South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE)
Guidance for College- and University-based Field and Clinical Experiences for 2020-21

Note: In this document, the term *clinical experience* refers to the full-time, culminating experience of a program preparing candidates for certification in teaching, service, or leadership fields. These clinical experiences may include traditional student teaching, residencies, or internships—and these terms may be used interchangeably in this document. The term *field experience* refers to field-based opportunities and activities prior to the full clinical experience.

The COVID-19 public health emergency presents unprecedented challenges for South Carolina school districts, colleges, and universities in preparing for the 2020-21 academic year. Traditional educator preparation providers have established essential partnerships with the state's districts and schools to ensure that educator candidates have opportunities for meaningful field and clinical experiences in school settings as they observe, learn from, and work with exemplary teachers, service professionals, and leaders. These experiences with school-based mentors are integral components of college and university-based programs preparing the next generation of educators for careers in South Carolina's public schools.

On June 22, 2020, the AccelerateED Task Force published *Guidance and Recommendations for the 2020-21 School Year*, recognizing "that our state's education system will continue to face extraordinary, new challenges that will require unprecedented levels of cooperation and coordination among students, families, staff, and school communities" (p. 3). In making decisions regarding the reopening of schools, districts will utilize one or more scheduling models depending on local contexts and on risk factors related to the spread of COVID-19. These scheduling models include the following:

1. a "traditional" model in which students, faculty, and staff return to school buildings for in-person instruction;
2. a hybrid model in which instruction consists of both in-person interactions and distance learning; and
3. full distance learning.

Because scheduling models utilized by school districts will vary and may change during the course of the academic year, the SCDE recognizes that clinical experiences and the field experiences prior to student teaching may take on new or varied formats by necessity.

Prioritizing Placements

To support candidates nearing completion of an educator preparation program during the 2020-21 school year and to ensure that these candidates have every opportunity to complete these programs and meet requirements for certification, providers and school district partners should prioritize placements of educator candidates enrolled in culminating clinical experiences.

Full-time Student Teaching or Clinical Experiences

Candidate Placement and Instruction

During the clinical experience, candidates must follow the schedule and teaching model of their cooperating teacher or school-based mentor.

- If the cooperating teacher is providing in-person instruction in a traditional classroom setting, the candidate will do so as well, adhering to all safety protocols and procedures of the school and district.
- If the cooperating teacher is providing instruction in a hybrid or distance learning model, the candidate will follow the same format as the school-based mentor and adhere to related safety protocols and procedures, including the district's technology policies regarding acceptable use and security.

Depending on the model in which the coaching teacher provides instruction to students, teacher candidates may require user accounts and access to the learning management systems or other web-based instructional platforms utilized by districts. Providers are encouraged to address these needs with districts and modify established partnership agreements as necessary.

Candidate Supervision during Clinical Experiences

College and university providers must work with district partners to establish or modify agreements regarding the supervision and observation of candidates.

The SCDE provides the following guidance and flexibility regarding the supervision and observation of candidates during the 2020-21 school year:

- Any orientation and pre-planning meetings, as well as training sessions for school-based mentors and cooperating teachers, may be conducted virtually—including those training sessions related to South Carolina's system for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT).
- Classroom observations may be conducted in-person or virtually. Supervisors may also conduct observations by viewing and evaluating video of lessons taught by candidates.
- If the district and college or university partner agree to in-classroom observations, supervisors must adhere to school and district safety protocols. In this instance, observations should be announced so that appropriate preparations are made.
- Post-observation, mid-term, and summative conferences may be conducted virtually.

In the event of school closures that prevent the completion of standard clinical experience requirements established in State Board of Education guidelines, providers have flexibility as outlined in the following policy approved on March 10, 2020: Emergency Provisions for Clinical Experience (Student Teaching) Requirements.

Field Experiences Prior to the Clinical Phase

Due to the public health emergency, districts may be unable to accommodate all requests for both clinical and field experience placements or may limit opportunities for field placements prior to student teaching. The SCDE encourages districts to allow field placements to the greatest extent possible and acknowledges that decisions regarding such placements must prioritize the safety and well-being of all stakeholders.

Flexibility for Field Experiences

Providers have flexibility to develop and implement field experiences that meet identified learning goals of the academic courses within approved programs. The focus of these experiences should be on high-quality opportunities for candidates to

- develop and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of effective practitioners in their specific certification fields;
- engage in activities of increasing responsibility and complexity; and
- demonstrate readiness to enter the full-time clinical experience.

The SCDE encourages providers to be innovative in their development and implementation of field experiences prior to student teaching and recognizes that the quality of field experiences is more significant than the quantity of these activities and interactions. By design, field experiences should include a broad set of meaningful interactions with PK-12 learners and effective in-service educators. Providers are encouraged to implement experiences that maximize interactions with PK-12 students and professional educators to the greatest extent possible and to utilize related experiences, as needed, when placements in school settings are not possible. Additionally, the SCDE encourages providers to collaborate with each other to identify and develop resources and opportunities, and the Office of Educator Services is available to provide technical assistance to providers to facilitate these collaborations.

The SCDE offers the following flexibility regarding field experiences.

- State Board of Education (2012) requirements regarding the number of field experience hours prior to student teaching are suspended for candidates enrolled in preparation programs during the 2020-21 academic year.
- Field experiences may include placements in traditional classroom settings, placements facilitated via distance learning, or placements that are hybrid in design.
- As needed, providers may arrange placements in non-public school settings (e.g., private or independent schools and child development centers).
- Field experiences may include varied activities that include but are not limited to:
    - synchronous and asynchronous observations in traditional, distance, or hybrid settings;
    - utilizing video of exemplary teachers conducting lessons, demonstrations, and classroom sessions;
    - micro-teaching with peers;
    - tutoring PK-12 students in traditional, distance, or hybrid settings;
    - practicum experiences teaching and/or tutoring peers in entry-level college courses; and
    - classroom or other teaching/service-related simulations.

Candidates must follow all health, safety, and policy guidelines established by their institutions and the districts, schools, and other entities with which they are placed.

Note: Providers should consult accreditation organizations (e.g., the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) or the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)) when modifying field experiences in programs accredited by these entities.