



**STUDENT HANDBOOK
FOR
ELEMENTARY
AND
MIDDLE GRADES
EDUCATION MAJORS**

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General Information

The B.S.ED in Elementary Education consists of the Liberal Studies requirements, the Professional Education Sequence, major courses, and an area of concentration. The B.S.ED in Middle Grades Education consists of Liberal Studies requirements, the Professional Education Sequence, major courses, and TWO academic concentrations. Whichever Education degree you are striving for, you will work alongside faculty, instructors, and cooperating teachers who are dedicated to fostering your intellectual and professional growth.

As a future teacher you can choose to specialize in many different age ranges or skills as well as in many disciplines ranging from English and Art to Spanish and Science. If you're interested in careers in education outside the classroom, you can also study to become a school psychologist, school counselor, speech-language pathologist or school administrator.

Becoming a teacher is one of the highest callings in life. As one veteran teacher put it: "Without teachers we would have no other professions."

Mission Statement

The mission of the professional education programs at Western Carolina University is to prepare highly effective and ethical graduates who are **inspired** to be lifelong learners, **engaged** in the community, and empowered to become leaders who strive to **transform** the future.

First Year Seminar

The First Year Seminar allows you to become a member of your new community in a dynamic environment and to experience intellectual life at the university level. Taught by professors with a passion for the subject and a passion for teaching, these courses are designed to encourage exploration of new ideas, examine a range of academic topics, challenge you to set high goals for your academic career, and promote a lifelong love of learning. First Year Seminars count as a core Liberal Studies requirement for all degree programs.

TRACS Advising (Teacher Recruitment, Advising, and Career Support)

The goal of TRACS Advising is to provide you with a central location for all of your advising needs. TRACS Advisors believe that students who follow their curriculum checklist, meet regularly with advisors and foster relationships with mentors are most successful in their academic and career endeavors.

WHEE Teach LLC and WHEE Teach

WHEE Teach LLC offers a first year experience for students who are interested in pursuing a career as educators. It's a **Living & Learning Community** open to 1st semester freshmen who are declared education majors. Students will take courses with an education emphasis, alongside other students in the community. Students also live together in Scott Hall where discussions and activities can continue into dorm life and enrich the total student experience. The Resident Advisors for the community are also education majors, and they organize educational and social events with an education emphasis for students who live in the community. Students are automatically enrolled in the student organization, **WHEE Teach**, which gives future teachers the opportunity to volunteer in schools and participate in educational and social events with their classmates and roommates.

First Course in Teacher Education

Once enrolled in **EDCI 201: Teacher Leadership in a Diverse Society**, you will be made aware of requirements for admission to teacher education. This is the only course in the Professional Education Sequence that can be taken without being admitted to teacher education. The course is usually taken in the sophomore year and includes placement for a specified number of hours in a K-12 school. Placement requires a background check through our online provider and subscription to TaskStream. Check current fees through the Office of Field Experiences. Admission to teacher education requires an application that should be completed after you receive your final grade in EDCI 201.

Transfer students who have been given credit for an equivalent course taken at another college/university (as determined by the student's program and the Registrar's Office) should follow the Admission to Teacher Education Program instructions. Questions can be directed to the CEAP Licensure Specialist.

Teacher Education Program Admission Requirements:

1. Complete at least 30 hours which can include transfer hours
2. Earn a C (2.0) or higher grade in EDCI 201 and ENGL 101. Note that earning a C (2.0) or higher grade in ENGL 202 will be required before beginning Internship I.
3. Earn (and then maintain) a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.75
4. Achieve the minimum required scores on the SAT, ACT, or *Pre-Professional Skills Test PPST Praxis I (Reading, Writing, Mathematics)*
5. Subscribe to *TaskStream*
6. Complete the *Personality Survey and Diversity Inventory* via TaskStream
7. Complete the *Professional Dispositions Contract*

8. Complete and submit the application for Admission to Teacher Education with related documentation to the CEAP Dean's Office, Suite 204 Killian or fax to 828.227.7388. You will be notified at your Catamount email address regarding your admission status.

Your fitness for teaching in the chosen area is determined on the basis of demonstrated academic ability and personal dispositions important for effective teaching. You may be considered suitable in one area and unsuitable in another.

Praxis I -Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST)

PPST stands for Pre-Professional Skills Tests and is also referred to as Praxis I. Praxis I measures basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics and includes multiple-choice questions and an essay question on the Writing test. The tests are designed to evaluate the academic skills needed to prepare for a career in education. Teacher candidates are required to take the Praxis I tests to demonstrate their qualifications. The State Board of Education sets minimum scores that students must meet for admission to teacher education. Some exemptions do apply. **THERE IS A FEE.**

TaskStream/Portfolios

As a teacher education candidate, beginning with EDCI 201 you are required to subscribe to and maintain a TaskStream account throughout your professional education course sequence. TaskStream is a Web-based electronic portfolio application that allows you to upload and share selected work via the World Wide Web. TaskStream also has tools which will allow you to create standards-based lesson plans, evaluation rubrics, and entire

instructional units. Applications for all field experiences are submitted through TaskStream. **THERE IS A FEE.**

After you subscribe to TaskStream you should see two portfolios - Professional Education Sequence Portfolio and Initial Licensure Portfolio.

Professional Education Sequence Portfolio

In this portfolio, you will submit:

- Common Assignments (assignments that all students take each semester) in EDCI 201, SPED 339, and PSY 323
- Early Field Experience Applications
- Early Field Experience Evaluations
- The M5-120 Personality Survey and Diversity Inventory (requirement for admission to Teacher Education)

Initial Licensure Portfolio

In this portfolio, you will submit:

- Application for Internship/Student Teaching
- EE2 - Content Knowledge (you will submit this in a class)
- Individual Growth Plan
- Diversity Scale
- EE3 - Teacher Work Sample Planning
- EE5 - Teacher Work Sample Implementation and Evaluation
- EE6 - Leadership Essay
- EE4 - Certification of Teaching Capacity (CTC)

Diversity Experience Requirement

As an undergraduate degree-seeking candidate in the Teacher Education Program you are required to complete one field experience (designated by the Office of Field Experiences) in a culturally diverse setting. This means you must complete at least one field experience in a culturally diverse setting in EDCI 201, PSY 323, SPED 339, "Block," Internship, or Student Teaching. In some cases, working with a mission group, camp, tutoring program, or Service Learning project may also fulfill this requirement. For these alternatives, contact the Director of Field Experiences for approval and documentation requirements. The spirit of the diversity requirement is that students engage in meaningful teaching and learning activities with children of different racial, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds than their own.

Traditionally this is completed during EDCI 201 or as early into the Teacher Education Program as possible. While many students have difficult schedules making it hard to travel to a school on the list, this is important in the overall preparation for your teaching career. The Diversity Committee continues to review the diversity policies to better incorporate these experiences.

Service Learning

Service Learning combines community service, academic instruction, and structured reflection. Students who do service learning can develop a better understanding of course content, meet genuine community needs, develop career-related skills, and become more responsible citizens. The Center for Service Learning can help you find a place to volunteer or do a course-based service learning project. They maintain a list of upcoming service projects, as well as a list of community agencies that you can work with. They also

sponsor a campus garden, special events like Days of Service and Alternative Break trips, and service-based scholarships and employment opportunities.

Internships

A full-year internship is required for all undergraduate elementary and middle grades majors. During the first semester (Internship I) you will spend the equivalent of at least two school days (15 hours) per week in the school for three credit hours. Internship I begins the week WCU classes begin unless you are able to begin the day teachers start the semester. If completing Internship I in the fall semester, you are expected to spend at least three days with your Cooperating Teacher before public school students start the school year. During Internship II (student teaching) the following semester, you begin the day your cooperating teacher returns. This is at the same school unless the school is no longer able to host you due to legal issues related to staff changes or poor performance on your part. Cases of poor performance can result in removal from the Teacher Education Program. The TaskStream application process for internship/student teaching placements is handled through the Office of Field Experiences.

Criminal Background Checks

One of the highest priorities of any school is the safety of students. Screening of any individual working with the students is an important precaution. Consequently, we require background checks from every student requesting a field experience.

Some schools will not accept a student who has any incident on the background check. With a sincere explanation of one relatively minor incident, a placement can usually be

arranged. Students with multiple and/or more serious incidents will have their reports reviewed by a committee which will make a recommendation to try or not to try to arrange placement. If the Director of Field Experiences makes 3 unsuccessful attempts to place a student with such issues, the student will be advised that he/she cannot be placed in a school setting and that the likelihood of being licensed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is slim.

Students with concerns about their individual situation should make an appointment to see the Director of Field Experiences to discuss specific circumstances. Ultimately students with criminal charges continue in the program at their own risk.

Be aware that background check results are available to school personnel, program administrators, and advisors as needed for placement purposes. **THERE IS A FEE.**

Initial Background Check: Required to obtain comprehensive background check prior to approval of your first field experience at WCU.

Background Check for Internship/Student Teaching: If you completed the comprehensive background check in an earlier field experience, you are required to obtain a follow-up background check the semester before Internship/Student Teaching as part of the application process.

PRAXIS II

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction currently requires successful completion of Praxis II: Subject Assessments for Special Education and Elementary Education majors. Praxis II measures knowledge of specific subjects that K-12 educators

will teach, as well as general and subject-specific teaching skills and knowledge. You should register for and complete Praxis II tests in the last semester or the semester before the last semester of your program. **THERE IS A FEE. (This testing requirement will change effective July 2014.)**

Applying for your NC Teaching License

Hooray!! You've finished your program and are anxious to teach. The Licensure Section of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is responsible for examining credentials and issuing licenses that qualify individuals to seek employment as teachers, administrators, and other special service personnel in North Carolina public schools.

All professional employees of public schools must hold a license for the subject or grade level they teach or for the professional education assignment that they hold. Depending on the time of year, the DPI licensure process may take approximately *eight to ten weeks*. The College of Education and Allied Profession's (CEAP) licensure specialist, Barbara Schade, routinely visits seminar classes to discuss the most current licensing requirements and will assist you with the licensure process.

Early Field Experience FAQ

1. How do I apply?

All Early Field Experience Applications are submitted via TaskStream. Undergraduate ELEM/MG "Block" Practicum applications are submitted the preceding semester after registration. All other Early Field Experiences Applications are open the first day of class.

2. How do I receive my placement information?

You will receive your placement information via your Catamount e-mail account. You are responsible for checking this account on a regular basis per university policy. Placement information and additional important information will be sent to this account throughout the semester. Early Field Experience information is sent out beginning the eleventh day of the semester and continuing as placements are approved by the schools. Late applications and unusual placements may take longer.

3. How do I contact my host teacher?

Contact your host teacher as soon as possible, but within one week of receiving your placement to confirm schedule. Check the school website for current email and phone information. Be aware that not all teachers regularly use their school e-mail and may not send an immediate reply. If you have not had a response back after three days, call the school secretary and ask when the teacher is free or call before or after school hours, asking if the teacher is available. Let your course instructor know if you are having difficulty making contact.

4. What forms do I need once I begin my placement?

There are two forms required for EDCI 201, PSY 323, or SPED 339. The first, the contract, should be completed with your host teacher at the first observation or earlier

and submitted immediately to the Office of Field Experiences. The second form is a timesheet which should be completed and signed at each visit by the cooperating teacher. Do not wait until the end of the semester to get the teacher's signature!

5. What professional behaviors are expected in the classroom?

- **Communication with Host Teacher:** Establish contact as early as possible. Use appropriate grammar, punctuation and spelling in emails. Respect the teacher's time. Make e-mails brief and to the point. Do not expect the teacher to change class schedule for your convenience. Thank the teacher for allowing you to visit.

First e-mail model: Thank you for allowing me to observe in your classroom for ____ hours this semester. May I come on (Tuesday, September 12 at 10:00) for my first visit?

Make sure that the teacher is aware of each visit planned, that you arrive as scheduled and that you let him/her know when it is your final visit. If you must miss or be late for a planned visit, PHONE the school to ask that the teacher be informed. Do not rely on email or texting.

- **Conduct:** While in school, you are expected to be professional in department and engaged in the classroom experience. As guests of the school, you must adhere to the rules and regulations of the school system and its Board of Education.
- **Dress:** It is expected that you will dress appropriately, modestly and respectfully. If you are deemed inappropriately dressed, you may be asked to leave the school premises and will not be permitted to return until you are appropriately dressed. In some cases, you will not be allowed to return at all.

- **Cell Phones:** Use of cell phones is forbidden in the school. **ABSOLUTELY NO TEXTING** during classroom visits.
- **Social Media:** You are not permitted to "friend" students or staff or discuss the observation experience via any social networking system.

6. What am I expected to do for my field experience?

Your course instructor makes assignments to be completed in the field placement.

7. How will teachers evaluate me?

At the end of every semester, you will be evaluated by the classroom teacher who hosted you for the semester. Areas of evaluation include:

- Willingness of student to participate
- Promptness
- Attendance
- Conduct
- Recommendations for the student
- Overall performance in the program.

Cooperating teachers complete an online survey of your work and professionalism.

Negative evaluations are shared with the course instructor. Your university professor and adviser will have access to your evaluation. Grades may be changed at the professor's discretion based on evaluations. All evaluations are reviewed by the Director of Field Experience with referrals to the Associate Dean of the College of Education and Allied Professions where appropriate. You also will have the opportunity to evaluate your field experience situation.

8. How can I be successful in my placement?

Show respect for the teacher and all school personnel as described in #5 above. Complete assignments as directed by your course instructor. Submit timesheet by due date if applicable to the course. Late timesheets are not permitted and may result in course failure.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What courses should I take?

You can find all of the degree requirements for your program through the online catalog and the degree audit/evaluation. You should use the degree audit in My Cat to prepare for your advising appointment. You can run a degree audit/evaluation for your current major using the instructions below.

2. How do I run a degree audit/evaluation?

Log into My Cat (<http://mycat.wcu.edu/>)

1. Click on the "Personal Services" tab
2. Click on the "Student" tab
3. Click on "Student Records"
4. Click on "Degree Audit/Evaluation"
5. Choose the appropriate term (if this is an option) and click submit
6. You will see your current curriculum information including your major.
To run a degree audit/evaluation, click on "Generate New Evaluation" in the middle of the page at the bottom.
7. Select the button next to the major you wish to run an audit for and click the *Generate Request* button.
8. Wait patiently for the audit to generate.
9. Select the button next to "Detail Requirements" and click submit.
10. You should now see your degree audit. Courses you still need to satisfy will appear with a red "No" next to them.

3. How do I know how I am doing in a course?

You should read your course syllabus carefully to make sure you understand your professor's grading policies. If you have questions about how your professor calculates your grades, visit with him or her during office hours. In addition, you should check your progress grades during the fifth week of classes.

4. How do I find my fifth week grades?

1. Log in to My Cat
2. Click on the "Personal Services" tab
3. Click on the "Student" tab
4. Click on "Academic Progress"
5. Select the term and click Submit
6. Scroll down to find your Week 5 grades and attendance (if posted)

5. How do I find my final grades?

1. Log in to My Cat
2. Click on the Personal Services tab
3. Click on Student Records
4. Click on the Grades
5. Select the current academic term

6. What can I do to improve my grade in a course?

1. Go to class every day
2. Use a day planner
3. Study 3 hours each day
4. Meet with your instructor during office hours
5. Spend time in the Writing and Learning Commons and Mathematics Tutoring Center.

MISCELLANEOUS

Phone Numbers To Keep Handy

TRACS Advising	828-227-7027
Office of Field Experiences	828-227-7314
Licensure Specialist	828-227-2000
Center For Service Learning	828-227-7184

Some of the fees you will have

Praxis I

TaskStream

Criminal Background Checks

Praxis II

Application for NC Teaching License

Other Tidbits

- CEAP - College of Education and Allied Professions
- STL - School of Teaching and Learning
- SAC - Second Academic Concentration
- Blackboard - A learning management system (LMS) used to facilitate teaching and learning for both face-to-face and online instruction. Tools in Blackboard allow for rich discussions, critical thinking, collaboration, and reflection.
- Block and Practicum are terms used interchangeably.