

# **Field Experience Handbook**

*A Resource for Teacher Candidates, Host  
Teachers, & Field Instructors*

Office of Student Services and Credentialing  
School of Education, Health and Human Performance  
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## Preface

This handbook provides information regarding field experiences for the educator preparation program in the School of Education, Health and Human Performance (EHHP) at the College of Charleston (CofC). The Office of Student Services and Credentialing (OSSC) negotiates and officially announces all placements.

## Overview of a Field Experience

A field experience is a school-based learning opportunity that precedes a teacher candidate's clinical experience. Field experiences are directly connected to the South Carolina Department of Education's (SCDE) minimum number of classroom hours for aspiring teachers. Per SCDE guidelines, a teacher candidate at the undergraduate level is required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of field experiences prior to a clinical experience. **A graduate-level teacher candidate pursuing certification through a Master of Art in Teacher (M.A.T) program** must complete a minimum of 75 hours of field experiences prior to the clinical experience. Courses which require a field experience are notated in the appropriate roadmaps, catalogs, and course information.

## Purpose of Field Experiences

Field experiences provide opportunities for a teacher candidate to apply knowledge, skills, and dispositions in a variety of settings appropriate to the content and level of each program of study. Each field experience is designed so the student is able to integrate coursework and to be sequenced so candidates develop competencies necessary to begin careers.

## OSSC Contact Information

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## Definitions

### Teacher Candidate

A declared teacher education major who is pursuing a teaching certificate through the South Carolina Department of Education.

### Field Instructor

Teacher candidates who enroll in a course requiring a school-based experience are taught by a field instructor. The field instructor will be onsite to **supervise** teacher candidates as well as to support host teachers.

### District Partnerships

College of Charleston's teacher education programs have formal agreements with Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Two school districts to place teacher candidates in their respective schools. Inviting teacher candidates to be a part of a learning environment is a professional courtesy extended by school administrators and faculty members. Please remember that CofC teacher candidates and field instructors are guests in each host school and classroom.

### Placements

To manage requests made of school and district partners, OSSC negotiates placements and serves as the single point of contact between partner schools and CofC. **Teacher candidates do not initiate contact with a teacher or school administrator to request a field or clinical experience.** OSSC will maintain communication with field instructors regarding placement status and projected timelines to begin school-based experiences. This information will be relayed by to teacher candidates by field instructors.

### Host Teachers

Host teachers of field experiences afford teacher candidates opportunities to observe, support, and instruct diverse learners. It is important to express appreciation and thanks for the opportunity to apply theory and pedagogy in host teachers' classrooms with appropriate content. School administrators work closely with OSSC to identify which teachers will support a field experience. A teacher's area of certification, classroom setting, instructional content, experience, and availability for the upcoming semester are among the variables considered.

### **Initial Contact and Ongoing Communication**

Although each field experience is a program and course requirement, it is important to view these school-based placements as professional experiences. A teacher candidate's professional network will build with each placement. A teacher candidate should contact the host teacher as soon as the official placement has been received. Please introduce yourself in an initial email. Professional communication must be maintained with school administrators, teachers, staff, families, and students. This expectation applies to all modes of communication with any stakeholder of field experiences, which includes but is not limited to phone calls, text messages, emails, lesson plans, worksheets, slides, as well as in-person interactions. If you have questions about what professional communication entails, please seek guidance from the instructor of the field experience or OSSC.

## **Expectations for Field Experiences**

### **Schedule**

The visitation schedule for a field course depends on the program of study, field instructor, syllabus, and academic calendars of CofC and schools.

### **Transportation**

**All candidates are responsible for arranging their own transportation to host schools.** If a teacher candidate does not have access to a vehicle for a field experience course, the teacher candidate may consider other options (e.g., carpool, ride share, taxi or bus services, etc.). CARTA provides free service rides to all CofC students with a valid college identification.

### **Professional Attire**

Teacher candidates are expected to maintain standards of dress and appearance that conform to the established policies of local schools. Teacher candidates should dress professionally at all times in schools. Teacher candidates should have a discussion about attire with both the host teacher and field instructor prior to the first day of the experience.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory for field experiences. Absences are handled by the field instructor. If you are unable to attend a scheduled field experience at the host school (e.g., illness, car trouble, etc.), it is imperative that you notify the host teacher and field instructor as soon as possible. An excessive number of absences or insufficient number of completed hours as defined in the course syllabus may lead to consequences including, but not limited to, reduced course grade, failing grade in the course, etc.

### **Electronic Devices (including cell phones)**

Electronic devices are not to be used for personal communication at school sites during regular school hours. Electronic devices should be turned off before entering the school site and should not be turned back on until the school day has ended unless used for an instructional purpose under the direction of the host teacher. Use of electronic devices during emergencies should be consistent with school policy.

### **Appropriate Use of Social Media**

The Department of Teacher Education prohibits the sharing of school, teacher, or student images, videos, or classroom work samples to social media by teacher candidates in field and clinical experiences. Failure to comply with this policy may result in a failing grade and/or disciplinary action.

### **Academic Integrity**

Field experiences are designed to take place in school settings as outlined by the program and course syllabus. Submitting assignments without being physically present in the learning environment is not acceptable. If the required number of hours are not met for a field experience, assignments and/or course grades may be lowered as deemed appropriate by the field instructor with input from the department chair of teacher education. Additionally, if it appears a teacher candidate has misrepresented his or her school-based experience and/or hours, this concern may be submitted for review with the Honor Board.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### **Will I be placed at a school in close proximity to my College of Charleston address?**

OSSC makes a concerted effort to provide diverse field experiences to teacher candidates across local school district partners. Proximity to a school carries greater weight in placement decisions for a clinical experience, which is five days a week, than with field experiences, which are typically one to two days a week.

### **How are hours scheduled with host teachers for field experiences?**

Hours are dependent on the major/program of study and course syllabus. Information specific to the field experience will be listed in the course syllabus and reviewed by the field course instructor.

### **How early may I begin reporting to my host teacher?**

To allow administrators, teachers, and students of our partner schools to settle into a routine, teacher candidates usually report to their host teacher(s) sometime after Labor Day during the fall semester and in mid-January for the spring semester. Course instructors and the OSSC director offer guidance and support in this area each semester. Teacher candidates should make contact with their host teacher(s) as soon as they receive their placement(s) so that planning may begin.

### **May I request a new placement for a field experience?**

Once a teacher candidate has been placed with a host teacher, the placement is firm and will not be adjusted without approval of the OSSC Director.

### **What if I am working during semesters with a field experience?**

OSSC understands the need for teacher candidates to work. It is important to arrange flexible work hours so all requirements of the program of study may be met, including field experiences. Attending field experience hours is the same as attending a regularly scheduled class.

### **May I serve as a substitute teacher if the host teacher is absent?**

Teacher candidates may not serve as a substitute teacher for the host teacher. If a teacher candidate is asked to manage a classroom in the absence of the host teacher, then the teacher candidate should politely decline and bring this matter to the field instructor's attention.

### **Do I have to attend meetings or extracurricular activities?**

Teacher candidates in field experiences are not required to attend after-school meetings or activities for field experiences.

### **Should I buy a gift for my host teacher?**

Teacher candidates are not expected to buy a gift for the host teacher. A handwritten thank-you card at the end of the experience is a thoughtful way to express gratitude, and is always appreciated.

### **What is a non-licensure track? How does it impact required school-based experiences connected to field courses?**

Successful completion of a non-licensure track will result in a degree from the College of Charleston, but it does not lead to a teaching certificate issued by the South Carolina Department of Education. Alternative assignments (e.g., virtual experiences) may be used to meet content requirements for field experience courses.