Special Education

Degree conferred
Bachelor of Science in Special Education. This degree also qualifies students for the «Diploma in Special Education». This diploma is a diploma recognised by the Department for education and cultural affairs.

Languages of study
Possibility to study in French or in German

Commencement of studies
Commencement of studies only in the Autumn Semester (September)

Special features for admission
In preparation for the programme, students must undertake a nine-month internship.
Late application is not possible.

Access to further studies
Master

The study programme «Special Education» (Sonderpädagogik und Sozialpädagogik) aims to transmit scientific and practical knowledge and competences equipping students for occupation in various professional settings of special education and social pedagogy. The programme focuses on the living conditions, developmental contexts and learning situations of children, adolescents and adults who experience long-term difficulties in education or independent living. Different areas of life and the entire life span are considered. A particular emphasis is placed on intellectual disability and socio-emotional developmental disorders (challenging behaviour).
The study programme «Special Education» at the University of Fribourg is the only university programme in Switzerland to offer qualifications for both academic and professional practice in these subject areas. Students develop an in-depth knowledge of special education and social pedagogy topics and issues. They acquire the foundations for critical thinking and scientific processing of current concerns and challenges in special education and social pedagogy. In addition, they acquire basic knowledge from related disciplines such as education, sociology, psychology, medicine and law in order to meet the complexity and interdisciplinarity of the subject areas.
Other central goals of the study programme are the development of practical competences and the reflective interconnection of theory and practice. The internships in the first and second academic year focus on building up the key competences in developing an educational relationship and applying diagnostics in special education. The internship during the third year aims to consolidate learned contents and practical competences and put them into practice.

Profile of the study programme

The Bachelor of Science in Special Education is a university programme that offers both the acquisition academic competences and a professional diploma.

The programme is aimed at students with a general qualification for university entrance who wish to pursue a practical career or conduct research in the fields of special education and social pedagogy. This involves dealing with the living conditions, developmental contexts and learning situations of children, adolescents and adults who experience long-term difficulties in education or independent living.

In preparation for the programme students must complete a nine-month internship. The study programme «Special Education» is a full-time university programme of 180 ECTS credits over the course six semesters. The curriculum consists of lectures in special education, social pedagogy and related disciplines (such as education, sociology, psychology, medicine and law), the in-depth study of issues surrounding special education and social pedagogy and internships in various professional areas. A reflective interconnection between theory and practice is central.

Fribourg profile
The programme «Special Education» is the only university course in Switzerland which qualifies students for both academic and professional careers in special education and social pedagogy.

The study programme is caracterised by the consideration of different living conditions throughout the entire lifespan, as well as the particular emphasis on intellectual disability and socio-emotional developmental disorders (challenging behaviour).

With this bachelor's degree students obtain two qualifications: Firstly, it provides a professional diploma in special education which is highly valued in the practical field. Secondly, the degree enables students to pursue different master's degrees in special education (special education, teaching degree in special education, early childhood intervention) and possibly related disciplines. A master's degree in special education qualifies for further academic studies (e.g. PhD).

Learning outcomes and career openings
The main goals regarding the professional and academic qualifications of students in Special Education are as follows:

a) Acquiring theoretical knowledge

- Knowledge about the facets, complexity and interactions of disability;
- Knowledge about living conditions, developmental contexts and learning situations of people with disabilities throughout the entire lifespan;
- Knowledge about the potential needs that may arise from disability and dealing with these in an appropriate and professional manner;

- Basic theoretical knowledge of related disciplines.

b) Acquiring scientific knowledge

- Basics knowledge of scientific methodology;
- Basics knowledge of scientific theory.

c) Acquiring professional competences

- Competences in decision-making and responsibility;
- Personal and social competences.

During the studies, students are required to do different internships in various professional fields:

- Children, adolescents and adults with intellectual or profound and multiple disabilities;
- Children and adolescents with socio-emotional developmental disorders (challenging behaviour) or young people living in difficult circumstances;
- Children, adolescents and adults with sensory or physical disabilities;
- Children, adolescents and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The main goals and professional fields define the professional perspectives with a Bachelor of Science in Special Education:

- Special educational or social pedagogical work in residential, semi-residential or ambulant services for people with disabilities and youth welfare;
- Educational management and advisory functions in the fields of disability services and youth welfare services;
- Work in advanced training of professionals in the fields of disability services and youth welfare;
- Continuation of an academic career (Master).

Studies organisation

Structure of studies

180 ECTS credits, 6 semesters

Curriculum

https://studies.unifr.ch/go/1I (*French*)
https://studies.unifr.ch/go/1J (*German*)

Admission

The following **Swiss school-leaving certificates** grant **admission to bachelor programmes** at the University of Fribourg:

- Swiss academic Maturity Certificate
- Federal vocational or specialised Baccalaureate + supplementary examination of the Swiss Maturity Commission (passerelle)
- Bachelor Degree from a Swiss university, from an accredited Swiss university of applied sciences (HES/FH) or from a Swiss university of teacher education (HEP/PH)

A **complete list of all further recognised Swiss school-leaving certificates** is to be found on the webpages of swissuniversities (*in French and German only*): https://studies.unifr.ch/go/fr-admission-swisscertificates;
https://studies.unifr.ch/go/de-admission-swisscertificates
Foreign upper secondary school-leaving certificates are recognised only if they correspond substantially to the Swiss Maturity Certificate. They must qualify as general education. Foreign school-leaving certificates are considered to be general education if, among other things, the last three years of schooling include at least six general education subjects, independent from each other, in accordance with the following list:

1. Language of instruction (at the school)
2. Second language (a foreign language)
3. Mathematics
4. Natural sciences (biology or chemistry or physics)
5. Humanities and social sciences (geography or history or economics/law)
6. Elective (computer sciences or philosophy or an additional language or an additional subject from category 4 or 5)

The general **admission** requirements to the **bachelor programmes** at the University of Fribourg for holders of foreign school-leaving certificates as well as the **admission requirements for individual countries** are to be found on the webpages of swissuniversities: https://studies.unifr.ch/go/en-admission-countries
In addition, applicants with foreign school-leaving certificates must present **proof of sufficient language skills in French or German**.
All guidelines are available at *(only in French and German)*: https://studies.unifr.ch/go/adm-guidelines

*The assessment of foreign school-leaving certificates is based on the «Recommendations for the Assessment of Foreign Upper Secondary School-Leaving Certificates» adopted by the Chamber of universities of swissuniversities on 21.11.2024 (https://studies.unifr.ch/go/swissuniversities24fr;
https://studies.unifr.ch/go/swissuniversities24de). The admission requirements are valid for the respective academic year. The Rectorat of the University of Fribourg reserves the right to change these requirements at any time.*

Special admission requirements
Candidates wishing to be admitted to the Bachelor of Science in Special Education must meet one of the following special requirements:
a) confirmation of having had a nine-month, full-time internship in a special education establishment;
b) or: confirmation of having had nine months' employment as a qualified teacher (one school year with a full teaching load).

If the scope of the internship is not equivalent to full-time employment, the duration must be extended correspondingly.

Contact

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