Cooperating Teacher Handbook
Professional Practicum & Mentored Practicum
Dear Cooperating Teacher:

The Practicum field experience is designed to give the teacher candidate an intensive field 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.

So that the Practicum experience may be as beneficial as possible, we ask that you, the Classroom Teacher, utilize the teacher candidate to the maximum extent possible in the ongoing classroom program. We also require our teacher candidates to apply themselves diligently to assigned tasks and seek to develop their teaching potential professionally. We recognize, however, that your main responsibility is to your students and that they must receive priority in all instances. Nevertheless, without your help, this field experience would not be possible.

The University Supervisor will give to you his or her contact information and will observe and evaluate the candidate a minimum of two times. At the end of the term, the University Supervisor will ask you for relevant information necessary to assign a grade that will accurately reflect the candidate’s present level of competence and future potential as a teacher.

The Mercer student assigned to you has given you a white folder which contains the evaluation documents you will need this semester and an explanation for each. This evaluation process is very important for the teacher candidate and for our Tift College of Education programs. Please contact me if you have questions about this. You can access any information contained in this letter on our website: http://education.mercer.edu/students/office-of-field-placement/cooperating-teacher-information/

If, for any reason, you need to talk to the University Supervisor or with me at any time during the semester, please don’t hesitate to do so. As the person who is with the candidate most often, you have the best opportunities for observation and evaluation. 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. Sometimes concerns arise and if they do, please don’t hesitate to contact me. I am glad, at any time, to meet with you to discuss your concerns.

Sincerely,

Kristin T. Doss
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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 (Professional Practicum only)
- Oversee the planning and implementation of all lessons plans
- Conduct two (2) Formal Observations spaced throughout the experience. Please complete this form in TOFES.
- Conference with the teacher candidate after each evaluation
- Complete the Summative Evaluation at the end of the experience and review with the Teacher Candidate. Please complete this form in TOFES.
- Complete the electronic Dispositions Assessment form (via our website) at the end of the experience and review with the candidate. Please complete this form in TOFES
- Sign the Teacher Candidate’s Time Log each week and at the end of the experience (Professional Practicum only)
- Meet with the Teacher Candidate to share and discuss strengths and weaknesses throughout their experience
- 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.
- The CT must approve all lessons plans for candidates before the teaching of the lesson.
- Be honest and open with the candidate when discussing and completing forms.
- It is important to provide feedback to candidates after informal and formal observations.
- Be present with a school employee at all times when in the presence of children inside or outside the classroom.
Connected Learning Segment (CLS) Commentary

Note: To be used by students during fieldwork

Mercer Connected Learning Segment (CLS) Commentary Template

Teacher Candidate:

Grade Level:

Date:

Unit/Subject:

Compose a narrative response describing the effectiveness of the strategies you included in your connected learning segment (CLS) in each of the sections listed below. The purpose is to explain the rationale for choosing your strategies and analyze what went well and what you might do to improve student learning. You **may** use the guiding questions to help in developing your response. You **do not** have to respond to all of the questions. However, make sure your response is clear, concise and includes some evidence of theory and/or research.

**Standards Correlation and Central Content Focus:**

- How effective was your planning in terms of developing the central focus over the course of the learning segment? How well did students grasp the central focus of this learning segment by the final day?

**Learning Targets:**

- How effective were the learning targets that you used in this segment? Did the students understand the targets? Is there anything you would change about the way you designed or implemented the learning targets across the learning segment?

**Academic Language:**

- How did you scaffold the learning segment to support the demands of academic language so that students could learn, participate and engage in meaningful ways with the content?
- How did your CLS support the students’ receptive language skills (e.g., listening, reading) and productive language skills (e.g., discourse/speaking, syntax/writing)? Cite specific examples from the CLS.
- How well did students grasp the specific language function (usually identified from the verb in your standard) that students will need to engage in the content? Cite a specific task from your CLS that demonstrated opportunities for students to practice the language function.
- How did your learning segment promote a connection between reading and writing?
- Describe the learning strategies you used in your lesson plan to build knowledge of essential content-related vocabulary.

**Learning Segment Scope and Sequence:**

- How did your learning targets and tasks show a progression of learning over time and support the development of reasoning, problem solving, and/or critical thinking skills?
• How did your role and the students’ roles change over time to promote increased student ownership of the learning?

Differentiation/Planned Support (Context for Learning)

• How did you utilize the information you included in the context for learning (knowledge about your students) to inform critical decisions about what and how you taught? Provide specific examples.
• How did the lessons in your segment support the social, cultural, knowledge, skills, and/or interests of your students? Provide specific examples.
• How did the lessons in your segment support students with specific learning needs?
• What research based instructional strategies/theoretical principles did you utilize to ensure the learning needs of your students?

Assessment

• Describe both the formative and summative assessment measures you used in your CLS.
• What research based assessment strategies/theoretical principles helped guide you in your selection of assessment techniques?
• How did the results from these assessments provide specific information about student mastery of the skills identified in your central content focus?
• How were the assessments differentiated to address the needs of the various individuals or groups of students identified in your context for learning?
• How did you provide specific feedback to your students?
• How did you determine each student’s level of mastery of your central content focus?
• Will additional review be needed to help students grasp the content of your CLS?

Overall Reflection

• What part of your learning segment did you think was most effectiveness in terms of enhancing student learning?
• What would you change/improve about the way you taught this learning segment?
• What is one specific goal you would like to set to help you grow in your effectiveness as a teacher?
Connected Learning Segment (CLS) Template (3-5 days)

Teacher Candidate:

Grade Level:

Date:

Unit/Subject:

Standard Correlation:

Use the GSE or GPS standards and any other standards that are required in the county/school system in which you are placed. Write the whole standard and any element that will be used. Include all standards and elements that will be addressed during the CLS.

Central Content Focus:

Describe the central concept(s) or understanding(s) that you want students to gain by the end of this learning segment. Add an essential question for each day to reflect those concepts and understandings.

Learning Targets:

List what you want the students to know (knowledge) and be able to do (skills) at the end of this learning segment. These learning targets should help students grasp the central content focus.

Context for Learning:

List any special features of your school and/or classroom setting that will affect your teaching in this learning segment. Summarize the required or needed supports, accommodations, or modifications for your students that will affect your instruction. Also discuss how you will consider the cultural, social, emotional, developmental and interest needs of your students.

Academic Language:

Detail the specific academic language demands (language function, discourse and/or syntax) that will be used by students to participate in learning tasks through reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking to demonstrate understanding of the central lesson focus.

Key Vocabulary:

Identify specific academic vocabulary that students will need to understand the central content focus of the learning segment.
Materials/Instructional Technology:

List any materials needed (teacher/student) including technology, supplies, textbooks, and other resources particular to this learning segment.

Differentiated Strategies:

List specific strategies that will be used to meet the varied learning needs of the students as described in your context for learning.

Assessment Strategies:

Detail the ways that you will be checking for student understanding continuously throughout the learning segment. Give examples of specific uses of formative and/or summative assessments.

Learning Segment Scope and Sequence:

Provide an overview of the progression of your central content focus over time. Make a list including each day of the CLS and the key learning target(s) that will be addressed each day. The scope and sequence should demonstrate how skills and activities will become increasingly more complex over time.

Theoretical Principles and/or Research Based Best Practices:

Explain the educational theory and/or research used for planning the learning segment.

Step-by-step Procedures: Complete this section for EACH day of the CLS.

Standard(s): List the specific standard(s) and element(s) that will be addressed on this day of the CLS.

Learning Targets: List what you want the students to know (knowledge) and be able to do (skills) at the end of this lesson. These learning targets should help students grasp the central content focus.

Introduction: (_____minutes)

Explain how students will be involved in the opening of the lesson including elements such as prior knowledge check, review of previous learning targets and activating interest in the lesson content.

Instruction: (_____minutes)

Explain how you will present and engage students in the lesson content. Elements that might be detailed in this section include direct instruction, modeling, guided practice, demonstrations, directions for tasks, etc.

Practice: (_____minutes)
Explain how you will engage students in learning tasks to work towards mastery of the central focus. This might be done through strategies such individual or flexible groups, learning centers, performance tasks, etc. These tasks should specifically support your lesson learning targets and provide content application.

**Closing: (_____ minutes)**

Detail how students will be involved in strategies to review key concepts, summarize learning, clarify misconceptions and complete a final check of understanding.
Mercer Stand Alone Lesson Plan Template

Teacher Candidate:

Grade Level:

Date:

Unit/Subject:

Standard Correlation:

Use the GSE or GPS standard(s) and any other standards that are required in the county/school system in which you are placed. Write the whole standard and any element that will be used.

Central Content Focus:

Describe the central concept(s) or understanding(s) that you want students to gain by the end of this lesson. Add an essential question for each day to reflect those concepts or understandings.

Learning Targets:

List what you what the students to know (knowledge) and be able to do (skills) at the end of this lesson. These learning targets should help students grasp the central content focus.

Context for Learning:

List any special features of your school and/or classroom setting that will affect your teaching in this lesson. Summarize the required or needed supports, accommodations, or modifications for your students that will affect your instruction. Discuss how you will consider the cultural, social, emotional, developmental and interest needs of your students.

Academic Language:

Detail the specific academic language demands (language function, discourse and/or syntax) that will be used by students to participate in learning tasks through reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking to demonstrate understanding of the content focus of the lesson.

Key Vocabulary:

Identify specific academic vocabulary that students will need to understand the content focus of the lesson.

Materials/Instructional Technology:
List any materials needed (teacher/student) including technology, supplies, textbooks, and other resources particular to this lesson.

**Differentiated Strategies:**

List specific strategies that will be used to meet the varied learning needs of the students as described in your context for learning.

**Assessment Strategies:**

Detail the ways that you will be checking for student understanding continuously throughout the lesson. Give examples of specific uses of formative and/or summative assessments.

**Step-by-step Procedures:**

**Introduction: (_____minutes)**

Explain how students will be involved in the opening of the lesson including elements such as prior knowledge checks, review of learning targets and activating interest in the lesson content.

**Instruction: (_____minutes)**

Explain how you will present and engage students in the lesson content. Elements that might be detailed in this section include direct instruction, modeling, guided practice, demonstrations, directions for tasks, etc.

**Practice: (_____minutes)**

Explain how you will engage students in learning tasks to work towards mastery of the central focus. This might be done through strategies such individual or small flexible groups, learning centers, performance tasks, etc. These tasks should specifically support your lesson learning targets and provide content application.

**Closing: (_____minutes)**

Detail how students will be involved in strategies to review key concepts, summarize learning, clarify misconceptions and complete a final check of understanding.
Suggestions Timeline for 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. A syllabus is enclosed to assist you in planning. Also, the learning segment and lesson plan format and guidelines are enclosed for your information.

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.