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What is ABA?

- a. ABA stands for Applied Behavior Analysis and is the applied branch of the science of behavior and learning; it is the systematic application of behavior principles to teach and improve behaviors of social significance. ABA relies on the scientific method and data to design, evaluate, and monitor behavioral interventions.
- b. ABA-based therapy is recommended (by the U.S. Surgeon General, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and many other professional organizations) as a treatment for autism spectrum disorders. ABA is also used as treatment for Intellectual/Developmental Disorders, ADHD, substance abuse, Alzheimer's, Dementia, and many other behavioral disorders.

What is a BCBA®?

- a. A BCBA® (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) is a graduate-level professional in behavior analysis who can practice independently and provide supervision to BCaBAs® (undergraduate level professional in behavior analysis) and RBTs® (high-school level professional in behavior analysis).
- b. BCBA®s in Professional Practice (aka service delivery) perform behavioral assessments, design evidence-based individual behavior/treatment plans, train and supervise the implementation of behavior plans, and perform ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the behavior plans through data analysis (aka data-based decision-making).
- c. Most BCBA®s work in ABA clinics, client homes, group homes/residential settings, schools, or private practice, however many BCBA®s also conduct applied research, consult, or have their own businesses.

What is the BACB®?

- a. The BACB® (Behavior Analyst Certification Board) is the credentialing body that certifies behavior analysts (BCBA-D®, BCBA®, BCaBA®) and registered behavior technicians (RBT®) on a national level.
- b. The BACB® oversees and regulates the practice of ABA by its certificants. The BACB® also ensures that all of its certificants abide by its code of ethics.

What are the requirements or pathways for becoming a BCBA®?

- a. In order to become a BCBA®, students must meet the following requirements as set forth by the BACB®:
 - i. Possess a graduate (master's or doctorate) degree in any discipline or specialty.
 - ii. Complete coursework in ABA.
 - iii. Complete 1500-2000 fieldwork experience (aka practicum) hours.
 - iv. Apply for and pass the BCBA® exam.

Does Ouachita offer a degree in ABA?

- a. Yes. Ouachita offers 2 graduate degree programs in ABA: an M.S. in ABA and an M.A. in ABA.
- b. The M.S. in ABA is ideal for:
 - i. students who already have (or are in the process of securing) employment at a fieldwork site (i.e., an ABA clinic or agency) and wish to accrue their fieldwork experience hours while in the program

- ii. students who wish to apply for and sit for the BCBA® exam as soon as they complete the program (*we've had students from previous cohorts apply for and pass the BCBA® exam within 10 days of completing the program*)
- iii. students who plan on pursuing a Ph.D. in the future
- iv. students who wish to conduct applied research in the future
- c. The M.A. in ABA is ideal for *any* of the following:
 - i. working professionals who prefer to obtain their master's degree in ABA first, before gaining fieldwork experience, at their own pace, on their own time
 - ii. students who want to obtain a degree in ABA and complete fieldwork experience with and through a supervisor or an ABA agency that is not affiliated/partnered with Ouachita
 - iii. professionals who work in non-ABA settings, such as schools, mental health settings, foster care, group homes, etc. and want to use ABA in those settings
 - iv. professionals who wish to use ABA outside of AU/IDD
 - v. students who intend of staying in professional practice once they become BCBA®s and do not intend on pursuing a Ph.D. or conducting research
- d. Both the M.S. and the M.A. in ABA programs follow the exact same VCS course sequence (the coursework required by the BACB® in order to be eligible to sit for the BCBA® exam) and both programs offer experiential learning courses where students learn to systematically apply the concepts and principles of ABA to real-world behaviors of social significance.
 - i. The M.S. in ABA offers 3 concentrated supervised fieldwork (CSF) courses and 2 thesis/capstone courses, all of which count towards the supervised fieldwork experience required to be eligible to sit for the BCBA® exam
 - ii. The M.A. in ABA offers 3 applied experience courses in ABA (with a focus on applications of behavior analysis beyond the AU/IDD population) and 2 applied research courses, none of which count as supervised fieldwork hours (students are responsible for accruing fieldwork hours on their own, independent of Ouachita)
- e. Both programs follow a cohort, lock-step model, which means all students in each program take the same course sequence and must pass one in order to proceed to the next course in the sequence.
- f. A breakdown of the curricula and course sequence for both the M.S. and the M.A. in ABA programs is provided in the [APPENDIX](#) section of this document.

Does Ouachita's ABA program meet the BACB®'s requirements for the BCBA® certification?

- a. Both the M.S and the M.A. in ABA programs include the VCS-approved course sequence. Students in either program will meet the BACB®'s 6th edition test content outline (TCO) and 2027 Pathway 2 BCBA® coursework requirements.
- b. The M.S. in ABA meets ALL of the BACB®'s requirements to be eligible to sit for the BCBA® examination; those requirements include coursework in ABA and completion of 1500-2000 supervised fieldwork hours (the M.S. in ABA offers the concentrated supervised fieldwork path, which requires 1500 fieldwork hours).
- c. The M.A. in ABA meets the coursework in ABA requirement; students are responsible for accruing supervised fieldwork hours on their own, independent of Ouachita.

Does the program provide supervised fieldwork experience?

- a. Yes, for the M.S. in ABA program only.
 - i. Concentrated Supervised Fieldwork courses (3 courses, 3 credits total) are embedded in the curriculum and are part of the degree requirement; in addition, work completed for thesis or capstone may also count as supervised fieldwork experience.
 - ii. Students in the M.S. in ABA program are placed with a clinical partner. The clinical partner designates a Ouachita-approved qualified BCBA supervisor who serves as the liaison between Ouachita and the student's site supervisor(s). The clinical partner and Ouachita collaborate in providing and coordinating students' fieldwork hours under one system consisting of a single MoU/supervision contract and fieldwork tracker.
 - iii. Ouachita provides group supervision of unrestricted activities, while the clinical partner provides individual supervision of restricted and unrestricted activities.
 - iv. Students' fieldwork activities are coordinated and overseen by Ouachita's ABA Fieldwork Coordinator.

What are the criteria for admission into Ouachita's ABA programs?

- a. Students must have a bachelor's degree in any discipline with at least 2.5 GPA for general admission into the university, and at least 3.0 GPA for admission into the M.S. or the M.A. in ABA program. Students with a GPA lower than 3.0 but not lower than 2.5 may be conditionally admitted into either program, on a case-by-case basis.
- b. Official transcripts for each institution attended must be submitted by the institution.
 - i. If a student is still enrolled in their undergraduate degree program, an unofficial transcript can be submitted for evaluation but full acceptance to the program will be on hold until an official, final transcript is received
- c. Submitted application with application fee.
- d. Three (3) *professional* references/letters of recommendation (e.g., from BCBA® supervisors, professors/faculty, directors, etc.).
- e. Personal statement letter (i.e., Statement of Purpose) that includes but is not limited to the following information:
 - i. Background/personal information (i.e., tell us about yourself)
 - ii. Why ABA? (i.e., what brought you to ABA?)
 - iii. Why Ouachita? (i.e., what led you to consider Ouachita's ABA graduate programs?)
 - iv. Evidence of academic, professional, and/or personal motivation
 - v. Evidence of commitment to the field of ABA
 - vi. Career goals (long-term)
- f. Brief interview with ABA Fieldwork Coordinator and ABA faculty.

How many credits are required for a Master's degree in ABA at Ouachita?

- a. The M.S. and the M.A. in ABA programs each require 36 credits.

What is the cost of tuition and fees?

- a. The current cost is \$750 per credit hour (the estimated total tuition and fees for the full 36-hour programs is \$27,505).

- i. Students placed with Ouachita Clinical Partners receive a tuition discount of \$50 off per credit hour (\$700 per credit hour after the discount)
- b. Financial Aid (federal or private student loans) available to cover both the direct cost to OBU and to assist with books, course materials, and living expenses. Our website has detailed cost and financial aid information at obu.edu/gps/finaid.
- c. For more information about financial aid, please contact Gina Tolbert at tolbertg@obu.edu.

How long are Ouachita's ABA programs?

- a. The M.S. and the M.A. in ABA programs are each 5 semesters long (Fall, Spring, Summer, Fall, & Spring) and about 22 months (including winter, spring, and summer breaks).

Are the ABA programs online, on campus, or hybrid?

- a. Our programs are 99% online. Both programs do have a residency requirement, which consists of a one-time 3-day in-person/on-campus ABA Intensive. The remainder of both programs is online synchronous (i.e., distance learning format).
- b. All courses (with the exception of one) in both programs require weekly live class meetings via Microsoft Teams.
- c. Live class meetings are MANDATORY and are held Monday and Thursday evenings from 5:30pm – 7:30pm CT.

How many courses can I enroll in each semester?

- a. Our fall and spring semesters consist of two 8-week terms, and our summer semester consists of a 3-week May term and an 8-week June-July term.
 - i. Each *term*, students are automatically enrolled in 2 courses taken simultaneously: 1 didactic course and 1 experiential learning course (e.g., concentrated supervised fieldwork, applied experience in ABA, thesis/capstone, applied research project)
 - ii. Each semester, students take a total of 3 courses, for a total 7-8 credits
- b. Students are automatically enrolled each semester by the Program Director.

How many admission entry points does the program have?

- a. Currently, there is only one entry point each year; both programs begin in August of every year.
- b. Both programs follow a cohort lock-step model, which means students admitted in a cohort all follow the same course sequence and take the same courses together.

What are the deadlines for applying for admission?

- a. Applications for admission are open on January 1.
- b. The deadline and last day to submit an application is May 1.
 - i. Students admitted into the M.S. in ABA program are required to secure a fieldwork site no later than July 1; this is required in order to be enrolled in the program, once admitted.
 - ii. For questions/assistance regarding the M.S. in ABA fieldwork requirements, please contact Alina Michael (ABA Fieldwork Coordinator) at michaela@obu.edu
- c. For questions regarding the application and/or admission process, please contact Patricia (Trish) Staley at staley@obu.edu

What is your transfer policy for ABA courses completed at another university?

- a. Our program allows students to transfer *up to* 9 credits from another institution under the following conditions and after the department has reviewed the student's completed admission application:
 - i. the credits must be from ABA courses that were part of the same task list as OBU's program (currently on task list 6)
 - ii. the credits must be from ABA courses that the student passed with a B or above
 - iii. the ABA courses must have been part of an approved VCS course sequence at the time credits for those courses were earned
 - iv. syllabi for all courses that wish to be transferred must be provided to and reviewed by the Program Director
 - v. students must complete our ABA Intensive residency requirement, in person, on campus
- b. Thesis, capstone, and fieldwork/practicum courses from another institution are not eligible for transfer.

Do I have to be an RBT® or have some background in ABA in order to be accepted into Ouachita's ABA programs?

- a. No, we do not require that students have the RBT® credential or have a background in ABA in order to be accepted into our program; we've had students with an ABA background do very well in terms of grasping the ABA terminology, but we've also had students with no background in ABA do just as well as students with a background in ABA.
- b. Although we do not require that students be RBTs® in order to be accepted into our program, students interested in the M.S. in ABA program should know that many of our clinical partners *do* require the RBT® credential as a condition of employment or supervision. This requirement will vary across clinical partners and is outside of Ouachita's control.

Is completion of a Thesis or a Capstone project required?

- a. Yes, only for the M.S. in ABA program; students must choose *either* a thesis *or* a capstone project by the end of their second semester in the program.
- b. There is no Thesis or Capstone project required for the M.A. in ABA, however, students in the MA in ABA program are required to complete an applied research project in their last 2 semesters.

Can I transfer from the M.S. in ABA to the M.A. in ABA or vice versa?

- a. Yes, students can transfer from one program to the other, as long as they do so within their first year in the program (i.e., within the first 3 semesters in the program).
- b. An internal application and interview with the Program Director and Fieldwork Coordinator is required to make sure the program the student wishes to transfer to is the right fit for them. There is no application fee associated with transferring from one program to the other.

Is clinical/fieldwork placement a requirement?

- a. Yes, for the M.S. in ABA program only.
- b. We have clinical partnerships with over 20 ABA organizations and agencies throughout the United States (e.g., Arkansas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, Nebraska, Alaska, North Carolina, California, etc.)
 - i. Students can be placed with any of our clinical partners; if a student is at an organization that is not yet a clinical partner, the organization can become a clinical partner if they meet the conditions of our partnership agreement

Does Ouachita help students find clinical/fieldwork placement?

- a. Yes, for the M.S. in ABA program only.
- b. The ABA Fieldwork Coordinator will help students identify potential fieldwork sites as early as the beginning of the application process, and to the extent possible, will assist students with securing fieldwork placement. However, it is ultimately up to the placement to determine whether the student will be a good fit for their organization. Please be aware that some (but not all) organizations require the RBT® credential in order to accept or hire fieldwork students.
- c. For assistance with finding clinical/fieldwork placement, please contact Alina Michael at michaela@obu.edu.

Can I still graduate with my M.S. in ABA even if I do not accrue all 1500 supervised fieldwork experience hours while I'm in the program?

- a. Yes! Although we encourage students in the M.S. in ABA program to accrue all of their fieldwork hours while in the program, this is NOT a graduation requirement.
- b. As long as a student passes their fieldwork courses with a B or higher, (s)he can still graduate even if they are short of 1500 hours by the time they complete the program.
- c. Students who do not accrue all 1500 hours while in the program can continue accruing them after they've graduated, on their own and independent of Ouachita.

Can I obtain a degree in ABA at Ouachita without accruing fieldwork experience hours?

- a. Yes, absolutely; the M.A. in ABA is specifically designed for students who want a degree in ABA with no requirement or commitment to accrue fieldwork hours while in the program. For such students, they can start accruing fieldwork experience hours after they've completed their degree if they choose to.

Does Ouachita help with test prep for the BCBA® exam?

- a. Yes. BCBA® Test Content Outline 6th edition quizzes, assessments, and test prep published by AATBS (Triad) are incorporated into the curriculum and used as a supplemental test prep resource.
 - i. Students are required to purchase a 24-month subscription (available through the OBU Bookstore at a discounted rate; financial vouchers are also available if applicable).
- b. In addition, a comprehensive exam (similar in format to the BCBA® credentialing exam) is required in the last semester of the program and students must pass it with a minimum score of 80% in order to graduate.
 - i. Students are allowed up to 3 attempts in one semester.

Are the ABA program faculty BCBA®s?

- a. Yes. All of our faculty (core and adjunct, as well as the ABA Fieldwork Coordinator) are all experienced and qualified BCBA®s and BCBA-D®s with over 40 years of combined experience in ABA.
- b. Our core faculty have experience practicing ABA within and beyond autism and intellectual/development disabilities; their areas of expertise include but are not limited to:
 - i. Assessment and treatment of severe and challenging behavioral disorders
 - ii. Experimental analysis of behavior
 - iii. Personnel supervision and training (including parent training)
 - iv. Substance abuse/addiction counseling
 - v. Behavioral economics (delay discounting, effort discounting, impulsivity, etc.)
 - vi. Relational Frame Theory (RFT)
 - vii. Acceptance Commitment Training (ACTr)
 - viii. Law enforcement training
 - ix. ABA in foster care

Will I have an academic advisor?

- a. Yes. Every student in both ABA programs will be assigned to an academic advisor who will be a core faculty in the ABA department. The Program Director serves the role of Academic Advisor for students, as well as Program Advisor for all students in both programs.
- b. All students in the M.S. in ABA program will have the ABA Fieldwork Coordinator as an additional advisor, for fieldwork-related advising.

What are some career paths for individuals with the BCBA® credential?

- a. Behavior analysis career fields and areas of specialty include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Autism Spectrum Disorder & Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities
 - ii. ADHD, OCD, ODD
 - iii. Behavioral Gerontology
 - iv. Behavioral Pediatrics
 - v. Health and Fitness
 - vi. Behavioral Medicine
 - vii. Sports
 - viii. Environment/Sustainability
 - ix. Education/Special Education
 - x. Animal training
 - xi. Organizational Behavior Management
 - xii. Brain Injury Rehabilitation
 - xiii. Prevention/Intervention in Child Maltreatment
 - xiv. Clinical Behavior Analysis / Mental Health
 - xv. Treatment of Substance Use Disorders / Addiction
 - xvi. Public Health

Are there additional resources I should know about?

- a. BACB® website: <https://www.bacb.com>
- b. BCBA® handbook, documents, and resources: <https://www.bacb.com/bcba/>

Who at Ouachita can I contact if I have additional questions or need further clarifications?

- a. For general or specific **program**-related questions, please contact **Dr. Julyse Horr** (ABA Program Director) at horrij@obu.edu or 870-245-4893.
- b. For general or specific **fieldwork**-related questions, including assistance with **clinical placement**, please contact **Alina Michael** (ABA Fieldwork Coordinator) at michaela@obu.edu.
- c. For questions related to **admission** and the **application process/requirements**, please contact **Patricia (Trish) Staley** at staleyp@obu.edu
- d. For questions regarding **tuition and financial aid**, please contact **Gina Tolbert** (Financial Aid Counselor) at tolbertg@obu.edu.

APPENDIX

CURRICULA & COURSE SEQUENCES FOR M.S. & M.A. in ABA PROGRAMS

M.S. in ABA				
Year 1			Year 2	
Fall I & II (Aug-Dec)	Spring I & II (Jan-May)	Summer (May-July)	Fall I & II (Aug-Dec)	Spring I & II (Jan-May)
Concepts & Principles of ABA (3) ABA 6143	Behavioral Assessment (3) ABA 6243	*Ethical & Professional Issues in ABA (3) ABA 6343	Behavior-Change Procedures II (3) ABA 6443	Special Topics in ABA (2) ABA 6542
Research Methods in ABA (3) ABA 6153	Behavior-Change Procedures I (3) ABA 6253	Supervision, Training, & Performance Management (3) ABA 6353	Experimental Analysis of Behavior (3) ABA 6453	Advanced Concepts & Principles of ABA (3) ABA 6563
Concentrated Supervised Fieldwork I (1) ABA 6161	Concentrated Supervised Fieldwork II (1) ABA 6261	Concentrated Supervised Fieldwork III (1) ABA 6361	ABA Thesis / capstone I (2) ABA 6482/6882	ABA Thesis / Capstone II (2) ABA 6582/6982
7 credits total	7 credits total	7 credits total	8 credits total	7 credits total

M.A. in ABA				
Year 1			Year 2	
Fall I & II (Aug-Dec)	Spring I & II (Jan-May)	Summer (May-July)	Fall I & II (Aug-Dec)	Spring I & II (Jan-May)
Concepts & Principles of ABA (3) ABA 6143	Behavioral Assessment (3) ABA 6243	*Ethical & Professional Issues in ABA (3) ABA 6343	Behavior-Change Procedures II (3) ABA 6443	Subspecialties of ABA (4) ABA 6554
Research Methods in ABA (3) ABA 6153	Behavior-Change Procedures I (3) ABA 6253	Supervision, Training, & Performance Management (3) ABA 6353	Experimental Analysis of Behavior (3) ABA 6453	Advanced Concepts & Principles of ABA (3) ABA 6563
Applied Experience in ABA I (1) ABA 6171	Applied Experience in ABA II (1) ABA 6271	Applied Experience in ABA III (1) ABA 6371	Applied Research Project I (1) ABA 6491	Applied Research Project II (1) ABA 6591
7 credits total	7 credits total	7 credits total	7 credits total	8 credits total