

# University of West Florida

Department of Teaching Education and Education Leadership  
M.A. in Exceptional Student Education  
Specializations: Applied Behavior Analysis

## Letter of Intent

This personal statement is an assessment of your ability to communicate effectively at a level of writing that is expected of a graduate student. This 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.

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

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.

### 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 ([gradadmissions@uwf.edu](mailto:gradadmissions@uwf.edu)) along with your other admissions documents.

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. All questions are thoroughly answered. Conclusion brings everything together.	Organization is logical and easy to read. All questions are answered clearly. Paragraphs are grouped by answer in a logical format but transitions are absent. 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. 1-2 questions were unanswered. Paragraphs may be present but do not contain a clear topic.	No clear organizational pattern. More than two questions were ignored or an entire section is missing.	
Style and Mechanics	Writing is clear and concise with less than two errors in grammar and none in spelling or punctuation. No unnecessary jargon. Uses clear and consistent formatting in terms of font size and type, margins, and spacing.	Minor (3+) errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Easy to read. No unnecessary jargon. Formatting is generally consistent.	Moderate (5+) errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Contains jargon. Formatting is inconsistent but still professional and clean.	Major errors (7+) in grammar, spelling, and punctuation that render the statement unreadable. Excessive jargon, slang, or unnecessary words that obscure the point. Font and margins are inconsistent and /or unprofessional.	
Self-Reflection	Describes a number of relevant experiences with clear detail. Reflects on each experience and thoughtfully explains how that experience connects to the program.	Describes relevant experiences with some detail. Reflects on each experience and connects that to the program.	Describes relevant experiences. There is some reflection of the experience but it is cursory and does not connect in many examples. The self-reflection may not connect to the program or field of study.	Does not describe relevant experience or the attempt is unclear and unorganized. Self-reflection does not show evidence of academic prerequisites or is unprofessional.	

Goal-Setting	Describes both short- and long-term goals in detail. Goals connect to other aspects of the statement (such as background) and contain actionable steps that show relevance to the field and a foundation that can support the goals.	Describes both short- and long-term goals that contain actionable steps that are appropriate to the student's experience level and apply to the field of ABA.	Describes some goals 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 "work with kids" with no other explanation.	Does not describe goals beyond certification. Simple answers that do not display thought or effort. Goals are not relevant to the field or they reflect an unprofessional or unclear goal.	
Ethics	Addresses the ethics question using references and citations to the relevant Ethics code(s). Explanation aligns with the profession's ethical guidelines. Shows evidence of application.	Addresses the ethics question using general ethics considerations. Examples are missing or not related to the field.	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.	

Holistic Criteria:

- Was the letter professional and appropriate?
- Did the letter demonstrate skills and goals that are compatible with pursuing a career as a practitioner in the field of ABA?

Rubric Score:

/ 20

Suggestions for improvement: