



Feedback Form

For Additional Qualification Course Guidelines

Schedule D

Special Education, Part 1, Part 2 and Specialist

What is your overall opinion of this additional qualification course guideline?

There are many good points that have been added to the original documents, but the approach still is quite generic. Special educators need to have a good knowledge of all the exceptionalities, and particularly of students with learning disabilities, who are the largest exceptionality and make up almost half of students with special education needs.

There should be a requirement for Part 2 and Specialist that at least one of the AQ courses on the individual exceptionalities be completed. Since all special educators will be dealing with students with learning disabilities, the Learning Disability AQ course would be a very important course to take.

Overall learning expectations for candidates:

There are three key concepts, described variously at each level, that are very important:

- *theoretical understanding necessary to implement and assess programs and/or practices related to Special Education*
- *critical examination of qualitative and quantitative research related to special education*
- *acquiring additional and relevant knowledge regarding all exceptionalities*

These three concepts are related. Implementing and assessing programs and/or practices related to special education must be based on a body of research results. Special educators need to understand how to critically examine qualitative and quantitative research, but also to make use of research summaries and meta-analyses of a broad range of educational research.

In addition, it is not enough to look at research on special education in general. Research-based practice is not necessarily the same for all exceptionalities, so special educators need to have specific knowledge of each exceptionality and of the research-based programs and/or practices that are appropriate to each.

Collaboration with in-school personnel, parents/guardians and community are very important and it is good to see this promoted. Special educators need to be familiar with the positive problem-solving approaches to potential conflicts that are outlined in *Shared Solutions* (2007).

Course Content

Theoretical Foundations

The point about *understanding, working with and critically analysing the various categories and definitions of exceptionalities* needs to be expanded. Special educators need to know how to recognize manifestations of the various exceptionalities in the classroom, and understand what instructional approaches and accommodations have been demonstrated by research to be effective. Exceptionalities such as learning disabilities are very complex so a simple overview is not sufficient.

Special educators need to be aware of the differences in recognizing and programming for students with special education needs at different stages of their academic careers, from kindergarten through high school.

Program Planning, Development and Implementation

For effective development of IEP and program planning, special educators **must** understand how to use professional assessment reports and recommendations. This understanding is extremely important, and definitely should be included in the list of competencies to be developed at different levels of the Special Education AQs.

Understanding and applying differentiated instruction and universal design in program planning, development and implementation are important, but these concepts apply to all students and are **necessary but not sufficient** for many students with exceptionalities.

It is important that special educators understand that most students with learning disabilities will need **individualized, intensive instruction** based on what research shows is effective, not just differentiated instruction.

Special educators must become familiar with ways of building self-esteem and confidence in their students, and teaching students self-advocacy skills.

Special educators need to be aware of a range of placement options for special education, including Provincial and Demonstration Schools.

Additional comments

All educators need to be knowledgeable about teaching students with special education needs in their classrooms. Since there is no consistent requirement for special education courses in pre-service, all regular classroom teachers should be encouraged to take Special Education

Part 1. Special Education Part 2 could then provide more detail for teachers who will be working with special education students in resource rooms or self-contained classes, and Part 2 should be a requirement for all special education teachers.

The Special Education Specialist course is really a special education leader/supervisor course. Another option should be available for teachers to specialize in one or two exceptionalities and be a Specialist.

As mentioned earlier, special educators taking Part 2 and Specialist should be required to complete at least one AQ course on an individual exceptionality.

The Experiential Learning component should include an opportunity to interview students and their families, to gain perspective on the student and family experience.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback.

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