

# Special Education MA (Low Incidence Disabilities and Autism)

## G1 Production of Scholarly Research

**Goal Description:**

Candidates will write a research paper, conforming to APA style.

**Providing Department:** Special Education MA (Low Incidence Disabilities and Autism)

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**L01 Literature Review**

**Learning Objective Description:**

Students will review literature related to their research questions.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Literature Review**

**Indicator Description:**

SPED 6306 students will use PRISMA (2020) guidelines to write a review of literature related to their research question.

**Criterion Description:**

SPED 6306 students will score at least 80% on the PRISMA 2020 Expanded Checklist.

**Findings Description:**

LIDA faculty decided in October 2023 to seek accreditation from the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts, an organization whose guidelines focus more on practice than research. For that reason, the SPED 6306 instructor did not require that students use the PRISMA 2020 Expanded Checklist.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Action 2 Literature Review**

**Action Description:**

This learning objective will not be accessed in the future because LIDA faculty decided in October 2023 to seek accreditation from the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts, an organization whose guidelines focus more on practice than research. Our revised second-year courses prepare students to do a practice-focused capstone rather than a scholarly research project.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**LO2 Research Questions**

**Learning Objective Description:**

Students will formulate research questions suitable for single-subject designs.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Research Questions**

**Indicator Description:**

SPED 6303 students will develop a novel research question that involves the manipulation of an independent variable on at least one dependent variable. Students in SPED 6303 will also review literature summarizing research related to their question.

**Criterion Description:**

SPED 6303 students will score at least 80% on the research question and literature review rubric.

**Findings Description:**

Seven out of nine students in Cohort 18 scored at least 80% on their research question and literature review rubrics.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3**

**Action 1 Research Questions**

**Action Description:**

This learning objective will not be accessed in the future because LIDA faculty decided in October 2023 to seek accreditation from the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts, an organization whose guidelines focus more on practice than research. Our revised second-year courses prepare students to do a practice-focused capstone rather than a scholarly research project.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1**

**LO3 Research Project Design**

**Learning Objective Description:**

Students will design a research project that conforms to guidelines set by ABAI.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2**

**Research Project Design**

**Indicator Description:**

SPED 6314 students will design a research project and propose it in front of a committee comprised of at least two faculty members.

**Criterion Description:**

At least 80% of students will receive a passing score on their proposal.

**Findings Description:**

In Cohort 17, 100% of students received a passing score on their proposal.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3**

**Action 3 Research Project Design**

**Action Description:**

This learning objective will not be accessed in the future because LIDA faculty decided in October 2023 to seek accreditation from the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts, an organization whose guidelines focus more on practice than research. Our revised second-year courses prepare students to do a practice-focused capstone rather than a scholarly research project.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1**

**LO4 Research Project Completion**

**Learning Objective Description:**

Students will carry out a research project that conforms to guidelines set by ABAI.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**SPED 6315 Research Project**

**Indicator Description:**

SPED 6315 students will carry out a research project and participate in a defense in front of a committee comprised of at least two faculty members.

**Criterion Description:**

At least 80% of students will receive a passing score 80% on their defense.

**Findings Description:**

LIDA faculty decided in October 2023 to seek accreditation from the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts, an organization whose guidelines focus more on practice than research. For that reason, students in SPED 6315 did not defend their projects in front of a committee.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Action 4 SPED 6315 Research Project**

**Action Description:**

This learning objective will not be accessed in the future because LIDA faculty decided in October 2023 to seek accreditation from the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts, an organization whose guidelines focus more on practice than research. Our revised second-year courses prepare students to do a practice-focused capstone rather than a scholarly research project.

**G2 Mastery of Knowledge and Skills based on Behavior Analyst Certification Board Task List**

**Goal Description:**

Mastery of Knowledge and Skills based on Behavior Analyst Certification Board Task List.

**Providing Department:** Special Education MA (Low Incidence Disabilities and Autism)

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**LO1 Behavior Analysis Certification Exam**

**Learning Objective Description:**

Candidates will pass the Behavior Analysis Certification Exam at percentages comparable to the national average.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Behavior Analyst Certification Exam**

**Indicator Description:**

The Special Education MA (Low Incidence Disabilities and Autism) graduate program prepares students to take the Behavior Analyst Certification Exam, the final step in becoming a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Therefore, the true test of the program's effectiveness is the percentage of students passing the exam every year.

**Criterion Description:**

At least 55% of first-time exam takers will pass the Behavior Analyst Certification Exam.

**Findings Description:**

Of the 13 LIDA first-time exam takers in 2023, seven passed, yielding a pass rate of 54%. This was a decline from 2022 when eight out of 14 LIDA first-time exam takers passed, yielding a pass rate of 57%.

### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

#### **Action 1 Behavior Analyst Certification Exam**

##### **Action Description:**

The pass rate data for candidates taking the exam in 2023 showed a slight decrease from 2022 (54% versus 57%). This is worrisome because our percentage of passing first-time test takers has declined over the past two years. The decreases represent a departure from what had been an upward trend over the preceding five years: 2017-2018: 47%, 2019: 60%, 2020: 50%, 2021: 66.67%. We plan to seek accreditation from the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts, which requires "sustained performance at or above 70% of first-time test takers" for full accreditation, and we must have full accreditation by January 1, 2032. To remediate the decline in pass rates, we have required the completion of BDS exam practice questions in eight rather than two classes, as in previous years.

### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

#### **LO2 Behavior Development Solutions (BDS) Modules**

##### **Learning Objective Description:**

Students will demonstrate mastery of behavior analytic terms and concepts.

### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

#### **Behavior Development Solutions (BDS) Modules**

##### **Indicator Description:**

The BDS Modules are a set of BCBA exam preparatory questions that have been shown to improve first time BCBA exam pass rates. Currently, the first-time BCBA exam pass rate for students who complete all of the modules to 100% accuracy is 97.7% (<https://www.behaviordevelopmentsolutions.com/>).

Students are required to complete portions of the modules throughout their second year in the LIDA program to prepare for the BCBA exam.

##### **Criterion Description:**

Of the assigned modules, 50% of students will complete the acquisition exam portions to 100% and the fluency exam portions to 80% with no limit on attempts.

##### **Findings Description:**

Five of 12 students met criterion. On average, the students in the cohort graduating in 2024 completed 96% of acquisition exam portions at 100% and 98% of fluency exam portions at 80% with no limits on attempts. That was better than the completion performance of the previous cohort. That group completed 90% of assigned acquisition modules and 91% of assigned fluency modules at criterion levels.

### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

#### **Action 2 Behavior Development Solutions (BDS) Modules**

##### **Action Description:**

Few students complete assigned BDS modules to criterion in SPED 6314 and 6315. LIDA faculty have decided to assign modules across courses during the first as well as the second year in order to provide more opportunities to practice answering the types of questions that will appear on the BCBA exam. Moreover, faculty will require students to submit screenshots of what they consider to be difficult questions, and instructors will discuss those questions in class. When students perceive that completing BDS modules to the specified criterion increases the likelihood that they will pass the BCBA exam on the first attempt, they will increase their completion of assigned modules.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

### LO3 Comprehensive Exams

#### Learning Objective Description:

Candidates will demonstrate mastery of knowledge and skills on comprehensive examinations referenced to the standards set forth by the Behavior Analysis Certification Board.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

### Comprehensive Exams

#### Indicator Description:

Faculty-developed rubric scored by two independent faculty members following standards of the Behavior Analyst Certification Board Task List.

#### Criterion Description:

90% of candidates will score 80% or better on the rubric on their first attempt. Particular areas of emphasis include data analysis, experimental design, behavioral support plan development, and application of ethical principles.

#### Findings Description:

Of the candidates graduating in 2024, 100% scored 80% or better on their first attempt. This was the same as the performance of the cohort that graduated in 2023.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

### Action 3 Comprehensive Exams

#### Action Description:

In both 2023 and 2024, 100% of candidates scored 80% or better on their first attempt. Because LIDA faculty have decided to replace comprehensive exams with capstone projects beginning in 2025, we will not assess this learning objective in the future.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

### LO4 Passing Rate on the LIDA Program Assessment

#### Learning Objective Description:

The LIDA Program Assessment is a 100-item multiple-choice test covering ABA principles and applications typically taught in an introductory Master-level course.

Candidates receive course points for completion of the assessment, regardless of accuracy on the individual items. Therefore, the only environmental variables that evoke and maintain correct responding are instructional control in the classroom and a history of reinforcement for performing accurately on similar tasks. In addition, the students are urged to do well to provide an accurate assessment of their knowledge with respect to the material as they advance throughout the program.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

### LIDA Program Assessment

#### Indicator Description:

The LIDA Progress Assessment is a 100-item multiple-choice test covering ABA principles and applications typically taught in an introductory Masters-level course.

Candidates receive course points for completion of the assessment, regardless of accuracy on the individual items. Therefore, the only environmental variables that evoke and maintain correct responding are instructional control in the classroom and a history of reinforcement for performing accurately on similar tasks. In addition, the students are urged to do well to provide an accurate assessment of their knowledge with respect to the material as they advance throughout the program.

The assessment will be scored as a percentage of responses correct.

**Criterion Description:**

Students will improve their scores on the test by at least 20% from the August administration to the May administration.

**Findings Description:**

Scores for Cohort 17, which graduated in 2024, increased by 4.5% on average from August to May. Cohort 16 had shown an average decrease of 0.43%. Cohort 18, which will graduate in 2025, increased by 6.6%.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3****Action 4 LIDA Program Assessment****Action Description:**

Cohorts 16, 17, and 18 did not meet the criterion of increasing their scores from August to May by 20%. The average increase across the cohorts was 3.8%. We will change the criterion during 2024-2025 to 10%, a more reasonable target, given that the courses that each cohort takes during one evaluation year cover only half of the material assessed by the LIDA Program Assessment.

**Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item****Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):****Closing Summary**

Faculty will revise goals, learning objectives, indicators, and criteria to better align with the requirements of the LIDA self-study required by the Association for Behavior Analysis International for Tiered Model recognition. We plan to submit an application for Tier 2a recognition during the summer of 2025.

**Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:**

LIDA faculty decided in October 2023 to seek accreditation from the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA), an organization whose guidelines focus more on practice than research. Because this makes the Production of Scholarly Research goal pointless, we will discontinue it. Making progress on our other goal, Mastery of Knowledge and Skills based on Behavior Analyst Certification Board Task List, has proved problematic. The only objective on which recent cohorts have met criterion is the one involving comprehensive exams, but we will discontinue assessment of this goal because we will no longer administer comprehensive exams. Over a number of years, cohorts have not met our BCBA exam pass rate, BDS Module completion, and LIDA Program Assessment score criteria. Based on the two most recent years of data on the first-time BCBA exam pass rates of our graduates, our cohorts' percentage passing hovers around 55%. We will need to get the pass rates above 70% for a number of years in order to qualify for full accreditation from APBA by 2032.

**New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item****Closing Summary:**

Faculty will give renewed emphasis to completion of BDS modules and improvements in LIDA Program Assessment scores. We expect this to result in more graduates passing the BCBA exam the first time. The self-study required by accreditation from the Association for Professional Behavior Analysts, moreover, will require us to document our redoubled efforts to support student success. In the new cohort, we have targeted two students with low undergraduate GPAs for frequent monitoring. Their instructors will meet with them monthly during their first semester to ensure that they are progressing satisfactorily in their courses.