This course of study deals with the special educational needs of children, adolescents and sometimes also adults whose social and academic education and general fostering of their needs pose a long-term challenge. Before students start their course, they have to undertake a nine-month internship in one area of special education or social pedagogy. During the Bachelor’s programme, the students take an in-depth look at special education and social pedagogy issues, at the same studying basic subjects in related disciplines such as education, psychology and medicine. Internships and research work are also an integral part of the course. The Special Education and Social Pedagogy programme in Fribourg is the only university course in Switzerland which qualifies students for both academic and professional careers in this field.

Profile of the study programme

The Bachelor of Arts in Special Education and Social Pedagogy is a vocational university training course which teaches students basic theoretical and practical skills as well as giving them a broad, basic grounding in special education and related fields. The programme is aimed at students with a general upper secondary school leaving qualification who wish to take up a practical career or do research in the fields of special education and social pedagogy. This means that they will be dealing with the special educational needs of children, adolescents and sometimes also adults whose social and academic education and general fostering of their needs pose a long-term challenge. It also encompasses the issue of social environment.

In preparation for the programme, students must undertake a nine-month internship. Special Education and Social Pedagogy is a full-time course in which students earn 180 ECTS credits over six semesters. The curriculum encompasses the basics of special education and related disciplines (such as education, psychology and medicine), in-depth study of special education and social pedagogy issues, practical training in various fields and writing research papers.

Fribourg profile

The Special Education and Social Pedagogy programme is the only university course in Switzerland which qualifies students for both academic and professional careers in this field. Including both a theoretical part and practical experience, it not only gives students a basic grounding in the subject studied but also in the discipline of Special Education as a whole.

The Special Education and Social Pedagogy training course is made up of two core study areas: intellectual and developmental disability and lifespan perspectives, of which they acquire in-depth knowledge.

This Bachelor’s degree teaches students the requisite skills either for a professional career in the field of special education and social pedagogy or for further academic studies. Here, the choices open to them are a Master’s degree in Special Needs Education or a consecutive Master’s degree combined with a Doctorate in Special Education and Social Pedagogy and related disciplines.

The Bachelor’s course in Special Education takes both a humanistic and a scientific approach.

Learning outcomes and career openings

With regard to the professional and academic training of students in Special Education and Social Pedagogy, the overall goals are:

- To teach them the required skills to educate socially and academically, foster and support, guide, counsel, integrate, mentor and care for disabled and potentially disabled children, adolescents and adults. The possible clients are, notably, children, adolescents and adults with intellectual and developmental disability or profound intellectual and multiple, as well as children and adolescents with behavioural disorders and their respective social environments;
- The required skills for working with reference people from the clients' social background (families, specialists) and for counselling, guiding and supporting them;
- Self-awareness, self-reflection and self-evaluation in their professional activity and role;
- The required skills for observing, analysing and interpreting situations and using this knowledge to take appropriate action;
- The required skills to undertake process and network analyses, planning and evaluation, and public relations work;
- Theoretical knowledge of academic and social education and disability and the ability to categorise these contents to critical discernment.

During the programme, the students do practical work with the following client groups:

- Children, adolescents and adults with intellectual and developmental disability or profound intellectual and multiple disabilities;
• Children and adolescents with behaviour disorders or in difficult life situations;
• Children, adolescents and adults with motor or sensory disabilities, or autism spectrum disorders;
• People at risk of disability.

The career prospects of graduates with a Bachelor of Arts in Special Education and Social Pedagogy cover the same overall goals and client groups as during their internship:

• Special educational and social pedagogical work in support services for persons with disabilities and youth welfare services in inpatient, semi-inpatient and ambulatory settings;
• Education management and advisory functions in support services for persons with disabilities and youth welfare services;
• Training at all levels of specialized workers in support services for persons with disabilities and youth welfare services;
• Further academic studies (Master).

Studies organisation

Structure of studies

180 ECTS credits, 6 semesters

Curriculum

http://studies.unifr.ch/go/6bJ0s (French)
http://studies.unifr.ch/go/AC34U (German)

Admission

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

• Swiss academic Maturity Certificate
• Swiss vocational or specialised Baccalaureate in conjunction with the supplementary exam certificate from the Swiss Maturity Commission
• 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 recognized Swiss school-leaving certificates is to be found on the webpages of swissuniversities (in French and German only): http://studies.unifr.ch/go/en-admission-swiss-certificates

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 the last three years of schooling include at least six general education subjects, independent from each other, in accordance with the following list:

1. First language (native language)
2. Second language
3. Mathematics
4. Natural sciences (biology, chemistry or physics)
5. Humanities and social sciences (geography, history or economics/law)
6. Elective (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: http://studies.unifr.ch/go/en-admission-countrylist

In addition, foreign candidates must present proof of sufficient language skills in French or German.

The assessment of foreign school-leaving certificates is based on the «CRUS Recommendations for the Assessment of Foreign Upper Secondary School-Leaving Certificates, 7 September 2007» (http://studies.unifr.ch/go/crus07en). 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 Arts in Special Education and Social Pedagogy 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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