

## COVID-19 Student Teaching FAQ

**Please note that new items are in red.**

We want to acknowledge the patience and support you have shown for your students over the last few weeks. We also want to say a particular thanks to St. Michael's and UVM for bringing this to our attention early so we could be proactive. Contingencies that seemed far-fetched a couple of weeks ago have revealed themselves to be prescient. We also know that EPPs have taken some action while waiting for guidance from the AOE. Please know the AOE and VSBPE trust that you are acting in the best interests of your students and, ultimately, the students in our schools. If any guidance is in conflict with action you have already taken, please reach out to us to coordinate next steps.

It is our intention to send out an updated FAQ each Thursday for the near future. At the end of this FAQ, you will find a form allowing you to submit additional questions or ask for further clarification.

### **What action did the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators take regarding student teaching and school closures due to coronavirus?**

On March 12, the Standards Board moved to allow substantial flexibility for students who are currently enrolled in their student teaching placements. In short, the board approved truncated student teaching placements provided:

1. At least half of the required 13 weeks have been completed
2. The mentor/cooperating teacher writes a letter of recommendation attesting that the student has demonstrated the appropriate trajectory of a typically successful student teacher.
3. The university supervisor writes a letter of recommendation attesting that the student has demonstrated the appropriate trajectory of a typically successful student teacher.

This evidence will allow an EPP to recommend a candidate for licensure. This only applies to coronavirus-related closures. **UPDATE: on 1 April, the AOE released additional guidance to EPPs on the mechanics of gathering attestations from mentor teachers and institutional supervisors, along with a letter to be maintained on each candidate. Please contact Ellen Cairns ([ellen.cairns@vermont.gov](mailto:ellen.cairns@vermont.gov)) or Patrick Halladay ([patrick.halladay@vermont.gov](mailto:patrick.halladay@vermont.gov)) for a copy of that guidance.**

### **What if the student teacher has failed to demonstrate that trajectory?**

It is our hope that student teachers for whom there are substantial concerns about their efficacy would have received intervention from either the EPP or had those concerns raised by the cooperating teacher. We understand that mastery is not realistic; rather, is the student teacher

### **Contact Information:**

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information, please contact:  
Ellen Cairns, Educator Quality at [Ellen.Cairns@vermont.gov](mailto:Ellen.Cairns@vermont.gov).

where you would expect them to be at this point in their trajectory? Our working assumption is that the vast majority of student teachers have demonstrated this trajectory and have not required intervention.

**I am really not sure about a few students. They need to show a good deal more before I can comfortably make such a recommendation.**

If you do not feel comfortable making such a recommendation, assuming the candidate graduates, s/he can apply for a provisional license. At this point we have not determined the exact mechanics for applying for a provisional. Under our current rules, only a hiring SU/SD can apply for a provisional on behalf of a teacher. This may remain the case or there may be additional leniency. We will let you know as we determine that process. Once the student is hired, s/he can petition to upgrade the provisional license to a Level I license after the weeks the candidate is short of a full 13 weeks of student teaching have been completed **AND** s/he receives a letter of recommendation from the supervising administrator. This would allow the EPP to recommend for licensure.

**Can you explain that again?**

Of course. Let us use an example. Say a student teaching assignment for the student you have real concerns about is cut short after 9 weeks, leaving the candidate 4 weeks short of the required 13. The AOE will grant a provisional license to the candidate, provided that they graduate and apply for a license. The provisional license is good for 2 years

When the candidate is hired, s/he could apply to have the provisional license upgraded to a full Level I license after teaching for 4 weeks (9 weeks completed in student teaching + 4 weeks completed in their employment = 13 weeks) **AND** their supervising administrator provides a written attestation of the candidate's efficacy. Then, the EPP could recommend for licensure, allowing the AOE to issue a Level I license.

**What if only a university supervisor or a mentor teacher attest to the readiness of the candidate, but not both?**

The waiver passed by the Standards Board requires both the supervisor and the mentor teacher to attest that the candidate is on the right trajectory toward being a successful classroom teacher.

**This is a change. In the past, it has been the EPP's decision, with consultation from the mentor teacher, whether to recommend for licensure. Is this precedent for the future?**

No. This is simply a trade-off for waiving the 13 week requirement during the current reality. After the current situation has passed, we will return to normal functioning.

**A lot of our candidates are looking for jobs out-of-state. Will other states honor these agreements?**

We cannot guarantee anything. The AOE only controls Vermont licenses. That said, our office is in contact with other licensing offices across the region and the country. We will explain the logic of our decision and ask other states to honor these decisions. Just as we are going to have to be flexible with out-of-state applicants from the cohort applying for licensure, we will lean on other licensing departments to do the same. **UPDATE: The AOE continues to participate in regional discussions with other state departments of education. We will continue to clarify our process to states and encourage states to reach out to us for additional guidance.**

**Are we going to have to change our recommendation stamp on our transcripts?**

Yes. We will need you to acknowledge that a full student teaching placement was not completed and that we should be looking for a letter of recommendation from the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor. It will not be your responsibility to submit those letters, though; that will fall on the applicant. **UPDATE:** We plan to provide more detailed guidance on the recommendation/attestation process by the end of Friday, 27 March.

**And for those we do not recommend, what should that stamp look like?**

There should not be a recommendation on those transcripts. Think of this as analogous to a student who has completed all coursework satisfactorily, but has not passed the PRAXIS Core. The student would still graduate, but would not receive a recommendation until passing PRAXIS. Similarly, only when the remaining weeks of student teaching are complete and the supervising administrator has attested to their efficacy, would an EPP stamp the recommendation.

**About PRAXIS. It looks like test centers are closed and our students are not able to take their PRAXIS Core or PRAXIS II assessments. What are they to do?**

Students graduating or completing an endorsement this spring who are unable to take a required PRAXIS exam should still apply for licensure. We will leave all applications open while awaiting PRAXIS scores. Please note on the EPP recommendation that all testing has not been completed. We recommend applicants reach out directly to the AOE if they have not completed a required PRAXIS at [AOE.licensinginfo@vermont.gov](mailto:AOE.licensinginfo@vermont.gov). Please have candidates notify us of the assessments for which they are waiting and their current plan for completion. The most updated information from ETS can be found at <https://www.ets.org/s/cv/praxis/the-americas/>.

**Our program requires students to have passed PRAXIS Core before the end of their sophomore year. Can students still matriculate through the program if they have not passed PRAXIS Core before junior year begins?**

Yes. Different programs across the state have set different timelines for when testing needs to be completed. According to ROPA, appropriate testing only needs to be completed in order to recommend for licensure. If your EPP is changing policy due to a lack of available testing,

please notify Ellen Cairns, the ROPA Coordinator. This will NOT be considered a substantial change requiring standards board action.

**We have a number of other cases that are similar to incomplete student teaching. For example, we have students in a school librarian practicum who have only been able to complete 40 hours. What are they to do?**

While we did not ask and the Standards Board did not seek guidance on these questions, we are proceeding as if these instances are substantially commensurate with the guidance they did provide. Therefore, if a student seeking an endorsement has completed at least half of a required practicum or internship **AND** has a recommendation from both the site supervisor and the university supervisor, the EPP can recommend for the endorsement being sought. As with student teaching, an accompanying attestation from the site and EPP supervisor will be required.

**We have students who have not completed half of the required internships. What should they do?**

If these candidates are not seeking initial licensure, they would be eligible for a provisional license in the endorsement they are seeking.

An EPP could recommend and the candidate could apply for an upgrade to a Level I license after s/he has completed the remaining hours while employed. For example, if a candidate has completed 20 hours of their school librarian practicum, s/he could apply for a provisional. Once hired in a new position, the remaining 40 hours could be earned on the job. When those 40 hours have been completed, the EPP could recommend for licensure and the candidate could apply for a Level I license.

**We have some candidates that are completing a practicum in their junior year needed for dual endorsement. What are they to do if they do not complete their 60 hour practicum? They will be student teaching at a later date.**

We ask that they make every effort to complete their practicum during the term when they student teach or another term. The 60 hours do not need to be in a single placement. For example, if the early childhood practicum is not finished this spring, while the candidate is student teaching in the fall, s/he could spend a couple of days at the outset or end of their student teaching placement in an ECE setting to make up the remaining required hours of the practicum.

**We are thinking of making some of our graded courses Pass/Fail this semester. Is that allowed?**

**UPDATE:** Yes, assuming a student passes the course and with a qualification for the student teaching placement. For student teaching ONLY, the EPP must acknowledge that a "Pass" is commensurate with grade of "B" or better.

### **Are we to assume that our spring ROPA visits are postponed?**

Mostly. Some ROPA visits have proceeded virtually, though most will be postponed. Ellen Cairns will be in touch with you individually regarding those details.

### **What is the impact on the Vermont Licensing Portfolio?**

EPPs have the autonomy to adjust the VLP requirements as needed. As we stated above, we have confidence in your ability to determine if your candidates are ready for the classroom; likewise, we trust your judgement in making adjustments to the assignments used in building the VLP. **UPDATE: Students seeking licensure through the provisional option will still be required to complete a VLP.**

### **Will applications stay open for our candidates who can't complete their criminal record checks?**

We understand that this is a real impediment for those who need a set of fingerprints. We will continue to process applications without fingerprints submitted. Should the need arise due to extended closures, we will develop a process that is analogous to our current Letters of Eligibility that allow a licensure applicant to teach while waiting for the results of background checks to be complete.

A full list of sites that take your fingerprints can be found through the Vermont Crime Information Center [website](#). Please check the status of sites that are closest to you. At our last check, all but one fingerprinting center is closed. The one center open is only taking fingerprints for educators living in the immediate area.

### **Will Vermont permit student teachers and their Faculty Supervisors to participate in alternative virtual teaching experiences, so they can be applied toward the required weeks?**

Yes. Individual institutions can make responsible choices for the content for the remainder of the student teaching semester. The AOE and the Standards Board has only provided guidance on the in-school portion of the student teaching experience.

### **Would the Vermont Agency of Education grant an emergency license in the Fall to individuals who had completed a program except for student teaching?**

Almost--a provisional, not an emergency. However, an applicant who has completed less than half of the student teaching placement could still apply for a provisional. Those applications would be considered on a case by case basis.

**NEW: We have a candidate who we were about to counsel out of the program before this all started. Neither her cooperating teacher nor supervisor will write her the letter of**

**recommendation, and we do not feel she is even ready for a Provisional license. Per the FAQs, the process is she can get a Provisional without our recommendation. is that correct?** Yes. The AOE will be communicating with superintendents, principals, and HR directors that provisional licenses are granted for graduates,, but reflect either a reluctance to attest to their readiness in the classroom or their inability to complete half of the student teaching placement. We will be releasing additional guidance on the provisional option in the very near future.

**I have a question you did not address. How do I get answers to those?**

If you have additional questions or would like further clarification of any of the above, please enter those questions in [this form](#). For the next few weeks, we are aiming to send out updated guidance each Thursday. If you have immediate needs, please contact Ellen Cairns via email at [ellen.cairns@vermont.gov](mailto:ellen.cairns@vermont.gov). Please note that our entire team is working remotely and will not be easily available by phone.