

AUTISM STUDIES PH.D.

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

<https://www.towson.edu/chp/departments/autism-studies-doctorate/>

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The Autism Studies Ph.D. program prepares graduates to teach, influence policy, and engage in applied research. The program is designed to strengthen graduates' research skills while deepening their knowledge and perspectives on autism. This four-year, full-time program draws upon interdisciplinary experts across TU, including practitioners, educators, and researchers who work with autism-related issues in their fields. Students in the Ph.D. program in Autism Studies will have the opportunity to become proficient in various research methodologies and apply these to pressing questions and topics within their own disciplines and across disciplines. They will collaborate with expert faculty, as well as external partners, as they deepen their research acumen and investigate significant issues related to autism and neurodiversity.

The doctoral degree requires the completion of at least 60 units beyond a master's degree, with 15 units of coursework on the interdisciplinary foundation of autism, 18 units of coursework on research and research methods, 9 units of cognate (i.e., self-selected courses across disciplines to deepen understanding of chosen topics), and 18 units of dissertation study.

Requirements

Admission Requirements

Application deadlines and a full listing of materials required for admission can be found on the website.

Degree Requirements

This Ph.D. program is a 60-unit hybrid program following completion of a master's degree in a related field of study. Full-time study is planned understanding, however, that part-time study will be available. Required courses will be divided into four major areas of study: Interdisciplinary Foundations of Autism (Core), Research and Research Methods, Cognate, and Dissertation Study.

In addition to their course of study, students will obtain teaching and leadership experience in autism studies; this may be completed as a graduate assistantship, during the cognate courses, or through an individualized opportunity that reflects the experience of the student.

Substitutions to courses in the Core, Research & Research methods, and Cognate categories may be made in line with the research focus of the student with permission from the advisor and program director.

Code	Title	Units
Interdisciplinary Foundations of Autism		
First-year Seminar		
IDHP 650	HISTORICAL AND CURRENT PERSPECTIVES OF AUTISM	3
Family Collaboration		
Select one from the following:		3
FMST 601	APPLIED FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	

FMST 610	FAMILY-PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION	
SPED 605	WORKING WITH FAMILIES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	
Autism in Children		
Select one from the following:		3
IDHP 621	CONTEMPORARY ISSUES FOR INFANTS AND CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM	
SPED 620	EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS	
Autism in Teens and Adults		
Select one from the following:		3
IDHP 623	CONTEMPORARY ISSUES FOR ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM	
SPED 629	TRANSITION FOR STUDENTS WITH ASD ACROSS THE LIFESPAN	
Laws, Policy, Ethics, and Advocacy		
Select one from the following:		3
IDHP 741	ETHICAL AND LEGAL ISSUES IN CLINICAL PRACTICE	
PSYC 790	ETHICAL, LEGAL AND PROFESSIONAL ISSUES IN PSYCHOLOGY	
SPED 765	LEADING CHANGE IN AUTISM: ADVOCACY, LAW AND EDUCATION POLICY	
Research & Research Methods		
General Research Methods		
Select one from the following:		3
EDUC 789	RESEARCH METHODS, DESIGN, AND ANALYSIS	
OCTH 613	ADVANCED RESEARCH METHODS IN OCCUPATION BASED PRACTICE	
Quantitative Methods		
Select one from the following:		3
EDUC 790	ADVANCED MEASUREMENTS AND STATISTICS IN EDUCATION	
OCTH 610	DATA ANALYSIS IN OCCUPATION-BASED RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE	
Qualitative Methods		
Select one from the following:		3
EDUC 791	ADVANCED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS	
GEOG 620	QUALITATIVE METHODS	
OSC 890	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: OCCUPATION AND LIFE NARRATIVE	
Grant Writing		
PRWR 619	GRANT AND COMMUNITY WRITING	3
Applied Research		
Select one from the following:		3
FMST 615	APPLIED RESEARCH METHODS IN FAMILY SCIENCE	
FMST 620	PROJECT IN FAMILY FOCUSED PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT	

SPED 604	ACTION RESEARCH IN SPECIAL EDUCATION	
WMST 609	APPLIED RESEARCH METHODS AND SKILLS I	
Self-selected Research Course		
Select one from the following:		3
FMST 880	GRADUATE PROJECT IN FAMILY STUDIES	
OSC 770	SPECIAL TOPICS IN OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE	
PSYC 615	INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODS IN COUNSELING	
PSYC 687	ADVANCED EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN I	
PSYC 688	ADVANCED EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN II	
PSYC 689	MULTIVARIATE METHODS	
PSYC 691	INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION IN PSYCHOLOGY	
Cognate		
Select 9 units from the following:		9
GEOG 652	GEOGRAPHIES OF HEALTH	
HLTH 619	MANAGEMENT OF POST-ACUTE CARE SERVICES	
HLTH 657	HEALTH ADVOCACY ACROSS SERVICE SETTINGS	
IDHP 641	COMMUNICATION, BEHAVIOR, AND PARTICIPATION LINKAGES FOR PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM	
IDHP 642	PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION IN AUTISM	
PSYC 611	DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY	
PSYC 622	ADVANCED MULTICULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY	
PSYC 722	ADVANCED MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING	
SOSC 606	SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHT	
SOSC 609	DEVELOPMENTAL HUMAN LEARNING: A LIFESPAN APPROACH	
SPED 621	FORMAL AND INFORMAL ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES FOR STUDENTS WITH ASD	
SPED 622	SOCIAL THINKING AND CONNECTEDNESS FOR STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM	
SPPA 600	LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND DISORDERS FROM BIRTH THROUGH PRESCHOOL	
SPPA 606	LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND DISORDERS IN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN	
SPPA 615	AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS & SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY	
SPPA 710	WRITTEN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND DISORDERS	
SPPA 714	AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION	
Dissertation Study (choose one based on college of study) ¹		18
IDHP 997	DISSERTATION	
IDIS 997	DISSERTATION	
IDED 997	DISSERTATION	

OSC 997	OSC DISSERTATION	
Total Units		60

¹ These units will span the development, proposal, data collection, analysis, writing, and defense of the dissertation project. Students will register for dissertation units in their college of focus.

Learning Outcomes

The educational objectives for the Autism Studies Ph.D. program are congruent with the mission and vision of Towson University to develop doctoral-level programs that prepare graduates for workforce requirements and that are responsive to an ever-evolving external environment. The specific educational objectives of the program are to prepare graduates who will:

- Develop substantive core research-based knowledge in the field of autism and a related discipline (e.g., education, occupational therapy, sociology).
- Apply interdisciplinary research-based perspectives and practices to promote collaboration and innovation in the field of autism research and practice.
- Master methodologies required to evaluate and conduct independent research.
- Design and conduct original research in the field of autism.
- Demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate research findings and autism knowledge more generally to professionals and laypeople.