

## Student Teaching/EPP COVID-19 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 know that EPPs have taken some action while waiting for specific 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 most Thursdays 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.

### STUDENT TEACHING

#### **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. 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 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.

### 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).

**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 will likely be eligible for a provisional license. Only a hiring SU/SD can apply for a provisional on behalf of a teacher. The provisional license is good for 2 years.

**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. In addition, the candidate will have had to complete at least half of the 13-week student teaching placement.

**What will be the process for candidates to upgrade their Provisional Licenses to Level I licenses?**

There will be different processes depending into which of these categories a candidate falls. We have identified four, though your experience may point to additional ones. Options 1-3 begin with an application for a provisional license by the hiring school district. Option 4 could begin with an application for a provisional from the hiring school district, but could also follow other routes.

- 1. Candidates whom the EPP believe were on the trajectory to complete student teaching satisfactorily and successfully completed all other licensure requirements, such as the VLP and PRAXIS, through the EPP, but the cooperating teacher would not attest to their readiness.**

This candidate would receive a letter of attestation from the EPP student teacher supervisor and, after completing the remaining weeks of student teaching as the teacher of record, would receive a recommendation from their supervisor/principal. This candidate would forward that recommendation to their EPP, and the EPP would then be able to recommend the candidate for the Level I license.

- 2. Candidates who received letters of attestation from neither their cooperating teacher nor their EPP supervisor, but who have successfully completed all other licensure requirements through your program.**

The EPP would indicate on the transcript that the candidate has completed all requirements for licensure, including the VLP, except student teaching. The candidate would then submit a transcript and a recommendation from a supervisor/principal to the AOE after completing the remaining weeks of student teaching as the teacher of record in a classroom.

**3. Candidates who did not complete other licensure requirements in addition to student teaching, such as the VLP, through an EPP.**

After completing the remaining required weeks of student teaching, the candidate would apply for a Level I license by submitting a VLP to the AOE directly, as well as the letter of recommendation from the supervisor/principal. The AOE will determine if the candidate has met the qualifications for a Level I license. If the evidence presented is not adequate, the candidate shall be referred to Peer Review.

**4. Candidates who have not completed other requirements, such as Praxis II.**

As always, an EPP may recommend a candidate at a later date, once satisfactorily completing the remaining requirements. If the candidate has not met the EPP requirements for a recommendation, Peer Review remains an option.

**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.

**What about a candidate who doesn't get hired and therefore doesn't qualify for a Provisional? Could they complete their remaining weeks of student teaching under a long-term sub position?**

Yes. This could look a good deal like option one, above. A candidate could get hired for a long-term sub position (up to thirty student days, but enough to sum to 13 weeks with the time in class completed this spring) without a license, get a recommendation from the principal, and use that as evidence to get a recommendation from the EPP. However, this option is limited to an EPP recommendation. As the EPP would be recommending the candidate, the EPP would have the flexibility to design additional oversight in conjunction with the school. We would strongly recommend that the candidate still be observed regularly and get feedback- whether by the principal or someone from the recommending program. This is flexible and largely depends on the EPP's assessment of the candidate's needs.

For option two, above, the candidate recommended by the supervising principal would be hired by the school. The principal attestation means that the principal is committing to the candidate at least for an entire school year. Under the long-term substitute case, the principal is not making such a commitment. Therefore, the long-term sub option is only available to candidates who are working towards earning the EPP's recommendation.

**Could a candidate piece together daily substitute experiences to total the missing number of student teaching weeks?**

No. A daily substitute teaching experience is not commensurate with a longer-term experience where the substitute is preparing daily lessons and assessing student performance.

**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.

**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. 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?**

No. We have changed this; you will not need to change your recommendation stamp or submit the letters of recommendation. You will need to keep those letters in the candidates' files and they will be reviewed as part of your next ROPA review/Rules Check. However, if a candidate has not completed the required testing needed for an EPP to recommend for licensure, that needs to be noted.

## **TESTING**

**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.

**UPDATED:** Beginning on 18 May, several PRAXIS Assessments will be available to be taken at home. There are a number of limitations--only about 30 tests will be available, there are controls on the testing environment that must be followed, devices on which the test will work are limited--but for many this will provide a solution to completing a required PRAXIS exam. The PRAXIS Core will be among the exams offered. On 1 June, additional assessments will be added to the menu.

The exams will be the same content in the same form at the same price as the ones currently taken in testing centers. Additional information and registration will be posted on the ETS website beginning on 15 May.

For those assessments that are not offered at home, until test centers begin to reopen, the Licensing Team is developing a Letter of Eligibility that would allow an educator to be licensed. Once the test centers open, the educator would have a limited time to pass the required assessment.

**NEW: What if I am issued a Letter of Eligibility, but do not pass the assessment within the required window?**

If an educator is unable to pass an assessment once the testing centers reopen, the license and/or endorsement would be rescinded; however, a superintendent would likely be able to apply for a provisional license on behalf of an educator, allowing the educator to retain your employment and retake the required assessment.

**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.

## **INTERNSHIPS AND PRACTICA**

**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 their hiring superintendent to apply for a provisional license on their behalf 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 in 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.

## **SPRING 2020 GRADING**

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

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.

## **LICENSING PORTFOLIO**

**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.

## **FINGERPRINTING**

**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 fingerprinting centers were closed.

**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.

**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.