**Early Field Experience Handbook**

**Master of Arts in Teaching**



**Updated 07/2018**

**Purpose of Early Field Experience**

Early 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 K-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?**

Early 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, assessing students needs, or providing targeted instruction for individuals or small group. Field experiences for MAT include P3T 20-hour grant requirement (if applicable-grant no longer available), Practicum, and Internship. If a course has a required field experience component, it will be listed clearly in the course syllabus. Currently, the following courses also have a field component: MAT 6320-Literacy Seminar, MAT 6314-Reading Difficulties, and MAT 5390-Practicum.

**MAT Field Experiences**

1. **P3T 20-Hour Grant – For those under the Partnership for Transition to Teaching Grant,** there are ***two*** ways to complete the observation hours. I can arrange for you to complete 20 hours of observation with a certified teacher in your area of licensure in one of our partnership districts, or you can substitute teach in one of our partnership districts. We work with all of our partnership districts to help our students to become substitute teachers--hopefully as a first step in securing a long term position.
2. **Practicum – During Practicum,** the 75 hours of observation must be completed in the student’s level/licensure area. Up to 30 substitute hours may be used. The student and teacher can work out observation times that are convenient for both as long as the total time observed is 75 hours in the student’s level/licensure area. Only hours in which the student is directly observing students in academic settings or working directly with the supervising teacher on professional responsibilities may count toward the 75 hours. Additional assignments are required during Practicum.
3. **Internship –** During Internship**,** the student shadows the teacher all day every day for the duration of the semester. The first day of internship is dependent upon what day the teachers return to work for the semester. Students are required to attend all professional development and meetings that the teacher is required to attend. The last day of internship is dead/reading day. See the MAT Internship handbook for details.

**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 an early field 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. Your name and information will be put 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.** The MAT Field Placement Coordinator will let you know when your background check has cleared.

If you have already completed a recent background check though 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.

Please contact Nancy Ringgold with any questions or concerns. Her e-mail address is ringgold@uca.edu and the office number is 501-450-5478.

**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. Placement sites are determined based on the address that you put on your application(s) as your home address. You can be placed up to 60 minutes from your home address. Every effort is made to minimize your travel time. Self-placements require a special form signed by the MAT Field Placement Coordinator. This is discussed during the Practicum and Internship meetings held each semester. Please note: Students are **never allowed to make their own arrangements for placement in certain districts**.

As of January 2018, the list includes:

Benton

Bentonville

Bryant

Cabot

Conway

Greenbrier

Little Rock

Mayflower

Morrilton

North Little Rock

Pulaski Special School District

Vilonia

Please contact the Field Coordinator, Mrs. Sunny Styles-Foster, for the most updated list.

Placements for those districts will be placed by the MAT Field Placement Coordinator ONLY. There are no exceptions. Furthermore, candidates may not be placed in any school their children attend nor where family members are employed. Once placements are made, no changes will be made unless deemed necessary by the Department Chair.

**Diversity**

The UCA College of Education requires that **all candidates** have experiences with K-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.

**Attendance Form (NOT applicable to Internship)**

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 line 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 to the mentor teacher. The mentor teacher will fill out the evaluation portion located at the bottom of the attendance form and sign the document. It is the responsibility of the candidate to return the attendance form and the evaluation portion filled out by the mentor teacher, by the date and method that has been determined by the UCA instructor.

**Basic Candidate Responsibilities While in the Field**

1. Candidates are to report to the principal’s office every time they enter the building unless the principal has **specifically** made other arrangements.
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. For Internship, in the event that a candidate must be absent, **the candidate must notify the mentor or supervising teacher by telephoning the school as early as possible. Students must also complete the required online absence form and submit to the supervisor and Sunny Styles-Foster, MAT Placement Coordinator. Students must also e-mail the principal and mentor teacher.** Sessions missed may have 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**. 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. **Candidates are there to observe, learn, and participate, not to evaluate or criticize!**
11. Observations made or information gained about any K-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.**
12. UCA candidates are **NOT** to become personally involved with the classroom students.
13. Candidates should remember that they are representatives of the University of Central Arkansas. Their behavior should be positive and highly professional at all times.
14. 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.