

# University of West Florida and

Department of Teaching Education and Education Leadership

M.A. in Exceptional Student Education

Specializations: Applied Behavior Analysis or Special and Alternative Education

## Letter of Intent

This personal statement is an assessment of your ability to communicate effectively at a level of writing expected of a graduate student. The statement must demonstrate your ability to answer the following prompts using academic language. There is no word count requirement, however the finished product must fully inform the reader of why you chose this program and why you feel you would be a quality candidate.

The statement must follow APA guidelines in terms of the paper for spacing, margins, and grammar.

Please address the five questions below according to your desired specialization in a way that reflects the information below.

### 1. ABA Applicants:

Applied behavior analysis is the practice of applying the science of behavior in real-world contexts. Practitioners must understand and apply the scientific method and principles of behavior science and then communicate results in a way which can be understood by a diverse group of clients and significant others.

### 2. Special and Alternative Education

This specialization is designed for educators who desire to advance their knowledge and skills in the area of disabilities. The curriculum is designed to develop candidates who can increase the effectiveness of educational programs that serve individuals with disabilities and other learning difficulties. This program is not intended to lead to teacher certification.

Questions:

1. Who are you? Introduce yourself. This includes your background experience with this field, if any, and your history in terms of academic and professional work.

2. Why are you pursuing this degree? What do you plan to achieve within 5 years after you complete your degree? What are your long-term goals? What are your current plans for steps which will help you achieve your goals?
3. What do you want to achieve while enrolled?
4. Which skills and experiences do you possess which will make you successful in the program?
5. Working in these fields often requires practitioners to work with diverse populations which are often vulnerable. What is your stance on the role the field of Ethics has in your specific specialization?

Please send this personal statement to Graduate Admissions along with your other admissions documents.

Rubric:

Area	Distinguished (4)	Competent (3)	Needs Development(2)	Poor (1)	Score
Organization and Flow	Well-organized statement where each paragraph has a topic sentence and transitions to the next one. Conclusion brings everything together.	Organization is logical and easy to read. Paragraphs are grouped by answer in a logical format. There is a conclusion that makes sense.	There is some organization to the statement but it may jump around, go off topic, or out of order. Paragraphs may be present but do not contain a clear topic.	No clear organizational pattern.	
Style and Mechanics	Writing is clear and concise with less than two errors in grammar and none in spelling or punctuation. No unnecessary jargon. Follows APA formatting.	Minor (3+) errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Writing is clear and concise. Easy to read. No unnecessary jargon. Follows APA formatting.	Moderate (5+) errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Writing is unclear in parts but the statement is understood. Contains jargon. Follows some of the APA formatting.	Major errors (10+) in grammar, spelling, and punctuation that render the statement unreadable. Excessive jargon, slang, or unnecessary words that obscure the point.	
Self-Reflection	Describes a	Describes a	Describes relevant	Does not describe	

	number of relevant experiences with clear detail. Reflects on each experience and thoughtfully explains how that experience connects to the program.	number of relevant experiences with clear detail. Reflects on each experience and connects that to the program.	experiences with some detail. There is some reflection of the experience but it is cursory and does not connect in many examples.	relevant experience or the attempt is unclear and unorganized.	
Goal-Setting	Describes both short- and long-term goals in detail that connects to other aspects of the statement (such as background) and contains actionable steps. Shows motivation and desire to put effort into the field for a specific reason. Goals are specific yet attainable.	Describes both short- and long-term goals in a thoughtful way that contains actual actionable steps that are appropriate to the student's experience level. Shows motivation and desire to put effort into this field.	Describes goals that are both short and long-term but does not go beyond a simple explanation. Does not show careful thought into how those goals will be achieved. Includes vague answers such as "save the world" or "help kids" only with no other explanation.	Does not describe goals beyond certification. Simple answers that do not display thought or effort. Does not include evidence of personal reasoning.	
Ethics	Addresses the ethics question in a way that shows thoughtfulness and experience. Explanation aligns with the profession's ethical guidelines. Shows evidence of application.	Addresses the ethics question in a way which is thoughtful. Explanation aligns with your profession's ethical guidelines.	Addresses the ethics question but only gives a cursory explanation. Ethics may be questionable but may be due to lack of formal education in this area rather than intentional disregard.	Does not address the ethics question or does so in a way that shows little understanding of ethics, science, or both. Or answers in a way that is disturbing.	