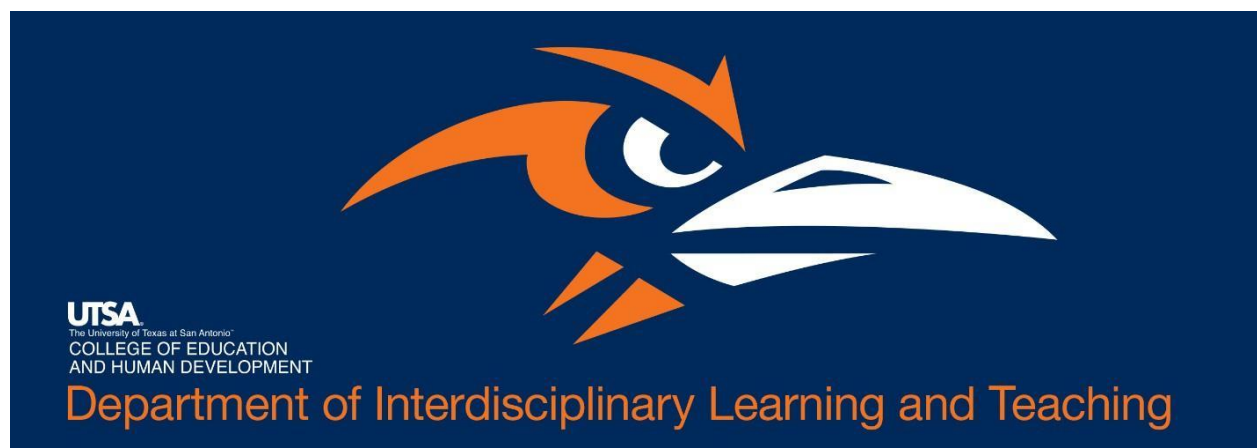




**MASTER OF ARTS (M.A.) IN
LITERACY EDUCATION
HANDBOOK**

**Department of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching
The University of Texas at San Antonio**

Note: This program guide is subject to change without notification. It is strongly recommended that students routinely check in with their advisors and the Student Development Specialist to ensure they are completing their Degree requirements in a timely manner. This handbook does not substitute or supersede information contained in the UTSA Graduate Catalog.



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Description of Master of Arts in Literacy Education

College of Education and Human Development
at The University of Texas—San Antonio

Program Background:

The Master of Arts in the Reading and Literacy Program is housed in the Department of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching in the College of Education and Human Development at The University of Texas at San Antonio. The Master of Arts Degree follows the Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. It is an interdisciplinary program that provides students with course work that addresses theory and research that inform literacy practices and outcomes. Classes are held online.

Mission:

Courses are designed to influence classroom practices and policies in literacy, primarily reading and writing, but also the other language arts, listening and speaking as they contribute to literacy development across the elementary, secondary, post-secondary years of schooling and into adulthood. The research addressed is ground-breaking with the goal of pursuing equitable learning, critical thinking, and higher-order language comprehension and production in the humanities and sciences, as needed in the 21st century work world or daily life.

Special attention is given to field-based experiences with a range of learners including English as a second language and bilingual learners, and to the challenges and obstacles some students face in becoming skilled readers and writers. There is a Reading Specialist Certificate option with courses to fulfill the Texas State Specialist Certification requirements and opportunities to learn about literacy locally, nationally, and internationally through partnerships with schools.

Structure:

M.A. seeking students may choose a non-thesis option or thesis option. The thesis option provides students with an opportunity to design and report on a research project. This experience may be valuable as a precursor to a doctorate in literacy or related fields. The M.A. uses a cohort structure where students develop a relationship with peers pursuing the M.A. through cooperative learning. An action research project is required at the close of the coursework.

Work Opportunities:

Graduates of the UTSA Literacy Program have pursued work as reading specialists, literacy coaches, department chairs, with the Texas Education Association (TEA) in technology centers, publishing houses—as editors of educational sources, hospitals, and adult education centers, and in bilingual contexts, in literacy programs in prisons, and in pre-schools, supporting parents and caregivers in the development of childhood literacy and at the same time, adult literacy.

Introduction

This guide is for the Master of Arts (M.A.) in Literacy Education and seeks to provide information about various policies and procedures students may encounter over the course of their Degree Program. If you have questions, please contact your faculty advisor or the Student Development Specialist for more information. Other policies and procedures may also be included in the UTSA Graduate Catalog: <http://www.utsa.edu/gcat>.

Orientation

Prior to the fall and spring semesters, there are typically two OPTIONAL orientation sessions. The first is hosted by the UTSA Graduate School and will cover broader topics such as graduate student success, balancing life as a graduate student, and what resources UTSA offers its students. There is an on-campus session (usually held on a Saturday morning on Main Campus) and online sessions available. For more information, visit <https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/admissions/graduate-school-orientation/> or call (210) 458-4331.

The second orientation is hosted by the Department of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching and more specifically focuses on the M.A. degrees in our Department. The Department orientation is usually attended by the Student Development Specialist as well as the M.A. Graduate Advisor of Record (GAR).

Orientation is optional, but it is recommended for students who have never attended UTSA before or those who are returning school after a long awhile. There are also many resources online that students can seek out if they are not able to attend these sessions. Contact the Student Development Specialist for more information or visit <https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/about/student-success-professional-development-team/index.html>.

Advising

The Dean's Condition Sheet

If you have not already, you should soon receive your official admission letter (via email) from the UTSA Graduate School. Please keep this letter on file, as it contains your student Banner ID number and lists any admissions conditions you are required to meet. Please note that in order to graduate you will need to meet these requirements.

Your Faculty Advisor

At the time of admission to the program, students are assigned to a faculty advisor in literacy. The faculty advisor is there to support you and your goals in whatever way possible, but it is also your responsibility to seek out that mentorship and support. If students are part of a cohort, they need to contact their advisors prior to registration to ensure they are keeping up with their cohort. Students will continue to receive advising from their cohort director/ faculty advisor until graduation.

Some topics to discuss with your advisor should include:

- Short and long-term professional and academic goals;
- Possible interest in writing a master's thesis;
- Previously completed coursework you may have from another program or institution that may be transferred to UTSA;
- Timeline for finishing the degree, especially if you are trying to finish in two years or less;
- Course rotation for your specific program and when you should plan on taking certain classes;
- Possible interest in pursuing a doctoral degree or other professional certifications that your coursework might be geared toward;
- Other questions or concerns.

This is not an exhaustive list, but it does provide some key points that might help advisors get to know you and your needs as a master's degree student.

If you would like to change to a specific faculty advisor, you may do so at any time. Please contact the Student Development Specialist to make a change. See the next section for information about contacting the Student Development Specialist.

The Student Development Specialist

The Student Development Specialist's (SDS) role is to help support your relationship with your advisor and whatever you need as a master's degree student. The SDS serves as the point person between the program, the Dean's Office of the College of Education, and the Graduate School. The SDS is familiar with most of the services and resources available to UTSA students (graduate students, specifically). The SDS's phone number is (210) 458-7443.

Since the SDS is the resident expert on policies, procedures, and paperwork, your advisor may direct you to them. The specialist is there to help process paperwork related to admissions, transfers, graduation, etc. The SDS is also responsible for disseminating important information to graduate students about deadlines and upcoming events. Please carefully read the email announcements from the SDS to avoid missing out on relevant, time- sensitive information.

Contact Information

It is important that you update your contact information in your [ASAP](#) account as needed each semester. The SDS will use the email address you designate as your preferred email address for announcements and other important information. This email address can be your official UTSA email address or a Gmail, Yahoo, or other email account.

Completing Degree Requirements

Please note that all students in a cohort are to take courses with their cohort in a particular sequence. Consult your advisor to ensure you take the correct courses for your program option (thesis, non-thesis, or Reading Specialist) to ensure your timeline for completing the program is not delayed.

Background courses: If you did not major in education or a closely related field as an undergraduate, you may have been admitted to the program with background courses that you must complete **in addition** to the 30 hours for the M.A. *You will not be allowed to graduate without completing these hours. It is strongly recommended that you complete these hours within your first 1-2 semesters. These courses are foundational courses, and we do not want you to forget about them.*

If you have questions or concerns about these classes, see your faculty advisor. If you are unsure if you have background courses, contact the SDS who can send you the Dean's Condition Sheet. Once you have completed the background course(s), please let the SDS know so they can complete a "Removal of Admissions Conditions" form.

Literacy Options

Reading Specialist Certification Option

Courses in this emphasis lead to the fulfillment of the requirements for the Texas State Reading Specialist Certification. The list of courses for this emphasis area leads to a state credential and cannot be substituted.

Core Courses (6 hours)

- ☐ LTED 6033: Survey of Literacy Research*
- ☐ LTED 6833: Theoretical Foundations of Literacy Education

Program Emphasis Courses (12 hours)

- ☐ LTED 6073: New Literacies Using Critical Perspectives
- ☐ LTED 5743: Secondary Literacy Development
- ☐ LTED 5823: Early Language and Literacy Development
- ☐ LTED 6843: Practice-Based Literacy Research*

Support Courses (12 hours)

- ☐ LTED 5793: Literacy Coaching
- ☐ LTED 6763: Re-mediating Literacy
- ☐ LTED 6943: Internship in Literacy
- ☐ 3 semester credit hours in children's or young adult literature

There is an additional application you must fill out specifically for the Reading Specialist

Program. The requirements are different for the Reading Specialist Certification Program and admission to the MA does not guarantee admission to the Reading Specialist Certification Program. Be sure to talk to your advisor early in the program if you are interested in the Reading Specialist Program to see if certification is a good fit for you.

*LTED 6033 must be taken in the final fall of your program of study.

*LTED 6843 Practice-Based Literacy Research is the capstone class and should be taken in the last semester or when you are within 12 credit hours of graduation. Contact your faculty advisor or SDS for more information.

Non-Thesis Option (without Reading Specialist Certification)

Core Courses (6 hours)

- ☐ LTED 6033: Survey of Literacy Research
- ☐ LTED 6833: Theoretical Foundations of Literacy Education

Program Emphasis Courses (9 hours)

- ☐ LTED 6073: New Literacies Using Critical Perspectives
- ☐ LTED 5743: Secondary Literacy Development or LTED 5823: Early Language and Literacy Development
- ☐ LTED 6843: Practice-Based Literacy Research*

Support Courses (15 hours)

- ☐ 3 hours in children's or young adult literature
- ☐ 12 hours of graduate electives TBD in consultation with faculty advisor

*LTED 6033 must be taken in the final fall of your program of study.

*LTED 6843 Practice-Based Literacy Research is the capstone class and should be taken in the last semester or when you are within 12 credit hours of graduation. Contact your faculty advisor or SDS for more information.

Thesis Option

Core Courses (6 hours)

- ☐ LTED 6033: Survey of Literacy Research
- ☐ LTED 6833: Theoretical Foundations of Literacy Education

Program Emphasis Courses (9 hours)

- ☐ LTED 6073: New Literacies Using Critical Perspectives
- ☐ LTED 5743: Secondary Literacy Development or LTED 5823: Early Language and Literacy Development

- ☐ LTED 7863: Russian Contributions to Literacy, Psychology and Learning

Support Courses (12 hours)

- ☐ LTED 6983: Master's Thesis
- ☐ LTED 6983: Master's Thesis
- ☐ 3 hours in children's or young adult literature
- ☐ 3 hours graduate research methodology elective TBD by faculty advisor

Discuss your courses with your faculty advisor and obtain their approval PRIOR to enrolling any courses.

Courses are subject to change; therefore, you must continue to consult your advisor to ensure you are following and completing the requirements for your degree.

Obtaining a Degree Plan

It is your responsibility to meet with your advisor to discuss the particular degree plan. A degree plan is made official when it is completed with all relevant information and signed by both the faculty advisor and the student.

It is strongly recommended that copies of degree plans be provided to the SDS who can place copies in the student's file for reference.

A final degree plan that is fully filled out with all completed courses and grades, courses in progress, and the advisor's signature is required to sign up for the comprehensive experience and graduation checkout.

Time Limit on Master's Coursework

Per the UTSA Graduate Catalog, Master's level coursework **expires after six years**. If you took a class in the Spring of 2020, credit for that course expires in May 2026. All degree requirements must be satisfied and a student must graduate within six years to avoid the expiration of classes. If you exceed this time limit, the only way courses may count past the time limit is through a waiver of the time limit that is approved by the Department, the College of Education Dean's Office, and the Dean of the Graduate School. If you have expiring coursework, please contact your faculty advisor and the SDS for information on the petition process for obtaining this waiver.

It is strongly recommended that students keep course syllabi and work completed for their courses until they graduate. If you run into the six-year time limit or try to transfer hours to another institution, the petition or transfer process may be hindered by a lack of proper documentation.

The process for seeking a waiver of the six-year time limit is:

1. The student meets with the faculty advisor to discuss old courses and should bring the syllabus for each course, course descriptions, and any other documentation showing what they did in the class for the advisor to review. The advisor makes the initial determination whether courses are appropriate to count past the time limit. The advisor will notify the SDS which courses will be transferred and how they would like them to be used.
2. Students will email faculty member(s) who currently teaches the course (or UTSA equivalent course, if the course is from outside UTSA) to ask them to review the syllabus and determine whether the content of the course has significantly changed since the student took the course. The SDS should be copied on these emails. If they approve the course, they can email the SDS with their approval. If the course has substantially changed, the course cannot count. (Note: We will not move on to another faculty member who might approve since this undermines the approval process and the expertise of the faculty member).
3. If the student has not already done so, copies of the syllabus (or syllabi, for multiple classes) and other supporting documentation like course descriptions should be provided to the SDS. Additionally, the student will need to write a short letter requesting the waiver (An email is fine. Ask the SDS for more details). A letter or email indicating approval from student's advisor is also needed.
4. Once all the necessary documentation is received, the SDS will compile everything into one packet to send to the Graduate Advisor of Record, the College of Education Dean's Office, and to the Dean of the Graduate School for review. Upon approval, the paperwork will be placed in the student's file and student will be notified via email.

It is the student's responsibility to obtain required documentation and approvals from their advisor and appropriate faculty. The SDS and faculty advisor will assist as needed, but the ultimate responsibility in following up with petitions is with the student.

Transferring Coursework from another Institution

If you enter the program with graduate-level coursework from another institution that you want to count for your degree at UTSA, those credits are not automatically transferred. There is a petition process that all courses must undergo before they can be reviewed and approved. *It is the student's responsibility to follow through on the steps of the petition process. The advisor will make the initial approval determination, and the SDS will assist the student in the approval process and getting paperwork together. However, the student must be diligent in following up with people through the 4-6 weeks that this process can take, depending on the number of courses for transfer.*

Transfer will not be considered for classes that: a) exceed the six-year time limit; b) have a grade of B- or less; c) have already counted for another degree; d) are repeated coursework that a student has already completed at UTSA. No more than 12 hours can be transferred. Other conditions for transfer are listed in the UTSA Graduate Catalog.

The process for transferring courses is:

1. The student meets with their faculty advisor to discuss transfer credits. They should bring transcripts, course descriptions, and any other documentation showing what they

did in the class for the advisor to review. The advisor makes the initial determination whether courses are appropriate to transfer and how they can be used in a student's degree plan.

2. The advisor will notify the SDS which courses will be transferred and how they would like them to be used. Please note that a UTSA equivalent course must be identified. The SDS will give student guidance on what the UTSA equivalent courses are and who they should contact to review the syllabus of the transfer course(s).
3. Students will email faculty member(s) who teach equivalent UTSA course(s) to ask them to review the syllabus and determine whether the transfer course is an appropriate substitution. The SDS should be copied on these emails. If they approve the course, they can email the SDS with their approval. If they do not approve the course, we might seek alternative substitutions. If there is not a fit and/or the faculty member does not approve the substitution, the course cannot transfer. We will not move on to another faculty member who might say yes since this undermines the approval process and the expertise of the faculty member.
4. If the student has not already done so, copies of the syllabus (or syllabi, for multiple classes), other supporting documentation like course descriptions, and a copy of the student's UTSA degree plan showing where transfer courses fit should be provided to the SDS. Additionally, the student will need to write a short letter requesting the transfer (An email is fine. Ask the SDS for more details). A letter or email of approval from the student's advisor is also needed.
5. Once all the necessary documentation is received, the SDS will compile everything into one packet to send to the Graduate Advisor of Record, the College of Education Dean's Office, and to the Dean of the Graduate School for review. Upon approval, the paperwork will be placed in the student's file and the student will be notified via email.

Please note that transfer credits may not appear on UTSA transcripts until a student graduates. Students who transfer 6-12 hours of credit may have to complete a paper application for graduation. Inquire with the SDS for more details.

Registration

Graduate students register themselves for classes in most cases. If you do not know what to register for or have a conflict, please contact your faculty advisor and/or the SDS. If you are having trouble registering for classes and need troubleshooting help, please contact the SDS.

When contacting the SDS (email is preferred), you should provide the following: Your Banner ID or abc123 ID, the five-digit CRN of the course, the full course information (Subject, number, section number; e.g., LTED 5823), AND the error message you receive from the system. The SDS will not know how to fix the situation if they do not have all this information.

Independent Studies

In the case of students having a special interest in a topic that is not part of the normal course rotation or needing a substitute course so they can graduate, an independent study may be offered to the student. These are offered on a limited, case-by-case basis, and independent studies will not be offered on topics on which a formal class is offered that semester. Students cannot register for independent studies online themselves; they must fill out the formal paperwork and obtain appropriate approvals. The official independent study form is available at <http://www.utsa.edu/registrar/forms/independentstudy.pdf>.

Special Problems/Special Topics courses

Special problems/topics courses are courses developed by faculty on subjects that may fall outside the normal course offerings of the program. Students are encouraged to take these courses (with advisor approval), but no more than 6 hours of special topics and 6 hours of special problems courses will count toward a program of study.

Wait Listing

When courses fill up during the fall and spring semesters, a wait list may be put into effect to help students virtually “stand in line” for a spot in the course to open up. This is available on a first-come, first-served basis, and the student at the top of the wait list is only given a limited amount of time to register for a course should a spot become available. If you are on a wait list, you should read the website <http://www.utsa.edu/registrar/waitlist/> carefully for policies and procedures related to wait listing.

Add Forms

If a course is full and you are not able to get into a specific course (or you want to add the course after the window for adding courses online has closed), you will need to complete an add form (available at <http://www.utsa.edu/registrar/forms/add.pdf>). *It is the student's responsibility to obtain all the required signatures on this form and to submit it to Enrollment Services by the end of the business day (5:00pm) on Census Day. Check the academic calendar for Census Day.*

Census Day

Each semester, the university has a deadline by which all enrolling in classes must be done called Census Day. After 5:00 p.m. on Census Day, no more add forms will be processed.

Dropping Classes

Classes that are dropped prior to Census Day will not appear on students' transcripts. After Census Day, students will receive a “W” for each class they drop. This does not affect a student's GPA, but it could affect the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) they are required to maintain for financial aid.

There is a limited period of time during a semester where students can drop an individual class and receive a “W.” The deadline to drop an individual class is roughly during the ninth week of the fall or spring semester. Please refer to the academic calendar for the actual date.

After the deadline to drop an individual course has passed, students may only drop courses by completely withdrawing from ALL their courses and receiving a “W” for each class. The deadline to withdraw from the university is approximately one week before the first day of finals. Please check the academic calendar for the actual deadline.

Refunds: Check the academic calendar for refund deadlines.

Withdrawing from the University

Students who cannot attend a semester or who want to drop all their classes must formally withdraw from the university by filling out a withdrawal form (available at <http://www.utsa.edu/registrar/forms/withdrawal.pdf>) and taking it to Enrollment Services for processing. Graduate students do not need advisor approval to drop from their classes. Withdrawing from the university for a semester should not impact enrollment in future terms provided that the student is still an active student and has no holds on their account.

Academic Standing

Master's students are required to maintain a 3.0 GPA both overall and in each semester. Failure to do so will result in academic probation or possibly dismissal.

Per the UTSA Graduate Catalog

<https://catalog.utsa.edu/policies/generalacademicregulations/academicstanding/#GRStudents>

Academic probation occurs when:

1. A student fails to achieve a 3.0 GPA in any term, irrespective of level of courses taken (even a random undergraduate exercise class counts toward your GPA);
2. A student receives a "D+," "D," or "D-" in any course AND a GPA of 3.0 or higher;
3. A student is admitted on academic probation based on their entering GPA;
4. A student has been reinstated following academic dismissal.

Students on academic probation cannot take their comprehensive experience. Further, graduating students must be in good standing in their final semester. If a student is placed on academic probation during their last semester, they may be kept from graduating until they are back in good standing.

Academic probation is cleared only when none of the above criteria apply and then the student achieves a GPA of a 3.0.

Academic dismissal occurs when:

1. A student earns a GPA of less than a 2.0 in any term;
2. A student earns a grade of "F" in any course;
3. A student admitted on academic probation fails to make a 3.0 their first semester;
4. When a student already on academic probation during a semester fails to make a 3.0;
5. When a student is unable to pass their comprehensive exams after two attempts.

Students who are dismissed from the program and want to return must apply for reinstatement after sitting out one long semester (fall or spring). Early reinstatements are only considered in special and exceptional circumstances. More information on reinstatement following academic dismissal is available at: <http://graduateschool.utsa.edu/current-students/petition-for-reinstatement/>.

The Comprehensive Experience

Per the UTSA Graduate Catalog, every student is required to complete a comprehensive experience that is determined by their particular program option. Only students in the Thesis Option do not have the comprehensive experience. The comprehensive experience for the Non-Thesis Option and the Reading Specialist Option is built into a capstone course:

LTED 6843 Practice-Based Literacy Research

Students may enroll in the capstone course when they are within 12 hours of graduation.

Students will complete an action research project, analyze data from their research, and write a paper summarizing their findings. In order to successfully pass the comprehensive experience, students must submit their paper and present their research to students in the class and members of the Literacy faculty, usually in a small group roundtable format. Papers are evaluated by the instructor of the course, and presentations are evaluated based on a common rubric.

Careful planning with your advisor will ensure that you take the research capstone when you are ready so your graduation will not be delayed.

Graduation

Prior to or early on in the last semester of coursework, students must complete some paperwork in order to graduate.

First, they must apply for graduation via their ASAP account. The graduation application becomes available once a student completes 24 hours of coursework. The fall graduation deadline is **September 15**; spring is **February 15**. Students who are graduating in the summer but want to walk the stage in May must apply for graduation by February 15. Summer graduates who are not walking the stage or want to walk in the December ceremony must apply by June 15.

Students are also required to provide a signed final degree plan and a filled-out End of Program Checklist to the SDS by the graduation application deadline. The SDS will typically send out reminder emails to students prior to the deadline. Failure to submit the necessary paperwork can delay your graduation.

The SDS will complete early graduation checks to ensure that students are on track to graduate during the semester for which they applied, including confirming that students are in good academic standing and have completed or will complete all degree requirements such as background courses.

Students who are not eligible to graduate will be asked to withdraw their graduation application for that semester and to reapply for a future term when they will complete any outstanding requirements.

Commencement

The Department is not involved with Commencement, or the end of term ceremony where students walk the stage. Participating in Commencement ceremonies is optional. Official information for Commencement is disseminated through the website, <http://www.utsa.edu/commencement>. Please check this website throughout your final semester to find out information on the date and time for the College of Education ceremony as well as where and when to buy your cap, gown, and other commencement-related items.

During the fall and spring semesters, UTSA hosts an event called Grad Fest where students can buy their ceremony regalia, diploma frames, take pictures, and purchase an official UTSA Ring. Grad Fest is usually held in October and March, respectively. Check <https://alumni.utsa.edu/gradfest> for more information.

Your faculty advisor and the SDS will generally not have information on the details of the ceremony as they are not involved in the planning. Please refer to the official website for all related information.

Teacher Certification

A Master's degree by itself will not qualify someone to teach in the public school system (and in many private schools) in Texas. Students interested in obtaining their initial teacher certification must go through some type of Teacher Preparation Program.

Post-Baccalaureate Certification

This is a program offered by UTSA and is the fastest choice for students who already have a Bachelor's Degree and want to take the certification classes here at UTSA. There is an admissions process to this program, and students must meet minimum GPA and other requirements to complete this program. Once admitted, a certification officer will evaluate a student's transcripts to see what they have already taken for their bachelor's degree that will fulfill or substitute for classes on the certification plan. Then, students will be provided the list of courses they need to take—including a semester of student teaching—that will meet the requirements for certification. Once students complete those classes, their student teaching, and any other requirements of the program, they will be recommended for a standard state certification.

There is no preset time that this program requires. If you want to get certified in an area similar to what you majored in for your bachelor's degree, you might have less hours to take than someone else who did not major in that field. Program plans for certification are individualized based on students' previous coursework.

This website provides information meetings for the UTSA post-baccalaureate certification program: http://education.utsa.edu/certification_program/post-baccalaureate_information_meetings/.

You can pursue the post-baccalaureate certification program while completing your master's degree; however, you are working off two separate plans—one for the M.A. and one for the

certification. Certification classes can count toward background courses (if you were admitted with background courses), but they will not count for the M.A. as the certification program requires additional undergraduate coursework.

Teacher Certification Built into a Master's Degree Program

As part of the Department of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching, we offer initial certification through our MACIT (pronounced “make it”) program. This program offers students pursuing an MA in Curriculum and Instruction the opportunity to choose to follow a track for 4th-8th Math and Science certification OR 4th-8th English Language Arts and Social Studies certification. Contact the ILT Student Development Specialist at 210-458-7443 for more information.

The Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies offers a Master's with Certification in EC-6 ESL Generalist OR 4-8 ESL Generalist OR 7-12 ESL Generalist. They also offer EC-6 Bilingual Generalist OR 4-8 Bilingual Specialist. Contact the Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies at 210-458-6619 for more information.

Note: You will have to change master's degree programs by reapplying to the appropriate master's programs to pursue these options.

The Thesis Option

Writing a Master's Thesis is not required. Students choose to write a Master's thesis for a variety of reasons, including having aspirations for pursuing a doctoral degree in the future; having conditions from scholarships or other funding sources that require that they write a thesis; or they simply have an interest in research and want the experience. If you think you want to write a thesis, this is something that should be decided on relatively early on in your program because it impacts your degree plan and the number of hours needed to complete the program.

Thesis Option Degree Requirements

Core courses	6 hours
Program emphasis courses	9 hours
Children's or young adult literature course	3
Research methodology course	6 hours
Thesis hours	6 hours

Total = 30 hours

Students who complete this route will effectively have no room for extra support courses in their degree plan.

Starting the Thesis Option

The first step is to speak with your faculty advisor. It is strongly suggested that students have a topic or educational problem in mind with some basic information on how they would like to



study that topic. The advisor can make suggestions on research that the students should start looking at, what research methods courses they should consider taking, and what other faculty members might serve on the thesis committee.

Identifying a Thesis Chair and Thesis Committee Members

The thesis chair is the faculty member who will take the lead on overseeing and supporting you through the thesis process. This can be your assigned faculty advisor, but it does not have to be. This thesis chair should be comfortable enough with your topic that they can help you through the research process. Consider what faculty members have expertise and do research that is somewhat related (or closely related) to your proposed thesis topic. A faculty member might be less inclined to serve on a thesis committee if they are not familiar with your topic.

You might consider the Graduate School online workshop on selecting a thesis chair:
<http://graduateschool.utsa.edu/current-students/online-workshops/>.

It is strongly recommended that you consider writing a short research proposal or prospectus before approaching faculty members to serve on your thesis. *Remember that faculty members are not obligated to serve on thesis committees, so the clearer you can be about what you want to do and how prepared you are to take on a thesis, the more confident they can be with you and your work.*

Here is a link on preparing a prospectus:

<https://www.brown.edu/academics/history/prospectus-writing-tips>

The research topic and your research question(s) will help determine what type of research methods courses you take. It is important that you discuss this with your thesis chair or faculty advisor so you can ensure you are adequately prepared to take on the independent research work needed for a thesis project.

Enrolling in Thesis Hours

There is paperwork that you will need to file with the SDS to formally pursue the thesis option. The first form is the “Intent to Complete a Master’s Thesis.” A second form formalizes the members of the thesis committee and requires faculty signatures.

Once both forms are on file, you will be allowed to enroll in thesis hours (C&I 6983). Students are typically expected to enroll in thesis hours over two semesters. Only six hours of the thesis course will count toward the master’s degree, but students are required to be enrolled in thesis hours for as long as they are working on the thesis.

Thesis Defense

Students who complete the thesis will participate in an oral defense of the thesis with their committee. The oral defense counts as the student’s comprehensive experience. The chair of the thesis committee should prepare the student for the format of the thesis defense.

Graduating with the Thesis Option

Students are required to abide by certain deadlines to ensure that their thesis is uploaded to ProQuest in a timely manner and all the paperwork is completed for the student’s degree audit in time for graduation. Please work with the thesis chair and the SDS to develop a timeline.

Thesis Formatting

The Graduate School maintains the deadlines for submitting preliminary and final drafts of the thesis as well as assistance with formatting. Please visit

<http://graduateschool.utsa.edu/current-students/category/thesis-dissertation/> for information on deadlines and resources for preparing the thesis.



General Financial Aid information

THE DEPARTMENT (YOUR ADVISOR AND THE SDS) CANNOT ADVISE YOU ON FINANCIAL AID MATTERS.

Graduate students on financial aid must be enrolled in at least 4 graduate-level hours each semester to receive financial aid. Since we do not typically offer 1-hour courses, students should plan on enrolling in two courses or six hours each fall and spring semester to receive financial aid.

Students must also meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to maintain their eligibility (<http://www.utsa.edu/financialaid/elig/sap.html>). More information on financial aid at the graduate level is available at <http://graduateschool.utsa.edu/graduate-admissions/financial-aid-for-graduate-students/>.

Even if you do not intend to take out loans, complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form and submit it early if you will try to apply for grants and scholarships. For example, UTSA is one of the only universities in Texas that sets aside grant money for its graduate students. All students have to do to make themselves eligible to receive this money by submitting their FAFSA form (available at <http://fafsa.ed.gov/>) early. More information regarding graduate-level financial aid and funding opportunities may be found at <https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/tuition-funding/index.html>.

General Tips for Graduate Students

1. **Keep your syllabi and all course related materials until you graduate!** If you go over the six-year time limit or realize you need to transfer, you may need these, and departments and faculty do not always keep copies.
2. Know all the services and support available to you (most for free) as a student. For example, the Graduate School offers online workshops on special topics related to being a graduate student at <http://graduateschool.utsa.edu/current-students/online-workshops/>.
3. Remain in touch with your advisor throughout the program to avoid scheduling conflicts and solve problems before they occur.
4. **REGISTER EARLY!!!!** So many problems related to registration can be avoided by registering within the first week.
5. Be an advocate for yourself. You know your schedule, your personal life, and your timeline for finishing the degree. Be sure to ask questions and seek help when you need it. We want you to be successful, so be sure to voice your questions and concerns as they arise.

General Resources for Graduate Students

UTSA Graduate School: Provides support to graduate students in various forms
<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/>, PNB 2.210
(210) 458-4331



Tomás Rivera Center Graduate Student Learning Assistance: Academic support specifically for graduate students

MS 1.02.02 (Main Campus); DB 2.114 (Downtown Campus)
(210) 458-4694

UTSA Card Office: This is where you receive your UTSA ID Card.

<http://www.utsa.edu/auxiliary/utsacard.html>, MS 1.01.52

(210) 458-7275

Student Disability Services: Students needing accommodations must register with this office.

<http://www.utsa.edu/disability/>, MS 3.01.16

(210) 458-4157

Counseling Services: <http://www.utsa.edu/counsel/>

RWC 1.810 (Main Campus); BV 1.308 (Downtown Campus)

(210) 458-4140 (Main Campus); (210) 458-2930 (Downtown Campus)

Campus Recreation: Student gym, fitness classes, health assessments, etc.

<http://campusrec.utsa.edu>

Recreation Wellness Center (Main Campus); 3rd floor of Durango Building (Downtown Campus)

Student Health Services: Flu shots, various health screenings, nurse visits, health education

<http://www.utsa.edu/health/>, RWC 1.500 (Main Campus); BV 1.308 (Downtown Campus)

(210) 458-4142 (Main Campus); (210) 458-2930 (Downtown Campus)

Library

<http://lib.utsa.edu>

John Peace Library (Main Campus); Buena Vista Building (Downtown Campus)

(210) 458-7506 (Main Campus); (210) 458-2440 (Downtown Campus)

Judith G. Gardner Center for Writing Excellence: For writing-related services

<http://www.utsa.edu/twc/>

JPL 2.01.12D (Main Campus); FS 4.432 (Downtown Campus)

Veterans Certification Office: For students utilizing GI Bill or related services

<http://www.utsa.edu/va/>

MH 3.01.26 (Main Campus); FS 1.500 (Downtown Campus)

(210) 458-4540 (Main Campus); (210) 458-2077

Completing the Reading Specialist Program

Students seeking the Reading Specialist Certification must meet the following:

1. Have a Master's degree in a related field with appropriate coursework
2. Have at least two years teaching experience as a Teacher of Record in an accredited school
3. Meet all requirements of the Certification Office and take the appropriate coursework
4. Pass the Reading Specialist exam

Reading Specialist Certification Acquisition Process

1. Apply and be accepted to the Master of Arts in Reading and Literacy with free and clear admission.
2. Apply and be accepted to the Reading Specialist program. Students need to complete the Reading Specialist application and submit it to the Teacher Certification Office for admission. In addition, applicants must complete an interview for entry into the program. This process should be completed in the first or second semester of a student's program.
3. Take prescribed coursework toward the Reading Specialist focus area. Students who already hold a master's degree will follow a plan for non-degree seeking students provided to them by a faculty member.
4. In the final semester of coursework, register for, take, and pass the Literacy comprehensive experience built into LTED 6843.
5. After completing the final semester of coursework, submit an Eligibility Form from the UTSA TExES website and fax it to Michael Vriesenga, Director of the TExES Program, 210-458-5794, for Reading Specialist exam approval.
6. Register for the Reading Specialist examination through Educational Testing Systems (ETS).
7. Take the Reading Specialist examination through ETS.
8. Apply for the Reading Specialist Certificate using the College Recommendation application through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) after obtaining a Master's degree and after having passed the state Reading Specialist exam.
9. Submit a teaching service record to a Certification Officer at UTSA faxed to 210-458- 5410.
10. Check the TEA website for virtual certificate confirmation.

Information about the Reading Specialist Internship in Literacy (LTED 6943)

Students on the Reading Specialist track working toward certification with the State of Texas are required to enroll in the three-hour internship course. For students who are classroom teachers, these individually supervised internships can be conducted largely in their own classrooms. For students who are not currently teaching, appropriate placements will be identified by the instructors. Consent of the student's graduate advisor is required for enrollment.

Supervised Field Experiences

In the internship course, students will complete 160 hours of supervised field experiences. (Under extenuating circumstances more hours may be required.) During each internship, one 45-minute lesson must be observed by a university supervisor. Across the three internships, students must complete 10 hours teaching reading in the content areas; 10 hours of professional development with classroom reading teachers (or with content area teachers if you are working with them on disciplinary literacies), and 140 hours teaching ELAR.

Observations

All observations are conducted within a 45-minute timeframe. Depending on the candidate's status within the program, observations will be conducted in one of the following settings:

1. **Guided Reading** (Small Group);
2. **Whole-Class Content/ Disciplinary Literacy Lesson** (in a Content Area);
3. **Professional Development** (done in partnership with UTSA and selected campus on a designated day)

To ensure compliance with state requirements, a required pre and post-conference will be conducted along with maintaining proper documentation of addressing all standards by the candidate.

Guided Reading/Small Group

All candidates enrolled in LTED 6943 are required to prepare for a small group Guided Reading observation. All small group lessons are required to be submitted for a "Review and Approval" process in which the entire presentation, resources, and relevant materials are reviewed by the course instructor within a specified deadline. A Pre/Post Lesson Plan form is utilized for this process including a required pre-conference session documented via Zoom. Conferences may take the form of multiple sessions until the guided lesson has met all the required criteria.

Small-group lessons must be aligned to the Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals, evidence-based research, as well as the Texas Essential Knowledge of Skills.

In addition, small-group lessons must include components relevant to the pillars of literacy and a balanced literacy framework.

A required post-conference session documented via Zoom is also conducted after a small-group guided session is completed to reflect, adjust, and discuss Professional Standards addressed.

A Professional Standards Reflection Document is required to be completed by the candidate within this domain.

Whole-Class Content/ Disciplinary Literacy Lesson (in a Content Area)

All candidates enrolled in LTED 6943 are required to prepare for a Whole-Class Content/ Disciplinary Literacy Lesson observation. All whole-class lessons are required to be submitted for a "Review and Approval" process in which a complete lesson, resources, and relevant materials are reviewed by the course instructor within a specified deadline. A Pre/Post Lesson Plan form is utilized for this process including a



required pre-conference session documented via Zoom. Conferences may take the form of multiple sessions until the lesson has met all the required criteria.

Whole-Class lessons must be aligned to the Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals, evidence-based research, as well as the Texas Essential Knowledge of Skills.

A required post-conference session documented via Zoom is also conducted after a Whole-Class Content/Disciplinary Literacy Lesson has been observed to be able to reflect, adjust, and discuss Professional Standards addressed.

A Professional Standards Reflection Document is required to be completed by the candidate within this domain.

Professional Development

All candidates enrolled in LTED 6943 are required to provide a Professional Development session to other professional educators and leaders on the topics related to Literacy. All Professional Development sessions will be held in partnership at UTSA's La Plaza, or may take place at a specified campus through the arrangement of UTSA professors and campus administrators on a designated day.

All Professional Development sessions are required to be submitted for a "Review and Approval" process in which the entire presentation, resources, and relevant materials are reviewed by the course instructor within a specified deadline. A PPD (Pre/Post Professional Development) form is utilized for this process including a required pre-conference session documented via Zoom. Conferences may take the form of multiple sessions until the presentation has met all the required criteria.

Professional Development sessions must be aligned to the Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals (Standard 6), evidence-based research, as well as the Texas Essential Knowledge of Skills.

In addition, all Professional Development sessions must include components of engagement, hands-on activities, a take-away piece, and an open survey for participants to complete.

A required post-conference session documented via Zoom is also conducted after Professional Development sessions are completed to reflect, adjust, and discuss Professional Standards addressed.

A Professional Development Reflection Document is required to be completed by the candidate within this domain.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. I have been contacted by the Student Development Specialist. Are they my advisor?

No. Students are assigned faculty advisors when they are accepted into the program. The Student Development Specialist (SDS) is here to complement the advising done by faculty members. In addition to helping expedite the admissions process, the SDS helps students complete paperwork, schedule and facilitate new student orientation, recruit, coordinate the comprehensive exams, and generally handle student issues. Their job is to help students through all stages of their degrees to ensure that they are on track and stay on top of their requirements. They can help with MOST issues or can at least point students in the right direction.

2. I was admitted with the requirement to take background courses. What does this mean?

Background courses are meant for students who did not complete the required 18 hours of coursework in education before applying to our MA in Education program. These courses are meant to give you a strong foundation in education before delving into graduate-level work. Students who are assigned background courses should take these courses as soon as possible. Once you complete your background courses, contact the SDS so they can complete the form entitled, "Removal of Admissions Conditions" showing that you did complete the assigned courses.

These courses are admissions condition, and students who do not satisfy this condition before graduation will NOT be allowed to graduate.

3. How do I find out who my faculty advisor is? When should I get advised?

The name of your faculty advisor is listed on the Dean's Condition Sheet that is sent out with your acceptance letter. If you've misplaced this, you can email or call the SDS, and they will inform you. Students are advised to at least check in with their faculty advisor periodically through their program to make sure that they are on track.

4. I want to transfer credits from another university. How do I do that?

Students are allowed to transfer in **up to 12 hours** of graduate-level coursework from another university. The first step is to meet with your faculty advisor to decide whether courses from outside universities are acceptable and where they fit into your degree plan. Afterwards, contact the SDS for a list of items that you will need to collect for the petition. The following items may be required: a letter from the student stating the reason for requesting the transfer, a letter of support from the student's advisor, course syllabi, course descriptions, a transcript from the institution reflecting the course term and grade awarded, and any other supporting documents from the course. For more information on transferring coursework, consult the Graduate Catalog.

5. **What is a Special Graduate Student?**

The Graduate Catalog states a Special Graduate Student is, “A student who is admitted to UTSA for the purpose of enrolling in graduate and/or undergraduate courses in one or more colleges of the University without entering a degree program.”

For some students, the SDS may have suggested applying as a Special Graduate Student if they did not meet the GPA requirements for the MA program. In this case, students may begin taking graduate level work to help them raise their GPAs. The coursework Special Graduate Students complete can be applied to their Master’s degrees once their GPA is raised to the required level. **However, no more than 12 hours of coursework** as a Special Graduate Student may be applied to the Master’s degree.

Therefore, it is important for students to remain aware of how many hours they have completed so they do not lose hours.

6. **I was admitted as a Special Graduate Student and am ready to switch over to “Graduate Degree-Seeking.” How do I do that?**

You will need to fill out a new application and pay another application fee to change to degree-seeking. The Graduate School will complete your paperwork and recalculate your GPA. The packet is then sent to the department for review.

7. **How do I change my degree?**

The ILT Department offers 5 M.A. options: Education/Instructional Technology, Curriculum and Instruction, Special Education, Literacy Education, and Early Childhood and Elementary Education. Students who want to change their degree are encouraged to contact a professor within the area they want to switch to or their advisor **BEFORE** making the change to ensure that the change is a good decision for them. Keep in mind that certain concentrations have set degree plans and not all programs allow for electives; therefore, students may not be able to automatically apply courses from one program to another. To change your degree, you have to reapply to the program you want to switch to and pay a new application fee.

8. **Can I change from an M.A. in the ILT department to another degree program?**

Yes, but admission to one program does not guarantee admission into another program at UTSA. You should research the other program carefully to ensure you meet all of the admissions requirements. Students are strongly encouraged to consult their advisors and to contact a professor in the concentration/degree program they are interested in switching to **BEFORE** they make the switch. To change your major, you will have to complete a new application and pay a new application fee.

9. **Where do I find out about financial aid?**

Students who are interested in finding out more about financial aid should make an appointment with the Financial Aid office on campus. More information about filling out the FAFSA, grants, loans, etc., can be found at <http://www.utsa.edu/financialaid>. Remember that UTSA is the only institution that sets aside grant money for graduate students, and there are opportunities for free money. The best advice we can give you is to do your research and apply early. The priority deadline is March 1.

10. **When do I take my comprehensive exam?**

Students are required to take and pass a comprehensive experience to graduate. The experience typically occurs the semester a student is scheduled to graduate or within the last 12 hours of coursework. Students should talk to their advisors about what their program's comprehensive format is and when it is available for them to complete. Students who are writing a thesis do not take the comprehensive experience. Instead, the defense of their thesis is used as their comprehensive experience.

11. I want to write a thesis. What's the first step?

First, you should consider the thesis option as early on in your program as possible (within the first 18 hours, if not sooner). The first step to writing a thesis is to meet with your faculty advisor to decide if a thesis option is right for you. Before approaching faculty members to be part of a thesis committee, a student should have a clear idea of a thesis topic, some preliminary research done, and an idea of a methodology. Having a research proposal in hand is important. Writing a thesis is not an option that should be taken lightly, and students should have some solid ideas in mind BEFORE enrolling in thesis hours. For more information on the paperwork, please see your thesis advisor or the Student Development Specialist.

Students who complete a thesis must also be enrolled in a thesis course each semester they are working on their thesis. Only 6 hours of these classes can be counted toward a program of study.

12. What if I need to take a semester off?

If you are a newly admitted student, you have up to one calendar year to enroll in a graduate-level course to maintain your active status with the university (i.e., if you were admitted for the Fall 2024 semester, you have until the Summer of 2025 to take a course). If you inactivate, you will have to reapply to the university.

Students who have already taken graduate-level courses may sit out for up to two years without inactivating. Keep in mind that you have six years to complete the degree before courses expire. However, there is flexibility for students who have to take time off due to unforeseen circumstances.

