

Development, implementation, and assessment of a new graduate Applied Behavioral Analysis degree program

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Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is concerned with applying empirical approaches based upon the principles of respondent and operant conditioning to change behavior of social significance. It is the applied form of behavior analysis and changes behavior by first assessing the functional relationship between a targeted behavior and the environment. Further, the approach often seeks to develop socially acceptable alternatives for aberrant behaviors.

The Demand for Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) has increased dramatically over the past 11 years. In 2010, there were 798 BCBA job postings and has grown to over 33,996 by 2020 (BCBA, 2021). There are many factors that contribute to this large increase; School Districts, Behavior Health Agencies, Health Care Insurance companies, Behavioral health and overall Wellness sectors are seeking out qualified behavior change agents to address the behavior deficits of students and those in need of behavior change intervention and change systems.

This paper will describe how the Master of Science of Applied Behavior Analysis (MSABA) at National University, which has been approved by BACB and ABAI credentialing boards, was developed and has now become the second largest program in National University's Sanford College of Education. The MSABA program is a unique practitioner-based model where students not only learn the complexities, concepts, and terminology of ABA, but also learn how to execute this content through applying these concepts as a single-case design and collecting data on their own study behaviors and performance.

The paper will also describe how the MSABA program was recently assessed, using factor analysis and ANOVA/Scheffe' to determine which aspects of the program and course content, as well as instructor actions, correlated most highly with students' self-assessment of learning and their ability to utilize what they learned in their professional settings.