



## GRADUATE STUDIES FACT SHEET

### CERTIFICATE OF SPECIALIZATION IN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

#### MISSION OF THE PROGRAM

This program is to provide professionals, parents, and other members of the community access to empirically validated educational approaches for teaching persons with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), strategies for implementing these approaches, and methods to assess their effectiveness, i.e., the effect of education/treatment on the person's quality of life.

#### THE PROGRAM

The autism certificate program is based on the following assumptions:

- People with ASD and their families have a wide range of disability-specific strengths and needs.
- Professionals who specialize in the treatment of individuals with ASD must understand the ASD profile, its history, and the challenges faced by families of individuals with ASD.
- Professionals who support individuals with ASD must collaborate with each other.
- Specialization in autism requires course work, guided observation, and supervised clinical practicum.
- Assessment and intervention must be based on evidence-based practices.

#### THE CURRICULUM

The program offers career enhancement for professionals currently working with individuals with ASD. Community professionals will enhance their abilities to serve clientele who have autism and their families. The program can serve as a stepping stone for individual students seeking graduate degrees in service areas including speech and hearing science,

psychology, education, physical education, social work, and medical fields. Many graduates are seeking careers in service-related positions in Pennsylvania and the surrounding states. Graduates in this program are fortunate to have numerous opportunities that satisfy their primary goal of supporting the needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorders and their families. In addition, courses can be used as Act 48 credits for curriculum for Pennsylvania certified teachers.

This program is interdisciplinary with three colleges within WCU participating:

1. College of Arts and Sciences
  - Department of Psychology
2. College of Education
  - Department of Early Childhood and Special Education
3. College of Health Sciences
  - Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
  - Department of Kinesiology

#### PROGRAM OFFERED

Due to course sequencing, summer admission is required for this 18-semester-hour certificate program (six courses).

#### Required courses

- EDA 503 Family Systems in Special Education: Field and Seminar (a 42-hour field experience with a family living with an individual with autism)
- EDA 520 Introduction to Autism: Understanding Autism and the Interdisciplinary Process (taught by faculty from all five disciplines as recommended by National Research Council 2001 Report)
- EDA 530 Teaching Children with

Autism (detailing educational settings and interventions)

- KIN 587 Contemporary Issues in Adapted Physical Activity: Students in the Autistic Spectrum (dedicated to adapting physical education needs and recreational programs)
- PSY 521 Issues in Autism: Diagnosis and Behavioral Treatments (dedicated to validated assessment and treatment)
- SPP 565 Communicative Enhancement for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (detailing communicative interventions and strategies)

#### ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Candidates should have the following qualifications:

1. Applicants must have a baccalaureate degree from a college or university accredited in the United States or its equivalent from a school in another country.
2. West Chester University is phasing in new GPA requirements. A minimum 3.0 undergraduate GPA will be required.
3. If GPA is below the minimum required University GPA of 3.0, scores from either the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) general test or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT), with a score at the 50th percentile are required.

Students should apply online at [www.wcupa.edu/grad/](http://www.wcupa.edu/grad/).

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Write: Office of Graduate Studies and Extended Education  
McKelvie Hall

102 West Rosedale Avenue  
West Chester University  
West Chester, PA 19383

Call: 610-436-2943  
Fax: 610-436-2763  
E-mail: [gradstudy@wcupa.edu](mailto:gradstudy@wcupa.edu)  
Web: [www.wcupa.edu/grad](http://www.wcupa.edu/grad)  
Visit: [www.facebook.com/wcugrad](http://www.facebook.com/wcugrad)

*Or contact the department:*

Write: Dr. Vicki McGinley, Graduate  
Coordinator  
Department of Special Education  
305-B Recitation Hall  
West Chester University  
West Chester, PA 19383

Call: 610-436-2579  
Web: [www.wcupa.edu/\\_academics/coed/WCUcertificateofAutismSpectrumDisorders.asp](http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/coed/WCUcertificateofAutismSpectrumDisorders.asp)

The Graduate Catalog is available online at [www.wcupa.edu/\\_information/officialdocuments/graduate.catalog/](http://www.wcupa.edu/_information/officialdocuments/graduate.catalog/).

## ABOUT GRADUATE STUDIES

West Chester University offers high-quality graduate degrees in more than 70 disciplines

or areas of study, as well as certificate and certification programs. The graduate studies program has grown remarkably since its introduction in 1960. West Chester University's program is the largest within the 14 institutions in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education enrolling more than 2,100 graduate students.

Programs can be taken on a part-time basis, and most of the graduate classes are scheduled during late afternoons and evenings for the benefit of in-service teachers and other employed persons.

## ABOUT WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

A regional, public institution, West Chester University of Pennsylvania offers high-quality undergraduate and graduate degrees, as well as certification and certificate programs, in more than 100 subject areas. As the second largest member of the State System of Higher Education, West Chester offers a full and rewarding educational experience as well as reasonable tuition.

With a rich heritage dating back to the 19th century, West Chester University was founded in 1871 as West Chester Normal School for the purpose of training teachers

for the Commonwealth's newly established public schools. In 1960, West Chester State Teachers College expanded its programs to include liberal arts and graduate degrees and, as a result, dropped "Teachers" from its name. In 1983, West Chester State College became one of the 14 institutions in the State System of Higher Education. Along with its university status, the school acquired a new system of governance and the opportunity to expand its degree programs.

Today, more than 15,400 graduate and undergraduate students, as well as 1,500 faculty and staff, study and work on the 406-acre campus. Situated in the Borough of West Chester, the campus is a picturesque mix of Gothic, Victorian, and modern architecture with pleasant, tree-shaded walks.

Strategically located at the center of the mid-Atlantic corridor, West Chester University is just 25 miles west of Philadelphia and 17 miles north of Wilmington, Del. The campus is convenient to major cultural institutions, recreational activities, and commercial businesses, many of which provide internship opportunities for WCU's students.

