

Lamar University
College of Education and Human Development
Fitness to Teach Professional Policy

The College of Education and Human Development (COEHD) offers curriculum designed to academically prepare individuals for the teaching profession. However, satisfying the curriculum and testing requirements alone does not qualify a candidate for recommendation by Lamar University (LU) to the State of Texas for teaching certification. All teacher candidates in the LU Educational Preparation Program (EPP) are expected to demonstrate that they are prepared to teach children and youth. This preparation results from the combination of successful completion of university coursework and the demonstration of important human characteristics and dispositions that all teachers should possess.

A. Required Documentation

Prior to admission to the EPP, all teacher candidates will be apprised of the Fitness to Teach (FTT) policy. This policy applies to all candidates upon enrollment in the EPP, and to candidates completing coursework in the COEHD that requires interaction with schools, and continues to apply until completion of their program.

1. In October and March a reminder will be sent to faculty to identify the *outstanding EPP teacher candidates* for recognition or *Tk20's FE Professional Concerns* for teacher candidates who demonstrate difficulties that raise concerns about the candidates' ability to successfully complete the program. Faculty may submit the referral forms at any time prior to mid-semester and final semester phase committee reviews.
2. The completion of these forms will allow the COEHD to identify teacher candidates who display outstanding knowledge and/or skills that deserve recognition and identify those who may have some difficulties that raise concerns about the candidate's ability to successfully complete the program. All forms completed will be sent to the phase committee through the Associate Dean for COEHD.
3. Teacher candidates must be in good standing with the LU.

B. Fitness to Teach Criteria

In addition to curriculum and testing requirements addressed in the LU catalog and other LU policies, all EPP teacher candidates will be screened throughout their program according to the criteria addressed in this policy, including dispositions for teaching. Dispositions for teaching are defined as those professional attitudes, values, and beliefs expected of an education professional

contained in this document. As a professional program, the COEHD reserves the right to recommend or not recommend teacher candidates for certification. If all criteria aren't met satisfactorily, teacher candidates may be denied full acceptance into the Educational Preparation Program and/or denied the opportunity to teacher candidate teach. Without unconditional acceptance into the EPP and successful completion of all coursework, field work, and teacher candidate teaching or its equivalent, the university does not recommend teacher candidates for Texas Teacher Certification. All teacher candidates referred for review are expected to participate in the process. Refusal to participate will not terminate or invalidate the process. Professional Agreement reviews are internal institutional reviews and are not open to the public, including family members, friends, and other professionals unless specifically requested by the Associate Dean for COEHD.

1. Completed Criminal History Review

In accordance with Texas Education Code 22.083, an examination of each teacher candidate's criminal history will be conducted by the EPP and independent school district (ISD) prior to participation in field-based course work, including student teaching. Criminal history record information, which includes both conviction and arrest records is obtained. An ISD or other school field-based entity may deny placement of teacher candidates with a criminal background. The teacher candidate's clearance for fieldwork is the prerogative of the ISD or participating entity and not LU. If a teacher candidate is unable to obtain a field-based placement, he/she will not meet LU's requirements for recommendation for teacher certification. If a teacher candidate cannot complete course-required field work because of their criminal history, the teacher candidate will be required to withdraw from the course. The teacher candidate may retake the course if and when the criminal history changes, allowing them to be cleared by the school district. If the offense is one that will preclude any further field work, the teacher candidate will be dismissed from the EPP.

2. Academic Requirements

- a. Teacher candidates attend all classes as required and maintain an overall GPA of 2.7. Preparedness for class and punctuality are expected at all times.
- b. Teacher candidates complete course assignments in a professional manner according to the timelines designated by the course instructor.
- c. Teacher candidates complete all field experiences in a professional and timely manner as required.
- d. Scholastic Integrity

- (1) The teacher candidate demonstrates honesty and integrity by being truthful about background, experiences, and qualifications;
- (2) doing one's own work; giving credit for the ideas of others; and providing proper citation of source materials.

e. Communication Skills

The teacher candidate demonstrates written and oral skills expected of an education professional that shows the ability to comprehend information and communicate ideas and feelings.

- (1) *Written*: Writes clearly, uses correct grammar and spelling. Demonstrates professional level skills in written English to understand content presented in the program and to adequately complete all written assignments, as specified by faculty.
- (2) *Oral*: Communicates effectively with other teacher candidates, faculty, staff, and professionals. Expresses ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrates a willingness and an ability to listen to others. Demonstrates professional level skills in spoken English to understand content presented in the program, to adequately complete all oral assignments, and to meet the objectives of field placement experiences, as specified by faculty.

3. Personal and Professional Requirements

- a. Teacher candidates will exhibit beliefs of effective teaching and professional behaviors in all interactions with supervisors, mentors, colleagues, instructors, and students.
 - (1) A teacher candidate will be present and prompt to class and to field visitations and notify proper individuals if they are unable to attend or will be late.
 - (2) A teacher candidate does not reveal confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
 - (3) A teacher candidate will patiently strive to maintain productive classroom behavior.
 - (4) A teacher candidate will maintain the dignity and respect of all students and school personnel.

- (5) A teacher candidate will provide students opportunities for learning and employing critical thinking.
 - (6) A teacher candidate will demonstrate equality through formal instruction and classroom practices.
 - (7) A teacher candidate will abide by all campus rules and regulations.
 - (8) A teacher candidate will use students' perceptions and past experiences in developing rapport and for supporting new learning.
 - (9) A teacher candidate believes that teachers are responsible for establishing a classroom environment conducive to learning and good order.
 - (10) A teacher candidate believes that they should help each student and enlist students to help others learn.
 - (11) A teacher candidate believes that teachers should encourage students to express themselves by various and creative means.
 - (12) A teacher candidate believes that teaching is best when it encourages acquisition of knowledge useful to analyzing information, creating new ideas and reaching decisions.
 - (13) A teacher candidate believes that reflection and analysis of teaching effectiveness can lead to instructional improvement.
- b. Teacher candidates demonstrate interpersonal skills that are required for successful professional teaching. These skills include:
- (1) An openness to accepting and testing the results of new techniques and strategies of teaching;
 - (2) The ability to accept and act upon reasonable criticism;
 - (3) The ability to understand and accept others' perspectives about teaching;
 - (4) The ability to separate personal and professional issues when in the classroom or completing course work;
 - (5) The ability to work collegially with parents, teachers, staff, and administrators in school settings and elsewhere;

- (6) The ability to assist other professionals in improving and planning coordinated instruction;
 - (7) The ability to work collegially and productively with classmates in course assigned group projects;
 - (8) The disposition to act always for the benefit of all students;
 - (9) The ability to exhibit a love of learning, understanding what is learned is often personally and professionally useful.
 - (10) Refraining from sexually harassing others; making verbal or physical threats, becoming involved in sexual relationships with their students, supervisors, or faculty; abusing others in physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual ways.
 - (11) Refraining from inappropriate communication with students including electronic communications by cell phone, text messaging, email, instant messaging, blogging, and other social network communications.
- c. Teacher candidates demonstrate positive personal hygiene habits.
 - d. Teacher candidates dress appropriately for their professional contexts.
 - e. Teacher candidates read and will adhere to the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators.
4. Cultural and Social Attitudes and Behavior
- a. Teacher candidates exhibit respect for superiors, peers, and children and youth in all settings.
 - b. Teacher candidates understand and appreciate the value of diversity and look beyond self in interactions with others; respect differences of race, ethnicity, religion and social class, national allegiance, and cultural heritage. Teacher candidates do not impose personal, religious, sexual, and/or cultural values on others.
 - c. Teacher candidates exhibit acceptance of and provides reasonable accommodations for exceptional learners.
 - d. Teacher candidates are able to work productively with their peers.
 - e. Teacher candidates are able to speak in a manner appropriate to the context of the classroom.

- f. Teacher candidates must display positive attitudes towards faculty, colleagues, and students;
- g. Teacher candidates demonstrate professional social skills with faculty, colleagues, parents, and students.

5. Physical Skills

The teacher candidate exhibits motor and sensory abilities to attend and participate in class and field placements, with or without accommodations as recommended by the office of Services for Students with Disabilities.

Note:

No otherwise qualified teacher candidate shall, on the basis of disability, be subject to discrimination or excluded from participation in the EPP. A teacher candidate with a disability may be protected by Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act and be eligible for a reasonable accommodation that will provide an equal opportunity to meet academic criteria related to professional behavior and scholastic performance.

Any otherwise qualified candidate with a qualified disability who requests a reasonable accommodation must notify the office of Services for Students with Disabilities and provide documentation as needed. The office of Services for Students with Disabilities makes recommendations for accommodations. A COEHD *interview committee* will review academic performance criteria in light of individual circumstances to explore issues of appropriate accommodations. An initial assessment, subsequent plans, use of outside experts (including the office of Services for Students with Disabilities), and periodic checks between the committee and the teacher candidate are appropriate courses of action in making accommodations.

6. Emotional Dispositions

a. Stress Management

The teacher candidate demonstrates the ability to deal with current life stressors through the use of appropriate coping mechanisms. He or she handles stress effectively by using appropriate self-care and developing supportive relationships with colleagues, peers, and others.

b. Emotional and Mental Capabilities

- (1) The teacher candidate uses sound judgment and maintains self-control and remains calm under stress.
- (2) The teacher candidate demonstrates the emotional and mental health required to function effectively as a teacher.

c. Cognitive Dispositions

- (1) Teacher candidates think analytically about educational issues.
- (2) Teacher candidates are thoughtfully reflective about their practice.
- (3) Teacher candidates are flexible, open to new ideas, and willing and able to modify their beliefs and practices.
- (4) Teacher candidates question and test their assumptions about teaching and schooling.

C. Admission to Teacher Certification Program at LU

1. Provisional Acceptance

All teacher candidates at LU are provisionally admitted to the teacher Certification Program upon application and satisfactory completion of all admission criteria beginning with course PEDG 2310.

2. Pre-admission status

<http://education.lamar.edu/future-teachers/apply-to-education.html>

3. Admission to EPP

<http://education.lamar.edu/current-students/policies-of-the-lamar-university-educator-preparation-program.html>

Once admitted to the Education Preparation Program teacher candidates will remain on admitted status until such time as a remediation plan or a decision to revoke candidacy has been made. If a teacher candidate successfully completes a remediation plan and an additional Fitness to Teach referral arises, the teacher candidate's full program history will be reviewed to determine the teacher candidate's status in the program.

4. A teacher candidate will have a maximum of three (3) attempts to successfully complete pedagogy courses (courses with prefixes of PEDG, READ, EACH). After three unsuccessful attempts to complete the course the teacher candidate will be removed from the EPP. The teacher candidate may appeal to the appropriate Phase committee to be reinstated only in the case of documented extenuating circumstances.

D. Conditions for Completion of Student Teaching/Clinical Teaching

Successful completion of student teaching/clinical teaching is a condition for meeting teaching certification requirements. Teacher candidates may attempt student teaching/clinical teaching a maximum of two times. If the teacher candidate does not successfully complete the second student teaching/clinical teaching experience, they will not be eligible to enroll in student teaching/clinical teaching a third time. The teacher candidate may appeal to the Fitness to Teach Phase III committee to be reinstated only in the case of documented extenuating circumstances.

E. Review of Teacher Candidates at LU

All teacher candidates referred for review are expected to participate in the process. Refusal to participate will not terminate the process. The level of review will depend on the factors such as nature, severity, frequency of the incident or concern. For example, repeated violations may result in immediate Formal 2 Review. Violations of the LU or host school district's student code of conduct will result in immediate Formal 2 Review.

1. Informal Review

An informal review involves a faculty member and a teacher candidate. When a faculty member has concerns about a teacher candidate meeting any of the Fitness to Teach criteria, the faculty member will:

- a. Discuss the concerns directly with the teacher candidate and seek to work with the candidate to resolve the difficulties;
- b. Report the concern(s) through Tk20's FE Professional Concerns to the appropriate Phase Committee in order to identify potential patterns and issues related to the teacher candidate;
- c. Document dates and the content of the meeting with teacher candidates in Tk20's FE Professional Concerns.
- d. If a problem arises in the field, the cooperating teacher of the host school district may discuss concerns directly with the LU faculty member/supervisor and also document the dates and content of the meeting in Tk20's FE Professional Concerns. The teacher candidate may also be included in this meeting.

2. Formal 1 Review

When a faculty member is sufficiently concerned about a teacher candidate's fitness to teach, he or she will fill out the FE Professional Concerns in Tk20. The appropriate Phase Committee and the Associate Dean for COEHD or his

or her designee will be apprised of these concerns at the bi-semester Phase Committee meeting.

a. A conference will then be scheduled which may include the instructor, the teacher candidate, Phase Committee, and the Associate Dean or his or her designee. During this conference, a plan for remediation will be developed and documented in Tk20's FE Professional Concerns. The nature and content of the plan will depend on the specific situation. However, all remediation plans will be stated in measurable, objective terms, include a reasonable timeline, and be signed by all parties involved.

b. If the candidate fails the remediation plan(s) he/she will be placed on Probationary Status. Probationary Status will be documented in Tk20's Professional Concerns. If the candidate successfully completes the remediation plan, probationary status will be removed.

c. The remediation plan may continue for more than one semester, depending on the individual circumstances.

3. Formal 2 Review

If a second incident or concern is reported on the same teacher candidate, the candidate has failed a remediation plan during the Formal 1 Review, or the seriousness of the incident or concern warrant it, the appropriate Phase Committee will be convened. This group (may include faculty and the Associate Dean or his or her designee) will meet to:

- a. Review the paper work,
- b. Interview the faculty members who have instructed the teacher candidate,
- c. Interview the teacher candidate, and
- d. Make a determination regarding the teacher candidate's suitability to continue the program.

The teacher candidate is afforded due process throughout these proceedings. Following a Formal 2 Review, a letter of appeal may be submitted to the Dean of the college for consideration. The Dean's decision is final.