



Tift College of Education:
Cooperating Teacher Handbook
for Practicum

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Welcome Letter

Dear Cooperating Teacher,

Thank you for your 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 describe the role you will partake in while our Tift student completes their required field experience with you. 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 the semester. A practicum student should spend a minimum of two half days or one full day per week in the classroom. The student must attend their placement for the full semester.

If the Teacher Candidate you are working with is a paraprofessional or lead teacher in your school, their placement will look different than a traditional, unpaid Teacher Candidate. Further details about students in these roles will be provided in the next section.

The **University Supervisor** assigned to your field experience student will contact you before the start of placement by e-mail. If you would prefer a phone call, please reach out to them with your contact information. Please ask any questions and express any concerns that you have about the program or about the student who has been assigned to you. It is our goal to work with you as closely as we can to make the field experience as meaningful as possible. If you need the University Supervisor to come to the school for any reason, please do not hesitate to call him/her or to contact him/her by e-mail with that request.

As the classroom teacher, you certainly have the best opportunities for observation and evaluation. Our evaluation process is very important for the Teacher Candidate and for our Tift College of Education program. All evaluations are electronic through Qualtrics. The full list is provided in the next section.

The forms mentioned above are electronic in Qualtrics 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 the classroom.

Sincerely,

The Office of Field Placement

Tift College of Education; Mercer University

TiftFieldPlacement@mercer.edu

Cooperating Teacher Responsibilities

Listed below are the primary responsibilities when working with a Practicum Teacher Candidate:

- Work with the Teacher Candidate to plan the semester experience. (i.e., what days and times will the candidate be in the classroom?)
 - All Practicum courses are 80 hours over a 15-week semester, or about 5-6 hours per week.
- Provide the Teacher Candidate with as many authentic opportunities to engage as possible and work with the Teacher Candidate and have him or her assist you with your daily responsibilities.
 - Teacher Candidate may take on responsibilities, with guidance, such as working with small groups, tutoring individual students, answering questions, co-teaching, read alouds, leading activities, leading transitions/daily routines, etc.
- Oversee the planning and implementation of all lesson plans.
- Approve all lesson plans for candidates before the teaching of the lesson. Provide feedback as needed.
- Meet with the Teacher Candidate to share and discuss strengths and weaknesses throughout their experience.
- Complete the following assessments for our Teacher Candidate through Qualtrics
 - ☐ Conduct two (2) Formal Observation Evaluations spaced throughout the experience. *Please review the Ga Intern Keys Assessment rubrics to use while the Teacher Candidate is teaching.*
 - ☐ Complete a Cooperating Teacher Profile
 - ☐ Complete a Ga Intern Keys Summative Evaluation at the end of the experience.
 - ☐ Complete a Professional Behavior and Dispositions Assessment at the mid-point and end of the semester.
 - ☐ Sign the Teacher Candidate's Time Log each week and at the end of the experience.
- At the first sign of trouble, contact the University Supervisor.
- 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.

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.
- Talk openly and honestly with the candidate when discussing strengths and weaknesses and completing evaluation and assessment forms.
- Provide a designated area for the teacher candidate to keep lesson plans and materials.

Non-Traditional Practicum Placements

Paraprofessionals:

There are generally four scenarios when working with **paraprofessional** Teacher Candidates:

1. You are a classroom teacher and the Teacher Candidate is coming into your classroom as your paraprofessional:
 - Ex: You are a kindergarten teacher and the teacher candidate is a kindergarten paraprofessional in your classroom.
 - The student will log any hours that they spend working as a paraprofessional in your classroom.
 - The student will teach four total whole-group lessons to the class during the semester. You will observe them teaching two whole-group lessons. The University Supervisor will observe them teaching a different two lessons.
 - You may choose to allow the paraprofessional to take on a more active role in the classroom by co-teaching, teaching more lessons, working with small groups, etc.
2. You are not a classroom teacher and the Teacher Candidate is in someone else's classroom as a paraprofessional:
 - Ex: You are an instructional coach and the Teacher Candidate is a second-grade paraprofessional
 - The student will log any hours that they spend working as a paraprofessional in their assigned classrooms.
 - You will **go to their classroom** to observe them teaching two whole-group lessons. The University Supervisor will observe them teaching a different two lessons.
3. You are a classroom teacher and the Teacher Candidate is coming in, but not as a paraprofessional:
 - Ex: You are a kindergarten teacher and the Teacher Candidate is a fifth-grade special education paraprofessional. They are using personal leave to spend 80 hours in your classroom. *This scenario only happens when the student is employed in an inappropriate setting (i.e., SPED)*
 - The student will log 80 hours in your classroom and will operate as a traditional Practicum student.
 - The student will teach four total whole-group lessons to the class during the semester. You will observe them teaching two whole-group lessons. The University Supervisor will observe them teaching a different two lessons.
 - You may choose to allow the Teacher Candidate to take on a more active role in the classroom by co-teaching, teaching more lessons, working with small groups, etc.
4. You are a classroom teacher but the Teacher Candidate is in someone else's classroom as a paraprofessional:

- Ex: You are a kindergarten teacher and the Teacher Candidate is a third-grade paraprofessional. *This scenario only happens when there is no one on the student's grade level with appropriate certification levels.*
- The student will log any hours that they spend working as a paraprofessional in their assigned classrooms.
- You will **go to their classroom** to observe them teaching two whole-group lessons. The University Supervisor will observe them teaching a different two lessons.

Lead Teachers:

Lead teachers will log all hours within their own classrooms. You will **go to their classroom** to observe them teaching two whole-group lessons. The University Supervisor will observe them teaching a different two lessons.

Lead teachers are also required to spend **15 additional hours** observing teachers outside of their grade level and submitting reflections to their University Supervisor.

- You do **not** have to sign off on these time logs.
- We do ask that you assist the Teacher Candidate in creating a schedule for obtaining these hours.
 - Ex: Spend one planning period per week in another grade level as an observer.

Helpful Information for Cooperating Teachers

Language that Mercer University uses for field placement:

- OFP – The Office of Field Placement
- TC – Teacher Candidate
- CT – Cooperating Teacher (you!)
- US – University Supervisor

All Mercer University **Teacher Candidates** have been required to adhere to the following:

- At the first sign of an issue or potential problem, please contact the University Supervisor.
- Observe the schedule/hours planned with the CT at the beginning of the experience.
- Adhere to the same holiday schedule as the system to which the candidate is assigned.
- Sign in at the front office and wear a Mercer nametag at all times.
 - Students who do not have a name tag will receive one within the first month of the semester.
- Contact the CT before all absences. The candidate is expected to make up all missed days by the end of the experience.
- May NOT serve as a substitute teacher and may NOT administer standardized tests. The candidate may work with a substitute for the CT when the CT must be absent.
- Dress professionally at all times. No jeans, sweatpants, or leggings may be worn, even on days where teachers may wear jeans. Candidates may wear school t-shirts on specified days if teachers wear t-shirts on certain days.
- Be present with a school employee at all times when in the presence of children inside or outside the classroom.

Teacher Candidates will complete journal reflections submitted to their University Supervisors where they will reflect on observations of:

- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Differentiation
- Assessment
- Professionalism
- Classroom Community and Climate

**Teacher Candidates who are lead teachers will reflect on their own teaching for these journals.*

Evaluations and Observations

Georgia Intern Keys Formative Observation:

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

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 teaching courses.

Teacher candidates will be required to complete the following assessments:

- A minimum of two (2) on-site formative evaluation observations of teaching performance by the Cooperating Teacher during the semester.
 - The lessons observed by the CT must not be the same lessons observed by the US or the lesson used for journal reflections. The CT 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 Teacher Candidate to schedule the observation evaluations.
 - Observation schedule should be staggered throughout the course. Please review the "Phases of Practicum" below for guidance.
 - The Teacher Candidate should provide the dates that their University Supervisor plans to observe to ensure it aligns with your schedule.
- Teacher Candidates should email the lesson plan to you **at least two days** before the observation and should have the lesson plan viewable when you arrive.
- Provide **constructive** and **detailed** feedback on each indicator of the formative observation. Anyone should be able to review the observation feedback from you and understand why the student received their scores.
- 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 formative evaluations. There should always be a correlation between the Formative, Mid-Term, Summative, and Dispositions evaluations.
- Conference immediately following each observation.

Suggested Timeline

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 some 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.**

The Teacher Candidate’s must have properly written or typed instructional plans for teaching or for any activities they have planned. These plans should be kept in a physical or digital 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:

- Assist the TC in becoming involved in the routine of the teaching/learning environment.
- Provide as many opportunities as are possible and appropriate for your teacher candidate to observe varied instructional methods.
- Provide constructive criticism and suggestions in regard to the observed teaching and the professional behaviors of your teacher candidate.
- 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 evaluation procedures for assessments of each objective.

Phase I Weeks 1 - 4	Phase II Weeks 5 – 10	Phase III Weeks 11 – 15
On Site Tasks - Plan schedule for semester - Observe - Assist - Co-Plan - Co-Teach	On Site Tasks - Observe - Assist - Co-Teach - Teach	On Site Tasks - Observe - Assist - Co-Teach - Teach
Assignments Weekly Time Log	Assignments - Weekly Time Log - First Lesson Plan Due	Assignments - Weekly Time Log - Second Lesson Plan Due
Evaluation TC: Ga Intern Keys Self-Evaluation	Evaluation - CT: Formative Evaluation 1 - US: Formative Evaluation 1 - CT: Mid-Point PBDA - US: Mid-Point PBDA	Evaluation - CT: Formative Evaluation 2 - US: Formative Evaluation 2 - CT: Final PBDA - US: Final PBDA
Other - Students attend orientation with US - Schedule 1st US and CT observations - Optional: Triad meeting with US and CT	Other - Attend seminar with US - Review observations and evaluations - Schedule 2nd US and CT observations - Optional: Triad meeting with US and CT	Other - Attend seminar with US - Review observations and evaluations - Optional: Triad meeting with US and CT

For further information and resources:

[Cooperating Teachers - College of Education](#)

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