

BEACON Scholar Program — Summary Guide (updated May 2026)

1. Program Eligibility

Basic Requirements

- Bachelor's degree in any field from an accredited university
- Master's holders may apply if seeking a second master's
- Experience and genuine interest in working with individuals with disabilities

Program-Specific Requirements

- **MSD/LBD:** May be working with or have access to individuals with disabilities; if not, we can place in practicum
- **ABA:** Practicum placement provided—no prior access required

Certification Notes

- Not an MAT Option 6 pathway (no provisional licensure)
- Initial certification only; MSD-certified individuals may apply for LBD or ABA, but not MSD

Who Commonly Qualifies?

Social workers, registered behavior technicians, educators looking to change certification area, paraprofessionals, special education leaders, and parents of children with disabilities

Not Eligible

- Individuals with only an associate's degree
- Individuals relying on Option 6 or provisional licensure for employment

2. Program Continuity & Timeline

- Next cohort begins **Fall 2028**
- Applicants must meet eligibility before the start date
- Application deadlines:
 - **ABA:** January 15
 - **SPED (MSD/LBD):** April 15
- Personal statement must mention interest in the **BEACON Project**
- Admissions process includes application review, virtual interviews, and final funding decisions

3. Application Process

How to Apply

- Apply online through the **UK Graduate School**
- Review requirements for your specific program

Application Link

<https://gradschool.uky.edu/admissions/application-process>

One Application Only

- Scholarship consideration occurs through the same graduate application
- Clearly describe your fit for the **BEACON Scholar Program** in your personal statement

ABA Track

- Select and apply to the **MS in Applied Behavior Analysis** program

SPED Track

- Select and apply to the MS in Special Education program
- Select Initial Certification if you do not hold any teaching certification at all
 - Then specify LBD or MSD- thesis track.
- Select Advanced Certification if you currently hold a teaching certification, but are obtaining a new certification in the area of LBD or MSD
 - Then specify LBD or MSD- thesis track.

4. Program Structure

Tracks Offered

- **MSD, LBD, and BCBA (ABA)**
- Distinct programs, but scholars learn and train in interdisciplinary teams

ABA Program Workload

- Full-time
- 20–30 hrs/week practicum in UK-approved sites
- Some placements may be paid
- Not compatible with full-time employment

SPED Program Workload

- Full-time and part-time
- 5-10 hrs/week practicum in your own classroom or UK-approved sites
- Part-time enrollment is compatible with full-time employment

Thesis

- Due to the overlapping coursework and fieldwork requirements, all students will be in the thesis track. It is encouraged to collaborate on a shared thesis project that is mentored by a special education and ABA faculty member.

Program Length

- **MSD:** 2.5 years (part-time)
 - **LBD:** 2.5 years (part-time)
 - **ABA:** 2 years (full-time)
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5. Format & Location of Classes

- **ABA:** Fully in-person on UK's campus
 - **MSD & LBD:**
 - On campus (if student lives within 30 miles of UK's campus) OR via synchronous Zoom (if student lives more than 30 miles from campus)
 - Classes meet live; not asynchronous or recorded
 - **Class Times:**
 - SPED courses: Evenings
 - ABA courses: Some daytime and some evenings
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6. Financial Coverage

- Stipend covers:
 - In-state tuition
 - University fees
 - Required textbooks
 - Additional emergency funds available (transportation, childcare, conferences, etc.)
 - Stipend paid **directly to the scholar**
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7. Transfer Credit Policy

- BEACON is a cohort model—students start and finish together (unless SPED students are part-time, in which they end one semester later).
 - **No transfer credits accepted**
 - Prior coursework may help with preparation, but all BEACON classes must be completed
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8. Work Requirements After Graduation

- BEACON funding comes with a federal service obligation
- Graduates must work **2 years in eligible employment for each year of funding received**
- Details available at:
<https://pdp.ed.gov/osep/home/agreements/>