

**MERCER**  
UNIVERSITY

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TIFT COLLEGE OF EDUCATION



**Cooperating Teacher Handbook  
Professional Practicum & Mentored Practicum**



Dear Cooperating Teacher:

Thank you for agreeing to accept the important responsibility of mentoring a teacher candidate from Mercer University. We will be working closely together this semester to help our students make a smooth transition from student to a confident and effective certified teacher. We appreciate your willingness to play such a critical role in his or her development.

This handbook outlines and describes the role you will partake in, while our Tift student completes their required experience within your classroom. Our Practicum field experience is designed to give the teacher candidate an intensive experience just before student teaching. Teacher candidates are expected to spend a **minimum** of eighty (80) hours in the classroom over a period of the semester. A practicum student should spend a minimum of two ½ days or one full day per week in the classroom.

University Supervisors will serve as a liaison for the Office of Field Placement with assisting our teacher candidates to conduct formal observations, assignments, and seminars. At the beginning of the experience, our supervisor will reach out to you to schedule a hello visit. Please use this time, to ask any questions about your role as the cooperating teacher and schedule two formal observation visits.

Our evaluation process is very important for the teacher candidate and for our Tift College of Education program. Please complete the following throughout the semester for our student:

- Cooperating Teacher Profile
- (2) Formative Evaluation Observations
- Professional Behavior and Dispositions Assessment
- Summative Evaluation

The forms mentioned above are electronic and will be sent to you via your work email. At the end of the term, our University Supervisor may ask you for any relevant information necessary to help assign a grade that will accurately reflect the candidate's present level of competence and future potential as a teacher.

If, for any reason, you need to talk to the University Supervisor or with me at any time during the semester, please contact me. The University Supervisor will let you know how best to get in touch with him/her, and my contact information is below.

The faculty of the Tift College of Education of Mercer University appreciates your willingness to allow our student to work with you in your classroom.

Sincerely,

The Office of Field Experience  
Tift College of Education  
Mercer University

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## **Contact Us**

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## Cooperating Teacher Responsibilities

Listed below are the main responsibilities when working with a Professional Practicum student or a Mentored Practicum student:

- Work with Teacher Candidate to plan the semester experience
- Oversee the planning and implementation of all lessons plans
- Approve all lessons plans for candidates before the teaching of the lesson.
- Meet with the Teacher Candidate to share and discuss strengths and weaknesses throughout their experience
- Complete the following Assessments for our teacher candidate through Chalk and Wire\*:
  - Cooperating Teacher Profile
  - Conduct two (2) Formal Observation Evaluations spaced throughout the experience. Please review the GA Intern Keys Assessments included in this handbook to use while our student is teaching.
  - Complete a GA Intern Keys Summative Evaluation at the end of the experience
  - Complete a Professional Behavior Dispositions Assessment form at the end of the experience
  - Approve the Teacher Candidate's Time Log each week.

\*Guest Accounts are created using your school email address. Please alert your Teacher Candidate if you do not receive any of the mentioned assessments above.

- At the first sign of trouble, contact the University Supervisor

In addition to supporting all teacher candidate requirements listed above, we ask that all Cooperating Teachers:

- Build a trusting and supportive relationship with the teacher candidate and consistently provide helpful and encouraging feedback to candidates after informal and formal observations.
- Talk openly and honestly with the candidate when discussing and completing evaluation and assessment forms.
- Provide a designated area for the teacher candidate to keep lesson plans and materials.

The Cooperating Teacher or another school employee, including a substitute teacher, must be present at all times when the Teacher Candidate is in the presence of children inside or outside the classroom.

## Helpful Information for Cooperating Teachers

**All Mercer University's teaching candidates have been required to adhere to the following:**

- At the first sign of an issue or potential problem, please contact the University Supervisor.
- The Teacher Candidate is expected to observe the schedule/hours planned with the CT at the beginning of the experience.
- The candidate will adhere to the same holiday schedule as the system to which the candidate is assigned.
- The candidate must sign in at the front office and wear Mercer nametag at all times.
- The candidate is required to contact CT before all absences. The candidate is expected to make up all missed days at the end of the experience.

- The candidate may NOT serve as a substitute teacher, may NOT administer standardized tests. The candidate may work with a substitute for the CT when the CT must be absent.
- The candidate is expected to dress professionally at all times. No jeans may be worn even on days teachers may wear jeans. Candidates may wear school t-shirts on specified days if teachers wear school t-shirts on certain days.

## **Georgia Intern Keys Formative Observations:**

The formative assessment is designed to be used by the candidate as a self-assessment, the Cooperating Teacher, and the University Supervisor.

The purpose of the Ga Intern Keys observation instrument is to provide feedback to teacher candidates throughout the initial teacher preparation programs and to familiarize candidates with the standards that will be used to evaluate their effectiveness as in-service teachers in Georgia's P-12 schools.

The ratings on the formative observation evaluation are not included in the calculation of the candidate's final course grade; the ratings are indicators of the candidate's progress. This key assessment will be required for practicum and student teacher courses.

Teacher candidates will be required to complete the following assessments in addition to submitted assignments:

### **Practicum/Mentored Practicum**

- A minimum of two (2) on-site formative evaluation observations of teaching performance by the Cooperating Teacher during the semester, including an observation during the two-day learning segment.
  - The lessons observed by the CT must not be the same lessons observed by the US or the lesson used for the video critique. The Cooperating Teacher should discuss each observation with the teacher candidate and should provide a copy of the assessment to the teacher candidate.

### **Helpful Hints for Evaluations**

- Collaborate with the student to schedule the observation evaluations.
  - Observation schedule should be staggered throughout the course. Please review the phases of Practicum/Mentored Practicum for guidance
- Teacher Candidates should email the Supervisor the lesson plan no later than the day before the observation and should have the lesson plan viewable when you arrive to observe.
- Provide constructive feedback.
- Observe the entire lesson.
- Complete the online GA Intern Keys Assessment within 7 days of the observed lesson.
  - Students need to see this throughout the semester to grow from one lesson to the next
- ALWAYS make comments on the Formative Evaluations. There should always be a correlation between the Formative, Mid-Term, Summative, and Disposition evaluations.
- Conference immediately following each observation.
- The Mid-Term Evaluation should be completed at the mid-point of the semester with the cooperating teacher.

## **Suggestions Timeline for Practicum/Mentored Practicum Experience**

For the first few days of the Practicum experience, we expect the teacher candidates to assume an observational role in order to get a “feel” for the classroom. After this observation period, your teacher candidate should assume greater independence, but should still seek your approval of plans and activities. In order to facilitate this progression, **you and the teacher candidate will need to participate in planning sessions during the first two weeks to establish a calendar and to determine when lessons can be taught.**

NOTE: The teacher candidates must have properly written instructional plans for teaching or for any activities they have planned. These plans should be kept in a notebook during the entire time period of the field experience. Your teacher candidate is always expected to have your approval for any teaching plans.

As the Cooperating Teacher, you will have the best opportunity to note the progress of and to make positive suggestions to the teacher candidate. The following list offers suggestions as to ways you might be most helpful to your teacher candidate.

1. Assist the teacher candidate in becoming involved in the routine of the teaching/learning environment.
2. Provide as many opportunities as are possible and appropriate for your teacher candidate to observe varied instructional methods.
3. Provide constructive criticism and suggestions in regard to the observed teaching and the professional behaviors of your teacher candidate.
4. Provide constructive criticism and suggestions, when appropriate, in regard to written lesson plans. Critiques should deal with the appropriateness of objectives, instructional procedures and materials, and evaluative procedures for assessments of each objective.

### **For Further Information and Resources:**

<https://education.mercer.edu/academic-programs/field-placement/cooperating-teachers/>

# Phases of Professional Practicum/ Mentored Practicum

