

# Faculty Handbook for Teaching in Jamaica

## Section 1 -- Preparing for Your Jamaican Teaching Assignment

### A. Our Teacher Education Mission in Jamaica

This program has the same fundamental mission as the teacher education program on campus -- to improve the educational experiences of young people in schools. In Cullowhee, we primarily serve the teachers and children of the Southeast region of the United States, particularly North Carolina. In Jamaica, we serve the teachers and children of this Caribbean nation.

The differences between the two nations, their cultures, and their educational systems create differences in the ways we approach our mission. Compared to U.S. schools, Jamaican classes are large. Teachers typically have class rosters of fifty to sixty children. Classrooms, however, are similar in size to those in the U.S. Student attendance is often sporadic.

Many Jamaican children grow up speaking *Patois* in their homes. This is a language developed by the slaves to communicate with each other and preserve culture. Consequently, it is an important part of their culture. One goal of the schools, however, is to increase English literacy, so children are expected to speak, read and write English by the time they leave elementary school. Having two languages, one which is a part of their heritage and cultural pride, and another which represents the official language, sometimes increases the literacy difficulties experienced by Jamaican children.

An understanding of these cultural differences is important for professors as they try to find ways to help Jamaican teachers become more effective with their students. Consequently, while teaching in Jamaica, professors are expected to set aside at least one-half day to visit a Jamaican K-12 school. The best way to arrange such a visit is to ask the on-site WCU program coordinator to schedule a visit to a school. The purpose of the visit is to become a student of Jamaican schools.

Finally, this program is designed to involve several types of experiences for the Jamaican students. Ten days of classes during a two-week stay in Jamaica is one part of the course. Two other parts are those experiences required before you arrive in Jamaica and the assignments required after the two-week class is finished. Students are expected to read material before the professor arrives and to complete course requirements after the professor leaves the island. If professors plan adequately during the semester prior to the

teaching assignment, these can be valuable learning experiences that complement in-class experiences.

## B. Timeline

Four months prior to a teaching assignment in Jamaica, the instructor should contact Educational Outreach, which administers the Jamaica program. Educational Outreach staff will assist you in acquiring an application for a passport. They will also need to know your plans for travel and course materials ahead of time. Textbook assignments are made prior to the start of the program as students are responsible for ordering their own textbooks. If an issue arises concerning the textbook assigned for the course, contact Dr. Dan Grube immediately. Syllabi have to be sent to Jamaica 6-weeks prior to the start of the class. Contact Educational Outreach concerning materials that may need to be copied. Remember, all courses are on Canvas, previously Blackboard allowing students access to all course materials. Please be mindful that there are expensive shipping/customs charges when sending materials to Jamaica. Unless you provide Educational Outreach with plenty of notice, plan to carry these materials in your luggage.

NCATE requires evaluations of all courses taught by WCU faculty. The link for course evaluations will be sent to you from Educational Outreach and should be included in your syllabus.

Please note: Adjunct professors who have taught more than 365 days prior to their next hire date may be required to complete additional paperwork to be rehired.

## C. Covering WCU Classes

Work with your department head to cover campus classes during your absence. Tests or guest speakers should be scheduled for class sessions you cannot attend. Teaching in Jamaica is an opportunity to enrich both the professional perspectives of faculty as well as those of students remaining on campus. Be sure to plan good educational experiences for your students while you are gone.

Before you leave, a Course Coverage Information Sheet to be submitted to your Dean's Office. A copy will be included in your teaching agreement. Turn the packet into Catharina Nickel at Educational Outreach and this will be distributed to the Dean's office with your payment action form (PAF).

## Section 2 -- An Introduction to Jamaican Schools

### A. Types of Schools

Depending on their family economic condition, aptitudes and career goals, Jamaican children progress through the following schools:

Kindergarten or Infant School for ages 2.5 to 6.

Preparatory Schools for ages 3-12.

Primary School for ages 6-12.

All-Age Schools for ages 6-15.

Junior High Schools for ages 13-17.

Comprehensive High School for ages 13-18.

Technical High School for ages 14-18.

Jamaican children of the same age attend different types of schools because Jamaican schools have different missions. The difference between a kindergarten and a preparatory school is that many affluent Jamaicans send their children to preparatory schools--government subsidized schools run by churches and private groups. The preparatory school's mission is to prepare students to score well on the national exam, which determines the kind of secondary school the student can attend. On the other hand, children of less affluent families often attend a basic school and then move to a Primary School.

An All-Age School enrolls children in Grades 1-6 and 7-9. Its purpose is to prepare students for a second opportunity to take the national exams, through which children gain access to secondary education.

The government is in the process of bringing Junior High Schools into the education system. Some All- Age Schools have become Junior High Schools.

The differences among the high schools are reflected in their missions. The Comprehensive High School curriculum has both academic and vocational courses of study. The Technical High School curriculum emphasizes vocational preparation for the work force. Both types of schools encourage students to pursue tertiary education.

Similarly, the process used to hire principals is sometimes political. Local boards of education hire principals, but sometimes the decision is heavily influenced by other factors. Principals receive housing and a car allowance in addition to a salary. School principals are seen as

community leaders. They are expected to link the school to the community. In Jamaican schools, the senior teachers and department heads often function as the instructional leaders while the principal plays a community relations role. Similar to U.S. schools, assistant principals are often responsible for maintenance of the campus and supervision of the teachers and instructional programs.

Although Jamaican educators and the Ministry of Education recognize the need for special education programming, their system does not have the resources needed to meet the needs of all exceptional students. Special Education for students with mild to moderate disabilities in Jamaica is typically a matter of trying to address the special needs of students in classrooms that have very few resources.

#### B. Major Issues in Jamaican Schools:

- a. Classes tend to be very large. Although recent directives from the Ministry have capped class size, this is not fully adhered to. Most classrooms are far too small for 50-60 students.  
Teachers are lobbying for class maximums of 45 students.
- b. Educational materials are limited, including library resources.
- c. The government is building computer rooms and purchasing computer equipment for students, but technology infrastructure remains spotty.
- d. Education policies are evolving but remain inconsistent.

#### C. Government Schools and Private Schools

Public schools, like ours, educate children from all social classes. No child can be turned away from a government school. Private schools, even those that receive public funds from the Ministry of Education, can deny admission to students they believe will not be successful in their school. Most private schools are funded through a combination of tuition payments and government subsidies.

### **Section 3 -- Professors and Students Working Together**

#### A. Adult Students in our Jamaican Program

Unlike traditional age students in our residence undergraduate teacher education programs, the Jamaican students are experienced educators in their own right. Many of them have years of dedicated service to the children of their communities, and they are well-respected educators in their nation.

Jamaican teachers often attain additional professional responsibilities as they prove themselves to be effective educators and leaders within their schools. Accordingly, a professional hierarchy exists in Jamaican schools, and we enroll professionals in all but the first category:

- (1) Pre-trained Teachers are high school graduates hired to fill vacancies when the school cannot find a teacher college graduate to fill a position.
- (2) Trained Teachers are those who hold a teacher's college diploma.
- (3) Graduate Teachers are those who have a bachelor's degree, but not a diploma from a Jamaican Teachers' college.
- (4) A Graduate-Trained teacher is a teacher with a bachelor's degree and a diploma from a Jamaican Teachers' College.
- (5) Senior Teachers and Heads of Departments are teachers who share leadership and management responsibilities with their principals and assistant principals.
- (6) Assistant Principals and Principals perform roles similar to those in American schools.  
More than in our country, Jamaican principals are considered leaders in their communities.
- (7) Some teachers become Education Officers working in the Ministry of Education.

Furthermore, some of our students are administrators and staff members in Jamaican social service agencies.

The WCU program enrolls professionals with varying backgrounds and has become an opportunity for many to realize a life-long dream--a master's degree from an American university.

Jamaican teachers are also motivated to earn this degree because a master's degree places them higher on the salary scale. Just like in our country, teachers are paid according to their educational level.

## B. Jamaican Customs

Music -- Music is an important part of the Jamaican culture. Jamaican teachers use songs and music to teach concepts in math, social studies, etc. Every year Jamaican students compete in music and dance competitions that start in the schools, go up to the parishes, and end in a

national competition. These competitions are part of the National Independence Celebration. When Jamaicans think about having a good time, they have to have music along with the food.

Holidays -- Jamaicans take off work and school to celebrate the following national holidays:

1. New Year's Day (January 1)
2. Ash Wednesday
3. Good Friday
4. Easter Monday
5. Labor Day (Last Monday in May)
6. Emancipation Day (August 1)
7. Independence Day (August 6)
8. National Heroes Day (Third Monday in October)
9. Christmas (December 25)
10. Boxing Day (December 26)

End-of Class Celebration -- When the course in Jamaica ends, students feel a tremendous relief and they want to mark this time with a small celebration. Often times students want to express their appreciation to the professor and relax with their visitor and teacher. Often the students sing and have cake and refreshments for the whole class. This is also a time when students may want you to sign their class book. Many students like a comment or two, along with an autograph, to help them remember the professor and the happy moments in class.

Graduation -- All graduations take place in Jamaica. Jamaicans are known for their delight in celebration. Graduations are important events in their lives, especially college graduations. Students take it upon themselves to organize a graduation celebration to go along with the formal ceremonies that occur in Kingston, Mandeville, Montego Bay, or Discovery Bay.

## Section 4 -- Logistical Concerns

### A. Travel Costs and Arrangements

If you are traveling to Jamaica to teach, you will need a valid passport. Please contact the Division of Educational Outreach who will assist you with obtaining a passport application and familiarize you with the routines associated with getting your educational materials to Jamaica.

Four months prior to teaching in Jamaica, Catharina Nickel will send you a teaching agreement packet. You will need to complete this and send it back to Catharina. Simultaneously, you will need to add Catharina Nickel and Chelsea Pressley as delegates on Chrome River, Western Carolina University's new travel system. If you are unaware of how to do this, contact Catharina for further instructions.

All travel is completed by Educational Outreach. Once your teaching agreement is completed and submitted to Educational Outreach, Catharina Nickel will submit your travel preapproval on Chrome River. All international travel must be approved by the Provost office. After approval is received, you will be able to purchase your ticket\*. Keep in mind that the cost of flights continues to increase the longer you wait. Be sure to submit your teaching agreement in a timely manner. Once your ticket is purchased, submit your receipt to Catharina Nickel for reimbursement.

\* Faculty who prefer not to pay for their ticket out of pocket can reach out to Catharina Nickel who will make your flight reservations on your behalf. Note that this method may not guarantee your preferred flight time and airline.

Instructors teaching in Jamaica have the option of requesting and obtaining a travel advance prior to departing for Jamaica. This travel advance will cover the per diem for the duration of the trip. Instructors opting to obtain a travel advance should exchange their money once they arrive in Jamaica; the airport will likely give the best exchange rate. Instructors can opt to pay for their per diem out-of-pocket and be reimbursed upon their return. Please note that not all establishments will take a credit card.

Once you return from Jamaica, you will submit any receipts you would like to request reimbursement for and a second reimbursement will be submitted for your mileage, baggage, and hotel if applicable. Receipts must be submitted within two weeks of your return from Jamaica.

Instructors planning to travel with a guest should indicate this on their teaching agreement.

Western Carolina University will only pay for travel expenses for the instructor. Instructors will be responsible for any extra charges. This includes daily health insurance for the traveler.

Professors are usually able to check out of their weeknight accommodations for travel to interesting destinations on the weekends. By doing this, the bill to the School is reduced, and the money saved can be put toward the cost of the weekend lodging—but cannot exceed the cost of the original lodging. To coordinate this, contact Catharina Nickel so that the hotel can be notified. Professors wishing to check out of their week night accommodations should pay for the weekend lodging out of pocket. Reimbursements will be submitted up to the cost of the weeknight rate, after an itemized receipt is received.

Travel arrangements and payment will be taken care of by Educational Outreach. This will cover the following: pickup from airport, travel to and from school each day, once school visit, one trip to the grocery store, and drop off at the airport. Additional trips will be paid for by the instructor.

Instructors are expected to visit one school while visiting Jamaica. Faculty are encouraged to speak with students in their class or on-site coordinator, Owen Speid, for suggestion. Upon completion of their visit, instructors should document their visit by using the following form: [https://wcu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_ba7nS7WRmyP53jn](https://wcu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ba7nS7WRmyP53jn)

While in Jamaica, faculty can contact their loved ones using apps like FaceTime or WhatsApp or can work with their wireless provider to pay a daily international rate to use their phones/data plan in country. WhatsApp is a free phone/text message app which runs off WiFi. The on-site coordinator, Educational Outreach, and most Jamaica students use this as their primary form of communication. WiFi is available at the hotel you will be stay in as well as the school you will be teaching at.

Information about traveling to Jamaica may be accessed via the web sites [www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/cb/jamaica/](http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/cb/jamaica/) and [www.jamaica-gleaner.com/](http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/)

A. Important Phone Numbers

Educational Outreach - 828-227-7397 | 800-928-4968 toll free  
Educational Outreach WhatsApp – 828-507-7531

On-site Program Coordinator:  
Owen Speid – 876-419-0417



Email: [speidywarrior@yahoo.com](mailto:speidywarrior@yahoo.com)

Liguanea Club, Kingston, 876-926-8144, fax 5501

Mandeville Hotel, Mandeville, 876-962-9764, fax700

El Greco, Montego Bay, 876-940-6116, fax 6115

Runaway Bay, Discovery Bay, 876-973-6671

In an emergency, instructors may call the Educational Outreach Office collect (828-227-7397).

The office will refuse the call but will call you back immediately.

Prior to your departure to Jamaica, you will receive a contact card from Catharina Nickel. This wallet sized card contains all contacts needed while in Jamaica including your driver's phone number. Additionally, it includes the address and phone number for the hotel you will be staying at. This information is needed for the customs form, to be filled out on your flight to Jamaica.