

Special Education Certificate

The **online Special Education Certificate program** is designed for Wisconsin educators who already hold a teaching license in another content area and wish to add expertise in special education. This 24 credit fully online program prepares educators to teach students with a wide range of disabilities and leads to eligibility for the Wisconsin Cross-categorical K–12 Special Education license (2801). To ensure access in a high-need field, candidates are admitted into fully online cohorts that allow practicing teachers to remain employed in their districts while completing the program.

Grounded in a constructivist, learning-in-community philosophy and an emphasis on culturally relevant teaching, the program integrates coursework and clinical experiences across elementary, middle, and high school settings. Candidates apply learning directly in their current school districts, with field experiences tailored to their professional context.

Program goals include preparing highly qualified K–12 cross-categorical special education teachers, strengthening district capacity in a critical shortage area, and developing highly skilled educators who serve as advocates for students with disabilities and their families. Candidates build expertise in inclusive instructional practices, collaboration, and differentiated supports for learners with diverse needs, including students with significant disabilities.

Coursework and experiences are aligned with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Initial Practice-Based Professional Standards for Special Educators and Wisconsin Teaching Standards.

Completers of this program are eligible for a Wisconsin Cross-categorical (2801) teaching license.

The program typically admits new cohorts annually, with Fall 2027 applications opening in late Spring 2027.

Program requirements

Admission

Applicants for admission 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 regular teaching experience in a K-12 classroom and current teaching position in a K-12 classroom.
- 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

The graduate Special Education Certificate Program is aligned with Wisconsin Teacher Standards (WTS) and Council on Exceptional Children (CEC) Standards.

Code	Title	Credits
RDG 704	Emergent Literacy	3
EDU 755	Introduction to Special Education for In-Service Teachers	3
EDU 756	Classroom Practices in Special Education	3
EDU 757	Co-Planning and Co-Teaching in Child-Centered Environments	3
EDU 758	Advanced Special Education Assessment	3
EDU 759	Advanced Methods: Teaching Students with Disabilities	3
EDU 760	Classroom Management and Positive Behavioral Practices	3
EDU 761	Practicum in Special Education	3
Total Credits		24

Program completion and eligibility for certification

Eligibility for K-12 Cross-Categorical Special Education (2801) certification is contingent upon:

- Completion of all K-12 Cross-Categorical Special Education Program coursework, associated experiences, and artifacts.
- Cumulative graduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher.
- Completed DPI employment verification form (<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/forms/doc/f1618.doc>) indicating at least 3 years of employment as the teacher of record in K-12 schools or hold a WI Lifetime Educator license.