The University of Central Arkansas

College of Education

Middle and Secondary Field Experience Handbook

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Purpose of Field Experience

Field experiences are designed to deliberately expand and challenge personal and professional attitudes while providing personal and professional growth opportunities for prospective teachers. Observation and first-hand experience within community agencies and P-12 settings provide prospective teachers with information and tools that complement classroom study and assist in the development of pedagogical skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for effective teaching.

What is Field Experience?

Field experiences involve activities done outside of class time to enhance the content being taught in that course. It can include observing in a classroom setting, tutoring students, reading to students, attending a school board meeting, interviewing teachers, volunteering in a community agency such as a Boys and Girls Club, or working with special needs children in a supervised setting. Field experiences also include Internship I and Internship II. If a course has a required field experience component, it will be listed clearly in the course syllabus.

Arkansas Law Regarding Child Abuse

According to Arkansas law, any person with cause to suspect child maltreatment, or who observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in child maltreatment must immediately notify the Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-482-5964). Maltreatment is defined as either abuse or neglect. Teachers are considered by law as mandated reporters.

Background Checks

All students completing a field course requirement are required to complete a background check. The cost to complete the background check is $10.00. You will be asked to fill out a background request form and return it to your instructor. The Office of Candidate Services will put your name and information into the system. An e-mail will be sent to your UCA cub e-mail account. The e-mail will contain a link that you must open to make the payment ($10) for the background check. The payment may be with a credit or debit card. After the payment is made, you will be shown a screen that says “Thank you for your payment, you are now being returned to the Student Connect site.”
This will be done automatically if you wait. A link to the site is also provided if you wish to return to the Student Connect site more quickly. PLEASE DO NOT CLOSE OUT OF THE SYSTEM UNTIL IT HAS RETURNED TO THE STUDENT CONNECT SITE. If you close the screen prior to returning to the Student Connect site, it will delay receipt of your background check. You will not be allowed to begin your field experience hours until your background check has cleared. Your instructor will let you know when your background check has cleared.

If you have already completed a recent background check through the Arkansas Department of Education and it can be verified on their website, you will not be required to pay for a second background check. However, you must complete the forms each semester that you will be in a school.

Please contact Nancy Ringgold with any questions or concerns. Her e-mail address is ringgold@uca.edu and the office number is 450-5478.

Policies Governing Field Experiences in the College of Education

Placements

Placement decisions are based upon availability of qualified supervisory personnel, range of experiences needed by the candidate, and recommendations from university faculty, district personnel officers, principals, and other candidates. Placements are generally determined by the range of grade levels required in the candidates program and by the site agreements with particular public schools; therefore, candidates may not request specific school placements and are never allowed to make their own arrangements for placement. Furthermore, candidates may not be placed in any school their children attend nor where family members are employed. Candidates may not be placed in the high school from which they graduated for any early field experience placement. Once placements are made, no changes will be made unless deemed necessary by the Field Placement Coordinator, Department Chairs, or other instructors. (All policies in this handbook may or may not apply to EDUC 1300 concurrent credit courses taught on area high school campuses.)
Diversity

The UCA College of Education requires that all candidates have experiences with P-12 students of diverse populations including students with exceptionalities, English Language Learners, students from various ethnic backgrounds, and students from various socioeconomic groups. Therefore, candidates will be assigned to a variety of placement sites while in the teacher education program. Every effort will be made to place you in schools with diverse populations. Candidates are required to document these placements and their experience with various diverse populations.

Though not inclusive, the following is a list of school sites UCA regularly uses:

- Conway Public
- Mayflower Public
- Perryville Public
- Pulaski County Special
- Vilonia Public
- East End-Bigelow Public
- Little Rock Public
- Cabot Public
- Greenbrier Public
- South Conway County Public
- North Little Rock Public
- Little Rock Prep Academy

Internship Waiver

Candidates will sign a waiver while enrolled in EDUC 1300 Education as a Profession. This waiver releases all faculty, the College of Education, and the University of Central Arkansas, and those associated with the university—including cooperating teachers from any lawsuit. Each student must sign this waiver before further course work can be pursued.

Attendance Form

It is the candidate’s responsibility to provide the mentor teacher with the attendance form to initial at each visit. The time the observation began and ended should be clearly noted. Every portion of the attendance form must be completely filled out. Incomplete forms will not be accepted. At the end of each field experience, the candidate will give the attendance form, along with an envelope, to the mentor teacher. The mentor teacher will fill out the evaluation portion located at the bottom of the attendance form and put it in the envelope. The mentor teacher will seal the envelope and sign across the seal. It is the responsibility of the candidate to return the attendance form, with the evaluation portion filled out by the mentor teacher, to the UCA instructor by the date determined. (P-4 junior/senior block use alternate forms. In some courses, it is not required that mentor teacher fill out the evaluation portion of the attendance form.)
Basic Candidate Responsibilities While in the Field

1. Candidates are to report to the main office every time they enter the building unless the principal has specifically made other arrangements. Candidates are required to sign in as a visitor to the school. Be sure to have identification. Many schools now require a driver’s license to be presented prior to entry.

2. Punctuality and attendance are of utmost importance. Participants in field experiences are expected to arrive promptly for field experiences and remain on duty for the entire time designated for each session of the semester.

3. In the event that a candidate must be absent, the candidate must notify the mentor or supervising teacher by telephoning the school or site contact as early as possible. Sessions missed are to be rescheduled before the end of the semester, and these sessions must be arranged in advance with the mentor teacher at his/her convenience.

4. Candidates should park in the appropriate area. Many schools have designated parking places for visitors to park. Check with the office concerning this matter.

5. Candidates should dress professionally, be neatly groomed, and abide by that school’s dress code. Participants should be neatly groomed at all times. Jeans, short skirts, t-shirts, wind suits, athletic shoes, hats or caps, and shorts are inappropriate for those engaged in field experience. It should also be noted that excessive tattoos and excessive piercings are not permitted in most public schools.

6. Candidates should abide by all school policies and rules while visiting the school. Personal business such as telephone calls and personal visits may not be conducted during field experience hours. Pagers and cell phones may NOT be used. Tobacco, firearms, knives, or other weapons of any design are strictly prohibited.

7. Candidates should make every effort to enter the classroom BEFORE instruction begins, that is, before school, between classes, or during a break time. Do not enter the classroom when class is in session unless the mentor teacher has requested it.
8. The first responsibility of the mentor teacher is the well-being of the students in the classroom. UCA candidates should be aware of the many demands made on the classroom teacher and should work around the teacher’s schedule. **It is the candidate’s responsibility to seek the level of involvement expected by the university instructor and to interact positively with the teacher and students.**

9. Field experience candidates are expected to fulfill course requirements assigned by the university instructor and approved by the mentor teacher. On the first visit, candidates are to provide the cooperating teacher with appropriate forms and course requirements. The teacher must have a clear understanding of the field requirements for the course.

10. Every candidate will be responsible for providing his/her mentor teacher with appropriate forms and envelope addressed to the university instructor for whom the field is being completed. Mentor teachers are to place the completed evaluation form in the envelope provided and sign across the seal. Candidates are responsible for returning the sealed envelope, with the evaluation inside, to the university instructor.

11. **Candidates are there to observe, learn, and participate, not to evaluate or criticize!**

12. Observations made or information gained about any P-12 student during field experiences is to be held in the strictest confidence. Ethical and legal considerations preclude revealing students’ names, behaviors, or activities. When videotaping lessons, UCA candidates must follow the school’s procedures for obtaining permission for such activity. **Field experience should not be discussed in such a way that would inform others of students’ or faculty names.**

13. UCA candidates are **NOT** to become personally involved with the classroom students.

14. Candidates should remember that they are representatives of the University of Central Arkansas. Their behavior should be positive and highly professional at all times.

15. Candidates may be removed from a field experience, or other actions taken, if it is determined that public school students are being negatively affected in any
way. The actions taken may be at the request of the school district or the university.

Completion of Field Experience

It is the responsibility of the candidate to complete all field experience hours associated with a course. If the field experience hours are not completed, an “x” grade will be given for the course until the field hours are complete. The candidate has one semester from the time the “x” grade is given to complete the field hours; after that, the “x” grade is recorded as a failing grade (“F”) for the course. A candidate must have a “C” or better in all major and professional education course work to graduate from the program.

Retention and Removal

Retention:
If a candidate fails to exhibit professional conduct while in the field, or exhibits weaknesses that could later hinder his/her professional performance in the classroom and this is noted on an evaluation form by a mentor teacher, or noted by two or more instructors, a Notice of Need for Remediation can be completed. This will be completed by the instructor of the course, department chair, coordinator of Field Experience, and the candidate. A copy will be sent to the program coordinator and advisor. At this time, an improvement plan will be created and future actions will be discussed if improvements are not made. The department faculty and chairs will be responsible for following up on all improvement plans.

Removal:
A candidate may be removed from a field experience when any of the following occurs:

1. The appropriate school authority can demonstrate that the candidate’s presence in the classroom is not in the best interest of the students.
2. The candidate’s appropriate university authority can demonstrate that a candidate’s skill level either prevents the development or maintenance of a satisfactory learning environment in the field placement.
3. The candidate exhibits unprofessional or unethical behavior.
4. The candidate cannot achieve a satisfactory grade in a field experience course.

A grade of “F” will be assigned with or without the opportunity for re-enrolling in the course at a future time.

Appeals of Retentions and Removals

If a candidate so desires, he/she may submit a formal appeal of a retention or removal decision. In such a situation, a candidate can only initiate an appeal after seeking resolution with the program’s department chair. An appeal must be based on exceptional and extenuating circumstances and other pertinent information not previously available or considered. A formal appeal must be submitted in writing to the Dean of the College of Education (COE) within five business days of being notified of retention or removal status. The candidate may appeal to the COE Dean, in writing, within five business days of the committee’s decision. The candidate may appeal to the Provost, in writing, within five business days of the Dean’s decision. (See the complete Retention and Removal Policy on the COE website.)

Contact Information

The following people should be contacted concerning field experience questions:

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<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Email</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle/Sec. Field Exp.</td>
<td>Crystal Voegele</td>
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