

COVID-19 Guidance for Educator Preparation Program Completion and Initial Licensure

Fall 2020

The guidance in this document is subject to change as additional information about the spread and prevention of COVID-19 is known. New directives from Governor Jim Justice and public health officials may be forthcoming and may evolve prior to the start of the school year or during the school year. Educator preparation programs as well as County boards of education must be prepared to alter their learning plans to comply with any new directives and to best safeguard student health and learning needs.

In response to the continued impact of the COVID-19 health crisis, the West Virginia Department of Education's (WVDE) Office of Educator Development and Support, in collaboration with the WVDE Office of Certification and the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) have developed guidance on meeting requirements for field and clinical experiences for program completion and, subsequently application for initial licensure.

Field Experience and Clinical Experience Q & A

As we move closer to fall, how will county decisions regarding in-person, blended or remote learning scenarios due to COVID-19, affect the completion of field and clinical experiences?

Policy 5100 permits virtual clinical experience for up to 50% of required hours. Due to the fluid nature of COVID-19, Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) may utilize a hybrid approach for the clinical setting if the district is also adopting this platform for instruction. Pre-service teachers will follow the district's protocol and procedures for instruction.

Will the WVDE allow students to be recommended for licensure without completing the 12- week minimum for student teaching?

Yes. Policy 5100 allows institutions to move forward with clinical experiences that have fallen short of meeting the minimum 12-week requirement, as follows:

- » 6.7.b.5. Clinical Experiences Completed in the Public Schools. Each candidate completing an approved program shall spend a minimum of 12 weeks in the clinical portion of the program unless he/she is able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the college supervisor and the cooperating public school supervisor that he/she has achieved the proficiency level in less than the specified time.

Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) should follow directives from university administration for determining how affected students will meet course proficiencies required in the student-teaching practicum. The WVDE will accept the EPP's professional recommendation of program completion.

Will pre-service students be restricted access into the schools?

WVDE and the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) believe the student teacher is part of the educational process and must be included as an integral component of the educational community with the local school. WVDE recommends districts classify pre-service teachers as educators rather than visitors in district buildings. Pre-service teachers will follow district guidelines for employees surrounding reentry with the understanding that enhanced screening may be required and pre-service teachers will remain with a core group of students to reduce contact protecting all individuals.

Will the 125 hours of required pre-student teaching be adjusted this fall in response to COVID-19?

Yes. Candidates who are being admitted to student teaching/residency for Fall 2020 will be provided with flexibility in meeting the 125-hour field experience requirement. An EPP should work within the guidelines of its university protocols to provide innovative, alternative options (in lieu of onsite experiences) for meeting the diverse field experience requirements. Documentation should be maintained for accreditation purposes as well.



Will EPPs be permitted to place student teachers in a single placement for their clinical rather than the two required by Policy 5100 for specific programmatic levels?

Yes. To minimize opportunities for sustained exposure, pre-service clinical students should remain in a single placement for the 2020-2021 school year. EPPs will document previous field experience placements in diverse settings as evidence for national accreditation.

How will EPPs address field experience if the instructional week is adjusted?

EPPs may adapt and innovate in order to provide field experiences in alternative formats, including virtual options. Documentation should be maintained in the event a field experiences cannot be completed. See question above related to 125-hour pre-student teaching requirement.

Program Completion, Performance Testing, and Licensure Q & A

Will licensure be delayed if a student does not complete the performance assessment?

For candidates completing student teaching or residency placements during Fall 2020, EPPs should continue to support those candidates to satisfactorily complete the TPA according to the plan that the institution has developed for all enrolled students completing semester requirements.

- » **Nationally Normed TPA:** EPPs who have selected a nationally normed TPA as a requirement for program completion should follow the COVID-19 guidance and adjusted deadlines from the vendor (ETS/PPAT or Pearson/edTPA). If the EPP administration and its stakeholders determine it is not feasible for candidates to complete the edTPA or the PPAT, the WVDE will allow those completing student teaching/residency during Fall 2020 to use the PLT in lieu of the program completion requirement of a TPA.
- » **Locally Developed TPA:** EPPs that have selected to use either the West Virginia TPA or another locally developed performance assessment should also support candidates to complete the TPA and follow the guidance of the respective institution regarding program completion. The PLT is already a licensure requirement for EPPs choosing the locally developed TPA.

If a Fall 2020 teacher candidate has not taken and passed the Praxis II content assessment(s), will the candidate be permitted to apply for a clinical permit?

Yes. If testing centers are not available due to closure and/or capacity issues, candidates may still apply for a clinical permit with the institution's recommendation. All content exams must be completed for initial licensure. Please note ETS has provided options of in-home testing to meet the needs of teacher candidates and many testing sites have reopened for those students who are unable to test at home. Continue to monitor the Team Testing channel for current updates.

Will licensure testing requirements be waived due to testing sites being closed?

No. However, the WVDE has developed a plan to address the processes, timelines and other requirements are affected by the COVID-19 testing site closures.

What guidance is provided if a candidate for Fall 2020 admission has not yet successfully passed the Praxis basic skills exam or qualified for an exemption?

For those candidates who are applying for Fall 2020 admission to an education program, but have not yet completed the basic skills test due to the closure of the testing sites, the at-home testing option may be used to obtain the necessary scores for admittance. EPPs should follow the guidance provided by the institution for meeting basic skills requirements for program admittance.

If a Spring 2020 teacher candidate has not taken and passed the PLT, due to continued closure or capacity issues of Prometric or other testing sites, will the candidate be required to wait to apply for licensure?

No. While licensure testing will still be required, program completers will not be required to wait to apply for licensure. A one-year, non-renewable Temporary Professional Teaching Certificate allowing the licensure applicant the opportunity to complete the PLT will be granted. Once all licensure testing is successfully completed, the applicant may apply for an Initial Professional Teaching Certificate.

Please note: The Temporary Professional Teaching Certificate may be used for employment in West Virginia schools but is nonrenewable and cannot be used for reciprocity. However, experience gained while holding this certificate will be counted as professional teaching experience.

Where can additional guidance for West Virginia public schools accessed?

- » Coronavirus Information
<https://wvde.us/covid19/>
- » West Virginia Schools Re-entry Toolkit: COVID-19 Guidance
<https://wvde.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/WV-School-Re-entry-Toolkit-070820-FORWEB-2.pdf>

