



Kutztown University | College of Education
Office of Clinical Experiences and Partnerships

Student Teacher Handbook

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The Clinical Experience Program

Mission

The clinical experience program at Kutztown University is a collaborative partnership between mentor teachers, KU supervisors and the office of Clinical Experiences & Partnerships whose mission is to provide students a successful capstone experience in their pre-service teacher education program.

These partners work collaboratively in a wide variety of settings such as public, private, charter and parochial schools as well as intermediate units, museums, and other educational institutions to provide a high quality of clinical experience. The Kutztown University service area includes over 100 affiliated partners in the counties surrounding the university and special out of state programs.

The 15-week program is an opportunity for teacher candidates to polish their teaching skills and take on the role of a professional under the guidance of the mentor teacher and KU supervisor.

Office of Clinical Experiences and Partnerships

The Clinical Experiences office handles the logistics of student teaching placements:

- We review and approve the student teaching application and clearances.
- We coordinate placements and mediate any issues between the university and cooperating schools.
- We are your first point of contact for any student teaching issues, concerns, or special needs.

We are available to answer any questions or attend to any concerns you may have. The office is open Monday-Friday from 8am-12pm, 1pm-4:30pm.

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610-683-4276

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Roles of KU Supervisors and Mentor Teachers

KU Supervisors

KU supervisors are faculty members from the colleges of Education, Liberal Arts & Sciences, or Visual & Performing Arts with classroom experience and certification in the area they supervise. KU supervisors:

- Provide support, guidance, and continuity with the KU pre-service teacher education program.
- Act as liaison between the university and the mentor teacher.
- Collaborate with the mentor teacher to observe, critique, develop and evaluate the student teacher.
- Conduct in-person observations three times during each half semester period.
- Conduct weekly practicum meetings.
- Complete formal cumulative assessments and assign final course grades.

Mentor Teachers

Mentor teachers are selected jointly by the university and cooperating school. Basic qualifications as described in the School Code of PA include:

- Hold PA certification in subject area taught.
- A minimum of three full years of teaching experience in an approved school.
- A minimum of one year experience in the present school and grade level/subject area.

The mentor teacher's role in student teaching:

- To offer time, effort, and guidance in helping the student teacher grow professionally.
- To collaborate frequently with the university supervisor on the observation, development, and evaluation of the student teacher.
- Allow their student teacher to participate fully in the teaching process.
- Communicate with their student teacher and set clear expectations.
- Complete 3 informal (in-progress) evaluations within each half semester period.
- Complete 2 formal cumulative evaluations at the end of each half semester period. These evaluations will be uploaded to Anthology and will be considered by your KU supervisor when assigning your final grade.

Preparing for Student Teaching

Student Teaching Eligibility

All students **MUST** meet the following requirements before starting student teaching:

- Completed and passed ALL early field experience and ALL other required courses.
- Completed minimum 90 credit hours.
- Earned minimum 3.0 GPA
- Approved for teacher candidacy by the COE dean's office (undergrads only, see next section).
- Submitted pre-admission clearances to Anthology (Taskstream previously) and had them approved.
- Approved for student teaching by their advisor.
- Submitted the Student Teaching Application.

Teacher Candidacy Requirements

All students must be cleared for teacher candidacy before your student teaching semester. The following requirements must be met:

- Minimum 3.0 GPA maintained until graduation.
- A grade of C or better in the following courses:
 - 1 English composition (CMP) course
 - 1 English (ENG) literature course
 - 2 Math (MAT) courses

Candidacy will be lost if your GPA falls below the 3.0 minimum.

[Find more information on candidacy at our webpage linked here.](#) For questions regarding candidacy, please contact Cheryl Faust in the COE dean's office. Beekey 231 | cfaust@kutztown.edu | 610-683-4300

Student Teacher Information Meeting

The Clinical Experiences office will hold a MANDATORY informational meeting one year prior to each student teaching semester. Meeting dates and details will be sent to all potential student teachers via email and flyers will be posted around Beekey.

This meeting will explain the placement process, and cover important due dates, schedules, clearances, and other crucial information.

If you did not attend a meeting, you MUST contact the Clinical Experiences office to receive the required information and to be added to our list of student teachers. You will not be on our list if you did not attend.

Student Teaching Application

All students must apply for student teaching one year prior to their clinical experience semester.

Applications will be filled out via Microsoft Forms. A link to the application will be sent to all students who attend a Student Teaching Information Meeting. If you did not attend a meeting, contact the Clinical Experiences office.

Clinical Experience & Practicum Class Enrollment

- Enrollment is done differently in each department. Contact your advisor or department secretary to see how you will be enrolled.
- Clinical Experience and practicum count as two courses that count for six credits each. This gives you a full schedule for the semester and meets financial aid requirements.
- Your supervisor's name and practicum room number and meeting details can be found on your class schedule in MyKU once they are assigned.

Clearances

All students preparing for student teaching are required to update clearances and obtain additional items. Clearances are MANDATORY and MUST be submitted by the due dates. You will be removed from your placements if clearances are not submitted on time.

The following clearances and items must be dated within a year of the last day of clinical experience:

- Act 34 PA State Police Criminal History Report
- Act 114 FBI Federal Criminal History Record (fingerprinting)
- Act 126 Mandated Child Abuse Reporter Training
- Act 151 PA Child Abuse History Certification
- PSTAT (PSSA) Training Module Certification
- PSEA Professional Liability Insurance
- Student teaching resume

TB tests have special date requirements for student teaching.

- PA requires a negative TB test **dated within 90 days of entering a school building** for student teaching.
- TB testing date requirements are dependent on the number of placements. Refer to your **Clearance Information Sheet** for your date requirements.

TB testing more than once a year is not harmful: [See the CDC's fact sheet on TB testing and diagnosis here.](#)

[Follow the clearance date requirements on your semester's Clearance Information Sheet linked here.](#)

Important Notes:

- Your clearances must be dated within certain timeframes to be valid and up to date. There is NO flexibility. Follow the date requirements and instructions provided on your semester's **Clearance Information Sheet** given at the student teaching meeting and linked on our website.
- You must apply for clearances using the correct codes and application purposes specific to student teaching. For example, when applying for the Act 114 FBI fingerprinting clearance, you must use the code 1KG6RT. Follow the instructions on the Clearance Information Sheet!
 - **If you obtain the incorrect clearance, use the wrong code, or obtain a clearance outside the required timeframe, etc., you will need to redo the clearance. The Clinical Experience office will not refund incorrectly obtained clearances.**
- Use your home address, not a school/campus address, when applying for background checks.

- Keep hard copies and receipts of clearances as backups.
 - You can access clearance results uploaded to Anthology and print them out again.
 - If you need a paper copy of the Act 114 official results, the Clinical Experiences office or COE Support Center can print it out for you IF you still have the receipt with the UE ID number. This must be done IN PERSON—clearances cannot be sent over email.
- Your placement school district may require additional clearances such as a physical, drug test, or Covid-19 test. Your school district’s HR office will let you know of any additional clearance requirements.

Arrests or Convictions

If you have any arrest or conviction on a background check, you must disclose it to the College of Education Dean’s Office.

- You will need to sign a Release of Information form and meet with the COE dean as soon as possible for us to begin resolving the issue.
- Failure to report any arrest or conviction may prevent you from completing Clinical Experience.
- By signing the Student Teaching Application, you give permission for the director of the Clinical Experience office and COE dean to discuss any relevant background check and academic information with school district personnel to secure a placement.
- Schools have the right to refuse a placement for any record on background checks.

Anthology

Clearance results must be submitted to the **Student Teaching Clearance portfolio** in Anthology. This portfolio is specific to student teaching clearances. You will not have access to this portfolio until the Clinical Experiences office approves you for student teaching. [Find instructions for uploading clearances to the Student Teaching Clearances portfolio here.](#)

[Click here to login to Anthology.](#)

The COE Support Center helps with Anthology and clearances. The office is located on the first floor of Beekey in room 129 and is open Monday-Friday from 8am-12pm, 1pm-4:30pm. Contact the office at coesupport@kutztown.edu | 484-646-5900.

Student Teaching Placements

Placement Types

One Placement

Students with one full placement will be placed in one school district with one mentor teacher for the full semester of Clinical Experience. These students include:

- PreK-4 Elementary Education
- Secondary Education

Two Placements

Students with two placements will be placed in one school district with one mentor teacher for the first half semester of Clinical Experience, and then placed in a new school district with a different mentor teacher for the second half semester of Clinical Experience. These students include:

- K-12 subjects (one elementary and one secondary placement)
- 4-8 Middle Level (one placement for each content area)

- Special Education K-12 (one elementary and one secondary placement)
- Special Education Vision (two placements, each in a different setting)
- Special Education dual (one regular education and one special education placement)

Placement Rules & Guidelines

Student teaching placements **WILL** be...

- ... secured by the Clinical Experiences office only.
- ...located within a school/school district within a **40-mile radius of Kutztown University**.
- ...made only with schools with whom we have a contract.

Placements **WILL NOT** be made in a district where a student...

- ...has previously attended.
- ...has a family member that currently attends.
- ...has a family member that is currently employed.

Do NOT attempt to make your own placement. Our relationships with partner school districts are critical to the Clinical Experiences office. Each district asks that we respect their specific protocol when requesting placements. Therefore:

- DO NOT contact a school district, principal, or teacher to try to make your own placement. Reach out to your supervisor or the Clinical Experiences office to make a request.
- DO NOT have your parents call a school or our office to request special placements or arrange for your clearances or transportation.

Personal Requests for Placements

Request from Student

To request a placement with a particular school/teacher, contact the Clinical Experiences office. The request must meet the following guidelines:

- The school must be within a 40-mile radius of Kutztown University.
- The school must have a contract with us.
- It cannot be at a school where you or an immediate family member attends/attended/is employed at.

Requests from a Potential Mentor Teacher

If a teacher working in one of our partner schools would like to request you as a student teacher, they can do so by informing their school principal/district office and the KU Clinical Experiences office.

Only the Clinical Experiences office can submit a placement request. It is up to the cooperating school district, principal, and teacher to approve it.

Roll-overs

A roll-over is when a student teacher is placed with a mentor teacher they worked with during early field, prosem, or TRIO. Contact the Clinical Experiences office to request a roll-over.

Can I roll-over?

- The student, mentor teacher, and KU supervisor must approve.
- The school district, principal, and Clinical Experiences office must also approve.
- Secondary Education undergrads and M.Ed. Secondary Education grads cannot roll-over.

Roll-overs are not a sure thing and there are several reasons why a roll-over might be denied. The Clinical Experiences office will make the final confirmation for a roll-over.

Official Placement Letters

Students will receive a letter from the Clinical Experiences office via email when their placement is secured.

- This letter includes details about your school(s) and contact information for your mentor teacher(s) as well as next steps for preparing for student teaching.
- Placements are secured at different times for each student. Students will receive their letter(s) at different times.
- We make every effort to secure placements by the end of the semester prior to your student teaching. However, issues may arise, and you may end up getting your placement secured over summer/winter break. We will keep you updated if this occurs.
- Contact our office to check in on your placement status.

Transportation & Living Arrangements

Geography is important during student teaching. Please consider transportation and living arrangements during your student teaching semester.

- If you are living outside a 40-mile radius of Kutztown, expect a longer commute to your placement.
- KU does not provide student teacher housing.
- **KU DOES NOT provide transportation to placements. Students are solely responsible for their own transportation to and from their placement.**
 - Let the Clinical Experiences office know if you are having trouble. We can reach out to students open to ride sharing to contact you. We can try to place students who rideshare at the same school.

Special Situations & Issues

If you have any special circumstances, issues, or concerns that might affect your placement, contact the Clinical Experiences office as soon as possible. The sooner we can work on the problem, the better. It is very difficult to change placements once they have been made.

Student Teaching Policies

General Policies

You must attend your school placement all day, every day. Student teaching is a full-time responsibility and must take place over other commitments.

- Follow the daily schedule of the mentor teacher. This includes arrival and departure times, meetings, conferences, and professional development programs unless told otherwise.
- **Follow your school district's calendar—not the KU calendar. This includes fall/spring break!**
- Follow your school district's policies for inclement weather, health protocols, and any other policies.
- You must attend practicum with your KU supervisor every Tuesday evening on campus.

Attendance & Absences

KU's teacher education programs require 15 weeks of student teaching. Therefore:

- You are responsible for teaching a full day every day.
 - Multiple absences may result in make-up days. This will be decided collectively by the supervisor, department chair, and Clinical Experiences office.
- **If you will be absent or late, you MUST notify your mentor, supervisor, and the Clinical Experiences office as soon as possible.** Include all three parties on one email.
- If you anticipate an absence, it must be approved by your supervisor, mentor teacher, and the Clinical Experiences office at least **5 days** in advance to be considered excused.

- Before your excused absence, you are expected to provide your mentor with the plans and materials needed for lessons you were supposed to teach that day.

Professionalism

Present yourself as a professional:

- Familiarize yourself with your cooperating school's student/teacher handbook regarding dress code and behavior policies.
- Clean up your social media and/or make it private. Do not add/"friend" students on your accounts.
- Be professional over email, text, and voicemail. Check your spelling, grammar, and manners.
- Use appropriate language (no swearing or crude terms) when in school or at school functions.
- **Maintain a clean and neat appearance with good hygiene.**
- Dress professionally and according to the school district's dress code policy.
- Regarding tattoos, follow any policies in the school's handbook.
- Avoid heavy perfume/cologne and any lingering smell of smoke/alcohol.

Act responsibly:

- Have a positive relationship with ALL school personnel, including office and IT staff and custodians.
- Familiarize yourself with and adhere to all policies, regulations, and disciplinary codes of your school.
- **You are expected to maintain confidentiality during your clinical experiences.** Do not discuss confidential information about students, teachers, school issues, or fellow student teachers in public with individuals who do not need to know.
- Do not engage in gossip.
- Do not answer calls or use your personal phone during class hours.

Drug/Alcohol/Smoking Guidelines

Alcohol, vaping, smoking, or ANY drug use on cooperating school property/at any cooperating school function is NOT TOLERATED. Drug use of any kind will result in immediate dismissal and any necessary legal sanctions.

Student teachers **MAY NOT** have any smoking/vaping/drug paraphernalia on their person at any time while on school property/at any school function.

Student Teacher Responsibilities

Meeting Your Mentor Teacher

Introducing Yourself

- Send your mentor an introductory email with your resume attached when you receive your placement letter. Use proper grammar and etiquette – this is your first impression!
- Set up an initial meeting with your mentor prior to your first day of student teaching.
- Convey enthusiasm and thank your mentor in advance: they have volunteered to share their knowledge, experience, and classroom with you.

Initial Meeting with your Mentor

- The goal of this meeting is to open the lines of communication, establish a working relationship, and prepare you for your first week in the classroom.
- Prepare questions to ask your mentor. Examples:
 - What is their preferred way to communicate when not at school?
 - What is their daily schedule?
 - What are their classroom procedures, rules, and expectations?

- What are their expectations for you on the first day/week?
- Remember that your mentor is your guide for student teaching. They have agreed to the role to help you succeed.

Visiting Your School

- Plan a visit to your school to familiarize yourself with the commute, the building layout, and the faculty and staff. This visit can be planned when meeting with your mentor.

Working with your Mentor Teacher

Responsibilities to your mentor teacher:

- Present all lesson and unit plans to your mentor for review and approval.
- Plan a time for daily conferences to discuss progress.
- Classroom management is the mentor's responsibility; discuss discipline procedures in advance.
- Accept and complete teaching and non-teaching assignments gracefully, competently, and on time.
- Convey enthusiasm for teaching, a sincere desire to learn, a willingness to cooperate, and an appreciative attitude toward suggestions and constructive criticisms.
- Review, practice and strengthen basic content knowledge, principles of human growth and development, instructional design strategies, teaching techniques and classroom management skills.
- Be proactive: ask questions, offer ideas, be involved, and show that you are willing to go the extra mile.

Communication is key! It is critical to keep the lines of communication open with your mentor teacher.

- Communication is the best way to avoid misunderstandings.
- Your mentor teacher is there to provide experience-based guidance. Don't be afraid to ask questions!
- If you have a question regarding your school or district, expectations of your school, or procedures within your school, ask your mentor.

Working with Your KU Supervisor

- Keep your supervisor informed of any difficulties you encounter during student teaching.
- Provide a weekly schedule of your teaching times at the beginning of practicum every Tuesday. Your supervisor will tell you how they want the schedule organized.
 - Notify your supervisor if a change is made to your schedule after you have submitted it.
- Notify your supervisor if you are going to be absent from your placement.
- Have plans for all lessons taught available for review by the supervisor.
- Ask your supervisor how they want these responsibilities organized and handled.

Observations and Evaluations

Observations

Your supervisor will observe you at least three times in-person during each half semester period. Provide your supervisor with a weekly schedule of your teaching times.

Evaluations

Your mentor and supervisor will both complete regular evaluations during each half semester period. [Evaluations are scored using the KU Adapted Danielson Rubric, linked here.](#)

- Your mentor will write three informal in-progress reports each during each half semester period at regular intervals and discuss them with you. A copy of each in-progress report should be sent to you over email/in-person.

- Based on the in-progress reports, the mentor and supervisor will both complete a formal cumulative evaluation at the end of each half semester period on Anthology.
- Your supervisor will also complete a PDE 430 (*PA Statewide Evaluations for Student Professional Knowledge and Practice*) evaluation at the end of each half semester period on Anthology.

[Find more information regarding evaluations and links to the in-progress report forms on our website here.](#)

Issues During Clinical Experience

Problem-Solving Process

If issues arise during your placement:

1. First, contact your KU supervisor and explain the situation. The supervisor will act as a mediator between you and your cooperating school/mentor teacher. Typically, a meeting between yourself, your mentor and supervisor will occur to resolve the issue or develop a plan to move forward.
2. If the issue is not resolved after meeting, the supervisor will contact your KU department chair and Clinical Experiences director to meet with you. Typically, issues can be resolved at this stage.
3. If all attempts to remedy the issue fail, the student teacher may need to be removed from the placement and assigned to a different mentor/cooperating school. The director will notify the original school.

*** A placement change is a very serious last resort only done when absolutely necessary. ***

Strike / Work Stoppage

If a strike or work stoppage occurs at your placement school:

- You must inform the Clinical Experiences office right away.
- You are forbidden to report to your school altogether.
- You are forbidden to substitute teach at your school during this period.
- You are forbidden to participate in any school activities.
- You are forbidden to participate in picket lines or any similar activities.

If a strike lasts more than 5 days, you will be placed in a different school. You will not be required to make up time lost from a strike.

Student Teachers as Substitutes

With PDE's new Act 91 policy of 2021, current student teachers may act as substitute teachers.

You may substitute teach during clinical experience if you abide by Kutztown University's Substitute Teaching Policy and submit the appropriate form. [The KU Substitute Teaching Policy and the Substitute While Teaching form can be found on our webpage linked here.](#)

Please reach out to the Clinical Experiences office with questions regarding substitute teaching.

Teacher Certification

TIMS and Application Process

PA teacher certification is given by the PA Department of Education. [Apply for certification through PDE's Teacher Information Management System \(TIMS\) linked here.](#)

The following items must be completed and on file in TIMS before you can complete the application and be reviewed for certification by our certification officer:

- Passing Basic Skills Test scores
 - For undergrad students only; passing Basic Skills Tests is a prerequisite for student teaching.
- Passing scores for any Praxis/PECT tests required for your certification area(s)
- Your final semester GPA posted
- Degree conferral / completion

Once the application is submitted it will be processed and reviewed by PDE. Upon a satisfactory review, your teaching certificate will be issued through TIMS as a PDF.

Tanya Faust in the COE dean's office is KU's certification officer. Contact her with questions regarding certification: Beekey 231 | tfaust@kutztown.edu | 610-683-4332

[Find PDE's FAQ page on TIMS here.](#)

[Find more information about teacher certification and TIMS on our website here.](#)

Have Questions or Need Help?

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