

## Professional Competencies

All Erikson graduates demonstrate competency in three areas, which represent Erikson's Institutional Learning Outcomes: (a) understanding of developmental and professional knowledge (Knowledge), (b) professional practice skills (Practice), and (c) critical reflection (Reflection). Each of Erikson Master's degree programs includes a set of Program Learning Outcomes that align with the Institutional Learning Outcomes and allow student to demonstrate mastery respective to their specific degree program in the areas of knowledge, practice, and reflections. During the 2023-24 academic year, faculty in each program reviewed and revised the program learning outcomes, which were subsequently approved by Erikson's Faculty council in June 2024. Students entering Erikson in the 2024-25 academic year are expected to demonstrate mastery in revised program learning outcomes.

Students entering Erikson prior to the 2024-25 academic year are expected to demonstrate competency in the following upon completion of their program:

### Knowledge Competencies

- **Developmental knowledge**  
Students will have an in-depth knowledge of typical and atypical human growth from the prenatal period to age eight in the areas of intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and language development. They will understand the inter-relationships among these domains of development as well as the role of care-giving relationships in the developmental process.
- **Social/cultural influences**  
Students will have an understanding of how social, cultural, political, economic, and family contexts influence child development.
- **Understanding programs**  
Students will have knowledge of a range of schools, programs, services, and resources for children and families in different communities and settings. This includes knowledge of a range of effective approaches, curricula and inclusive practices for children of different ages, and the use of formal and informal assessment strategies to understand and meet children's needs within these settings.
- **History and policy issues**  
Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical, philosophical, and social foundations of current policies and practices in child and family services, and current social issues facing children, families, and those who work with them.

### Practice skills/competencies

- Students will be able to work effectively with and for children and families in their chosen concentration using current knowledge and best practices.
- Students will be able to work effectively with other professionals in the field of early childhood as supervisors and team members.

- Students will demonstrate leadership skills through their ability to articulate and implement ideas and knowledge regarding children and families through speaking, writing, and facilitating change in a range of professional settings.
- Students will understand how to use technology to more effectively deliver services to children and families, and how to use it to further their own professional development.

### Self-Knowledge and Reflection

- Students will be able to reflect on their professional practices in relation to theory and research.
- Students will understand how their own history, experience, and cultural background influence their work with children, families, and colleagues.
- Students will be able to articulate a philosophy and rationale for their decisions, and to reflect on and evaluate the effects of their choices and actions on others (young children, families, and other professionals) as a basis for program planning, modification, and continuing professional development.

Students entering Erikson during and after the 2024-25 academic year are expected to demonstrate competency in the following upon completion of their program:

### MSECEO Program Learning Outcomes (revised)

Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO)	Program Learning Outcome (PLO)
<b>Demonstrate understanding of developmental and professional knowledge</b>	1. Describe child development across domains through a JEDI framework
	2. Explain social and cultural influences on learning and development using a JEDI lens (technology tools included here)
	3. Explain systems and approaches to working with diverse families/adults
	4. Understand the historical, cultural, and structural context of early care and education.
	5. Design practices for supporting children, families, and communities
	6. Understand the strengths and limitations of research designs and ethical issues in research
<b>Demonstrate competency of professional practice skills</b>	1. Relates to diverse children, parents, and colleagues effectively and appropriately
	2. Teaching skills across a range of curricular domains
	3. Fostering an educational environment
	4. Critical reflection and analysis observed

	5. Utilizing oral, written and technological communication skills to foster inquiry, collaboration and supportive interactions with children, families and professional colleagues
<b>Engage in critical reflection</b>	1. Takes account of several points of view in a conversation, debate, and discussion
	2. Responds with sensitivity to others and uses knowledge about individual needs, circumstances, and relationships to encourage growth in others
	3. Participates constructively in supervision to reflect on one's work (where appropriate)
	4. Demonstrates insight about one's own performance and is aware of one's effect on others
	5. Maintains a reflective stance in relation to their work in the classroom

### MSCD Program Learning Outcomes (revised)

Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO)	Program Learning Outcome (PLO)
<b>Demonstrate understanding of developmental and professional knowledge</b>	7. Understand child development across domains within a broad range of sociocultural contexts.
	8. Describe how communities, organizations and neighborhoods interact to mediate and shape child development.
	9. Explain how home, family, and cultural contexts create conditions for supporting child development
	10. Identify macro level influences (sociological, anthropological and systemic) that give rise to policies, systems, and societal structures that indirectly impact families with young children.
	11. Describe how knowledge of developmental domains should be applied to various child development contexts
<b>Demonstrate competency of professional practice skills</b>	6. Integrate applied child development knowledge into professional activities
	7. Demonstrate respect and sensitivity toward diverse children and families.
	8. Promote the well-being, development, and learning of children and families.
	9. Demonstrate ethics and integrity in all professional activities.

	10. Evidence effective oral, written, and technological communication skills.
	11. Demonstrate evidence of professionalism and leadership skills
<b>Engage in critical reflection</b>	6. Use theory and research in the analysis of practice.
	7. Examine how personal history, experience, and cultural background influence work with children, families, and colleagues.
	8. Reflects on issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging regarding work with children, families and colleagues
	9. Evaluate the effects of personal choices and actions on others.
	10. Identify means for continuing professional growth.

*Note: Program Learning Outcomes for the MSECE-EI program launching in January 2025 are forthcoming.*

## General Degree Requirements

The master's degree programs include tightly-integrated child development courses as well as the opportunity to apply their learning in a variety of ways, depending on their degree program. These may include internship, capstone project, and integrative/supervision seminars. Upon completion of these requirements, students in all programs, complete a culminating learning experience of some kind. This may include a capstone, portfolio, or comprehensive examination.

Concentrations require additional courses and, in some instances, the substitution of specialized courses for core courses.

To earn a master's degree from Erikson, students must:

- Complete all degree requirements within five years of the student's entry into the program
- Maintain a B average (3.0 on a 4.0 scale) with no more than two grades of C (i.e., grades of D or F are prohibited and are not allowed to count toward degree completion).
- Complete the requirements related to assessment of professional competencies in the three areas that are the focus of graduate study at Erikson Institute: knowledge of child development, practice skills, and reflection.

Program descriptions for the master's degree programs are found beginning on page 15. Course descriptions for the master's degree programs are found in a separate document: Erikson's Course Catalog.

## Conferral of Master's Degree

Erikson has four official degree conferral dates each year. Dates for 2024–25 are January 10, May 9, June 20, and September 20. Master's degree students who plan to graduate must complete and submit an application for master's degree conferral, along with the \$175 degree conferral application fee. Applications for master's degree conferral are available on [my.erikson.edu](https://my.erikson.edu). To receive your master's degree, you must have been certified by the Registrar at Erikson as having fulfilled all academic and administrative program requirements, including passing the comprehensive examination. All tuition and fees must be paid, and all library materials returned before a student can be approved for graduation.

## Assessment of Professional Competencies

During the final year of graduate study at Erikson, master's degree candidates will be asked to demonstrate that they have achieved appropriate mastery in each area of competency: knowledge, practice, and reflection. Students must receive a minimum score of 20 points (out of 40 possible points) for each area of competency. Therefore, students will need to exceed this minimum score in one or more of the competency areas to meet the required total score of 80 across the three areas.

- Knowledge competencies: Students' developmental and professional knowledge competencies are evaluated through a comprehensive exam, culminating capstone project, or portfolio depending on the academic program enrolled in. A detailed description of the knowledge competencies covered is presented in Comprehensive Exam: Orientation & Preparation, which is available on the 'Comps Prep Resources' page in the Academics section of [my.erikson.edu](https://my.erikson.edu).
- Practice competencies: Each student will work with their seminar leader/field liaison to establish the evidence that will be gathered and used to evaluate practice competencies. Each student will identify specific and observable skills that they want to strengthen, improve, and develop. These will be recorded on the Internship Goals form and become the focus of study with the student's seminar leader and/or field liaison.
- Reflection competencies: Requirements for reflection competencies are addressed and monitored in the integrative/supervision seminars. Reflective assignments are specifically designed to match each program's experiential learning activities during the student's final year. However, all assignments help students describe, analyze, and reflect upon their practice.

Guidelines for assessment of practice and reflection competencies are outlined in 'Culminating requirements for Master's degree students', which is available on the Master's Graduation Requirements page in the Academics section of [my.erikson.edu](https://my.erikson.edu).

[Policy for students who achieve passing scores in each domain but do not achieve a total of 80 points](#)

If a student passes (i.e., receives 20 or more points) in each of the three areas of assessment in the Culminating Requirements, knowledge, practice, and reflection, but does not achieve the overall minimum of 80 points required for graduation (for example, earning 25, 25, 25 points respectively in the three required areas), the student will meet with the Dean of Students to pursue the following steps:

1. Establish a 3-person committee including their Program Director to oversee the completion and assessment of additional work assigned by the committee. Possible committee members may include the Dean of Students, seminar instructor, and other faculty.
2. The committee will work with the student to determine the appropriate additional work to be completed based on a discussion of the student's relative strengths and areas for potential growth as reflected in their culminating scores profile.
3. The committee will establish a timeline for the completion of the additional work. All work will be completed within one year, at most, of the initial meeting with the Dean of Students.
4. The committee and Program Director will evaluate the student's additional work, once completed.

### Knowledge Requirement

#### *Comprehensive Examination*

Students in the Master of Child Development program demonstrate mastery of child development and professional knowledge through a comprehensive examination. The comprehensive exam is a five-hour, written examination that covers major content areas in child development, the exam is important because:

- It gives the faculty concrete evidence of the student's mastery of the subject matter and their ability to organize and apply what has been learned.
- Studying for the exam gives students an opportunity to synthesize and integrate in a meaningful way all they have learned through their course work and internship.

The comprehensive exam is administered three times each year—in April, June, and September—if three or more people register for the exam. Refer to the academic calendar for 2024–25 exam dates.

To be eligible to take the exam, you must have satisfactorily completed all your Erikson course requirements excluding your final semester of internship, tutorial (if applicable), and seminar before you will be allowed to take the comprehensive exam. You may petition your advisor to take the spring comprehensive exam if during your final spring semester you are registered for one academic course, e.g., Social and Historical Perspectives, or are registered for a concentration course over the summer. All tuition and fees must be paid in order to register for the comprehensive exam. All academic grades, including final grades for outstanding "Incomplete" grades, must be submitted to the Registration and Student Records Office four weeks before the date of the examination. Students who plan to take the exam in June must have all work completed by the end of the academic year in May.

All library materials must be returned before the examination results will be recorded for graduation. The comprehensive exam must be taken within a year of completing course and internship requirements.

The questions on the comprehensive examination cover the entire academic program. Copies of past examinations and resources for preparing for the comp exam are available in the Comp Resources section of my.erikson, and you are encouraged to review them. You are also encouraged to join a study group to prepare for the exam. Faculty are available to meet with students to give advice. It is the student's responsibility to ask for this assistance. If you are a student who is requesting an accommodation for taking the comp exam based on a documented disability, please contact the Director of Student Experience and Accessibility to discuss your request.

Comprehensive examination results shall be reported as pass or fail. The existing comprehensive exam administration procedure was revised to the following procedure beginning in academic year 2020–21. If a student fails the exam, they will be able to “bank” passing scores on any questions that have a score of 3 or better. Students will be asked to retake only those exam questions that did not receive a passing score. Students will be eligible to retake these exam questions on the next scheduled comprehensive exam test date. A student has up to 2 additional attempts to earn a passing score on these retake questions. Students will be allotted the same amount of time to answer questions as they were given in the original exam situation; that is, 1 hour for questions 1 and 2, and 30 minutes for questions 3–6. Students who have a special circumstance that impedes their ability to participate in the comprehensive exam on the next scheduled date may petition the Program Director and Director of Student Experience and Accessibility to arrange a special retake date.

If a student fails on the third attempt, they may petition to take the comprehensive exam for a fourth time by submitting a formal written request to the Dean of Students. Students repeating the exam must do so within one year of the previous attempt.

### *Capstone Project*

The capstone project is a culminating and integrating project that draws on Erikson's three pillars: knowledge, practice, and reflection. In the first semester of Capstone Seminar, students will create a plan to implement a program or workshops related to their concentration of study (SEL, Leadership & Advocacy, or Mix of Electives) and core child development content. In the second semester, students will implement the plan, write about it, and present on it to their seminar. A student's grade serves as a basis for fulfilling requirements for graduation.

### **Practice requirement**

In all master's degree programs, experiential learning is central to bridging the gap between theory and professional practice. Depending on the program, students complete a capstone or portfolio project or participate in an internship. A capstone project requires students to generate questions about their practice that lead to a capstone project intrinsically connected to issues of quality in teaching and learning within diverse early childhood and primary settings. Portfolios include cumulative artifacts that demonstrate mastery of knowledge, integration of knowledge with practice skills, and reflective capacities. Internships may occur in a number of settings—children's museums, community colleges, governmental organizations, Head Start programs, hospitals, preschools, public and private schools, research

institutions, social service agencies, and therapeutic programs. A student's program director and field liaison work closely with each student to design an appropriate professional practice experience.

### *Internships*

The following information is specific to students enrolled in the on-campus Master of Science in Child Development and Master of Science in Early Childhood Education – Early Intervention degree programs. Students enrolled in certificate programs that require an internship receive information about their respective program's internship requirements, policies, and procedures through the program director.

Organizations serving as internship sites make a significant investment in Erikson students. In return, you and the Institute both have an obligation to fulfill the terms of the internship agreement. You will be expected to work the hours agreed upon, respect the organization's goals and procedures, and adhere to a code of professional ethics and confidentiality. In addition, you will be expected to adhere to the student responsibilities that apply to all students of Erikson and that are discussed in more details in the "Student Rights and Responsibilities" section in the Student Handbook.

Prior to beginning an internship, each student will be required to undergo and successfully complete a name and social security number based background check. The existence of a conviction in an applicant's record does not necessarily mean that they will be dismissed from the program or that the student will be unable to complete the internship requirement. Each case is evaluated individually on its facts and not all convictions or disciplinary actions are considered disqualifying to the course of study at the Institute. Students must have a minimum 3.0 grade point average, may not be on academic probation, and have successfully completed all child development courses before beginning internship.

Students typically have one internship placement for the entire academic year. We strive to help students find internships that reflect their interests and career goals. Students in one of the concentration tracks, however, may have specific requirements concerning previous experience, the type of internship, setting, and number of hours per week. Hours and specific commitments vary. Students residing outside the Chicagoland area are responsible for identifying potential internship sites and sharing contact information for potential sites with their program director and internship coordinator for vetting.

You are expected to work a minimum of 15 hours per week, most often during regular business hours. Some internship placements require prior experience, for which advanced planning is needed.

### **Internship placement at student's employment site**

Students are discouraged from pursuing an internship where they are employed. The purpose of internship is for the student to be a true learner, to be exposed to various practice opportunities and populations, and to get the broadest possible experience. Often the boundary between student and employee can become blurred, and the



learning can become secondary.

If students want to pursue the possibility of an internship at their place of employment, they must begin the process by notifying their program director of their intention at least six months prior to the scheduled beginning of the internship. The student's program director will determine whether the activities performed as a student differ sufficiently from their job responsibilities, that the internship supervision is distinct from the employment supervision, and that the internship supervisor can provide reflective supervision and oversee the student's learning goals. For an approved placement at a place of employment, there may be an additional requirement of a written project, depending on the nature of the learning experience and the student's learning needs.

There is no guarantee that internship placement at a student's place of employment will be approved. In the case where it is not approved, the student will be responsible for completing an alternative approved placement.

- The following policies are in place to ensure that the student's learning is the priority:
- The student must have passed the employment probationary period prior to the request.
- The internship experiences must occur in a different unit or division and must be separate and distinct from any activities currently performed for pay. The internship assignments must be relevant to the student's learning goals.
- It is strongly preferred that a separate supervisor is assigned to be the student's internship supervisor. If this is impossible, a separate hour must be used weekly for the sole purpose of internship supervision.
- The program director or their designee will conduct a site visit prior to the student beginning internship to establish clear boundaries in roles of the student/employee, clarify learning opportunities, and distinguish work to be done as an employee and tasks to be undertaken for internship.
- Once all of the material is reviewed, the program director makes the decision in regard to whether the placement is appropriate for new learning for the student. If approved, the internship supervisor needs to demonstrate throughout the year that the commitment to student learning is maintained.

### **Internship orientation**

Erikson holds two mandatory internship orientations. The first orientation (in February) provides an overview of the requirements for an internship and a listing of potential sites. Working closely with your program director you will apply to the internship site during the spring semester.

The second orientation (in late August) is a week-long asynchronous course with a 2-hour synchronous component. This orientation prepares you for the challenges of internship and reviews the particulars of the integrative seminars, placements, and goals contract. The goals contract is to be filled out by you, your advisor, and your internship supervisor and will establish general and specific learning goals on which your performance will be evaluated.

### **Internship evaluation**

Your internship supervisor will complete a detailed evaluation twice during your internship, in fall and spring. You will also complete a self-evaluation at the same time and discuss the results with your internship supervisor and your seminar instructor/internship liaison. At the end of your internship, you will also write an evaluation of your experience to help future students in selecting their placements.