Description
This Course of Study presents the required sequence of learning steps and activities to help you to complete your MS SPED Capstone Written Project/Practicum I in fulfillment of CAPS on your AAP template. Your competence will be assessed as you complete a research-based Capstone as well as specific supervised activities in order to meet the minimum 45-hour Practicum requirement.

The time commitment for both the Capstone and the Practicum is extensive and requires significant advanced planning. The required activities outlined in this Course of Study include successful completion of the research-based Capstone project as well as documentation of a total of 45 hours representing a combination of instructional planning, interviewing of key individuals, face-to-face supervised teaching, and related professional development activities. The in-classroom activities will occur in special education classrooms such as resource rooms, inclusive or self-contained classrooms at both the elementary (grades 1-6) and secondary (grades 7-8) levels. Depending on the individual situation, some students may find it challenging to schedule the five in-classroom activities. However, previous students have met this requirement in cooperation with their building principal by stepping out of their classroom during prep periods, taking a few hours of personal leave time, and so on. You will need to develop a plan in advance with the building principal.

Overview
The MS SPED Capstone Written Project/Practicum I is considered to be one of two culminating experiences for the Master of Science in Special Education degree. The second culminating experience is met by completion of MS SPED Capstone Oral Defense/Practicum II (CAOS). You will complete the work for both CAPS and CAOS I at your own pace in conjunction with guidance from your mentor in order to meet end-of-term deadlines. It should be noted that your research-based Capstone should not be attempted until after you have completed your graduate core, which consists of the following assessments on your AAP: RLT1, RPT1, RET1, RFC1, IAT1, IET1, IPT1, and IDC1. CAOS may not be completed prior to your CAPS work being passed.

Important Notice
It is very important to note that while you may begin working on your Practicum requirements early in your program, you will not be able to complete your five in-class supervised observations until you have passed all four of the required Special Education objective exams found on your AAP. These assessment codes are as follows: X353, X352, X371, and X542.

Competencies
A list of each competency addressed in the CAPS Course of Study may be found here: CAPS Competencies.
WGU Statement of Teaching Dispositions
Western Governors University supports the development and demonstration of professional teaching dispositions throughout the course of its Teachers College (TC) licensure programs. Please view the WGU Statement of Teaching Dispositions document as you prepare for your upcoming research-based Capstone and Practicum experiences.

ADA Student Support
Western Governors University (WGU) is committed to helping candidates with disabilities achieve their full educational potential. If you have a documented disability and need accommodations to meet your academic goals, we encourage you to send a confidential request to WGU's ADA Compliance Office (mailto:adasupport@wgu.edu). Please note that mentors are not authorized to suggest or to provide accommodations. More information regarding candidate disability rights and responsibilities may be found in the Policies and Procedures for Learners with Disabilities document.

Preparing for Success
To successfully complete CAPS Course of Study, you need the appropriate resources to help with your learning. You should also prepare a calendar to schedule times devoted to your studies. Share your calendar with family and friends so they are aware of your obligations. In addition, you should plan to:

Access the Learning Communities
Learning communities are an integral part of the WGU learning experience. Learning communities provide opportunities to learn through communication with the facilitator and other students. You will have access to the Special Education Program Community as well as the Special Education Learning Community and the Graduate Capstone Community; plan to take full advantage of the benefits that these resources can provide. Any time you have a question about the content you are learning in this Course of Study, contact the learning community facilitator for assistance. Community facilitators and other students will not provide answers but will engage you in discussion to help you clarify and extend your understanding of important concepts.

Preparing for Your Practicum
In order to be able to complete your five in-class supervised teaching experiences, you must submit the MSSP Practicum Placement Request Form. Keep in mind that you will not be officially cleared to complete any in-school activities until you have (1) passed all four required Special Education examinations listed on your AAP template, (2) provided proof of current liability insurance, (3) provided proof of current background clearance check, (4) provided a signed FERPA form, and (5) received approval from the school district in which you plan to complete the in-school experiences. Directions for meeting liability insurance, background clearance check, and FERPA requirements are provided below. The MSSP Practicum Placement Request Form may be found at this link https://web5.wgu.edu/aap/content/mssp%20caps%2045%20hour%20practicum%20application_may%202011_revised.pdf

Liability Insurance
WGU assumes no financial responsibility or liability for its Teacher Candidates completing their Practicum. Candidates who are not employed as a teacher of record in the school district in which they plan to complete their practicum are required to provide
proof of insurance including liability protection prior to initiation of the in-class portion of their Practicum. For information about liability insurance, please view the Liability Insurance Requirements document. You should send proof of current liability insurance to mssp@wgu.edu.

**Background Clearance Check**
Because some of the activities in the practicum will take place in actual classrooms, candidates are required to have a background clearance check on file. If you are currently teaching, your school district will have this document and a copy can be sent via file attachment to mssp@wgu.edu. If you have not yet completed a background clearance check, directions may be found for your state in the Student Handbook. Since background clearance checks can often require significant processing time, it is strongly recommended that you begin the process at least six months before you plan to begin your in-school activities.

**FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act)**
To be cleared to do a practicum, WGU must have a signed FERPA release form so that we can work with your district and school. Submit a signed copy of your FERPA form to mssp@wgu.edu.

**Required Practicum Activities**
There are specific activities that you must complete in order to fulfill the 45-hour practicum requirement. You should print MSSP Activity Log as documentation for completion of this requirement.

**Submitting Observation Forms**
Your clinical supervisor will complete a Master of Science in Special Education Observation form for each of the five required in-class teaching experiences for your practicum. Directions for completing and submitting the observation form are found in the Master of Science in Special Education Observation Form.

**Research-Based Capstone Project**
Before beginning on your research-based Capstone project for CAPS, you must first pass the following assessments on your AAP: RLT1, RPT1, RET1, RFC1, IAT1, IET1, IPT1, and IDC1. Those assessments will provide a solid foundational knowledge base that you will be able to draw upon in order to complete your own research-based Capstone.

When your mentor approves your referral for the CAPS assessment, you will be enrolled in CAPS Special Education Written Capstone. Follow the instructions found in the CAPS Capstone Job Aid document in order to complete your Capstone. Be prepared to be an active participant in the Special Education Community as well as in the Graduate Capstone Community for additional academic support. You may even wish to discuss with your mentor the benefits of having him or her refer you for APA and formal writing style assistance through the Abromitis Writing Center; this has proven to be quite helpful for many students at two key intervals of their Capstone: (1) just prior to submitting the Prospectus for final approval, and (2) just prior to submitting the final Capstone for approval.
Feedback
To provide feedback on this or any other course of study, please use the Course of Study Feedback form.