

Educator Preparation Guidelines: Standards, Policies, and Procedures

Emergency Exemptions for Spring 2020 Clinical and Field Experiences due to COVID-19

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) recognizes that educator preparation providers have been forced to modify Spring 2020 clinical experiences due to mandated school closures and that these modifications may, by necessity, exceed the flexibility provided in the State Board of Education (SBE) policy, Emergency Provisions for Clinical Experience (Student Teaching) Requirements.

Due to the extraordinary circumstances related to COVID-19, the SCDE is providing additional guidance and flexibility to providers regarding candidates enrolled in Spring 2020 clinical experiences.

Under the provisions of this additional flexibility, the following SBE requirements are waived: the minimum length of the clinical experience, number of days of independent teaching, and number of formative and summative observations as part of the state's system for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT).

Providers have flexibility to make decisions regarding a candidate's overall performance and eligibility for certification based on the professional judgment of the provider's preparation faculty in consultation with the clinical supervisor and cooperating teacher, using the available observations, evidence, and documentation collected during the modified clinical experience.

Recommending Candidates for Educator Certification

A provider may recommend a candidate for certification so long as each of the following conditions are met:

1. The candidate has earned an overall rating of Met on the provider's summative ADEPT evaluation based on the available observations, evidence, and documentation collected relative to the South Carolina Teaching Standards (SCTS) 4.0 indicators during the modified clinical experience.

If available evidence does not support an overall judgment of Met, the provider may not recommend the candidate for certification. In this instance, the provider should work within institutional policies and guidelines for issuance of an Incomplete (or other appropriate steps) to ensure the candidate has an opportunity to improve upon identified deficiencies and complete the clinical experience successfully at a later time.

2. The candidate has earned a successful overall grade for the provider's clinical experience.
3. The candidate has successfully completed the provider's preparation program and has been conferred the related degree.

For Spring 2020 and due to closures impacting testing centers, a provider may submit the certification recommendation form prior to a candidate earning successful scores on the subject

area and pedagogy assessments. The provider should note on the form if qualifying scores are not available at the time of recommendation. In this instance, the recommendation form will verify the candidate's successful completion of all requirements of the preparation program with the exception of one or more assessments required for certification.

The SCDE will issue an educator certificate to a teacher candidate once all required documentation is on file:

1. the certification application and fee (submitted prior to student teaching);
2. cleared fingerprint-based criminal background reports (submitted prior to student teaching*);
3. an official transcript documenting the conferred degree;
4. official scores on the subject area and pedagogy assessments required by the State Board of Education for certification; and
5. the program verification and certification recommendation form submitted by the provider.

* Fingerprint-based criminal background reports are valid for a period of eighteen months. The SCDE will advise any candidate who must repeat the clearance process due to expired background reports.

Flexibility for Clinical Experiences in Service or Leadership and Administrative Fields

Under this policy, providers have flexibility to make comparable emergency provisions for clinical experiences in educator preparation programs leading to initial certification in service fields (i.e., library media specialist, speech-language therapist, and school counselor) or add-on certification in leadership and administrative fields.

Flexibility for Field Experiences Prior to the Clinical Experience

SBE policy for field experiences leading up to the culminating clinical or student teaching experience (approved August 2014) requires that candidates enrolled in undergraduate teacher preparation programs complete one hundred hours of field experiences prior to student teaching. Candidates enrolled in graduate programs leading to initial certification must complete seventy-five hours prior to student teaching.

Due to closures of PK–12 schools and shifts to online learning by colleges and universities, providers have flexibility to utilize varied online or virtual learning opportunities and collaborations in lieu of field experience hours that can no longer be completed in school settings.