 literacy education;
- Apply the science of reading and structured literacy approaches in instruction and intervention;
- Identify and implement research-based strategies and resources;
- Provide leadership in literacy assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation aligned with state guidelines;
- Remain accountable to students, families, and educational stakeholders;
- Advocate for equitable literacy outcomes for all learners.

The Reading Teacher and Reading Specialist pathways are aligned with the 2017 Standards for Reading Professionals of the International Literacy Association as well as Wisconsin Teaching Standards (for Reading Teacher licensure) and Wisconsin Administrator Standards (PI

34.003, for Reading Specialist licensure). These standards emphasize the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential for effective literacy practice, including a comprehensive view of literacy that encompasses reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visually representing across print and digital contexts.

Delivered fully online, the program is designed for working professionals and is grounded in current research, best practices, and state policy expectations. Graduates are equipped not only to meet contemporary reading and literacy demands—including those outlined in Wisconsin Act 20—but also to lead systemic, evidence-based literacy improvement efforts across diverse educational settings.

The program typically starts in fall, spring, and summer terms.

Program requirements

Admission

For admission to the Reading: Reading Teacher (1316) and Reading Specialist (5017) Emphasis, a candidate for the program must:

- Meet all UWL graduate application requirements. (<https://catalog.uwlax.edu/graduate/admissions/#apply>)
- Hold a bachelor's degree in education from an accredited institution.
- Have an overall undergraduate grade point average of 2.85 or higher on a 4.00 scale.
- Provide evidence of teaching license or certificate (i.e. copy of teaching license).
- Provide a resume that documents at least one year of full-time teaching in a K-12 setting and current employment in a K-12 school.
- Complete a successful criminal background check (initiated by UWL).

Criminal background check

The WI Department of Public Instruction (DPI) requires that candidates for admission to a teacher education, administration, or pupil services program successfully pass a criminal background check (CBC) as one criterion for admission. By applying for admission to one of these programs, candidates agree to provide the necessary personal information to UWL in order to initiate their CBC and to complete their portion of the process prior to the deadline specified in their admission letter. Program candidates are responsible for all costs associated with their criminal background check(s).

Out-of-state applicants

This program may meet other states' licensing requirements. An applicant's state may or may not require that the applicant get a Wisconsin teaching license to be endorsed for their program of study. The Wisconsin licensing process may include taking coursework in Native American Studies (ACT 31). The applicant should check with their state licensing board prior to applying to ensure they understand the appropriate pathway to meet their state's licensing requirements.

Curriculum

(36 credits)

Code	Title	Credits
Core		
RDG 600	Research Methods in Literacy	3
RDG 601	Literacy and Language Development and Instruction	3

RDG 702	Disciplinary Literacy	3
RDG 703	Literacy Assessment and Instruction	3
RDG 704	Emergent Literacy	3
RDG 711	Advanced Research Methods in Literacy	3
RDG 714	Reading Teacher Practicum	3
RDG 715	Children's and Adolescent Literature	3
RDG 718	Guiding and Directing a Schoolwide Reading/ Literacy Program	3
RDG 780	Reading Specialist Practicum	3
Action Research in Literacy (six credits required)		6
RDG 799	Action Research in Literacy	
Total Credits		36

Program completion and eligibility for certification

Eligibility for Reading Teacher (1316) and Reading Specialist (5017) certification is contingent upon:

- Completion of Reading Teacher and Reading Specialist Program coursework, associate experiences, and artifacts.
- Cumulative graduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher.
- Passing score on the WI Foundations of Reading Test or hold a WI Lifetime Administrator License.
- Completion of DPI employment verification form (<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/licensing/f1613.pdf>) indicating at least six semesters of employment as the teacher of record in K-12 schools or hold a WI Lifetime Teaching License.

Degree requirements

University graduate degree requirements

After being admitted to the program of one's choice, candidates for a graduate degree must:

1. Complete any preliminary course work and deficiencies.
2. Complete all courses and other program requirements, including residence requirements prescribed for the degree desired in the respective school or college within a seven-year period from the date of initial enrollment, with the exception of students enrolled in the Student Affairs Administration and Leadership Ed.D. (SAA Ed.D.) graduate program. SAA Ed.D. students must complete all degree requirements within ten years from the time of initial enrollment in the graduate program.
3. Earn a minimum of 30 credits for a master's degree; 54 credits for a doctorate or post-master's degree. Earn at least one-half of the minimum number of credits required in the program in graduate-only level courses (700, 800, 900, and non-slash 600 level courses). Some UWL graduate programs require more than 30 graduate credits. Please review the individual program requirements (<http://catalog.uwlax.edu/graduate/programrequirements/>) listed in the catalog for the exact number of credits required.
4. Earn a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00.
5. Satisfy dissertation, thesis, seminar paper, terminal/graduate projects and internships, or comprehensive examination, where applicable. A dissertation or thesis approved by the committee must be submitted to Graduate & Extended Learning for editorial review and approval by the Dean of Graduate & Extended Learning. The recommended initial submission date for review is two weeks before commencement. Ordinarily, a seminar paper or project report does not have to be approved by the Dean of Graduate

& Extended Learning. However, if the seminar paper or project report is to be archived in Murphy Library, the student must follow the same rules as they apply to the dissertation/thesis requiring approval from the Dean of Graduate & Extended Learning. For further research/dissertation/thesis guidelines (<https://www.uwlax.edu/gel/graduate-education/thesis-and-dissertation/>), see Graduate & Extended Learning.

6. File a completed "Intent to Graduate" form online via the WINGS Student Center immediately following registration for the final semester or summer term in residence. December graduates and winter intersession should file by May 1. May and summer graduates should file by December 1.
7. Pay the graduation fee and remove all other indebtedness to the university. Payment of graduation fees does not imply readiness for graduation and does not take the place of applying for graduation.
8. Complete all requirements within 30 days after the official ending date of a term in order for a degree to be awarded for that term. (See #5 above for separate deadline for written capstone experience.)