

Student Handbook

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McNeese
STATE UNIVERSITY™
Lake Charles, Louisiana

Department of Psychology
McNeese State University

Master of Arts Degree with a Concentration in
Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
(On-campus and Online-only)

Post-Master's Certificate in ABA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Program Mission	3
Program Objectives	3
Admission Requirements and Deadlines	3
Graduate Assistantships.....	4
ABA Faculty	4
Course Sequences	5
Course Descriptions.....	7
Applied Experiences.....	9
Thesis Equivalent Project	10
Exit Examination.....	10
Academic Expectations and Quality of Work Standards	11
Links to University Policies	11
Frequently Asked Questions.....	12

Applied Behavior Analysis at McNeese State University

The goal of the Applied Behavior Analysis Program (ABA) at McNeese State University is to provide students with a well-rounded, educational experience that provides a firm foundation in behavior analysis through an integrated sequence of coursework and practica.

Students complete a rigorous sequence of coursework related to the basic principles of learning and the applications of those principles to social relevant issues. Practica experiences are provided in order to shape the clinical-skill sets of our students related to the application of behavior analytic principles to individuals with developmental disabilities attending the McNeese Autism Program. Additionally, all students are required to pass an exit exam and complete a publication quality, empirical research project prior to graduation.

The on-campus program, here at MSU, is accredited by the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) ®, while our online-only program is not. Both of these programs and our Post-Master's Certificate program include a verified course sequence (VCS) and practica experiences approved by ABAI ®. Following successful completion of any of the three programs, students are immediately eligible to submit their application materials to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) ® exam due to the VCS approval which is active in the 5th Edition Task List.

Program Objectives

First and foremost, we strive to provide our students with a well-rounded educational experience that provides them with a firm foundation in behavior analysis.

To accomplish this, we:

- 1) Ensure that all courses are taught by professors who are approved as VCS instructors by ABAI.
- 2) Ensure that our course requirements and content are aligned with the most recent BACB task list, as well as those specified by the BACB and ABAI ®.
- 3) Require stringent mastery criteria (i.e., B or above) for coursework, practica, exit examinations, and thesis project (and formal, oral proposal and defense meetings for on-campus students only).
- 4) Ensure supervision of the practica experiences meets the standards set forth by the BACB and ABAI ®.

Admission Requirements and Deadlines

Students are accepted into the ABA program each semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer). Application materials, which include a copy of your undergraduate transcript and GRE scores should be submitted to the William J. Dore' School of Graduate Studies online via their

website at <http://www.mcneese.edu/dore> and deadlines vary based on semester of application. See website for more details.

Undergraduate GPA requirement is 2.5 or higher.

Combined verbal and quantitative GRE scores must total 285 or higher.

Graduate Assistantships

Our on campus ABAI accredited program offers opportunities for merit-based applications for graduate assistantships (GAs) for ABA graduate students in the 5-parish area who have a site placement contract with the McNeese Autism Program (MAP). Applications are reviewed by ABA Faculty and MAP Clinical Staff. Typically, our GAs are given the opportunity to accrue paid hours at MAP.

Graduate Assistantships for Pay: Graduate Assistantships include a job description along with duties associated with the assistantship. GA roles and responsibilities at MAP are similar to those required during the 5-course internship; however, GAs also receive a stipend based on the number of paid hours earned per month along with a 50% partial tuition reduction for in-state graduate students or a 100% waiver of out-of-state tuition for non-Louisiana residents. Historically, over 80% of ABA graduate students have the opportunity to serve as GAs during their first year in the program. For more information regarding this opportunity, please reach out to our On-Campus Program Coordinator.

Internships for Course Credit: The 5-course Internship on the other hand has training and supervised experience as the focus even though the activities undertaken in the internship may overlap and be similar to activities in the Graduate Assistantship (e.g., in-session activities) the supervision, direction, and professional development commitment are different.

Our online-only program is not accredited by ABAI. Students in this program typically seek employment in ABA agencies that allow them to accrue requisite supervised hours. These agencies are approved by McNeese ABA Faculty and agency agreements and site-supervision agreements are in place for all student interns. If you are unable to secure immediate employment, you have the flexibility to postpone the start of your internship sequence.

ABA Faculty

Cam L. Melville, Ph.D. – Program Coordinator

Dr. Melville is a full-time professor at McNeese State University, who teaches online and face-to-face courses in the ABA program. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from the University of Idaho and his Master of Science and Ph.D. in Psychology with a specialization in Behavior Analysis from Washington State University. He currently serves as the Coordinator of Psychology Graduate Programs, Director of the MSU Project for the Treatment of Problem Gambling, Academic Coordinator for the CIT training, and faculty advisor to the McNeese Autism Program. His

research interests include animal models of addictions, addictions treatment, basic processes of behavior change. He teaches courses in Principles of Learning and Behavior, Advanced Topics in Behavior Analysis, Laboratory in Behavior Analysis, Addictive Behaviors, and Integrated Treatment for Co-Occurring Disorders, and History & Systems of Psychology. Dr. Melville is a member of the American Psychological Association and the Association for Behavior Analysis International.

Joanna B. Thompson Ph.D., BCBA-D – VCS Coordinator

Dr. Thompson is a full-time Assistant Professor at McNeese State University, who teaches online and face-to-face courses in the ABA program. She earned her Bachelor's and her first Master's Degree in Psychology with a dual concentration in Experimental Psychology and Applied Behavior Analysis from McNeese State University. She then worked on an additional Master of Science Degree in Experimental Psychology from Texas Christian University before earning her Doctoral Degree in Experimental Psychology under the advisement of Dr. Mauricio R. Papini. She has been a Board Certified Behavior Analyst since 2015. Her clinical experience includes early intensive behavioral intervention, verbal behavior, self-injurious behavior, and working with adolescents. Additionally, her scope of competence includes pediatric feeding behaviors. She currently serves as a signatory council member of the Texas Association for Behavior Analysis Pediatric Feeding Disorder's Special Interest Group Representative. Dr. Thompson is a Behavioral Neuroscientist who studies the neurobiological basis of addictive behavior as it relates to reward. More specifically, her research interests include, but are not limited to: identifying the precursors to addiction—before the behavior becomes habitual; understanding the behavioral and brain processes that underly the initiation into substance use, abuse, and other addictive behaviors; and pharmacological manipulations involving alcohol, benzodiazepine anxiolytics, cannabinoids, and opioids, and medication acceptance as it relates to feeding. She currently serves as the principal investigator of the Thompson Animal Laboratory and as the Faculty Advisor for the Student Association for Methods in Behavior Analysis (SAMBA).

Course Sequences

Students in the terminal degree program complete 24 credit hours of core psychology classes and 34 credit hours of ABA concentration classes for a total of 58 credit hours in addition to any prerequisite courses required upon admission into the program. Students work closely with ABA faculty to complete publication quality research as part of their course sequence. At least one-half of the total number of credit hours required for a graduate degree, excluding credit for thesis, must be at the 600-level. Credits applied must be earned within 6 calendar years from the time the student first enrolled in the program.

Students who live within the 5-parish area will be assigned a site-placement on-campus at the McNeese Autism Program.

Students who live outside of the 5-parish area will seek a site-placement at an ABA agency and gain ABA Faculty approval prior to initiating hours accrual at that site placement.

Campus and Online Course Sequence

The exact order in which courses are taken will be clearly outlined by your academic advisor upon admission. Median time to completion is 2.5 years.

Fall 1

- PSYC 603 - Principles of Learning and Behavior
- PSYC 605 – Practicum in ABA (1 credit hour)
- PSYC 620 – Single-Subject Methodology [PART 1 of 3 in Research Sequence]
- PSYC 647 – Intro to ABA
- PSYC 660 – ABA Internship I

Spring 1

- PSYC 612 – Conceptual Foundations of Behavior Analysis
- PSYC 617 – Behavioral Assessment
- PSYC 627 – Applied Research Methods in ABA [PART 2 of 3 in Research Sequence]
- PSYC 661 – ABA Internship II

Summer 1

- PSYC 625 – Ethics for Behavior Analysts
- PSYC 639 – Human Growth and Development
- PSYC 662 – ABA Internship III
- PSYC 699 – Thesis [PART 3 of 3 in Research Sequence]

Fall 2

- PSYC 600 – Advanced Topics in Behavior Analysis
- PSYC 615 – Verbal Behavior
- PSYC 658 – Experimental Analysis of Behavior
- PSYC 663 – ABA Internship IV

Spring 2

- PSYC 628 – Applied Behavior Analysis Interventions
- PSYC 684 – Professional Standards for Behavior Analysts
- PSYC 664 – ABA Internship V

Course availability depends on which semester you start in (i.e., Fall, Spring, or Summer). Course descriptions can be found below.

Post-Master's Certificate Program Course Sequence

Formerly known as our Graduate Certificate program, each student in the Post-Master's Certificate program must provide an unofficial transcript which specifies the degree he/she has obtained to the Admissions Office and his/her academic advisor. All previous master's degrees must be in a discipline currently recognized by the BACB. Students in the Post-Master's Certificate program complete 39 credit hours, plus any required prerequisites outlined by your academic advisor upon admission.

Fall 1	Spring 1	Summer 1	Fall 2	Spring 2
PSYC 603 – Principles of Learning	PSYC 617 – Behavioral Assessment	PSYC 625 – Ethics for Behavior Analysts	PSYC 615 – Verbal Behavior	PSYC 684 – Professional Standards for BA
PSYC 647 – Introduction to ABA	PSYC 628 – ABA Interventions	PSYC 662 – ABA Internship III	PSYC 620 – Single-Subject Methodology	PSYC 664 – ABA Internship V
PSYC 660 – ABA Internship I	PSYC 661 – ABA Internship II		PSYC 663 – ABA Internship IV	

Course Descriptions

PSYC 600 - Advanced Topics in Behavior Analysis

An examination of current research in applied behavior analysis, experimental evaluation of interventions.

PSYC 603 - Principles of Learning

Analysis of the major theories and research results relevant to learning, an examination of the basic principles of respondent and operant learning in the context of behavior change. Basic and applied research will be considered.

PSYC 605 - Practicum in ABA – *1 credit hour*

Initial supervised experience in the practice of applied behavior analysis. Students will participate in introductory clinical training and conduct direct observations of behavior under supervision.

PSYC 612 - Conceptual Foundations of Behavior Analysis

An examination of the conceptual, philosophical, and theoretical foundations of modern behavior analysis.

PSYC 615 - Verbal Behavior

Course introduces the student to a natural science/operant conditioning/behavior analytic approach to verbal behavior and language. Consideration to include the historical

foundations as and current applications to teaching language to learners with developmental disabilities

PSYC 617 - Behavioral Assessment

This course provides information on the general principles of psychological measurement and behavioral assessment including validity, reliability, correlation techniques, errors of measurement. Item analysis, test weights, scaling procedures, development and use of norms. Indirect, direct, and functional analysis of behavior, treatment integrity. Discussion of various psychological and educational instruments.

PSYC 620 - Single-Subject Methodology – Part 1 of 3 | Research

This course is the first of the three core research requirements for graduate students in the ABA program. The research proposal will include a thorough review of the relevant literature, experimental methodology that corresponds to the research question, expected results, and references, as well as submit an application based on the proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) if applicable to your research. An overview of strategies and tactics of experimental design in behavior analysis. Includes strengths and weaknesses of single organism methodology in basic and applied research. Topics include issues of experimental logic, experimental control, selecting and measuring target behaviors, assessing reliability and social validity, variability, graphing data, data analysis and display, interpretation of experimental findings, and program monitoring and evaluation. The complement to this course is PSYC 627.

PSYC 625 - Ethics for Behavior Analysts

This course is designed to provide students with knowledge pertaining to the ethical and legal concerns of behavior analysts as they apply to various professional activities and settings.

PSYC 627 – Applied Research Methods in ABA – Part 2 of 3 | Research

This course is the second of the three core research requirements for graduate students in the ABA program. It will focus on the application of a single-subject research project. Students will develop and write a proposal whose format is consistent with the Style Manual of the American Psychological Association. The complement to this course is PSYC 699 – Thesis. Your Thesis Chair remains the same throughout both courses. Requirements differ slightly for on-campus vs. online-only students.

PSYC 628 – ABA Interventions

This course is designed to give students an overview of applied behavior analytic interventions conducted with various populations and implemented across different settings. More specifically, this course will focus on ABA interventions for individuals with autism, traumatic brain injury, and dementia, as well as, interventions for typically developing individuals in the home, school, and workplace.

PSYC 639 - Human Growth & Development

Comprehensive course dealing with the characteristics of normal growth and development throughout the life cycle. Emphasis is placed upon the respective roles of maturation and learning. Consideration is given to emotional, social, mental, and physical development.

PSYC 647 - Introduction to ABA

This course is design to provide a foundation for beginning graduate students in the experimentally derived principles of Applied Behavior Analysis.

PSYC 658 - Experimental Analysis of Behavior

Introduction to the basic assumptions, techniques, practices, and findings associated with the experimental analysis of behavior.

PSYC 684 – Professional Standards for Behavior Analysts

Designed to teach students of applied behavior analysis about the use of behavioral principles as they pertain to professional development as well as the supervision of supervisees and staff. Topics covered will include: defining clear objectives, risks involved with ineffective supervision, the use of assessment tools for supervisees, feedback delivery, reinforcement, the use of other behavior analytic concepts and principles to train supervisees, and how to evaluate the effects of supervision.

PSYC 660 – ABA Internship I

This course is part of a five-course sequence conducted over five academic terms. During these courses, students will obtain the required supervised experience hours to sit for the certification exam for behavior analysts.

Students in the five-course internship sequence will work semi-independently with both an onsite (BCBA) and university supervisor providing a minimum of two hours of supervision per week. Failure to achieve the required clock hours over the semester will result in a NCE grade; student must enroll for second term.

PSYC 661 – ABA Internship II

See description for PSYC 660.

PSYC 662– ABA Internship III

See description for PSYC 660.

PSYC 663– ABA Internship IV

See description for PSYC 660.

PSYC 664 – ABA Internship V

See description for PSYC 660.

PSYC 699 – Thesis – Part 3 of 3 | Research

Student must register for the thesis course during each regular semester the thesis is in progress. A minimum of 3 credit hours must be accrued. Student must be enrolled in Thesis the semester the thesis is completed and for face-to-face students, the formal, oral proposal and defense meetings with accompanying document are approved by the permanent 3-member committee. Binding requirements exist within the University, and formatting differs from APA Format 7th Edition.

Applied Experiences

Students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with professional ethical standards. Students will be discussing sensitive material at the site and university supervision meetings. The rules of confidentiality apply to the content discussed in these meetings.

Students complete five practica experiences (PSYC 660, 661, PSYC 662, PSYC 663, and PSYC 664). These practica are offered through the McNeese Autism Program for on-campus students and are supervised by licensed Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs). See McNeese Autism Program Handbook for more information related to policies and procedures involved with the practica. For online students, supervision is provided by an approved BCBA near your location. Contracts must be in place prior to the inception of supervision.

Thesis Equivalent Project

The Thesis project involving is *mandatory* for MA in ABA majors, but *not* mandatory for students enrolled in the Post-Master's Certificate program. The Thesis requires a 3 member committee of full-time graduate faculty and involves a formal proposal meeting and oral defense meeting. There is a written product in the thesis project. Rather than the traditional chapter format, the completed thesis for the MA-ABA program should be written in the form of a peer-reviewed journal submission ready manuscript. Binding in accordance with McNeese State University Dore School of Graduate Studies guidelines is also required, and this formatting is separate to APA Format 7th edition. Your Thesis Chair will provide you with these details.

For students enrolled in the Online-Only MA program, no formal, oral defense meetings are required though all Dore School binding guidelines are required.

Comprehensive Exit Examination

Purpose: To prepare our students for their credentialing exam as future Board Certified Behavior Analysts® from their first semester in the program through a series of two Mock Exams (first semester, second semester) and a final, comprehensive exit examination.

Repeated contact with content provides spaced, rather than massed practice.

The exit exam is a standardized mock exam designed to prepare the students for the subject matter and format of the BACB credentialing exam. Students typically sit for this exam during their Internship V semester (usually the semester in which they are graduating), unless otherwise advised by their faculty advisor.

There are 160 questions on the test across various topics outlined on the BCBA 5th Edition Task List. The exam is timed– maximum time allowed on the exam is 4 hours.

The passing score for the Exit Exam is 70%. If a student fails the test, he or she sits for a new mock exam administered by BAS testing service in the following academic semester which covers the 5th Edition Task List. The passing score for that second exam is also 70% correct.

Academic Expectations and Quality of Work Standards

A 3.0 average (on a 4.0) scale must be maintained in all graduate work taken as a part of the degree program. No grade below C and not more than 6 credit hours (equivalent to 2 courses) of C work can be applied toward the degree. Only transfer credits with a grade of B or better may be applied toward the degree.

A grade of “Pass” must be earned on the Thesis requirement to earn credit towards the terminal degree. All BACB Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for Behavior Analysts, American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles, McNeese State University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee if applicable) requirements must be followed.

University Policies

Persons needing academic adjustments, accommodations, or reasonable accommodations as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as Amended, should contact Tim Delaney, Director of Services for Students with Disabilities, Drew Hall, Room 200, (337) 475-5916; TDD/TTY, hearing impaired (337) 562-4227 or ssd@mcneese.edu or tdelaney@mcneese.edu. Tim Delaney is the contact person for academic adjustments for students and student concerns.

Students should visit the MSU web page at <http://www.mcneese.edu/policy/diversity-awareness> for information about diversity awareness and sexual harassment policies and procedures.

Students should visit the MSU web page at <http://www.mcneese.edu/policy/academic-integrity-policy> for a detailed explanation of the University Academic Integrity Policy.

Students should visit the MSU web page at <http://www.mcneese.edu/policy/student-class-attendance-regulations-policy> for a detailed explanation of the University Attendance Policy.

Students should visit the MSU web page at <http://www.mcneese.edu/policy/student-rights-and-responsibilities> for a detailed explanation of student rights and responsibilities.
Attendance Policy

Students should visit the Write to Excellence Center, located in Drew Hall, Room 234, for individual and group tutoring for writing assignments of any kind. Appointments can be made at mcneese.mywconline.com. You may also visit without an appointment, or call 562-4205 or 4206. Center hours for 2015-2016 are Mon-Thurs., 9am to 4:30pm, and Fridays, 9am to 12pm.

MSU Official Policies Regarding COVID-19:

Below are links to helpful University resources regarding COVID-19, current campus status, and all current campus guidelines. These links are updated frequently by the University's administration—not by your instructors, and are provided as a resource. We recommend that you review these pages carefully and familiarize yourself with the University's safe, social-

distancing policies if any of your courses meet face-to-face. Please follow all CDC, State, and regional guidelines in addition to all MAP policies.

<https://www.mcneese.edu/emergency/return-to-campus>
<https://www.mcneese.edu/emergency/coronavirus-covid-19/>
<https://www.mcneese.edu/emergency/coronavirus-covid-19/resources/>

Campus Police - 337-475-5711 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

While some classes have moved online due to COVID-19 or Hurricane Damage, many on-campus student services and resources remain open. Every effort is being made to ensure cleanliness and encourage social distancing at these locations.

COVID-19: The University's policies and protocols for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic are focused on maintaining a safe and healthy campus environment. The plans align with federal, state and local guidelines.

Safety requirements include:

- good hygiene, including frequent hand-washing,
- maintaining 6-foot social distancing and
- wearing a face mask or covering inside all campus buildings and
- wearing a face mask or covering in any area where social distancing is not feasible.

The University expects all employees and students to comply with these protocols. Failure to comply with these safety requirements can result in disciplinary action and students may be removed from class and redirected to online instruction.

Technology Policy: While McNeese strives to provide access to computer labs and other technology, it is the student's responsibility to ensure adequate access to the technology required for a course. This may include access to a computer (not Chromebooks, iPads, etc.), webcam, internet, adequate bandwidth, etc. This requirement is a standard expectation for all courses regardless of initial course delivery format.

Course Delivery Format: For courses initially being delivered in a face-to-face or hybrid format, the instructor may modify the course delivery method to ensure safety and to respond to constraints that may continue to change throughout the term. Courses beginning in a fully online format will remain online throughout the term.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What should I do if I'm interested in applying to your program?

A: The first step is to apply to the Dore School of Graduate Studies. The application will request that you submit your undergraduate transcripts with a minimum GPA of 2.5 and your GRE combined (Verbal + Quantitative) score of at least 285.

Q: When is the application deadline?

A: There is no application deadline. Once the Graduate School has your completed application you will be notified of the admission's decision. The sooner you apply the better.

Q: Could I get some form of financial assistance as a graduate student in your program?

A: Successful applicants are admitted to the Graduate School, at which point prospective graduate student may apply for a merit based Graduate Assistantship via the Department of Psychology at the McNeese Autism Program (<http://www.mcneese.edu/autism>). Graduate Assistantships provide a monthly stipend along with a tuition reduction to eligible students enrolled in either the on-campus or online-only program who have a site placement contract with the McNeese Autism Program. This is true even you will be taking courses online, but as long as you can come to campus to work at the McNeese Autism Program. In fact, if you live in or close to Lake Charles (within the 5-parish area), you will be required to complete your internship at the McNeese Autism Program even if you are an online student otherwise. The paid GA positions are unavailable for students with off-site internship placements.

Q: Where can I complete my internship if I cannot commute to campus?

A: If you live further away from the 5-parish area, you will be able to complete your internship (accruing fieldwork hours toward BACB certification eligibility) at an ABA institute of your choosing, as long as the BCBA's there are able to supervise you and the appropriate supervision contracts are in place. These must be approved by ABA faculty. Please note that only our on-campus program is accredited by ABAI. The online-only MA program is not currently accredited by ABAI.

Q: Are there any undergraduate prerequisite courses that I need to take?

A: Only if you are pursuing the Master's degree (as opposed to the Graduate Certificate) and have not completed your Bachelor's in Psychology. In that case, the undergraduate prerequisites include the following courses: Social Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Experimental Methods, Statistics, and any 3 additional psychology electives.

Q: Can you tell me about tuition and fees?

A: The Admissions Office would be able to offer you current information about tuition and fees. <https://www.mcneese.edu/admissions/>

Q: How much will my monthly stipend be if I earn a GA position?

A: The monthly stipend depends on the number of hours you accrue per month and is capped at 20 hours per week due to University payroll restrictions. Your tuition exemption of 50% is standard across the board.